



# *City of Charleston*

## **BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW GENERAL GUIDELINES**



# *T*ABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>REPAIRS &amp; RENOVATIONS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SITE WORK</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>NEW CONSTRUCTION &amp; DEMOLITION</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>EASEMENTS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HISTORIC STRUCTURE VARIANCE</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>INVENTORY &amp; ARCHITECTURAL RATINGS</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>BAR REVIEW PROCESS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>28</b>

**City of Charleston  
Planning, Preservation & Sustainability**

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# *I*NTRODUCTION

The residents of Charleston have always had a great deal of pride in their city. Evidence of this shines through in the early part of the 20th century when Susan Pringle Frost and other pioneers began buying and restoring houses south of Broad Street as a response to houses being lost to demolition, and original fabric being removed and sold to out-of-town buyers. These citizens soon realized that they needed the assistance of the local government, and out of this early preservation movement came the establishment of the country's oldest historic district and the first Board of Architectural Review. This network of citizens and local government has helped retain the historic character and sense of place that is Charleston.

Since 1931 the boundaries of the historic districts and the members of the Board of Architectural Review may have changed, but the goal of retaining the character of this special place has never wavered. Each of Charleston's historic properties is important to the overall city fabric and diverse cultural heritage. Through both the introduction of new structures and the preservation of historic buildings, parks, and streetscapes, Charleston's respect and care for its built environment is evident and appreciated worldwide. Owners of historic properties must recognize a sense of stewardship when considering new work or alterations.

This booklet was created to provide guidance for the renovation and rehabilitation of historic buildings as well as new construction. There is also an abbreviated version of The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, which the Board of Architectural Review and City staff rely on for recommendations. Beyond that is an overview of the permitting and plan review process as well as a list of resources that will be helpful for more detailed information on how to care for an historic building.

In Charleston, historic preservation is more than bricks and mortar. It is about ensuring our unique historic resources, diverse neighborhoods, and cultural heritage are sustained and passed on to future generations.

## ABOUT THE BAR

The Board of Architectural Review (BAR) was established in 1931. As stated in the City of Charleston Zoning Ordinance, the board is tasked with several purposes which are “advanced through the preservation and protection of the old historic or architecturally worthy structures and quaint neighborhoods which impart a distinct aspect to the city and which serve as visual reminders of the historic and cultural heritage of the city, the state, and the nation.”

Thus, the BAR reviews all exterior alterations visible from any public right-of-way. The BAR is divided into the Board of Architectural Review – Large (BAR-L) for projects over 10,000sf in size and the Board of Architectural Review – Small (BAR-S) for projects under 10,000sf in size. Each Board is assisted by the Preservation Division and consists of five volunteer members who have demonstrated experience in historic design or preservation.

There are three historic districts, one area of demolition purview, and the Landmark Overlay. Each area has specific requirements related to new construction, exterior alterations and repairs, demolition (full, partial, or of character-defining features), and signage. Within each area, requirements for BAR approval are determined by age of structure, architectural rating, visibility from a public right-of-way, and of course, the scope of the project. Please see the “Historic Districts Purview Map” on page 24. Additionally, please see a helpful chart, “Does my project need BAR Approval?”, on pages 26 and 27.

In addition to BAR approval, reviews must be secured from the Zoning Division, Building Inspections, and the Department of Public Service. Generally, an applicant must seek approval from the Zoning Division prior to BAR, followed by Building Inspections. Easement approval with or without conditions must occur before approval can be granted. A permit must be obtained from Building Inspections for any work being done in the City of Charleston.

Property owners are encouraged to check with City staff prior to beginning any work. The Preservation Division is available to answer any questions and help ensure the process runs smoothly.

**Preservation Division | 843-724-3765**  
[www.charleston-sc.gov/bar](http://www.charleston-sc.gov/bar)

**City of Charleston Permit Center | 843-577-5550**  
**2 George Street, First Floor**  
**Closed on City Observed Holidays**



## **REPAIRS & RENOVATIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS**

On most historic buildings, elements such as the decorative details, windows, and brackets, display skilled hand craftsmanship and provide texture that is an important feature of historic districts. In an effort to retain this texture, wholesale replacement of materials is discouraged. Elements should be repaired, rather than replaced wherever possible. Removal of decorative elements such as window pediments, bracketed hoods over doors, and door surrounds is prohibited.

### **PRINCIPLES, GUIDELINES, & POLICIES**

The BAR has developed and adopted principles, guidelines, and policies to aid applicants on project development and approval.

#### **Principles**

- [BAR Principles for New Construction and Renovation and Repairs \(2017\)](#)

#### **Guidelines**

- [Guidelines for Elevating Historic Buildings](#)

#### **BAR Policy Statements**

- [Charleston Standards](#)
- [Hardscaping](#)
- [Historic Materials North of Line Street](#)
- [Hurricane Protection Panels](#)
- [Use of Mechanical Tools](#)
- [Piazza Enclosures](#)
- [Screening of Piazzas and Porches](#)
- [Roofing](#)
- [Signs](#)
- [Solar Collectors](#)
- [Staff Reviews](#)
- [Storm Windows](#)

## MATERIALS

Historic building materials and elements should be repaired, whenever possible, rather than replaced. Often, repair of these elements can be more affordable than replacement, especially considering the longevity of historic materials over modern-day materials. BAR staff are happy to share guidance on potential repair in lieu of replacement.

