

Culminating Activity: Mock Board of Architectural Review Meeting

Directions: Read through the following narrative that will explain exactly what your group will be presenting to the Board of Architectural Review at the mock meeting.

Business Owner

You have recently purchased a historic property located in a prime part of town at 202 Main Street for your new candy shop called Sugar Rush. You wish to use the first floor as commercial space for the candy shop, and either sell or rent the upper floors as condominiums.

This is an exciting purchase because Main Street is such a lively and vibrant area of town. There are so many thriving businesses that are already established in the area which is a good indication that your candy shop will be successful as well.

The building is a wonderful historic property constructed sometime before 1840. Its historic elements will create a unique ambiance for customers visiting the shop. However, there is one major change you would like to make before the store is ready to open:

1. Addition of a neon sign to hang at a right angle on the building's storefront façade (the front of the building).
 - a. The previous owner of the building had a small right angle sign on the façade that is still in place.
 - b. The addition of a right angle *neon* sign will attract more visitors to Sugar Rush and become a distinct addition to the atmosphere on Main Street.
 - c. The Tellis Pharmacy sign, similar to what Sugar Rush is proposing, is an example of an existing right angle neon sign in one of Charleston's major commercial districts.

Even though you would like to start working immediately to complete these alterations, it is necessary to present the plans and designs for the proposed changes to the Board of Architectural Review for them to approve before any construction work can begin.

Established in 1931, the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) is a group of seven volunteer members who are assisted by the City of Charleston's Urban Design and Preservation Division. The BAR is primarily concerned with reviewing all exterior alterations to buildings located in the Old City District (map of historic district). Therefore, all developers and residents owning property in the Old City District must present any changes they wish to make to the outside of the property to the BAR. Without the BAR's approval, exterior alterations cannot be carried out.

When you present the plans for the neon sign before the Board of Architectural Review, it is necessary to show the BAR members either drawings or photographs that specifically illustrate the changes that will be made. This allows the BAR members to visualize what you are trying to accomplish so they can make an educated decision on whether or not to approve your plan.

Additionally, representatives from your business will be required to speak in front of the BAR to present the plans for exterior alterations. This will let you explain why the proposed changes are necessary. It is during this time that you will use both visual examples and verbal persuasion to influence the BAR in your favor. Getting the BAR to approve your plan will save your business time and money as it will allow for work to begin on the exterior alterations.

You will find the following items in your packet. These items will help you create your presentation:

1. A brief history of the property
2. Photographs of the historic property

Things to consider when creating your presentation:

1. Talk very briefly about the history of your property.

- a. It is not necessary to tell the BAR everything about the building. The BAR exists to protect historic properties from any detrimental alterations that would diminish the value and significance of the building. Therefore, one of the most important things to explain is that the exterior alterations you are proposing respect the building's historic significance.
2. Clearly explain the objectives of the proposed exterior alterations.
 - a. Find a way to explain why the exterior alterations are necessary. This is when you must think of yourself as a salesman. Sell your plan to the BAR so they will be able to see your reasons behind altering a historic building.
3. Be prepared!
 - a. Know your material inside and out. That way, if a BAR member or someone from the audience asks a question, you will be ready with the right answer.
 - b. Possible questions may include:
 - i. Why do you want to do this project?
 - ii. When was your building constructed?
 - iii. Why is it necessary for you to add a neon sign to your storefront?
 - iv. How will the new sign affect the overall appearance of Main Street?
 - v. Are you taking the necessary precautions to protect the elements that make the building historically significant?

Final Directions:

1. You are encouraged to use the photographs in the packet as part of the presentation.
2. You will need to design a basic drawing of the neon sign you are proposing to add to the building's façade.
3. Work together as a group to create a professional and interesting presentation.
4. Remember, your primary responsibility is to present and explain the changes you would like to make to the historic property.
5. Your presentation should last no more than five minutes.
6. Decide as a group who will act as primary speaker, but all members will be responsible for knowing the materials and answering questions.

202 Main Street – Building History

202 Main Street was constructed before 1840 by George Mason. It is constructed of brick with red sandstone window sills and a parapeted gable above the third story. A parapet is a low wood or masonry wall used to screen the roof and sometimes for decorative features. In 1890, the cast-iron columns were added to the first story.¹

This property is a great example of mixed residential and commercial buildings constructed during the mid-nineteenth century. Even though the first floor is used for commercial space, the upper two floors have retained the single house plan which is very typical of Charleston architecture. The “single house” is a term used to describe houses constructed with a central hallway and one room on either side. In Charleston, single houses are positioned with the side end of the house facing the street.

¹ Jonathan H. Poston, *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 358-359.

Photographs of 202 Main Street

Fig. 6.7 202 Main Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.8 202 Main Street in relation to other Main Street buildings. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.9 Existing right angle sign on 202 Main Street's facade. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.10 Right angle neon sign on the facade of the Tellis Pharmacy building. Photograph by author 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.11 Close-up of right angle neon Tellis Pharmacy sign. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.

