

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. Then, follow the next set of directions.

Interested Citizens

As representatives from the Charleston community, interested citizens often come to Board of Architectural Review (BAR) meetings to either support or oppose proposals that are brought forward for approval. While citizens have no official authority to approve a proposal, they do have the opportunity to voice their comments at a designated point during the meeting. The process of preserving Charleston's historic properties affects everyone and allowing citizens to voice their thoughts in a public forum lets people know their opinions matter.

The Board of Architectural Review (BAR) was established in 1931. It 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.

In order to be informed about potential threats to historic properties within the city, interested citizens will go online to the BAR's website to see the agenda for upcoming meetings. Many times, the interested citizens who come to BAR meetings live in the same neighborhood or own property near the buildings whose proposals are up for approval. These citizens have an added interest in whether the proposal is approved because their own personal property may be affected by the BAR's decision. The agenda for the BAR meeting where you will be representing CHPT is outlined below.

AGENDA

BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

1. 15 Harbor Street

Application No. 103-10-1

Request approval for removal of the historic wooden six over six double-hung sash windows to be replaced with new vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows.

Rhettborough, Old City District c. 1847

2. 202 Main Street

Application No. 103-10-2

Request approval for a right angle neon sign to be added to the building's façade.

Old and Historic District c. 1840

Presentation Directions:

As interested citizens, your group will divide itself into two smaller groups. One small group will voice comments and concerns for the first proposal for 15 Harbor Street. The other small group will voice comments for the proposal for 202 Main Street. Decide amongst yourselves who will be in which small group.

While your group may not be presenting proposals exactly like the Homeowner and Developer groups, you will be required to speak during the meeting in response to each proposal. When the BAR members ask for comments from the public, you will be responsible for bringing up any problems you see with the proposals that could have negative effects on the historic buildings or go against any design or zoning regulations.

Depending on which small group you are a member of, you will read one of the following proposal descriptions that will help you prepare for your role in the meeting by providing you with information about the properties listed on the BAR agenda as well as preservation issues relating to each:

1. 15 Harbor Street

- a. This property was constructed in 1847 and is located in the Rhettsborough neighborhood in the Old City District.
- b. This proposal is requesting approval for the removal of historic wooden windows that are original to the house in favor of installing new vinyl windows.
- c. A double-hung window is constructed of two parts (sashes) that overlap slightly and slide up and down inside the frame. With a single-hung sash window, only one of the sashes move up and down.
 - i. On this particular house, each sash includes six panes of glass. This is why the window is described “six over six.”
 - ii. The homeowner is proposing that the six over six double-hung sash windows be removed and replaced by one over one single-hung sash windows.
 - iii. This would mean each sash would have one large pan of glass rather than being divided into six panes.
- d. The Technical Preservation Services under the National Park Service have put together informational briefs on appropriate preservation techniques online in order to make historic preservation information more accessible to the public.
 - i. According to Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows:
 1. Historic windows should only be replaced when absolutely necessary.
 2. It is more practical to repair existing wooden windows than replace them.
 3. Wooden windows that are properly maintained will last a long time.

4. Windows that are original to a building greatly contribute to its historic significance and character.¹
 - ii. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that original historic windows should be retained unless they are deteriorated beyond the point of repair.
- e. Additionally, removing original wood windows in favor of vinyl windows is an inappropriate preservation technique. If the wood windows have deteriorated beyond repair, any replacement should be sensitive to the original building material and be made of wood *not* vinyl.
- f. And, if possible, the same six over six design should be preserved rather than a one over one window in order to maintain the original look and design of the house.
- g. From the outside, the look of a double-hung window versus a single-hung window is not a large difference, but again, if the window was historically a double-hung window, then efforts should be made to make any new additions double-hung as well.
- h. As interested citizens, you own property nearby in the Rhettborough neighborhood and would like to voice some concerns at the BAR meeting.
 - i. You are concerned that the removal of the original historic wooden windows will reduce the value of the property and surrounding properties.
 - ii. You and your fellow neighbors have put a lot of time, effort and money into restoring your homes in a historically accurate manner, and you are worried that modern vinyl windows will be both aesthetically (visually) unattractive as well as a detriment to the historic integrity of the neighborhood.

¹ Technical Preservation Services, "Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows," National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/history/HPS/tps/briefs/brief09.htm#Window%20Replacement> (accessed March 5, 2010).

- i. See Figures 6-20 and 6-21 for a photograph of 15 Harbor Street as well as a photographic example of vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows the owners are proposing to replace the historic windows with.

Fig. 6.20 15 Harbor Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.21 Example of vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows. Energy Star Vinyl Window Toronto <http://www.vinylwindow-toronto.com/products> (accessed March 5, 2010).



2. 202 Main Street

- a. This property was constructed around 1840 and is located on Main Street which houses a large portion of Charleston's commercial businesses.
- b. The new business opening at 202 Main Street is a candy store called Sugar Rush.
- c. This proposal requests permission to construct a right angle neon sign on the façade (front of the building) of the existing three-story structure.
 - i. The primary concern with this proposal is that a right angle *neon* sign is not permissible under the City of Charleston's Zoning Ordinance.
 - ii. Sec. 54-413. Regulations for signs within the Commercial Transitional, CT District states:
 1. "Right Angle Signs: One right angle sign shall be permitted per business unit as follows:

- a. Right angle signs shall not exceed nine (9) square feet per face.
- b. On a single façade, right angle signs are not permitted in conjunction with façade signs.
- c. ***Right angle signs are not to be illuminated***²
- d. As interested citizens, you own businesses near 202 Main Street and would like to voice concerns at the BAR meeting.
 - i. Even though the Tellis Pharmacy building had a right angle neon sign, you do not feel that it is appropriate to allow Sugar Rush such a large neon sign that will dominate the character of the commercial district.
 - ii. If the BAR allows a right angle neon sign to be added onto the façade of 202 Main Street, it will set a precedent that will allow other commercial businesses to do the same.
 - iii. The BAR has a duty to uphold the integrity of Charleston’s historic buildings, and having a multitude of right angle neon signs is not compatible with the existing atmosphere of Charleston’s commercial district.
- e. See Figures 6-22 and 6-23 for a photograph of 202 Main Street and an example of an existing right angle neon sign on Main Street in Charleston.

² City of Charleston, South Carolina Zoning Ordinances, “Article 4, Part 3, Section 54-3413: Regulations for signs within the Commercial Transitional, CT District,” http://library6.municode.com/default-test/home.htm?infobase=14049&doc_action=whatsnew (accessed March 5, 2010).

Fig. 6.22 202 Main Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.23 Close-up of right angle neon Tellis Pharmacy sign. Photograph by author 3 Mar. 2010.



Final Directions:

1. Use the information listed above to raise awareness to the preservation concerns of each proposal.
2. Each member of your group will be asked to speak, so group members should establish before the meeting begins who is going to say what so there will not be any confusion.
3. Feel free to write down the information on note cards so you will be prepared.