Where repair is not possible, materials should be replaced in-kind. That simply means that new materials should match the existing in type, size, profile, and material. For example, if a double-hung, true divided lite wood window is beyond repair, it should be replaced with the same. The profile of the muntins (pieces between the individual panes of glass), the number of lites (panes of glass), and the depth of the window sill must match those of the window being replaced. Synthetic materials, such as vinyl, fiberglass, etc., are generally not allowed on historic buildings. It is important to note that maintaining and repairing historic structures with appropriate materials and techniques can be more affordable and more sustainable than installing new replacement materials.

## MASONRY

### Brick and Mortar

Replace damaged bricks and mortar with new bricks and mortar to match existing. Care should be taken to repoint historic masonry with mortar that matches the existing in color, texture, and strength. Information on an appropriate mortar mix is available in the [National Park Service Preservation Brief #2](#). Using an inappropriate mortar mix with a higher concentration of Portland cement can cause significant damage to historic bricks and mortar. Mortar joints should also match existing in type, e.g., concave tooled joint, v-shaped joint, flush joint, etc. In general, brick should not be painted unless previously painted. Applying paint to historic brick can cause irreparable damage by trapping and sealing moisture in the wall leading to water intrusion and structural issues inside the wall. Waterproof coatings on historic masonry are not permitted because they can do significant damage to a building. Additional information on this topic is available in the [National Park Service Preservation Brief #1](#). Please see the Paint section on Page 8 of this booklet for guidelines on painting brick.

### Stucco

Repair existing stucco with stucco that matches in strength, color, texture, and composition of the original. Information on an appropriate mix and correct method of repair for historic stucco can be obtained from the [National Park Service Preservation Brief #22](#). As much original stucco

as possible should be retained. New stucco should never be applied over existing stucco. If the original scoring pattern is evident, it should be replicated in the new stucco. Do not stucco masonry that shows no evidence of previous stucco applications. In many instances the patina of historic stucco is an important feature and should be left unpainted. Waterproof coatings on historic stucco are not permitted. See the [National Park Service Preservation Brief #1](#) for more information.

## SIDING

Wholesale replacement of siding is discouraged. When it is necessary to replace deteriorated siding, it should be replaced with siding that matches in size, thickness, exposure, and profile of the original. Synthetic materials such as vinyl, aluminum, and cementitious siding are not appropriate for historic buildings and are not allowed.

### Siding Profiles

*Not to scale*

**Beaded**



**Novelty**



**Lap**



## PAINT

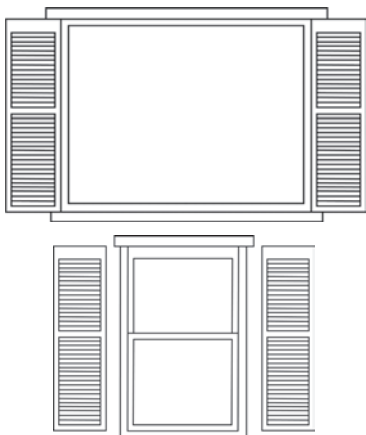
There is no specific palette of “approved colors.” Paint color approval is given on a case-by-case basis depending upon the style of architecture, the character of the adjacent buildings, and the neighborhood. Garish colors in general are to be avoided. A paint sample on the building may be required for approval. The Historic Charleston Foundation colorsheet is an informational resource for colors commonly found in Charleston. However it is not a pre-approved list and review by staff is still required. Historic unpainted stucco and brick should not be painted. Elastomeric or “waterproof” paints are not permitted.

Disc sanding, sandblasting, or open flame is never permitted for paint removal. (Disc sanding can do significant damage to architectural details as well as to flat siding.) Mechanical sanders are not permitted for use on details — flat boards only. Highly acidic paint removal solutions are not permitted. City staff can provide information on alternative methods of paint removal such as stripping gels and orbital sanders. [National Park Service Preservation Brief #10](#) is also a good source of information. Any home built prior to 1978 is likely to have surfaces painted with lead-based paint. Contact the Building Inspections Division for more information about lead abatement and lead hazards prior to beginning work if you suspect there may be lead-based paint in your building.

## SHUTTERS

When repair is not possible, replacement shutters should match existing in appearance and material. Shutters must be appropriately sized, be operational, and have appropriate hardware. Fixed shutters are not allowed. Shutters constructed of aluminum, vinyl, or other synthetic materials are not appropriate on historic buildings.

### Inappropriate Installation



### Appropriate Installation

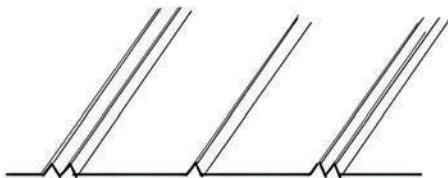


## ROOFS

Most historic roofs in Charleston are one of four materials: standing seam metal, standing seam copper, terra-cotta tile, or slate. They should be repaired wherever possible rather than replaced. Repair historic roofs with like materials. Asphalt shingles and V-crimp metal roofing are inappropriate for historic buildings. V-crimp is not the same as standing seam metal. See [National Park Service Preservation Briefs #4, #29, and #30](#) for more information.

