

## **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.*

### **Homeowner**

You have lived in the house located at 15 Harbor Street, located in the neighborhood of Rhettborough, for several years. The building is a wonderful historic property constructed in 1847. However, there are one change you have been interested in making to the property:

1. Remove the existing wooden six over six double-hung sash windows that are original to the house and install brand new vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows. (The definition of “six over six double-hung sash window” can be found in the building history section)
  - a. Several of the windows are in need of repair and you feel that your house will be better insulated (which will lower the cost of your heating bill) with the installation of new windows.
  - b. Changing the six over six pane design to one over one will add a more modern look to the house that you have been trying to achieve.

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 new windows before the Board of Architectural Review, it is necessary to show the BAR members 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, you will be required to speak in front of the BAR to present the plans for exterior alterations. This allows you to 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 you time and money as it will allow 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. Photographs of the historic property
2. Drawings of the plans for the exterior alterations
3. A brief history of the 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 house constructed?
      - iii. Are the existing windows original to the house? Why do you want to change them?
      - iv. How will the removal of the original windows affect the value of your house?
      - v. Are you taking the necessary precautions to protect the elements that make the building historically significant?

Final Directions:

1. Work together as a group to create a professional and interesting presentation.
2. Remember, your primary responsibility is to present and explain the changes you would like to make to the historic property.
3. You are encouraged to use the photographs and drawings in the packet as part of the presentation.
4. Also feel free to design your own drawings or other visual aids if desired.
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.

### 15 Harbor Street – Building History

15 Harbor Street was constructed around 1794 for grocer Christopher Brown. The three-story brick Charleston single house shows early natural stucco (an exterior form of plaster) on the exterior walls. The building has side piazzas on the first two stories. The term “single house” is 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 building facing the street.

The building also features a parapeted gable on the third story that was added during the Greek Revival period around 1840.<sup>1</sup> A parapet is a low wood or masonry wall used to screen the roof and sometimes for decorative features. The windows are wooden six over six double-hung sash windows that are original to the building. 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 window, only one of the sashes moves up and down. On this particular house, each sash includes six panes of glass. You are proposing that the wooden six over six double-hung sash windows be removed and replaced with vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows. Vinyl is cheaper than wood and is said to be more energy efficient. See Figure 6-6 for an example of vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan H. Poston, *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 213.

Photographs of 15 Harbor Street

**Fig. 6.1 15 Harbor Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.**



Fig. 6.2 15 Harbor Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.3 Close-up of existing historic windows at 15 Harbor Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



**Fig. 6.4** Close-up of existing historic window at 15 Harbor Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



**Fig. 6-5:** Close-up of existing historic window at 15 Harbor Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.6 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).