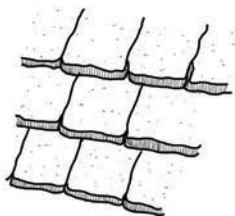


**Standing Seam Metal**

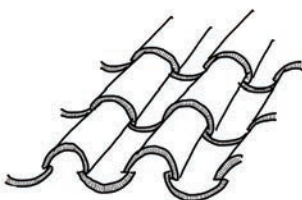


**V-Crimp Metal**

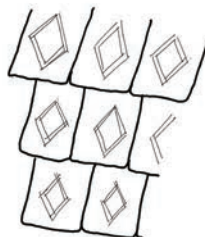
*(Not appropriate for historic buildings)*



**Slate**



**Terra-cotta Tile**



**Metal Shingles**

## GUTTERS & DOWNSPOUTS

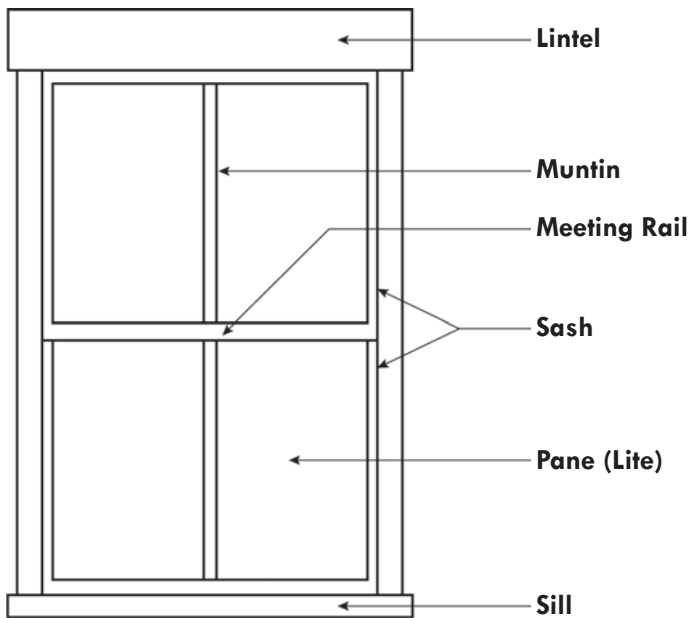
Galvanized metal, aluminum, or copper half-round gutters and round downspouts should be used rather than square and/or vinyl. The aluminum and galvanized metal systems should be painted to match the adjacent surface of the building. Gutters are typically required to be 6" half-round in shape.

## CHIMNEYS

Chimneys are a character-defining feature of a house and should be retained. See [National Park Service Preservation Brief #47](#).

## WINDOWS

Replacement windows that match the originals are generally expensive, therefore it is beneficial and encouraged to repair windows while retaining as much historic fabric as possible. If the pieces are beyond repair, exact replicas should be installed. Where replacement windows are necessary, they should match the material and configuration of the original windows, if known. For example, if the original windows had 6 over 6 lites (lites being the individual panes of glass), the replacement windows should as well. Simulated divided-lite windows and windows constructed of materials such as aluminum and vinyl are not acceptable in the historic districts on historic residences. Storm windows may be approved on a case-by-case basis, must fit within the framework of the window trim, and be painted to match the window trim. Storm windows are not allowed on Category 1 or 2 buildings. No changes are to be made in window size or openings. See [National Park Service Preservation Briefs #3](#) and [#9](#) for more information.



# PIAZZAS & PORCHES

Piazas and porches are considered to be character-defining features on buildings in Charleston. Careful attention should be paid to their maintenance and/or restoration. All elements should be repaired wherever possible. If elements such as balusters or columns must be replaced, the replacement must match the existing in design, or be appropriate to the period of construction. Fiberglass or other synthetic materials are not appropriate. Enclosing a porch or piazza is generally discouraged as per BAR policy adopted April 10, 1985. When screening in a piazza, the screen and its framework must be easily removed, and must fit inside (behind) the columns and railings. The columns, railings, and balusters must be retained and be visible on the exterior of the screening.





## **SITE WORK**

### **FENCES & WALLS**

The removal of historic walls is generally not permitted. Chain link, aluminum, vinyl, or PVC fencing are not appropriate in the historic districts and will not be permitted. As with all work in the districts, applications for walls and fences will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the character of the neighborhood into consideration. Wooden and stucco fences/walls must be painted or stained.

### **DRIVEWAYS & HARDSCAPING**

Asphalt and plain poured concrete driveways are not appropriate in the historic districts and will not be allowed. Gravel will be permitted on a limited basis. Stamped concrete intended to replicate other materials is generally not approved.

### **MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT**

HVAC units, pool equipment, satellite dishes, antennae, etc., must not be visible from the public right-of-way. HVAC units should be placed to the rear of the property and should be screened appropriately. Electrical meters and conduit should be placed in an unobtrusive location and be painted to match the building. All mechanical equipment visible from the public right-of-way is subject to screening.



## **NEW CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION**

### **NEW BUILDINGS & ADDITIONS**

When designing a new building, or an addition to an historic building, the context of the neighborhood (height, scale, mass, and materials in adjacent buildings and immediate surroundings) should be strongly considered. Any addition to an historic building should be compatible with and have a very low impact on the historic fabric of the original building. The original structure should be discernible from the new addition. An addition must be subordinate to the original structure by being inset from the original structure's footprint or connected with a hyphen or similar architectural approach. City staff welcomes applicants to meet prior to submissions for new construction.

### **SIGNS**

Each sign will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Generally façade and right angle signs will not be permitted on the same façade. Signs shall incorporate materials, colors, and design elements that are appropriate to the surrounding context and the building facade. Plastic letters or sign faces, sand blasted signs, and channel letters shall not be permitted. Illumination of signs is generally not permitted. Sign applications are to be submitted separately from BAR applications. Please refer to the Zoning Ordinance, BAR policy statements, or contact City staff for more information about signs.

### **AWNINGS**

Awnings should fit within the window or door frame over which it covers. Vinyl will not be approved. When permitted, graphics are only permitted on the valance. Generally barrel vaulted awnings will not be approved.

### **DEMOLITION**

Demolition of historic buildings or character defining features is discouraged. Demolition of any building over 50 years of age south of Mt. Pleasant Street must be reviewed by the BAR. Demolition of any structure in the Old and Historic District and the Landmark Overlay District must be reviewed by the BAR. Information on researching the age of a building and demolition submittal requirements are available on the BAR website.



## THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### STANDARDS FOR PRESERVATION

Preservation is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project. However, new exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment. The Standards for Preservation require retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric along with the building's historic form.

- 1 A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.
- 2 The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- 3 Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection and properly documented for future research.
- 4 Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
- 5 Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
- 6 The existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color and texture.
- 7 Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
- 8 Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.



## STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

- 1 A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
- 2 The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- 3 Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
- 4 Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
- 5 Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
- 6 Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
- 7 Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
- 8 Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
- 9 New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- 10 New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

## STANDARDS FOR RESTORATION

Restoration is defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project.

- 1 A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use which interprets the property and its restoration period.
- 2 Materials and features from the restoration period will be retained and preserved. The removal of materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the period will not be undertaken.
- 3 Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate and conserve materials and features from the restoration period will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.
- 4 Materials, features, spaces, and finishes that characterize other historical periods will be documented prior to their alteration or removal.
- 5 Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the restoration period will be preserved.
- 6 Deteriorated features from the restoration period will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials.
- 7 Replacement of missing features from the restoration period will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. A false sense of history will not be created by adding conjectural features, features from other properties, or by combining features that never existed together historically.
- 8 Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
- 9 Archeological resources affected by a project will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
- 10 Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.

## STANDARDS FOR RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction is defined as the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location. The Reconstruction Standards establish a limited framework for recreating a vanished or non-surviving building with new materials, primarily for interpretive purposes.

- 1 Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.
- 2 Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts which are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
- 3 Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.
- 4 Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color and texture.
- 5 A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.
- 6 Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.



## EASEMENTS

### Historic Charleston Foundation

Historic Charleston Foundation (HCF) has easements and covenants on nearly 380 historic properties in Charleston and the Lowcountry. “Covenants” are restrictions on properties that HCF owned at one point, through a neighborhood revitalization initiative such as the Ansonborough Rehabilitation Project, and resold with restrictive covenants on the deed. These are legally binding documents attached to the deed and typically expire after a period of 75 years.

“Easements” are restrictions on properties that are donated to HCF, or another easement holding organization, incentivized by tax deductions on the donor’s federal income tax. The terms of the easements are largely dictated by the IRS requirements and the donor’s wishes, are legally binding, and last in perpetuity. Easements cannot be extinguished, except through a court order. HCF established the nation’s first revolving fund program with the Ansonborough Revitalization Project in the late 1950s. Each property HCF purchased and resold in this neighborhood was protected by restrictive covenants. HCF continues to place restrictive covenants on properties it owns to ensure the protection of the properties long-term. HCF’s easement program started in 1982. The majority of HCF’s easements are exterior, but it also has easements with interior provisions or open space provisions. Unlike the BAR, HCF’s restrictions include the entire parcel, regardless of visibility from the public right-of-way. HCF’s easements also include use provisions and other restrictions specific to individual properties.

HCF performs annual inspections of each property to confirm that they are in compliance with the terms of the easement or covenant. HCF reviews proposed alterations and repairs to each property, again to confirm that all work is in compliance with the terms of the easement or covenant. The goal of this review is to protect the historic character of the property. Like the BAR, HCF follows the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation in its review.

Property owners with easements or covenants are legally bound to the terms of the document. Because both HCF and the BAR staff must review proposed work on these properties, HCF requires easement/covenant holders to obtain HCF approval prior to applying to the City. This sequence streamlines the process for everyone. Sometimes homeowners or contractors do not understand the easement or covenant and bypass HCF. The city has a list of HCF’s easement and covenant properties to trigger HCF review in this situation. Should an applicant obtain BAR approval

without HCF approval, the applicant does not have legal permission to make the change. Likewise, HCF approval does not mean that the applicant can bypass BAR. In the event of a violation to HCF's easement or covenant restrictions, HCF has legal ability to defend and enforce the easement/covenant.

## **Preservation Society of Charleston**

The Preservation Society of Charleston began its easement program in the late 1970s with two initial buildings: 252 Meeting Street and 2 Unity Alley. Over the years, the easement program has grown to over 80 historic properties in Charleston. The easement program works to create an agreement to protect the property with which the easement is held and to create a co-steward relationship between the property owner and the Preservation Society. Easements through the Preservation Society of Charleston can be for the interior or exterior of the property to allow for the protection of historic materials of the structure.

Easements are a federal tax deduction on a certified historic structure for the owner. The deduction is calculated using an appraisal and the owner's federal tax rate. A certified historic structure is a structure that is either individually eligible in the National Register of Historic Places or located in a National Register of Historic Places-listed historic district and certified by the U.S. Department of the Interior as being historically significant to the district.



## HISTORIC STRUCTURE VARIANCE

Historic structures<sup>1</sup> undergoing a Substantial Improvement (SI)<sup>2</sup> in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)<sup>3</sup> are required to comply with all current South Carolina Building Codes and City of Charleston Code of Ordinances related to building flood design requirements. However, a Building Code Board of Appeals variance or a FEMA variance request can be applied for to grant relief from one or more requirements when specific code compliance would result in unnecessary hardship for the building owner.

Please note the board variance determination<sup>4</sup>, for the proposed historic structure's alterations, is the minimum relief necessary from City Code of Ordinances and South Carolina Building Codes that will not preclude the structure's continued designation as a historic structure.

Please contact Building Inspections and Floodplain Management staff to arrange a meeting to discuss and review building flood design requirements related to the proposed project.

- 
- 1 Historic Structure - as defined by City of Charleston [Code of Ordinances §27-103](#) and determined by South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
  - 2 Substantial Improvement (SI) - Any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or other improvement of a structure, in which the 5-year cumulative cost of improvements equals or exceeds 50% of the market value of the structure before the "start of construction" of the proposed improvement(s). This term includes structures that have incurred "substantial damage," regardless of the actual repair work performed.
  - 3 Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) - as designated by FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) adopted by the City of Charleston.
  - 4 Refer to City of Charleston [Code of Ordinance §27-115](#).



## INVENTORY & ARCHITECTURAL RATINGS

### Old & Historic District and Old City Surveys (1973 and 1986)

There are three Architectural Inventories for the City of Charleston. Two were completed in the area between Line Street and the Battery and one was completed between Line Street and Mount Pleasant Street. The first two Architectural Inventories were completed in 1974 and 1986 and document structures in the Old City District and the Old and Historic District. Buildings were rated on a scale of one to four with Category 1 being the most exceptional buildings of Charleston and Category 4 being the contributing buildings. Additional data, beyond the photographs that documented structures have, may be recorded on the Inventory Cards which are located in the Permit Center and are available to the public. Category 1 and Category 2 buildings must go before the Board for any alterations or additions including paint color change, storm windows, additions, accessory buildings, demolition, and hardscaping. Category 3 and Category 4 buildings have more flexibility in the level of review but may still require Board review depending on the scale of the proposed project.

**Category 1: Exceptional** Buildings of the highest architectural design quality, well proportioned, with a sophisticated use of architectural features such as doors, windows, classical orders (or other period designs), chimneys, verandas, massing, materials, textures, refined detail, and craftsmanship. They are elegant and innovative and must be preserved and retained in situ at all costs.

**Category 2: Excellent** High style regional architecture—fine “Charleston Style”—well designed and proportioned, with good detail. These are spirited, dignified, frequently innovative, rare, and always attractive and interesting. Of irreplaceable importance, to be preserved in situ at all costs.

**Category 3: Significant** Good architectural quality of the vernacular mode. Less sophisticated and refined than “Excellent.” Appealing, curious and interesting. To be retained and protected.

**Category 4: Contributory** Buildings of architectural value without which the character of those buildings rated in groups 1-3 would be lessened. To be preserved and retained.

The [1974 and 1986 Architectural Inventories](#) can be found on the City of Charleston BAR website. The Inventories also identify structures that have easements with the Preservation Society of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation. Documentation from these organizations is required for the BAR review process.

## Upper Peninsula Survey (2004)

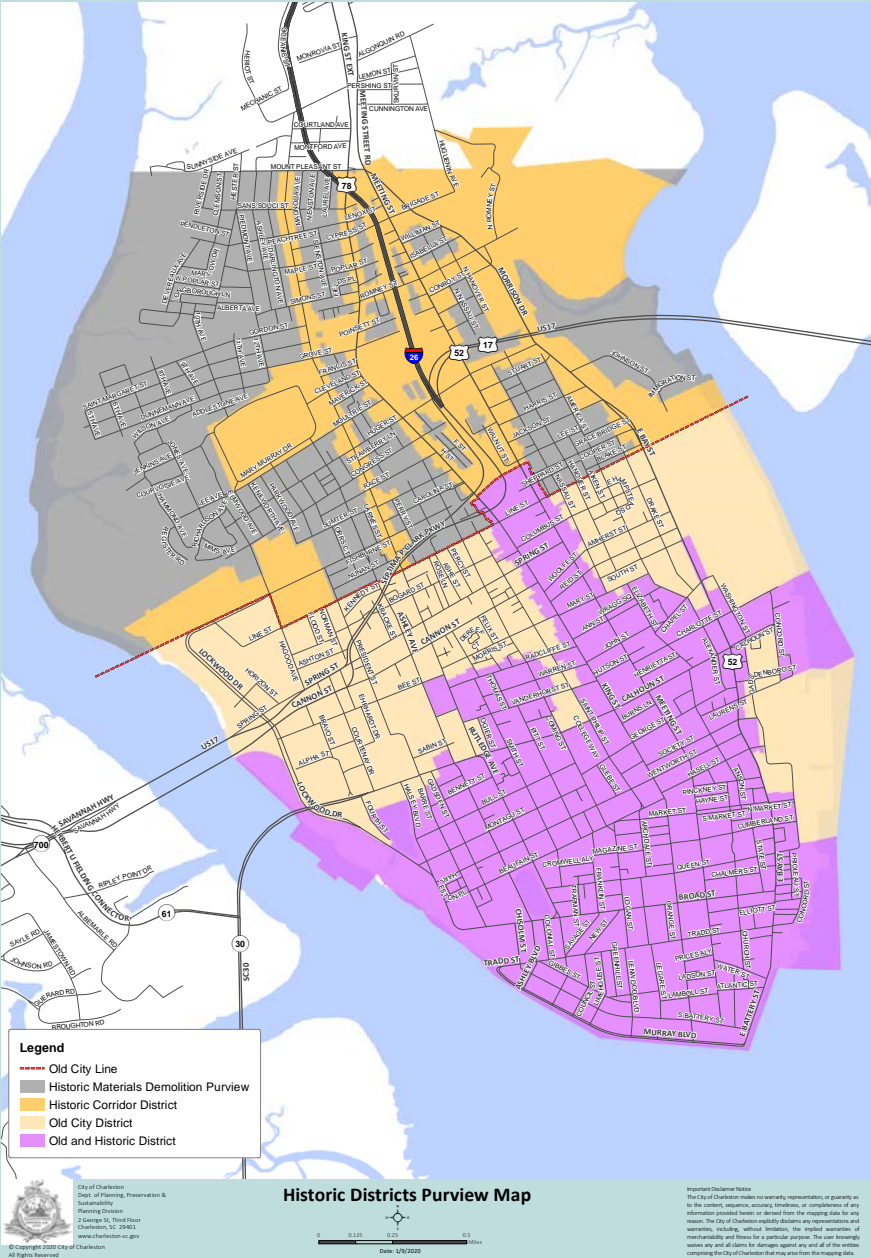
The third Architectural Inventory is the Historic Architectural Resource Survey of the Upper Peninsula. This area, north of Line Street and south of Mount Pleasant Street, is under the purview of the BAR as it is the Historic Materials Demolition Purview Area. The survey was completed in 2004 and collected data on over 2,000 properties. Information including the age of construction, building typology, building materials, National Register eligibility, and location are all listed within the survey. In 2022, the BAR-L and BAR-S adopted the Policy Statement for the Historic Materials Demolition Purview Area. This policy statement utilizes these Architectural Ratings of buildings along with their location, inside or outside of a National Register District, to allow for flexibility in repairs and replacement of features on these historic structures. The [policy statement](#) and the [2004 Architectural Inventory](#) are available on the City of Charleston website.

**Category 1: Exceptional** Buildings of transcendent significance, i.e., these resources would be important anywhere.

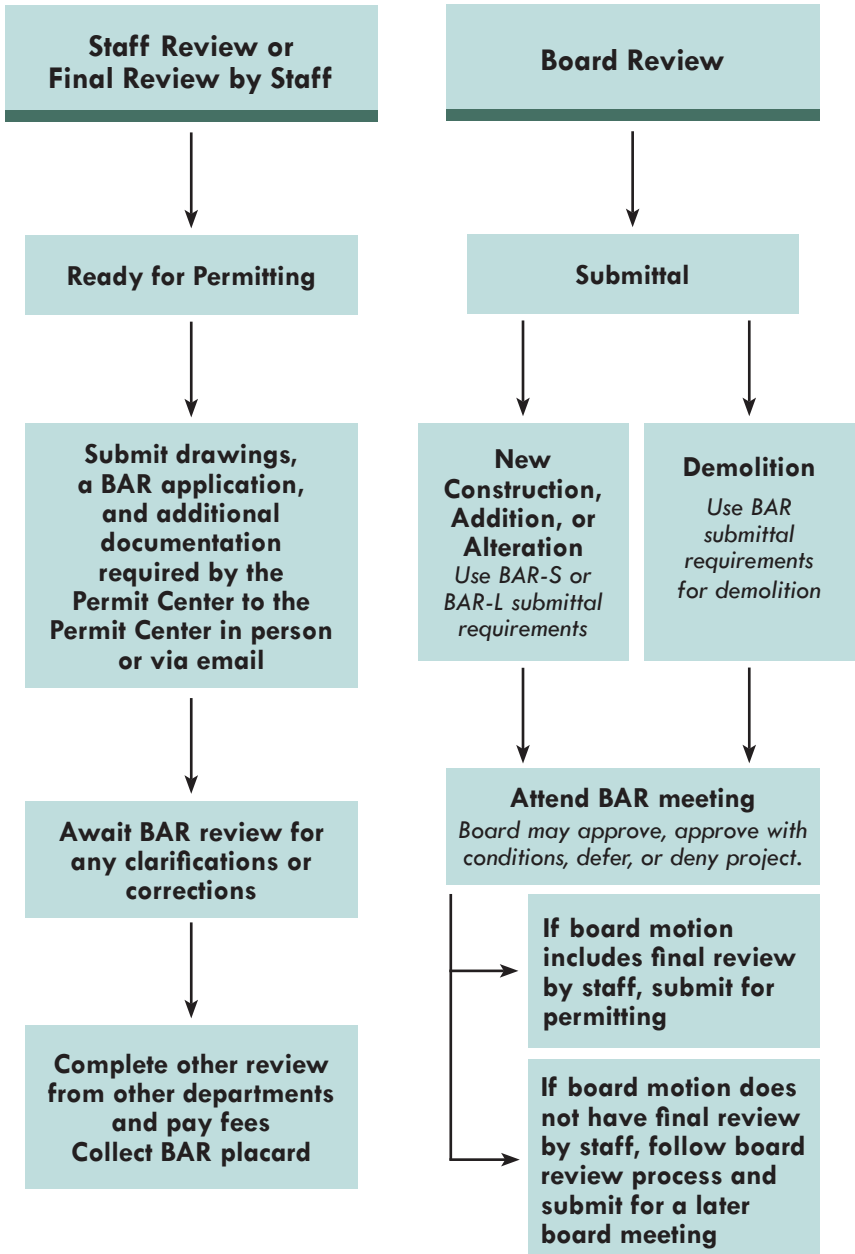
**Category 2: Excellent** Resources of high significance, but not transcendent importance, or to buildings that once were transcendent but have some changes to their original fabric. Ratings of 2- or higher were only given to resources that are listed in or individually eligible for the NRHP or contributing to a listed or eligible NRHP district.

**Category 3: Significant** Resources that might have a high level of integrity but lack a high level of architectural significance. A rating of 3 might also be given to a resource that has some architectural significance but has a low level of integrity.

**Category 4: Contributory** Resources that contribute positively to the character of its surroundings. These resources are heavily altered from their original form and materials. Resources considered not eligible for the NRHP were given ratings of 3 or below. Also, a resource that contributed to a listed or eligible NRHP district could be given a rating of 4 or lower if it had multiple alterations.



# **B**OARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW PROCESS



## DOES MY PROJECT NEED BAR APPROVAL?

### STEP 1:

#### DETERMINE TYPE OF WORK INVOLVED

### STEP 2:

#### IDENTIFY PROPERTY LOCATION

#### NEW CONSTRUCTION

Old and Historic District	Old City District	Historic Corridor District	Historic Materials Demolition Purview	Landmark Overlay
Yes, if visible from a public right-of-way <sup>8</sup>	Yes, if visible from a public right-of-way	Yes, if visible from a public right-of-way	No	Yes, whether visible from a public right-of-way or not

#### EXTERIOR REPAIRS & ALTERATIONS

Old and Historic District	Old City District	Historic Corridor District	Historic Materials Demolition Purview	Landmark Overlay
Yes, if visible from a public right-of-way <sup>8</sup>	Only if the structure is at least 100 years old, or rated <sup>6</sup> , or previously reviewed by BAR, and visible from a public right-of-way	Only for commercial and 8+ unit multi-family residential properties and visible if from a public right-of-way	Only when removing a substantial portion of elements or features that define its historic architectural character, the loss of which would compromise the structure's architectural character <sup>7</sup> and visible from a public right-of-way	Yes, whether visible from a public right-of-way or not

#### SIGNAGE

Old and Historic District	Old City District	Historic Corridor District	Historic Materials Demolition Purview	Landmark Overlay
Yes, if visible from a public right-of-way	Only if the structure is at least 100 years old, or rated <sup>6</sup> , or previously reviewed by BAR, and visible from a public right-of-way	Only for commercial and 8+ unit multi-family residential properties or previously reviewed by BAR and visible from a public right-of-way	NA	NA

## DEMOLITION: WHOLE BUILDING

Old and Historic District	Old City District	Historic Corridor District	Historic Materials Demolition Purview	Landmark Overlay
Yes, if visible from a public right-of-way	Only if the structure is at least 50 years old, or rated <sup>6</sup> , or previously reviewed by BAR, and visible from a public right-of-way	Only if the structure is at least 50 years old or rated <sup>6</sup> and visible from a public right-of-way	Only if the structure is at least 50 years old and visible from a public right-of-way	Yes, whether visible from a public right-of-way or not

## DEMOLITION: PARTIAL

Old and Historic District	Old City District	Historic Corridor District	Historic Materials Demolition Purview	Landmark Overlay
Yes, if visible from a public right-of-way	Only if the structure is at least 50 years old, or rated <sup>6</sup> , or previously reviewed by BAR, and visible from a public right-of-way	Only if the structure is at least 50 years old, or rated <sup>6</sup> , or previously reviewed by BAR, and visible from a public right-of-way	Only if the structure is at least 50 years old, or previously reviewed by BAR/DRB, and visible from a public right-of-way	Yes, whether visible from a public right-of-way or not

### General Notes

1. See [Zoning Ordinance](#) Sections including but not limited to 54-230 thru 54-248, 54-305 thru 54-308, 54-350, 54-402, 54-226 and Appendix D for BAR purview and review standards.
2. Staff shall determine visibility from a public right-of-way.
3. Staff may review repairs and/or in-kind replacements, some signage, painting, awnings (except cat. 1 & 2 structures), storm windows (except cat. 1 & 2), mechanical units (except cat. 1 & 2), landscape elements (except cat. 1 & 2), rear additions and accessory not visible or minimally visible from a public right-of-way (except cat. 1 & 2), and demolitions not meeting the above criteria (except cat. 1 & 2). All other applications must be made to the Board including noted category 1 & 2 exceptions. Staff may refer any application to the Board. See BAR Policy Statements.
4. Staff reserves the right to make final determination of BAR purview.
5. In Old City Height Districts where additional height may be awarded on the basis of architectural merit and context, if the property is not subject to the jurisdiction of the BAR, the owner requesting the additional height must submit the plans to the BAR for review and approval. Section 54-306(14).

### Footnotes

6. Consult BAR staff for building rating (Architectural Inventory categories 1, 2, 3 & 4).
7. Consult BAR staff for determination per Section 54-231(d).
8. Non-conforming use extension requests requiring special exception approval by BZA-Z for exterior alterations to structures in the Old & Historic District must be approved by the BAR regardless of whether said alterations are visible from a public right-of-way.

## RESOURCES

### PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

**Historic Charleston Foundation**

40 East Bay Street  
Charleston, SC 29401  
[www.historiccharleston.org](http://www.historiccharleston.org)  
843-723-1623

**Preservation Society of Charleston**

147 King Street  
Charleston, SC 29401  
[www.preservationsociety.org](http://www.preservationsociety.org)  
843-722-4630

**National Trust for Historic Preservation**

2600 Virginia Avenue NW, Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20037  
[www.savingplaces.org](http://www.savingplaces.org)  
202-588-6000

### EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**American College of the Building Arts**

649 Meeting Street  
Charleston, SC 29403  
[www.acba.edu](http://www.acba.edu)  
843-577-5245

**College of Charleston Center for Historic Preservation**

12 Bull Street  
Charleston, SC 29401  
<https://hpcenter.cofc.edu>  
843-953-3888

**Clemson Design Center Charleston**

701 East Bay Street, Suite 202  
Charleston, SC 29403  
[www.clemson.edu](http://www.clemson.edu)  
843-723-1747

### LOCAL RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

**Charleston County Library**

South Carolina History Room  
68 Calhoun Street  
[www.ccpl.org](http://www.ccpl.org)  
843-805-6930

**Charleston County Register of Deeds**

101 Meeting Street  
[www.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.charlestoncounty.org)  
843-958-4800

**Charleston Library Society**

164 King Street  
[www.charlestonlibrarysociety.org](http://www.charlestonlibrarysociety.org)  
843-723-9912

**City of Charleston Records Management Division**

2 George Street  
[www.charleston-sc.gov](http://www.charleston-sc.gov)  
843-724-7302

**Gibbes Museum of Art**

135 Meeting Street  
[www.gibbesmuseum.org](http://www.gibbesmuseum.org)  
843-722-2706

**International African American Museum**

14 Wharfside Street  
<https://iaamuseum.org>  
843-872-5352

**South Carolina Historical Society**

Archives: Addlestone Library,  
205 Calhoun Street  
Museum: 100 Meeting Street  
[www.schistory.org](http://www.schistory.org)  
843-723-3225

**The Avery Research Center for African American History & Culture**

125 Bull Street  
<https://avery.cofc.edu>  
843-953-7608

# RESOURCES

## LOCAL RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

**The Charleston Museum**  
360 Meeting Street  
[www.charlestonmuseum.org](http://www.charlestonmuseum.org)  
843-722-2996

**The Post and Courier**  
148 Williman Street  
[www.postandcourier.com](http://www.postandcourier.com)  
843-577-7111

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Advisory Council on Historic Preservation** | [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)
- **American Institute of Architects Charleston** | [www.aiacharleston.org](http://www.aiacharleston.org)
- **Association for Preservation Technology** | [www.apti.org](http://www.apti.org)
- **City of Charleston BAR** | [www.charleston-sc.gov/bar](http://www.charleston-sc.gov/bar)
- **Lowcountry Digital Library** | <https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu>
- **Lowcountry Digital History Initiative** | <https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu>
- **Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts** | [www.mesda.org](http://www.mesda.org)
- **National Center for Preservation Technology and Training** | [www.nps.gov/subjects/ncptt/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/ncptt/index.htm)
- **National Park Service Historic Preservation** | [www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/index.htm)
- **National Park Service Preservation Briefs** | [www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-briefs.htm](http://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-briefs.htm)
- **National Park Service Technical Preservation Services** | [www.nps.gov/tps/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/tps/index.htm)
- **National Register of Historic Places** | [www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm)
- **National Trust for Historic Preservation** | [www.savingplaces.org](http://www.savingplaces.org)
- **PreserveNet** | [www.preservenet.org](http://www.preservenet.org)
- **South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office** | <https://scdah.sc.gov/historic-preservation>
- **South Carolina Department of Archives and History** | <https://scdah.sc.gov>



*City of*  
*Charleston*

**PLANNING, PRESERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY**