



# VISION | COMMUNITY | HERITAGE

*A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*



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## Letter from the Mayor

Historic preservation is as much about our future as it is about our past. The stewardship embodied in preserving cities requires us to understand the past and learn from it. The knowledge gained can propel us into the future, for the best sort of progress builds upon successful history.

The Charleston Preservation Plan presents a vision based on our city's history. The Plan reexamines the city's architectural past, explores its present, and lays out comprehensive guidelines to help protect its heritage. Importantly, the Plan addresses historic preservation in the contemporary context of growth patterns and economic development, sustainability and natural resources conservation. These are tough issues that will continue to impact quality of life for future generations of residents and visitors who care about Charleston.

As mayor, I appreciate the collaborative effort by preservationists and professionals from all across government and beyond. This Plan also reflects the input of residents and community organizations from all parts of Charleston, and I am grateful for their interest and participation. These varied stakeholders demonstrate expertise but also heart and soul. I believe the Plan can serve our city well, and I urge Charlestonians to familiarize themselves with it.

As a Charleston native, I am proud of how deeply our citizens treasure the city's diverse historic resources. Charleston is the freedman's cottage and McLeod Plantation, the urbanity of the Lower Peninsula and the rural landscapes of Johns Island. The city is our neighborhoods, industrial lands, and the public realm, and the Plan explores its multiple challenges, in all their complexity and promise.

As a citizen, I am driven by a sense of urgency because the future is not a distant place. The decisions we make now will shape the city for years to come. Charleston, now in its fifth century, deserves our commitment to progress that is built upon the city's remarkable heritage. This Plan offers that promise.

**Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.**

*City of Charleston*

*December 2007*

## Letter from Historic Charleston Foundation

In 1974, Charleston set a national standard with the development of its ground-breaking Historic Preservation Plan. Historic Charleston Foundation played a seminal role in the development of that plan, when the preservation issues facing Charleston were a dying urban core in the face of rising suburbanization and strip malls, and areas within the historic district were blighted with derelict properties and an unkempt, littered waterfront. Three key achievements came out of this plan: a building-by-building inventory south of the Crosstown; vital recommendations for a revised height ordinance; and a strengthening of the Board of Architectural Review's regulatory authority.

Charleston in 2007 is a very different place from what it was in 1974. Thirty-four years ago Charlestonians were dealing with urban blight and a decaying downtown; today we are dealing with the threat of unchecked growth destroying those things that are unique and special about our historic community.

In the early spring of 2006, members of Historic Charleston Foundation's Community Planning Committee began discussing a growing concern over the onslaught of large development projects in our community coming in rapid-fire succession. Furthermore, the preservation community was being brought

into the planning of these projects at a relatively late stage of the process. The large number and size of the projects prompted us to take a hard, proactive look at the major preservation issues facing Charleston. The Foundation's trustees and staff decided that it was time for Charlestonians to assess the situation and potential direction for the future -- a future not limited to growth merely within the historic peninsular city, but beyond in areas such as Johns and James Islands, the Neck, Daniel Island and Cainhoy, and the historic Hwy. 61 corridor. Clearly, HCF trustees and staff felt, it is time for a new plan that can take us into the 21st century.

2007 marked the 60th anniversary of the founding of Historic Charleston Foundation, an organization that has taken the philosophy of preservation to a new level in this country: from that of preserving individual buildings to preserving the living fabric of historic neighborhoods and communities. What better way to celebrate HCF's many accomplishments over the past 60 years than with a gift to the city, that of a new Preservation Plan? And so HCF pledged its financial support to co-sponsor with the city of Charleston the development of a new plan, herein presented.

This plan is the people's plan. It was developed during numerous workshops held over the past year throughout the Lowcountry, with thousands of public comments and the oversight of a diversely represented Advisory Committee. Now the challenge belongs to all of us, the public and private sectors, working together to implement this plan. While Charleston is unique, the prevailing issues here are not so different from those of other historic communities throughout the country. Still, the solutions must be sensitive to and informed by the specific place where they are to be implemented. We are confident that with this plan in place, we can achieve that goal.

**Katharine S. Robinson, Executive Director**

*Historic Charleston Foundation*

*December 2007*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





*“...I who have known  
Her tenderness, her courage, and her pity,  
Have felt her forces mould me, mind and bone,  
Life after life, up from her first beginning.  
How can I think of her in wood and stone!...”*

*- DuBose Heyward, 1922*

Great cities have one common element: their differences. In this era of globalization, a new building may be designed in New York, located in Asia, and reference the shape of a structure in Europe. What distinguishes a great city is its singular history, expressed by multiple generations of residents in its architecture and development patterns. It is these cities, which successfully unite the historic and the contemporary, that are recognized as beautiful and lively places to live, work, and visit.

This Preservation Plan invokes a vision for Charleston based on the rich history of its buildings and people. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a direction for Charleston—renowned as a great historic city on the same world stage as Prague, Kyoto, and Edinburgh—to continue leading the way in protecting its built heritage and integrating a preservation ethos into everyday life.

Preservation is an everyday matter, especially in Charleston. Synonymous for many with quality of life, preservation encompasses far more than bricks and mortar. It is a social, economic, and cultural endeavor. Residents have affirmed this overlap of issues by calling for this Plan to tackle a vast sweep of concerns about transportation and traffic, affordable housing, open space, sustainability, and growth patterns. While preservation planning cannot single-handedly address these issues, it provides valuable input to these broader objectives.



**1.1** *More than 500 Charlestonians participated in an extensive public process to help shape the plan.*

Twenty-first-century preservation reflects this complexity in its challenges, rewards, and stakeholders. The Plan brings together a broad spectrum of planning tools, citizen input, multidisciplinary expertise, and related ideas from cities around the country and the world. A concerted effort was made to involve Charlestonians with diverse backgrounds and concerns, and more than five hundred residents participated in community meetings and focus groups (*Figure 1.1*).

Thus, the Plan comes from many voices: the voices of Charleston. The vision presented here fuses the community's thoughts and ideas with extensive policy research. Here is a plan specifically shaped to Charleston, to the incredible wealth of historic resources and the central role preservation has played. Its relevance is heightened by continuing growth in Charleston and the region: in 2000 the city's population was 106,000, and forecasts predict a 51 percent increase, to 160,000 residents, by 2015.

This is not a blueprint that identifies which buildings to preserve. Rather, it is a broadly focused policy road map that outlines how the city can continue to protect and add to its layers of built history for new generations. The Charleston Vision frames the Plan, while 600 policy recommendations advocate specific guidelines, identify opportunities, and suggest actions. The Plan lays out new ideas as well as those with a history of success.

Charleston is home to an enviable wealth of historic resources, and preservation has played—and must continue to play—a central role in its ongoing stewardship. This Preservation Plan encourages forward-thinking preservation by all Charlestonians—not only those with historic houses, but all individuals who care about the built and natural environments that shape life in Charleston.

## Stewardship Principles

With the current development boom, it is essential to articulate principles aimed at safeguarding Charleston's historic resources. Modern architecture and building practices differ dramatically from their historical counterparts. Without thoughtful guidelines, even well-intentioned new construction may be hard-pressed to contribute to the city's context.

The stewardship principles value heritage for its contribution to a relevant, lively future. Education and incentives are discussed as the basis for a more pluralistic practice of preservation, so that more people and resources can be engaged in protecting the community's historic resources. The Plan suggests updates to the City's Preservation Ordinance to reflect contemporary concepts of preservation. Other sections address the importance of historic preservation as a local economic engine and explore how the design review process can be streamlined.

### More Resources, More Protection

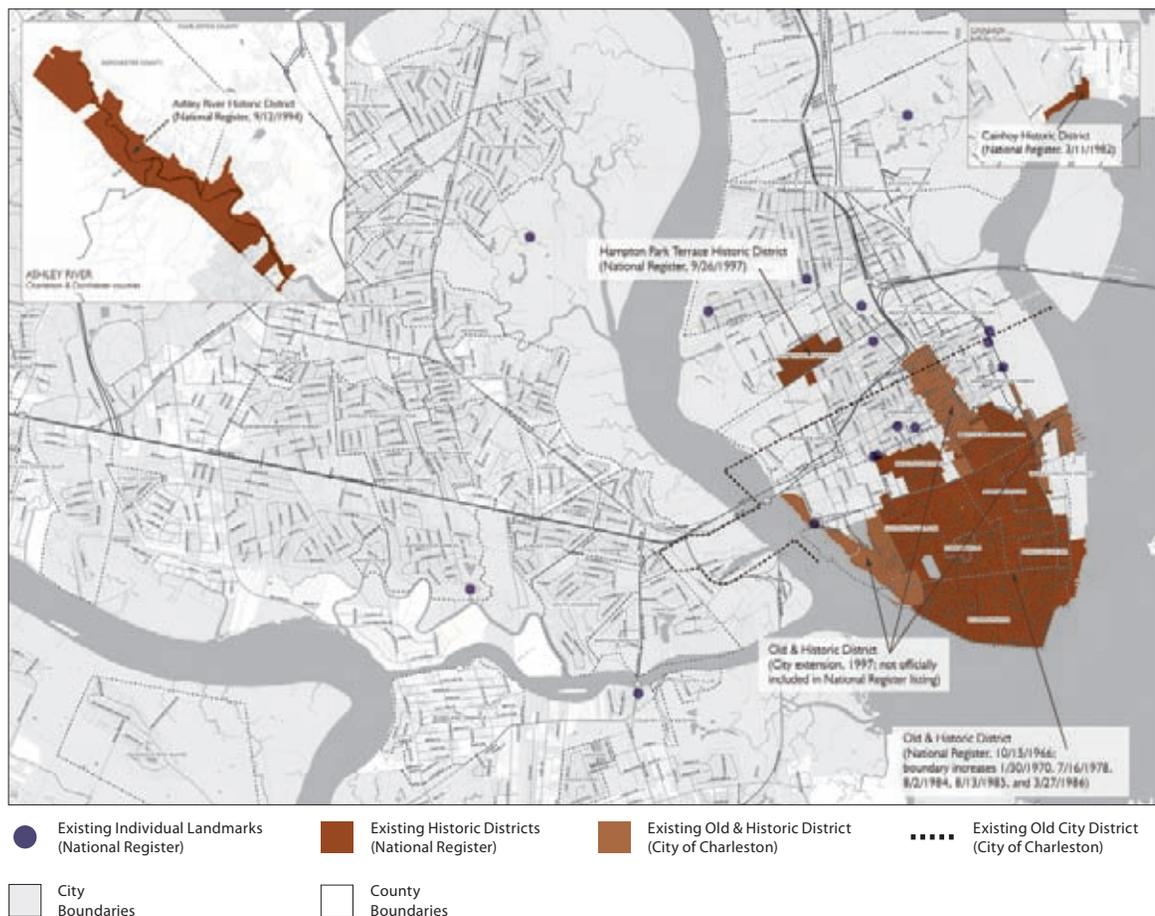
Although outstanding individual buildings sparkle, it is the volume, diversity, and quality of historic resources that make Charleston one of the world's great historic cities. Because many areas that contribute to its character currently lie outside historic districts, expanded protection and financial resources for preservation are vital as those areas face development

*This Preservation Plan encourages forward-thinking preservation by all Charlestonians... who care about the city.*

pressures. The Design Review section outlines a program for expanding the Old and Historic District, increasing project review south of Mt. Pleasant Street, and putting all National Register Historic Districts under the jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR), in addition to designating conservation districts (Figure 1.2). The Incentives for Preservation section describes specific preservation tools, such as the Bailey Bill and Transfer Development Rights (TDRs), that can benefit historic properties and their owners. The Interiors section affirms that historic interiors, as irreplaceable records of outstanding craftsmanship and materials, should be protected through easements whenever possible.

### Vision for the Future

The ten statements in the Charleston Vision constitute the heart of this Plan and of future policies and plans. They seek to reinforce historical development patterns and existing construction quality through continuing stewardship of existing resources and standards for new development. The conviction that local heritage is the best foundation for growth begins with the Plan's first vision statement—"Historic preservation is an integral part of Charleston's history and will continue to inspire the City's vision and its approach to planning and development"—and is reinforced throughout the Plan.



1.2 Existing historic districts will need to change to include resources throughout the city.

## Charleston Vision

1. Historic preservation is an integral part of Charleston's history and will continue to inspire the City's vision and its approach to planning and development.
2. Charleston will sustain its rich and dynamic cultural heritage by retaining its long-standing communities. Housing affordability is a crucial part of this effort.
3. Charleston will look like Charleston, with recognition that the city's eras of development each have a distinct and valuable character, which collectively represent the continuity of its rich history.
4. The peninsula will continue to grow as a dense and diverse urban community consistent with its historic development patterns.
5. The natural landscapes in Charleston are important parts of the city's cultural and environmental heritage. These landscapes will be protected with planning and conservation tools.
6. Suburban neighborhoods are the potential historic resources of the future. They will be treated accordingly, with the goal of reducing sprawl through development consistent with traditional patterns.
7. Dense urban architecture and infill development will be encouraged where infrastructure supports such development. Publicly accessible open space is central to successful development.
8. Charleston's historic architecture sets a high and challenging standard. This tradition of high-quality architecture and building materials will be required in all projects in the city.
9. Charleston's policies will encourage a balance of diverse, appropriate, and compatible uses to make it a truly living city with continuing neighborhood vitality and livability.
10. Charleston will be a responsible steward of its environment, both built and natural: environmental and cultural sustainability will be considered in planning decisions that affect development.

## Common Design Principles

While a well-articulated vision is necessary to guide the city, it must be translated into building-by-building principles. This is the role of the urban design principles, which render the sweeping statements of the Charleston Vision into tangible guidelines that residents, developers, and City staff can work from when they look at and talk about buildings and their contexts.

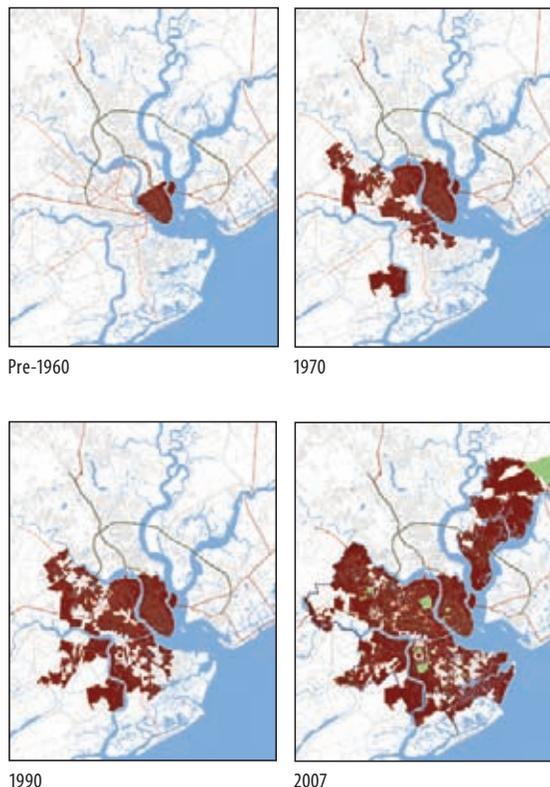
There are no easy answers to the question of appropriate architectural styles for Charleston. This issue requires ongoing community dialogue. The buildings that often prompt public controversy—large structures with little historical or stylistic precedent in Charleston—are especially important to assess. The Plan recommends that a New Charleston typology, focused on integrating large new buildings into the existing context, be developed.

*In the thirty years since 1974, the population has grown to nearly 120,000 and land area has increased fivefold to more than 100 square miles.*

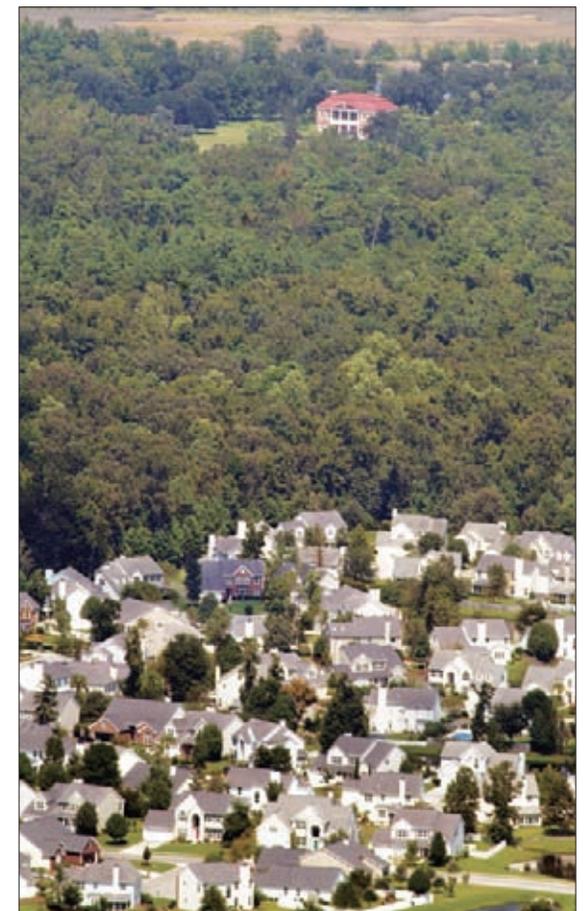
### Charleston's Expanding Horizon

The Charleston of today is very different from what it was in 1931 and 1974, when the original Preservation Ordinance and the Historic Preservation Plan made national history. Between 1931 and 1974, Charleston's population rose from 62,000 to 67,000, and land area grew from 6 square miles to 18 square miles. In the more than thirty years since 1974, the population has grown to nearly 120,000, and land area has increased fivefold to more than 100 square miles (*Figure 1.3*).

This growth, unprecedented in Charleston's history and projected to continue, requires visionary thinking to ensure that it builds upon past success. An influx of interest and financial wherewithal has opened the door to growth on an unprecedented scale. With growth comes great opportunity to reinforce and add to the Charleston landscapes. While standards for guiding growth are set forth in Stewardship Principles, the sections within Charleston's Expanding Horizon outline practical steps across transportation, infrastructure, and institutional planning to handle that growth.



1.3 Charleston's growth, 1960–present



1.4 Development near Drayton Hall



**1.5** *Wagener Terrace, in the Upper Peninsula, is a cohesive twentieth-century neighborhood.*

### Smarter Growth

The city limits encompass a rare mix of dense urban fabric, older suburbs, industrial brownfields, rural land, and recent development. The large lots of new suburbs, which relax historically tight development patterns, threaten the rural landscapes that embody a way of life. With preservation of place taken as a given, the Growth and Sprawl section presents ways to lessen the negative impacts of existing suburban development and promote smart planning for future growth (*Figure 1.4*).

### Institutions and Preservation

Several large institutions, including colleges and the Port, oversee a number of historic resources and indirectly influence many more through their actions. Effective integration of large institutional buildings that border historic neighborhoods should be explored to help define campus boundaries and positively reinforce neighborhood edges.

### Diversity of Place

A drive or stroll through the city reveals a variety of historic resources, from the very urban to the very rural: gracious homes and intimate alleys south of Broad Street, cohesive neighborhoods along Rutledge Avenue, residential neighborhoods and spreading oaks west of the Ashley River and on James Island, the expansive vistas on Johns Island, Cainho's unpaved lanes. These vastly different landscapes maintain a record of the Charleston area's growth and development, from the late seventeenth-century street grid through modern building construction in progress. These diverse, well-preserved landscapes and the histories they recall elevate Charleston from a small town to a great historic city.

It is this diversity of place that makes preservation planning so complicated. Neighborhoods cannot be lumped together in planning efforts. Recognizing this, the City of Charleston is moving toward neighborhood-based planning. This Plan reinforces that shift by evaluating historic resources and issues neighborhood by neighborhood. Dedication to maintaining each area's unique character is reflected in Neighborhoods, which explores the history, issues, and opportunities present in each area of the city.

### To Each Place Its Own

Building type and style, lot size, streets, landscaping—each neighborhood is composed of many factors that make it an interesting, well-rounded place. Wagener Terrace is noted for its cohesive architectural feel, but this element combines with generous front lawns, similar building placement on lots, gables and porches, doors set into the front façade, and street trees to make it a distinct neighborhood. The proposed Area Character Appraisals, or ACAs, study a particular neighborhood, then articulate the elements that contribute to neighborhood character. ACAs will be used as a planning and design review tool to ensure that new development reinforces the existing context (*Figure 1.5*).

*“Only a preservation effort that maintains the vibrancy and diversity of a community as well as its built heritage can truly succeed.”*

## New Paths for Preservation

In 1931, Charlestonians rallied around individual buildings. By 1974, the focus was on renewing historic neighborhoods. Today, this Plan envisions stewardship of Charleston’s heritage as groundwork for the entire city’s growth. This vision requires preservation to engage multiple disciplines, pioneer new collaborative efforts, and embrace fresh subjects and ideas.

### Archaeology

Archaeology has the potential to reveal artifacts from precolonial days to the present, uncovering details of how people lived. The Mayor’s Walled City Task Force recognized resources in the oldest part of the city, but archaeologically significant areas throughout Charleston should be protected. An Archaeology Ordinance should be passed before the advent of major developments that might otherwise permanently damage or obscure below-ground resources.

### Sustainability

Preservation has long practiced “the three R’s” of the environmental movement—reduce, reuse, and recycle. Preservation reduces the amount of natural resources and land used in constructing new buildings, encourages reuse of structures and materials to make the most

of embodied energy, and recycles buildings and valuable community fabric. This Plan recommends linking efforts of the environmental and preservation movements and calls for the appointment of a sustainability coordinator to work with the City, nonprofits, and the preservation community.

### Preservation of Community

“Only a preservation effort that maintains the vibrancy and diversity of a community as well as its built heritage can truly succeed.” Thus the Housing Affordability section opens. Because preservation has lasting effects on quality of life, property values, and demographics, community engagement is critical in building support for preservation as a democratic, pluralistic movement.

Charleston should continue to integrate historic preservation and community development by hiring a development review/affordable housing liaison and exploring cost-efficient, contextually sensitive designs for affordable housing. Funding should be secured to create more affordable housing in historic buildings and new developments, zoning should require new residential developments to include a percentage of affordable housing units, and historic housing should be retained as owner-occupied and affordable rental units (*Figure 1.6*).



**1.6** *Enston Homes, constructed “to make old age comfortable” for elderly Charlestonians, continues to provide affordable housing today.*

### Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

Charleston’s wealth of historic resources and its remarkable history of experiencing—and recovering from—disasters make disaster preparedness and recovery a necessary component of this Preservation Plan. An educated, involved public is essential to effective preparation for and response to disasters. A Preservation Response Network (PRN) of concerned agencies and organizations can formalize response efforts by developing and implementing a Heritage Disaster Management Plan.



1.7 Harleston Village, in the Lower Peninsula



1.8 Upper King Street, in the Mid-Peninsula



1.9 Moe's Crosstown Tavern, in the Upper Peninsula's North Central neighborhood

## Neighborhoods

This city's dynamic history is communicated by its neighborhoods and landscapes, which often differ dramatically but collectively comprise the place that is Charleston. It is no surprise, then, that stewardship of these neighborhoods and landscapes presents distinctly different challenges and opportunities. From the East Side to Riverland Terrace, Hampton Park Terrace to Johns Island, historic suburbs in West Ashley to Cainhoy Village, this Plan offers a path for each that seeks to balance growth and preservation.

While Area Character Appraisals (ACAs) and conservation districts identify the individual importance of different parts of the city, the sections in Neighborhoods explore them more fully, focusing on issues and opportunities specific to each area.

### Lower Peninsula

Planning for the Lower Peninsula requires balancing historic preservation and development pressures; old buildings and new ones; and the multiple needs of residents, institutions, and visitors. As the traditional geographic nexus of preservation in Charleston, this area has long been the center of revitalizing preservation efforts, and its continuing protection must remain a top priority. The area's tight-knit historical fabric cannot accommo-

date much change, and new buildings must fit into the established context in the few remaining development opportunities. Union Pier and Concord Park are notable exceptions as large mixed-use redevelopment projects with the potential to spark the development of a uniquely Charleston urban architecture—the New Charleston typology. Elsewhere, infill development must respect the context of this most historically important district (*Figure 1.7*).

In part because of successful historic preservation in this area, housing affordability has decreased. Increasing the supply of housing that is affordable to a range of Charlestonians should be included in preservation, planning, and nonprofit efforts, with innovative programs and new sources of funding explored. Improved public access to the riverfront would benefit residents, downtown employees, and visitors.

### Mid-Peninsula

The Mid-Peninsula combines the historic architecture of the Lower Peninsula with exciting opportunities for redevelopment that can strengthen the existing community character and benefit current residents. More outreach and responsiveness to community concerns are needed to connect historic preservation with community rewards, as past preservation efforts have sometimes lacked local support. Directing new development in this

area while maintaining its historic value, diversity, mix of uses, and affordability should be a priority. As in the Lower Peninsula, contextual, high-quality design should be required in all new developments (*Figure 1.8*).

The area is currently under the jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and classified as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Expanding the Charleston National Register Historic District would enable use of federal and state tax credits for rehabilitation projects. Combined with steps to retain housing affordability and increase homeownership, these incentives could greatly benefit current long-term residents.

### Upper Peninsula

Upper Peninsula neighborhoods have remained remarkably cohesive since their development in the early twentieth century. Hampton Park Terrace has been recognized as a National Register Historic District, but neither it nor other area neighborhoods receive BAR oversight of new construction or alterations. This Plan recommends putting all National Register Historic Districts and newly created conservation districts under BAR jurisdiction, with BAR review eventually extended over the entire Upper Peninsula (*Figure 1.9*).



1.10 *Rosemont, in the Neck*



1.12 *James Island's Riverland Terrace neighborhood*



1.11 *Byrnes Downs, in West Ashley*



1.13 *Johns Island*

Efforts to strengthen major north-south corridors and east-west axes should protect existing neighborhoods and the Upper Peninsula's diverse commercial and civic uses. Infrastructure improvements should include pedestrian pathways and cyclist routes. Planned new developments present the opportunity to develop a New Charleston typology for large-scale buildings, with special attention paid to contextual design at the edges of residential neighborhoods.

### **The Neck**

A historic home to heavy industry, the Neck is poised for transformation by extensive mixed-use developments. These new developments, if sensitively designed, could help propel the New Charleston typology into architecture that belongs to Charleston as much as the single house.

It is important to protect compact existing residential neighborhoods as these large new developments are planned and built. Zoning changes, sensitively designed edges of development, and carefully planned new infrastructure will help the historic workers' communities in the Neck retain their character and physical form. Inclusionary zoning would allow longtime residents, 40 percent of whom live below the poverty line, to stay in the area (*Figure 1.10*).

### **West Ashley**

Significant growth here underscores the need for a West Ashley Comprehensive Plan jointly developed by the City and County of Charleston. Generic new developments also highlight the need to protect the character of historic inner-ring suburbs through ACAs and conservation districts. These neighborhoods, most developed between 1924 and 1950, show how Charleston responded to the innovations and events of the early to mid-twentieth century.

West Ashley's older history as an agricultural area should also be protected. The remaining historic plantations and rural land here should be protected through conservation easements and, less directly, smart growth practices that reduce the land area used by new developments (*Figure 1.11*).

### **James Island**

On rapidly growing James Island, growth must be directed wisely and sprawl contained. Conservation easements and smart growth tools will help preserve the remaining open space on James Island. Creating pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure—both here and in West Ashley—is a necessary step toward improving neighborhood livability.

A variety of historic resources, ranging from 1860s earthworks to twentieth-century Riverland Terrace, should be recognized and preserved. McLeod Plantation, a major historic resource, should be the focus of a management plan developed with the American College of the Building Arts, Historic Charleston Foundation, and the City of Charleston (*Figure 1.12*).

### **Johns Island**

This relatively undeveloped area stands as an anomaly in Charleston's booming building climate. Its rural landscapes are invaluable cultural, historical, and environmental resources. To protect them, the Urban Growth Boundary must be maintained, and proposed large transportation and development projects should be thoroughly evaluated for their impacts on the land, residents, and ecology. City and County planning, land use, and zoning policies should be coordinated.

As development proposals on Johns Island increase, long-term communities and unrecognized historic resources must be protected. Heirs' property, or land that has been divided between family members through succession, is closely tied to Johns Island's long-standing African American community and rural development patterns. Cemeteries and other archaeological resources on the island should be recorded and preserved, along with rural roads and scenic corridors (*Figure 1.13*).

### Cainhoy

Cainhoy illustrates the need for regional planning. Located on the edge of booming Daniel Island in Berkeley County, new development encroaches on Cainhoy's historic resources. Historic village development patterns should be encouraged through low-density zoning and maintenance of rural roads.

The historic settlement should be protected through BAR review, both as a National Register Historic District and the proposed Cainhoy character area conservation district. As on Johns Island, heirs' property issues should be resolved and archaeological resources protected (*Figure 1.14*).



1.14 Cainhoy Village store

## Historic Resource Surveys

Historic resource surveys should be integrated as planning tools and expanded to include context statements, cultural landscape components, and historic interiors. This underscores the Plan's theme of recasting preservation as an active contributor to current and future planning efforts. This section summarizes surveys that have been conducted in Charleston, including a pilot survey undertaken as part of this Plan, and recommends specific steps to standardize, integrate, and expand surveys as tools for strong planning.

## Historic Context Statement

Here you will find the story of Charleston. Beginning with Native American settlements that occupied the area for more than 12,000 years and continuing through the new Cooper River Bridge in modern times, the Historic Context Statement weaves the broad themes of history into the patterns of the city's physical development. It helps explain how local and national politics, society, and culture shaped Charleston's streets and buildings.

The Historic Context Statement lays an important foundation for policy and education. In tracking the history that has influenced Charleston's growth, it helps residents and policy makers to better understand the city's physical, political, and social development—and how historic resources can be managed within their specific context.



1.15 View of Charleston Harbor circa 1739



1.16 *The new Cooper River Bridge*

**E**ven in this brief Executive Summary, it is evident that the scope of the Charleston Preservation Plan stretches far beyond traditional boundaries. There is a growing awareness of the impact that preservation values can make in the course of urban planning. The volume of comments received from Charlestonians on subjects such as transportation and affordable housing signals a readiness for this innovative and expansive approach to preservation and preservation planning.

This Preservation Plan speaks to Charleston as it is, as it has been, and as it could be. It digs deep into local history and potential to propose a vision for Charleston as a city renowned for both its history and its dynamic forward-thinking planning. In calling for preservation to address nontraditional issues, this Plan opens up preservation in Charleston to all citizens: not only those with historic houses, but all who care about the city. For although this Plan was commissioned by the City of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation, it belongs to the entire community. Only public affirmation can make its recommendations come alive.

### How to Use This Document

This Plan has been written for both laypeople and preservation professionals. Thus, narrative text in each section explains the concepts behind recommendations, whether basic or advanced, and how they apply to Charleston. Bulleted recommendations follow the text.

Many recommendations in the Plan appear in more than one place. These repeated recommendations are a reflection of integrated policies and are noted by different symbols. Letters following some recommendations signify that legal changes may be required (**L**) and that additional relevant information can be found in the Resources section (**A**). All recommendations are included in Next Steps with responsibilities and priorities assigned.

#### Symbols

- ◆ Recommendation
- ❖ Repeated recommendation
- L** Legal issues
- A** See Resources section



32-35 St Augustine Court  
William Weston Home - 1882  
"To Make Old Age Comfortable"



# INTRODUCTION





Charleston's rich history is a vital component of this growing city. The city's appeal raises a pressing question: how can necessary change be balanced with preservation of the buildings, culture, and history that make the city such a desirable place to live, work, and visit? The goal of this Plan is to answer that question through policies that support continuing stewardship of Charleston's diverse historic areas and to chart a bright course for the future of preservation in the city.

*As city limits and populations have shifted and expanded, perceptions of historic resources have changed.*

Charleston's boundaries have been static for much of its history. However, in the ten years leading to 2000, municipal jurisdiction more than doubled, growing to 89 square miles (*Figures 2.2-2.4*).<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Charleston's population grew 32 percent, more than double the growth rate for the previous decade and approaching the 47 percent growth rate of the 1840s boom.<sup>2</sup> (Half the population growth is the result of land annexation.) Still, growth has not peaked: the city's population is expected to increase by 51 percent between 2000 and 2015.<sup>3</sup>

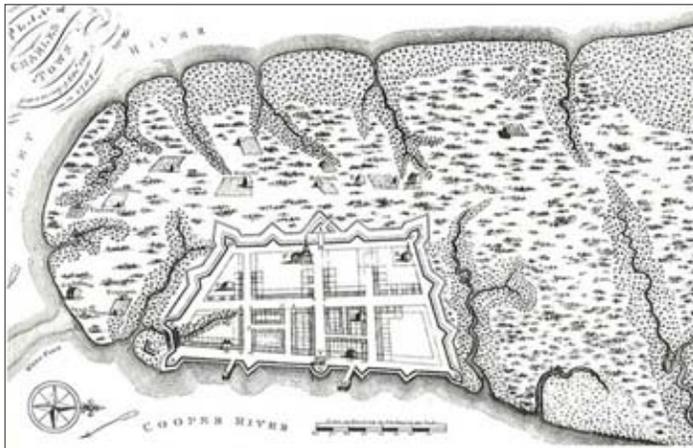
Just as city limits and populations have shifted and expanded, perceptions of historic resources have

changed. Early preservation efforts focused on the oldest buildings south of Broad Street.<sup>4</sup> Since 1931, the Old and Historic District has grown from 138 acres to over 1,000 acres and contains almost 5,000 structures built between 1712 and 1945.<sup>5</sup> Upper Peninsula neighborhoods have gained recognition in the recent past, such as with the listing of Hampton Park Terrace as a National Register Historic District. Off-peninsula historic resources have also been recognized: portions of West Ashley, James Island, Johns Island, and Cainhoy have been surveyed since 1989, and properties both on and off the peninsula have been added to the National Register of Historic Places and the City's Landmark Overlay.

With recent and continuing annexations, the Charleston community again must consider the boundaries and scope of its architectural and historical importance. The Lower Peninsula and the Mid-Peninsula hold the core of the historic city, but the Upper Peninsula and the Neck contain important records of the city's later residential and industrial past. West Ashley's neighborhoods reflect the architecture and development patterns of the mid-twentieth century, and several areas on James and Johns Islands and in Cainhoy are considered important by virtue of the Sea Island/Lowcountry history. The historic significance of these areas must be addressed, especially in the face of encroaching development.



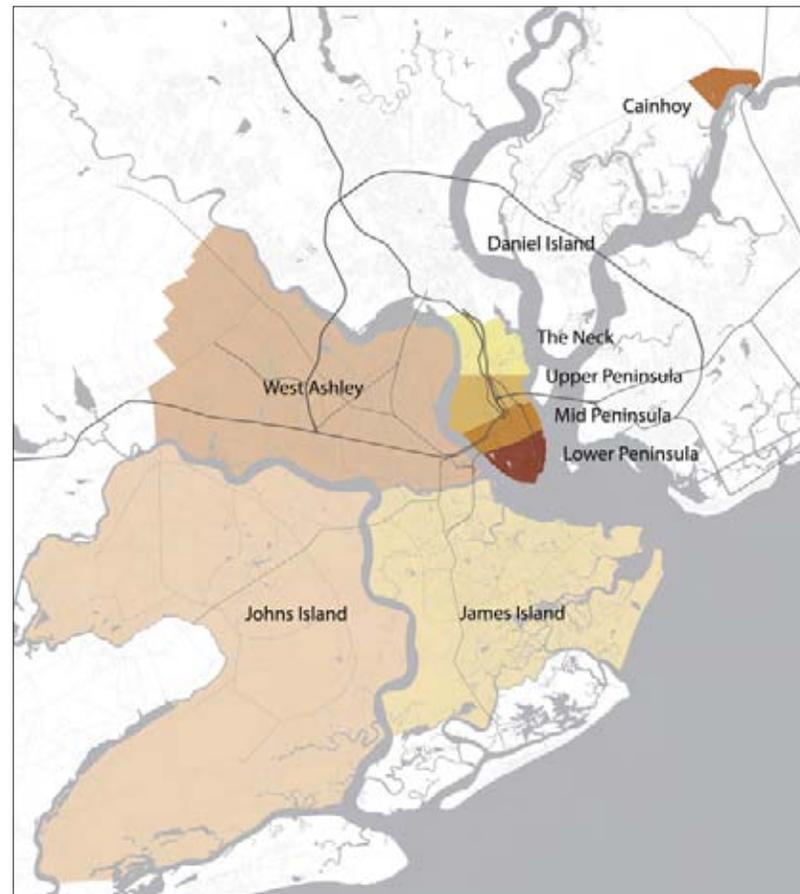
2.1 Panoramic view of Charleston, 1912



2.2 Charleston, 1704



2.3 Charleston, 1974



2.4 As Charleston continues to expand, historic and architectural resources in all the city's neighborhoods should be evaluated.



2.5 In 1974, Charleston's waterfront and city center were languishing.



2.6 King Street (above, 2007), has become a thriving commercial corridor since the 1974 Historic Preservation Plan was written.

### 1974 to 2007

Charleston's first Historic Preservation Plan was written in 1974, when the center city was languishing. Businesses on King Street were struggling, and the Cooper River waterfront had serious environmental problems (Figure 2.5). Historic buildings on Meeting Street and East Bay Street were in serious disrepair, and over half of the buildings on many blocks were deteriorated. Charleston had a population of about 67,000 and covered 18.2 square miles.<sup>6</sup>

The Historic Preservation Plan was written in these conditions as an effort to catalyze investment in historic resources and improve the quality of life in the city. It undertook a comprehensive survey of the city south of the Crosstown Expressway—Charleston's first building-by-building survey and a strong marker of the value of the city's historic resources. Its recommendations included a stricter height ordinance downtown and allocated more power to the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) through increased regulatory authority and a larger geographic purview, with the goal of countering disinvestment in the urban core.

Today, downtown Charleston is a thriving, densely historic place (Figure 2.6). Significant residential and commercial development is occurring off-peninsula. In 2007, the city as a whole spreads over 100 square miles

and has nearly 120,000 residents, and the center of population is shifting off the peninsula.<sup>7,8</sup> Property values are rising across the city—a hardship for some, but a definite sign of economic prosperity.

Despite these drastic changes, many preservation-related concerns remain the same as they were in 1974. People continue to want traffic mitigation, better-maintained streets and sidewalks, zoning that supports preservation efforts, and more open space—subjects connected to preservation as significant quality-of-life concerns. These issues comprise “place making,” or the practice of creating healthy communities by establishing proportion, scale, and densities that best reflect community setting and character.<sup>9</sup>

Increasing BAR authority, enforceable guidelines, and a clear design review process for new buildings remain priorities. The potentially prohibitive expense of maintaining historic properties is still a concern. Growth and change, a diversity of uses, and support of local businesses were all issues then and continue now as people look to the community's economic health.

Other issues from 1974 resurfaced in 2006–07, but with changed attitudes. Overcrowding and neglect were at the heart of housing worries in 1974. Now the focus is on the dearth of affordable housing and

*“She guards her buildings, customs and laws.”*

maintaining community diversity. Current comments reflect much more wariness of dense development than was expressed in 1974. The 1974 plan was less critical of institutional expansion than 2006–07 comments, praising the College of Charleston for its adaptive reuse of historic buildings as college housing and offices.

New concerns have arisen with the success of preservation efforts and the growth of the city in the last thirty-odd years. A lively debate over preservation of interiors, county standards for preservation, reuse of historic buildings, and standards for rehabilitation reflect the city’s desire to set a course for future preservation efforts. Concerns about tourism, absentee or part-time homeowners, and condominiums speak to the city’s increased attraction.

Land annexations have extended the potential field for preservation to off-peninsula neighborhoods, while increasing recognition of Upper Peninsula historic resources may spur preservation in that area. The desire to expand preservation into the community shows in concerns about public education and participation. Other concerns about archaeology, FEMA regulations, and accessibility for the disabled demonstrate public awareness of wide-ranging issues connected to preservation.

There is a distinct language difference in how concerns were articulated between the 1974 Historic Preservation Plan and the public comments received for this Plan. The 1974 plan spoke of Charleston’s heritage reverently: legacy, lingering romance, a museum of marvelous design skills and ingenuity. In 2006–07, Charlestonians approached preservation with respect, but also with an urgent emphasis on vision. It is important to look to the future, people urged, and create policies and practices that support a city in which history is living and relevant.

### Context for the Plan

Charleston’s commitment to preservation began with its establishment in 1783. The nascent city’s motto—“She guards her buildings, customs, and laws”—forecast a strong dedication to preservation of the local built environment.

In 1931 Charleston adopted the first historic district zoning ordinance in the country and created the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) to oversee new construction and alterations in the Old and Historic District. *This Is Charleston*, a 1944 citywide survey of historic buildings, was the first published architectural inventory of an American city.



2.7 Charleston Battery



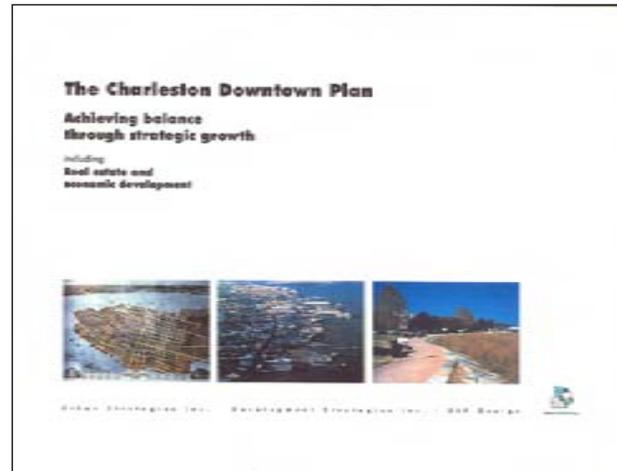
2.8 West Ashley



2.9 Upper Peninsula



**2.10-2.12** This Plan will be used in conjunction with many existing planning documents, such as the Century V City Plan (2000), the Charleston Downtown Plan (1999), and the Historic Preservation Plan (1974).



Charleston adopted the Feiss-Wright Survey and Historic Preservation Plan in 1974 to catalogue and protect local historic resources.<sup>10</sup> While elements of city and area plans have since addressed preservation concerns in one way or another, it is time for another comprehensive look at historic preservation in Charleston. This Preservation Plan used a community-driven process to evaluate current and emerging preservation efforts and issues, consider the expanded city limits, and develop an updated vision for the future.

### Other Plans

This Plan draws upon many existing planning documents. Of note are the 2000 Century V City Plan (Charleston's Comprehensive Plan), the 2005 Consolidated Plan for housing and community development, the 1999 Charleston Downtown Plan and other area plans, the 1974 Historic Preservation Plan, and institutional master plans (*Figures 2.10-2.12*). South Carolina's 2007 State Historic Preservation Plan, *Preserving Our Past to Build a Healthy Future*, provides a concise statement of the reasons and resources to support preservation and suggests further incentives.

The 1999 Charleston County Comprehensive Plan calls for "preservation of rural community character, preservation of cultural resources, and traditional lifestyles"; public education about historic preservation

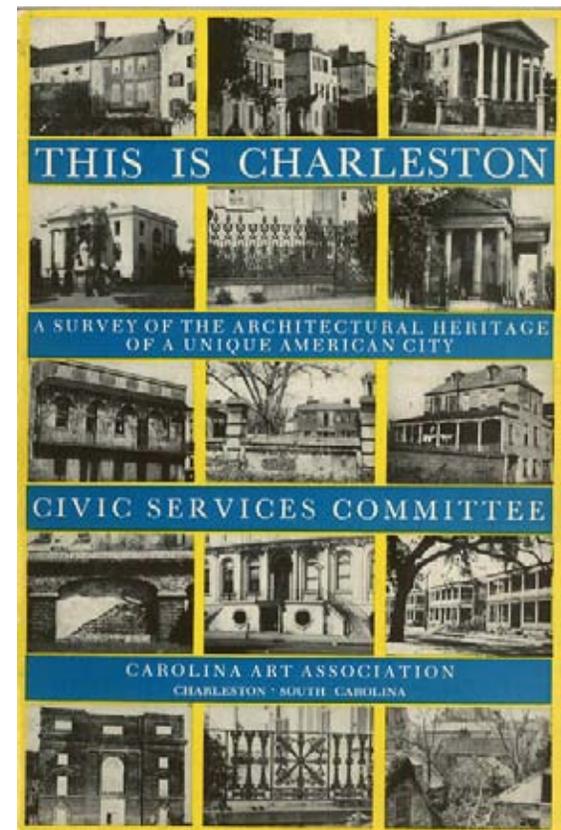
and its benefits; and coordinated preservation efforts between county and city governments, state and federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Berkeley County is currently preparing a comprehensive plan; current policy does not include a historic preservation component.

### Historic Resource Surveys

Historic resource surveys collect information on an area's historic resources, enabling those resources to be considered in planning decisions. Surveying can be done at reconnaissance or intensive levels, but it always includes fieldwork and research into a community's history and architecture. Before the late 1980s, all surveys focused on the peninsula, reflecting the long-held view that the bulk of the city's historic resources are located south of the Crosstown Expressway. The first effort, the 1944 *This Is Charleston* survey, included resources from the Lower and Mid-Peninsula areas (Figure 2.13). The 1972–73 Feiss-Wright Survey covered the Lower Peninsula and the Mid-Peninsula, and the Geier-Brown-Renfrow Survey covered the Mid-Peninsula in 1985. The Upper Peninsula Survey was completed in 2004. Together, these four surveys documented 9,379 historic resources on the peninsula.

Five surveys between 1989 and 2005 examined historic resources in off-peninsula areas. Over 1,200 historic resources were surveyed in these efforts. Two surveys were commissioned in 1989 and 1992 to cover the City of Charleston and the County of Charleston, respectively. Portions of James and Johns Islands were surveyed in 1989, Cainhoy Village was surveyed in 2001, and the Crescent Survey was completed in 2005.

As part of this Preservation Plan, one pilot survey was conducted in partnership with the College of Charleston/Clemson University Historic Preservation Program. The survey, which included portions of Lenwood Boulevard, compared past and current historic resource survey standards and evaluated mid-twentieth-century suburban resources. (See Historic Resource Surveys.)



2.13 *This Is Charleston* (1944) was the first major effort to survey Charleston's historic resources.

## How Preservation Fits

With Charleston's history obvious in many of the spaces and paths of daily life, it is not surprising that many groups are actively engaged in preservation of historic buildings, cultural resources, and open space. Supported by a strong local preservation ethos, they have pioneered preservation policies and explored both subtle and bold solutions to preservation challenges in Charleston.

## City Government

The Department of Planning, Preservation and Economic Innovation regulates protection of historic resources, in addition to its zoning and urban design functions. More specifically, the Architecture and Preservation Division oversees administration of the local historic districts and provides staff support to the citizen Board of Architectural Review (BAR). The BAR is responsible for the preservation of Charleston's local historic districts. Practically, this means that it reviews rehabilitations, new construction, and demolitions in areas and of buildings that have been deemed historic and/or architecturally significant. This Plan recommends a number of changes in BAR jurisdiction (see Design Review).

Other City departments address preservation from other specialized angles. The Charleston Civic Design Center provides a forum for public discussion, education, and involvement on issues of urban design, including structures and areas in local historic districts. The Building Inspections Division of the Department of Public Service enforces code-related BAR decisions, and Livability Court handles other BAR violations when necessary. The Homeownership Initiative and Redevelopment and Preservation Commission, both of which rehabilitate historic homes, involve the Department of Housing and Community Development in preservation.

Yet more departments and divisions affect and are affected by historic preservation. The Office of Neighborhood Services facilitates neighborhood associations, which may be active in historic preservation efforts in their neighborhoods. The Department of Parks maintains public open space and, in conjunction with the Tree Ordinance and the Board of Zoning Appeals-Site Design, protects trees on public and private property. The Geographic Information System (GIS) staff produces maps that show historic resources and how they relate to other layers of information about the city. The Department of Traffic and Transportation maintains infrastructure and plans for traffic to move residents, workers, and visitors around Charleston, and the Office of Tourism Management regulates visitor activities.

## County Government

Coordination with county agencies is especially important in West Ashley, James Island, Johns Island, and Cainhoy, where lands under county and city jurisdiction are interwoven. The Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (COG) is involved in regional transportation and planning, two regional issues of particular significance in the hot development climate.

County plans for transportation and open space were prepared in 2006. To encourage continuing coordination between the County and the City, staff liaisons should be designated for parks departments on both levels of government. The 2006 Comprehensive Greenbelts Plan for Charleston County and the 2006 Proposed Comprehensive Transportation Plan should be consulted in conjunction with planning efforts.

Preserving historically and culturally significant properties is part of the Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission's mission, and the Open Space Analysis of the Commission recommends partnering with preservation organizations to acquire, preserve, maintain, and improve historic properties when funding is available. The possibility of forming coalitions with foundations and preservation organizations to fund, interpret, maintain, and operate historic properties should be explored: Foundations might have the financial resources to acquire the properties, historic

preservation organizations could aid in rehabilitation and interpretation, and the CCPRC could assume responsibility for maintaining the properties and keeping them open to the public.

### Organizations

A variety of organizations works to preserve historic buildings, cultural landscapes, and other heritage resources in Charleston. Several affordable housing nonprofit organizations also participate in historic preservation directly or indirectly. For the most part, these organizations' efforts are targeted at specific areas and are addressed in the Neighborhoods section. Charleston's principal preservation organizations are Historic Charleston Foundation (HCF) and the Preservation Society of Charleston; a more complete list of organizations can be found in the Preservation Organizations section in Resources.

Historic Charleston Foundation, founded in 1947, approaches preservation as an advocate, educator, and conservator. HCF's most prominent role may be as owner and operator of the Nathaniel Russell House and the Aiken-Rhett House museums. HCF also holds nearly 400 preservation easements and protective covenants and operates volunteer committees like the Livable City Committee, which tackles diverse issues related to tourism and other quality of life concerns.<sup>11</sup>

The Preservation Society of Charleston, founded in 1920, is the oldest community-based membership preservation organization in the country. In 1931 the Society led the way in the City of Charleston's adoption of the first historic district zoning ordinance in the U.S. The Fall Tour of Homes and Gardens, the annual Carolopolis Awards, the Society's newsletter, the Historic Marker program, exterior and interior easements, and a fifty-year-old Planning and Zoning Committee are integral parts of the Society's preservation advocacy.

### Institutions

Institutions are important players in Charleston's preservation scene. They are discussed in the Institutions section of Charleston's Expanding Horizon.

### Community Involvement

Under Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., the City has prioritized citizen involvement in the planning and preservation process. One hundred neighborhood councils deal with localized concerns and opportunities, including preservation. The new Community Districts Program focuses on improving particular areas and focusing and prioritizing public investments in each area.<sup>12</sup> Fourteen Community Districts have been delineated, with final boundaries contingent on citizen approval.

In concert with one of the major themes of this document – the close relationship between preservation of physical spaces and preservation of communities – successful preservation and revitalization require other strong community institutions. Schools, churches, neighborhoods with a variety of uses, and safety and crime prevention are all part of building a thriving, vibrant city.

### Scope

Preservation can relate to virtually every part of life in Charleston. In some parts of the city, evidence of history is everywhere: buildings, streets, a distinct air of the past infused with the vibrancy of modern daily life. In other areas, contextual history is less easily felt but no less present. The suburbs of West Ashley, the rural island landscapes, and the neighborhoods of the Upper Peninsula all speak to important aspects of the city's history.

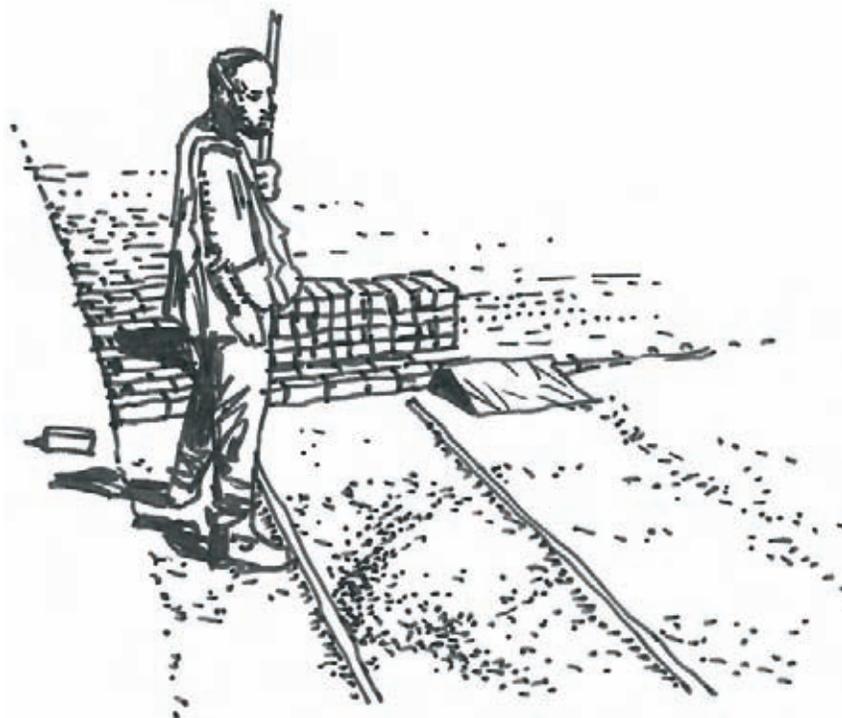
Charlestonians support this broad view of preservation. Nearly 1,500 public comments were gathered as an integral first step in the Preservation Plan process. The topics ranged broadly, reflecting the general view that everyday life in Charleston is inextricably entwined with historic preservation issues, from parks to traffic to housing. Preserving physical history is the foundation and starting point for preservation, but the field has expanded to include much more.

Preservation has become part of a larger movement to build sustainable communities with a strong sense of their histories and clear visions for the future. This Plan envisions a framework for historic preservation that integrates preservation as a vital, exciting part of Charleston's development, economy, housing, and environment. The policy recommendations contained herein should be viewed as guidelines for building that framework.

### Developing the Preservation Plan

This Plan presents a vision for Charleston that encompasses the city's rich history and dynamic future. Over the course of the last year, development of this vision has included completing field work, researching preservation policies from around the U.S. and the world, collecting community input, and consulting with local experts. This document exists for Charleston and her residents because a concerted effort was made throughout the process to involve Charlestonians with diverse backgrounds and concerns. A series of community meetings and focus groups, a standing Citizen Advisory Group, and extensive public feedback were invaluable components of the planning process that served to strengthen the Plan:

- 7 community meetings
- 11 focus groups
- 500 participants in the public process
- 1,500 public comments informed the recommendations
- 100,000+ Charlestonians will be affected by the Plan

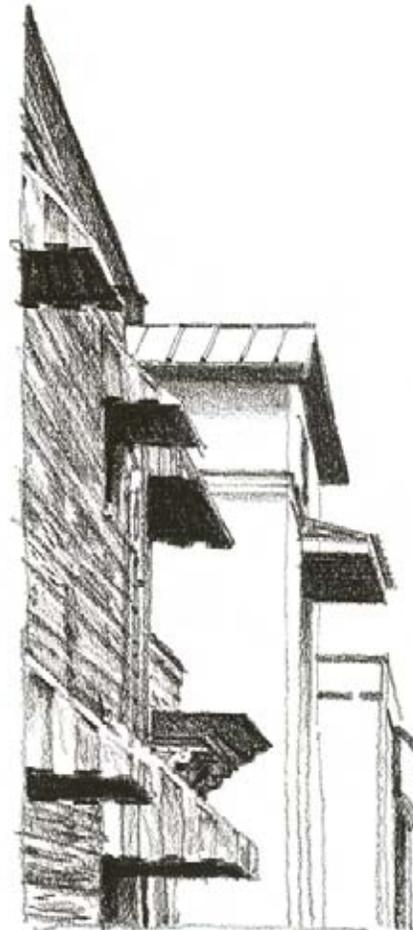


Laying Bricks on Church Street  
Charlestowne



# STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES





218 Cornhill  
\*  
Brewster Court

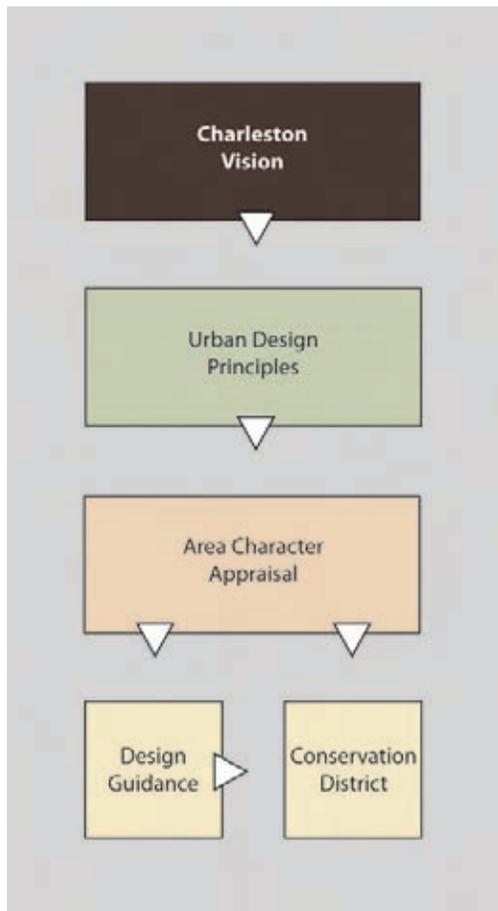
*S*he guards her buildings, customs and laws. Charleston's motto leaves no doubt that the city is fiercely protective of its historic resources. Buildings mark Charleston's progression from colonial village to antebellum town and through the postwar years. They endow the city and its residents with a strong sense of history, a high quality of life, and a thriving tourist industry. Charleston also has national and international significance as a well-preserved built record of history.

The sections in Stewardship Principles explore how to continue Charleston's strong preservation record as new developments herald significant change. Contextual new design, wise land use, and clear, inclusive design review processes are emphasized as ways to safeguard and strengthen the city's remarkable heritage.

## New Construction

In the historic fabric of the peninsula and off-peninsula, many opportunities exist for new development. Considering how new buildings will interact with Charleston's historic landscape is especially important in the current development climate, boosted by the city's popularity. New buildings may contribute to Charleston's distinctive architectural landscape, or they may serve only as structural fillers between historic buildings.

To provide a framework for the design of new construction and a direction for the larger development of the city, this Plan proposes a Charleston Vision, elaborated by urban design principles. A form-based approach to zoning could translate the Charleston Vision and the urban design principles into zoning law, urban design standards, and some architectural guidance. Area Character Appraisals (ACAs) complete the system by giving neighborhood-specific guidance on streetscapes and buildings for residents, developers, Board members, and City staff. FEMA requirements are also examined here for their significant impact on new construction.



3.1 The Charleston Vision sets a long-term direction for Charleston's future growth and preservation.

### Proposed Charleston Vision

The Charleston Vision sets forth a long-term direction for Charleston (*Figure 3.1*). It is the heart of this Plan and should be the foundation of future planning and development efforts. The ten vision statements possess a generality that will allow them to guide Charleston's growth and preservation well into the future, yet are also definite enough to support specific policies. The clear language and unambiguous ideas should make Charleston's overarching priorities and standards clear to all citizens.

1. Historic preservation is an integral part of Charleston's history and will continue to inspire the City's vision and its approach to planning and development.
2. Charleston will sustain its rich and dynamic cultural heritage by retaining its long-standing communities. Housing affordability is a crucial part of this effort.
3. Charleston will look like Charleston, with recognition that the city's eras of development each have a distinct and valuable character, which collectively represent the continuity of its rich history.
4. The peninsula will continue to grow as a dense and diverse urban community consistent with its historic development patterns.

*A uniform style code is neither realistic nor desirable; new construction should take a variety of forms and styles, with the consistent expectation of quality design.*

5. The natural landscapes in Charleston are important parts of the city's cultural and environmental heritage. These landscapes will be protected with planning and conservation tools.
6. Suburban neighborhoods are the potential historic resources of the future. They will be treated accordingly, with the goal of reducing sprawl through development consistent with traditional patterns.
7. Dense urban architecture and infill development will be encouraged where infrastructure supports such development. Publicly accessible open space is central to successful development.
8. Charleston's historic architecture sets a high and challenging standard. This tradition of high-quality architecture and building materials will be required in all projects in the city.
9. Charleston's policies will encourage a balance of diverse, appropriate, and compatible uses to make it a truly living city with continuing neighborhood vitality and livability.
10. Charleston will be a responsible steward of its environment, both built and natural: environmental and cultural sustainability will be considered in planning decisions that affect development.

### Urban Design Principles

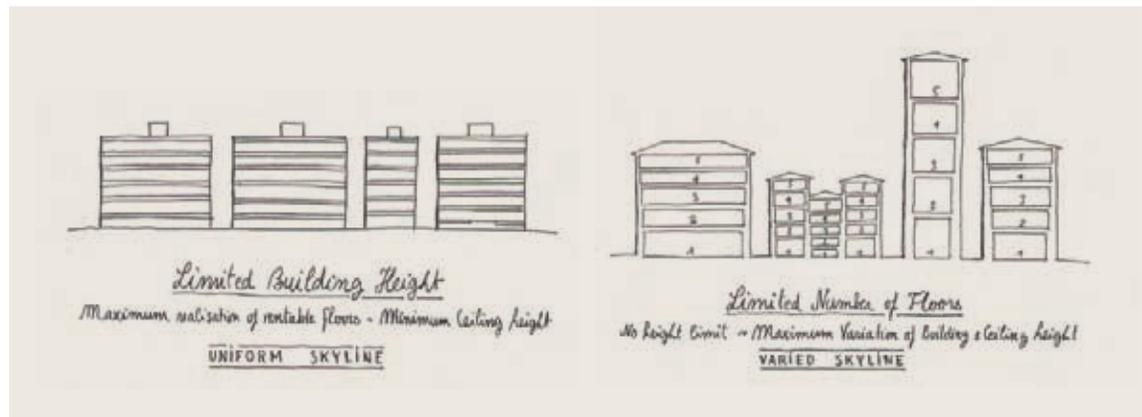
Urban design principles will help translate the Charleston Vision into working policy by providing more specific ideas as to how a citywide vision can be reflected in the built environment. These principles are widely recognized in urban design: design, height, scale, architectural rhythm, siting, and materials. They aim to articulate elements of existing sites so that new development can better fit in, or to develop wise guidelines for large areas of new development.

Charleston's present architectural vernacular encompasses diverse stylistic elements that reflect the evolution of the city to the present. With such a varied background, a uniform style code is neither realistic nor desirable; new construction should take a variety of forms and styles, with the consistent expectation of and requirements for quality design in the context of the city, the area, the neighborhood, and the block.

Charleston has few historic precedents for very large buildings. During the late nineteenth century, when some cities were embarking on skyscraper construction, Charleston was recovering from the economic effects of the Civil War and the hurricane of 1886. Large historical buildings in the city rarely reach higher than four stories.



**3.2** Charleston's buildings reflect the city's evolution in their diversity of stylistic elements.



3.3 Limits on the number of floors can preserve a city's varied skyline more effectively than height limits.



3.4 New buildings in Charleston should reflect the scale and historic character of their surroundings.



3.5 To retain the architectural rhythm of the city, new developments (Mid-Peninsula, above) should reference the patterns of the surrounding neighborhood.

Significant challenges arise in translating Charleston's iconic small-scale architecture, such as the single house or the King Street commercial building, into larger buildings. The "one style fits all sizes" approach taken by Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Santa Barbara, California, does not work here: enlarged replicas lack the detail and small scale that distinguish Charleston's historic streetscapes and dilute the remarkable sense of authenticity created by so many historic buildings.<sup>1</sup> Charleston has struggled to find an appropriate contextual vocabulary for new construction as new functions, building codes, and cost considerations demand larger buildings.

New buildings become local successes because they respect and draw from local traits.<sup>2</sup> Quality design requires acknowledgment of surrounding buildings, whether a traditional or modern approach is taken. Banal new construction, regardless of architectural style, dilutes the city's rich sense of place. New buildings in Charleston must acknowledge their context and the city's rich history. Buildings out of scale with their surroundings and the historic character of Charleston are not acceptable. (The Tower of London was considered for placement on UNESCO's list of endangered World Heritage Sites due to skyscraper construction around the Tower that threatened its historic context.)<sup>3</sup>

The urban design principles presented here should form the foundation of future discussions on architectural style. By prioritizing contextual design, these principles

endorse the wealth of existing buildings in Charleston instead of a particular style. Ensuring that height, scale, mass, architectural rhythm, siting, and materials are compatible with neighboring buildings is a fundamental first step to quality designs for buildings of any size.

#### 1. Design

- The design shall reference but not imitate neighboring buildings.
- The design shall insist that the building stands in Charleston, a place with notable architectural vitality, not on a generic highway or strip mall.

#### 2. Height

- The building shall be roughly the same height as neighboring buildings. If it is taller, its function or location shall warrant the increased height.
- The building shall not interrupt the view of the city's historic skyline, the block, or important viewsheds to water or along the water's edge.
- The ratio of floor-to-floor heights shall be similar to that of neighboring buildings. If the floor-to-floor ratio is greater, the building's function or location shall warrant the increased height (*Figure 3.3*).

#### 3. Scale

- The building's architectural and massing elements shall be sized to the same scale as those of neighboring buildings.
- The building shall not visually overshadow or overwhelm existing buildings (*Figure 3.4*).

#### 4. Architectural Rhythm

- The building elements shall visually reference neighboring buildings in the location and frequency of placement.
- If it is a larger building, the design shall visually separate its bulk into parts comparable to neighboring buildings.
- The proportion of fenestration, details, and solid-to-void ratios shall be compatible with those of surrounding buildings (*Figure 3.5*).

#### 5. Siting

- The building shall occupy roughly the same place on the lot relative to neighboring buildings, unless greater building height or function warrants different placement.
- The building shall not interrupt the view of the block.

#### 6. Materials

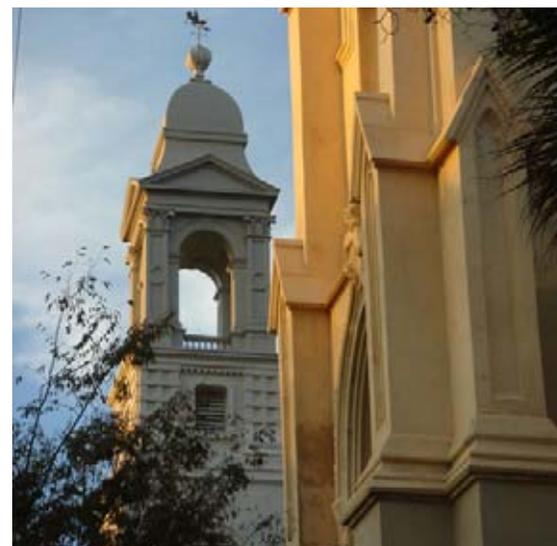
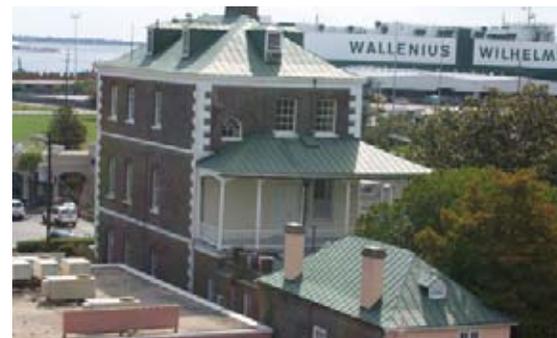
- The materials shall be of a high and lasting quality.
- Materials shall convey the quality of the design and craftsmanship.



**3.6** *The South Carolina Aquarium is a rare exception to the urban design principles.*

#### Exceptions to Urban Design Principles

Recognizing that healthy cities are continually evolving, the appropriate architecture is occasionally that which goes beyond the bounds of context and urban design principles. In this way architecture reflects and contributes to a dynamic, visually interesting city, articulating an important or unique function—or merely emphasizing local quirks. Exceptions should be rare and site-dependent, but some major civic buildings, specialized uses, and smaller-scale buildings do merit exceptions. The pyramidal addition to the Louvre is one example. The South Carolina Aquarium and many of Charleston's



3.7-3.12 *The wide variety of historic resources in Charleston makes introducing new construction challenging.*

existing streetscapes provide more local examples, showing both the city's large buildings and its fine-grained fabric with natural variations. Even in exceptional cases, the scale and massing of the surrounding buildings should not be ignored entirely (*Figure 3.6*).

Another exception arises when neighboring buildings lack the quality architecture and materials that distinguish so much of Charleston. When a building's context is below par, the building should be encouraged to meet higher standards, not required to match that context.

## Other Design Components

Area Character Appraisals (ACAs) should interpret the urban design principles to the scale of individual buildings and reinforce form-based codes. Conducted on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, ACAs define the existing physical character of an area by focusing on the unique character, architectural style, building forms, landscape resources, and cultural resources that make up the streetscapes and blocks. (See Area Character Appraisals.)

ACAs can provide substantive design guidance to ensure that future development will fit in with the established area character. The project applicant should

be required to explicitly demonstrate how a design is in keeping with the Area Character Appraisal. ACAs may result in the creation of conservation districts, thus adding a level of formal protection to areas that possess outstanding architectural integrity and/or value.

A form-based approach to zoning should be considered at the planning level. In general terms, form-based zoning embodies a long-term community vision for how a city should look on a smaller scale—that of the street. Through a creative zoning approach, form-based zoning prioritizes context-sensitive design by evaluating form in place of use. As policy, it can be altered to reflect changing city jurisdiction or landscapes. Form-based codes, or a similar approach to zoning, could help put the Charleston Vision and urban design principles into practice and provide policy support for Area Character Appraisals.

On a large scale, the Charleston Vision should direct placement and density of new developments. All new construction and substantial rehabilitations in Charleston should be based on urban design principles, form-based codes, and Area Character Appraisals. Though infill can contribute more local housing, commercial space, and opportunities for economic development, buildings out of scale with their surroundings in any part of Charleston may damage that area's historic character.

It is important to provide a forum for ongoing dialogue—not just salvo exchanges—about buildings in Charleston. Differing opinions on architectural style may never be reconciled, but the issue can and should catalyze a lively public discussion on architecture; indeed, the question of what type of architecture is appropriate in historic areas is being raised all over the United States and the world. Ongoing public dialogue about the enduring face of historic Charleston should be encouraged through a discussion series sponsored by the Civic Design Center or another urban design organization that draws together diverse community members.

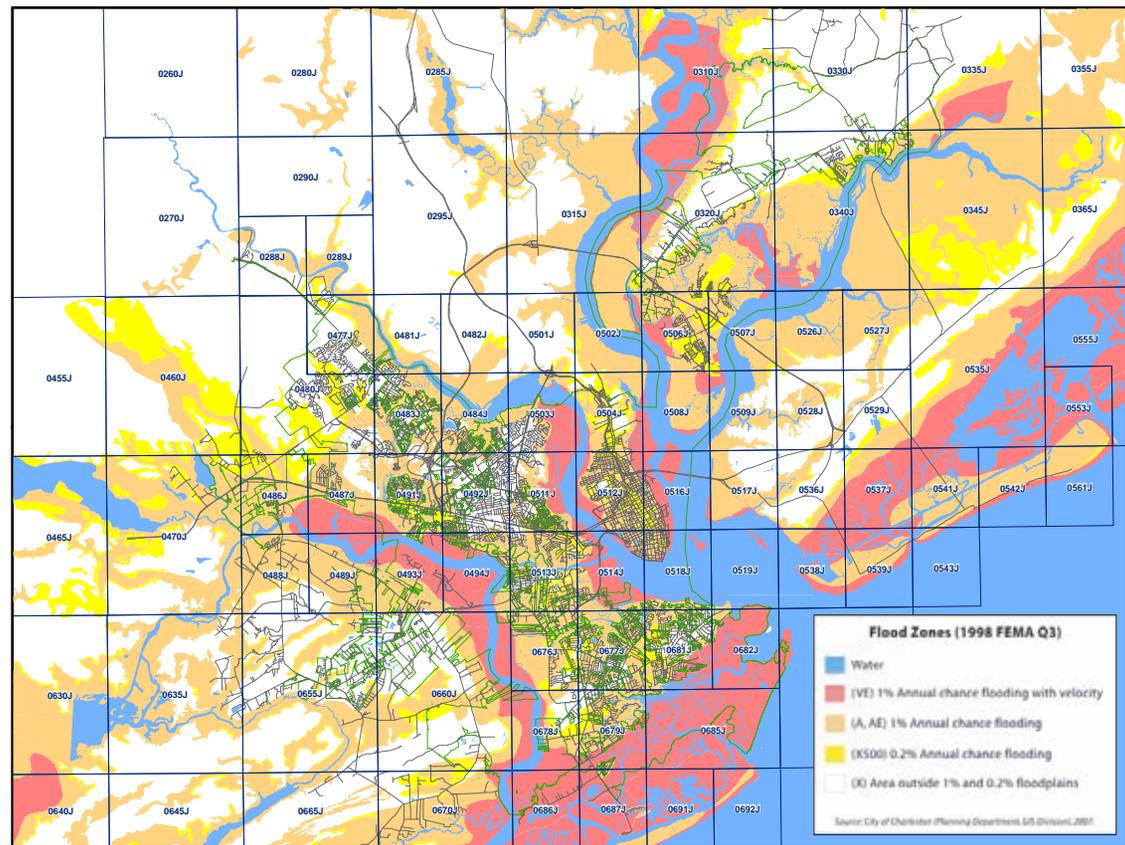
Taking those discussions as a starting point, a design competition might be held for a major public building or a prominent intersection, with emphasis placed on design quality and attention to context. The built language of the city can reflect diverse perspectives, but the character of the historic district should remain in keeping with its historic fabric.

Whether by design competitions in Charleston or architectural reconnaissance work in other cities, good examples of contextual architecture from a variety of stylistic perspectives should be found.

## FEMA Requirements

While the Charleston Vision and urban design principles should provide the ideological foundation for Charleston's physical development, FEMA requirements exert a very real and powerful effect on new buildings in much of the city. Hurricane Hugo was a powerful reminder that Charleston's many low-lying areas are vulnerable to flooding. Continued global warming will increase the chance of flooding, and FEMA flood maps will likely be revised again. The building elevation requirements in these maps can make new construction especially out of scale with historic neighborhoods, but they may have the greatest impact in large redevelopment areas. There, blocks of raised buildings—usually with parking at the ground level—may be devoid of visual interest at the street level and discourage pedestrian activity.

FEMA flood plain regulations affect large areas in Charleston that are classified as V-Zones and A-Zones. V-Zones may be subject to waves, hurricane-force winds, and erosion, in addition to flooding; A-Zones are usually located immediately inland from V-Zones and have fewer restrictions. In V-Zones, FEMA requires new living and retail spaces to be elevated above the Base Flood Elevation—as high as 17 feet above the 100-year flood level in certain parts of the peninsula (*Figure 3.13*).



3.13 FEMA map (1998) indicating flood zones in Charleston

This Plan joins with the Downtown Plan in supporting guidelines that offer architectural and urban design solutions compatible with both FEMA regulations and Charleston's historic character. The Civic Design Center has successfully advocated for amended V-Zone height regulations that help activate streetscapes at the ground level. Its work should be expanded into publicly focused guidelines with suggestions for gracefully increasing the height of a structure and increasing visual interest at street level. A design competition for residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings could bring a wider lens to the issue.

Outdoor dining and merchant stands, display areas, and lobbies can add further vitality to streets in V-Zones.<sup>4</sup> Nonresidential buildings in the less-stringent A-Zone may be flood-proofed, or constructed to be watertight, instead of elevating the lowest floor.<sup>5</sup> This measure allows buildings to be more engaged with the sidewalk. Commercial activity with a ground floor presence and a mezzanine for safe equipment storage helps streetscapes engage pedestrians.

Throughout all discussions of FEMA regulations and architecture, the overarching importance of scale, form, and materials should be recognized, along with the common goal of preserving a healthy, diverse, and dynamic city.

### Design Policies

- ◆ Approve Charleston Vision statements as part of Plan
- ❖ Establish citywide urban design principles
- ❖ Develop ACAs that can be used to assess development proposals and specify localized design characteristics to aid in decision-making consistency
- ◆ Consistently enforce design standards and BAR decisions
- ◆ Prioritize quality contextual design by providing examples of appropriate contextual style and sponsoring design competitions
- ◆ Set high design standards with civic, institutional, and other large-scale buildings
- ◆ Facilitate continuing public dialogue through the Civic Design Center about successful design
- ❖ Consider a form-based approach to zoning **A**
- ❖ Change zoning to regulate the number of stories rather than a fixed height, to allow for varied heights and roof forms and appropriate street-level proportions

### Major Projects

- ❖ Create a citywide 3-D digital model to help planners, citizens, and developers see how Major projects or projects in sensitive areas will affect area character and density
- ◆ Consider demolishing inappropriately scaled buildings and redeveloping the area with contextual buildings or public open space
- ◆ Locate higher-density projects in areas of planned transit, near major transportation corridors, and in gathering places
- ❖ Expand the Downtown Plan height study to include major gateways outside the Old City Height District
- ◆ Build on the Downtown Plan's skyline assessment to identify contributing elements of the city skyline and protection strategies
- ❖ Study adjustment of parking requirements in areas classified as transitional zones by the character map to encourage appropriate redevelopment

### FEMA Design Requirements

- ◆ Consider a design competition to define a new Charleston architecture typology that complies with FEMA flood elevation requirements
- ◆ Develop design guidelines to offset FEMA flood elevation requirements
- ◆ Require nonresidential construction in flood zones to be flood-proofed per FEMA standards where possible
- ◆ Formalize the FEMA variance process to allow for more consistent reviews with the Building Inspections Division
- ◆ Consider pursuing a higher community rating under FEMA's Community Rating System to receive discounted flood premium rates, in conjunction with architectural and urban design solutions for increased building elevation<sup>6</sup>
- ◆ Explore the possibility of a point-based credit system with insurance companies, in which insurance rates for older, pre-Flood Insurance Rate Map (pre-FIRM) houses would be lowered if additional flood-proofing conditions were met other than elevating the building

## Land Use and Regulation

In terms of historic preservation, zoning should establish similar guidelines for form and function so that new development is similar but not identical to existing buildings. This section complements the New Construction and Design Review sections by providing suggestions for regulating buildings, urban spaces, and the city as a whole.

Land use decisions made now will determine the shape of Charleston far into the future. The next twenty years—even the next ten—will be a defining time for the city. Increasing popularity supported by a hospitable economic climate foreshadow a wave of new development. While growth is not inherently bad, new developments consuming rural landscapes around the perimeter of existing urban and suburban areas could irreversibly damage one of the things that make Charleston special. New development should be directed to infill areas and transportation nodes and encouraged to use land in a sustainable, relatively dense manner, with smaller lots or clustered development. (See Growth and Sprawl.)

As large projects in the Neck move forward and planning advances for projects in Johns Island and the Upper Peninsula, the historic forms and spaces that define various parts of the city as unique, as *Charleston*, should be recognized and maintained by new developments.

This Plan offers few specific suggestions for zoning changes. Instead, it recommends adopting the Charleston Vision and urban design principles, using

*Land use decisions now will determine the shape of Charleston.  
The next twenty years—even the next ten—will be a defining time for the city*

Area Character Appraisals to evaluate individual areas, and adjusting zoning to align with the established principles and ACAs. A form-based approach, which emphasizes the importance of building form, should be considered to ensure that development projects fit in their context (Figure 3.15). (See Resources) It could be especially relevant to areas without BAR review because it requires that new development be in context with existing buildings.

Height dictates how well a building fits into its context, as well as the building's square footage. Because it impacts individual profit and neighborhood character, height can become a contentious issue. Height requirements should be tailored to the existing neighborhood character through ACAs. To avoid the uniformly flat rooflines at the height maximum and lower first stories of many new buildings, fixed height limits should be replaced by a limit on the number of stories, with a minimum first floor height. This will allow development that maintains Charleston's varied roofline and historic buildings' grand first stories with less-stringent limits on square footage.

Like height, building density is an area-specific issue. Low-density development is appropriate in rural areas like Johns Island, especially outside the Urban Growth Boundary, whereas peninsula development has sustained a density that new infill should maintain. New development in largely undeveloped areas such as the Neck may reach an even higher density. The Charleston Zoning Ordinance regulates building lot occupancy, or the percent-



**3.14** *In order to protect the rural landscapes around the city's perimeter, new development should be appropriately dense and directed to infill areas.*



**3.15** *A form-based approach to zoning such as the one presented in the Bull Street Infill Development Plan in Columbia, South Carolina (above), would be relevant in Charleston.*



**3.16** *Changing the approach to height limits will help maintain Charleston's varied skyline.*

age of a lot occupied by buildings. Lot occupancy should continue to be used as a tool for maintaining historic development patterns and preserving a historic proportion of open space in lots.

Density and lot occupancy should maintain historic precedent in areas of newer development as well as historic neighborhoods. Because historic development patterns were established well before automobiles were present, they contribute to a mixed-use environment that requires less driving and uses less land. All ACAs should determine a neighborhood's historic uses, density, lot coverage, and building placement (such as with Sanborn fire insurance maps). In newer areas, historic development patterns should be recognized as more sustainable and adapted as appropriate for the context.

In older neighborhoods, a diversity of uses has historically thrived. Small shops and other businesses serving neighborhood residents were woven into the local fabric, largely evidenced in corner-store building types. The high price of housing in the Lower Peninsula has prompted the conversion of many corner stores to housing units; however, the Mid-Peninsula and Upper Peninsula still have many mixed-use areas. The diversity of uses should be maintained in these areas and reintroduced to the Lower Peninsula, if possible. Mixed-use areas can be maintained by discouraging changes from a mixed-use to single-use zoning ("down-zoning") and more easily enabling reuse of traditionally mixed-use buildings for neighborhood-friendly commercial uses.

*Prevent developments which are not in harmony with the prevailing character of Charleston.*

Corner stores in a residential neighborhood show how landscapes underpin historical identity and culture, demonstrating historical development patterns and land use priorities. Public open spaces such as parks create a space for public interaction and common history, serving as stages for people to play out a continuing public story. Open spaces also can highlight monumental and small-scale buildings around them or, like Charleston's marshes, play an important ecological role.

As public and prominent parts of the Charleston landscape, the Ashley and Cooper Rivers should be accessible to everyone. Developments adjacent to the rivers that construct docks should provide at least one dock open to community members (potentially maintained by the City and County of Charleston).

Nighttime illumination has the potential to light Charleston without compromising the historic appearance of much of the city. Excessively bright lighting creates dangerous situations for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists; and use of modern fixtures detracts from nineteenth-century streetscapes. Historically appropriate light fixtures (luminaires) fitted with unobtrusive lightbulbs can light roadways, bridges, and key buildings while maintaining a high level of safety and energy efficiency. Lighting regulations should be developed for Charleston, with special attention to the historic districts and the approaches to them, such as over the Ashley River Bridge.<sup>7</sup>



**3.17** Corner stores demonstrate historical development patterns and add vitality to Charleston's residential neighborhoods.



**3.18** Open spaces like Charleston's rivers and marshes play important ecological and social roles.

### Height, Scale, and Mass

- ❖ Establish citywide urban design principles
- ◆ Enforce height limits by limiting variances
- ❖ Expand the Downtown Plan height study to include major gateways outside the Old City Height District
- ❖ Change zoning to regulate the number of stories rather than a fixed height, to allow for varied heights and roof forms and appropriate street-level proportions
- ◆ Require an area-specific minimum first-story height, except when FEMA regulations require a Base Flood Elevation of 5 feet or more
- ❖ Consider a form-based approach to zoning **A**

### Density

- ◆ Maintain historic lot coverage requirements for all new projects, referencing Sanborn fire insurance maps and other historical maps (e.g., the 1852 Bridgens and Allen map) to understand areas' historical density
- ◆ Enforce density regulations, especially with regard to rental housing around colleges

- ◆ Designate “nodes” in transition areas near major intersections and corridors, where zoning should permit higher-density developments
- ◆ Reduce parking requirements for mixed-use developments by adopting standards that allow shared parking
- ❖ Utilize auxiliary buildings and garage apartments as scattered-site affordable rental units

### Uses

- ◆ Preserve open space as well as buildings: develop an open space conservation plan to plan for strategically located development on a citywide scale
- ◆ Encourage mixed-use development in neighborhood commercial districts and in defined locations along traffic corridors by zoning target areas as Gathering Places
- ◆ Conduct vacant/underutilized property survey
- ◆ Reference the Charleston County Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan to advance regional open space planning
- ◆ To maintain a diversity of uses, disallow the automatic down-zoning of existing commercial or mixed-use properties to residential use



**3.19** *The 1974 Plan described Charleston's skyline as "a vital part of the total city scene." To protect this feature, the Downtown Plan height study should be expanded.*



3.20 Waterfront Park, 2007

- ◆ Change zoning to encourage traditionally mixed-use buildings to be reused for neighborhood-friendly commercial uses
- ◆ Study adjustment of parking requirements in areas classified as transitional zones by the character map to encourage appropriate redevelopment
- ◆ Publicize the MU-1/WH and MU-2/WH Districts, which offer incentives for provision of affordable housing
- ❖ Require developers to include a minimum of 20 percent below-market-rate units in all multifamily residential projects of ten units or more (also known as inclusionary zoning)<sup>8</sup> L

- ◆ Encourage reuse of historic neighborhood commercial buildings through rezoning incentives and public education about rehabilitation incentives for historic buildings
- ◆ Follow recommendations of the 2003 City of Charleston Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2012 for developing additional parks

#### Open Space

- ◆ Set public open space requirement for new development
- ◆ Define and protect wetlands
- ❖ Create additional opportunities for public waterfront access, in part by requiring private riverside developments to provide publicly accessible docks (Figure 3.21)

#### Illumination

- ◆ Establish appropriate lighting as a salient issue in Charleston, especially in historic districts and the approaches to them
- ◆ Adopt lighting regulations for Charleston, with special attention to the historic districts L



3.21 Additional opportunities exist for public waterfront development, as illustrated in the Charleston 2000 Plan. These opportunities should be identified city-wide.

## Design Review

Design review affects every person who cares about Charleston’s built environment. This section provides a framework for reviewing minor rehabilitation projects, large new developments, and everything in between. Here are recommendations that help the Preservation Ordinance and protected areas to better reflect expanded city limits and fresh concepts of historic preservation. Here, too, is discussion of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR), the primary instrument of historic preservation in the city.

The Design Review section straddles theory and practice, principle and policy. It responds to changes in the real and political landscape of the city and recommends a forward-thinking vision and practical adjustments to guide Charleston into the future.

As the Preservation Ordinance establishes the foundation for and extent of BAR authority, many of the recommendations in this section suggest alterations to this Ordinance. For readability, however, the Preservation Ordinance subsection contains only major recommended changes. Other subsections introduce more focused changes.

### Preservation Ordinance

The Preservation Ordinance, the basis of the pioneering preservation movement in Charleston, articulates a commitment to strengthening the city through preserva-

tion of its buildings, neighborhoods, and open space. Located in Article II, Part 6 of the Zoning Ordinance, it sets forth the BAR’s mission: to preserve and protect “the old historic or architecturally worthy structures and quaint neighborhoods.” It outlines the geographic purview and regulatory authority of the BAR, along with the review process and application requirements.

### A Common Framework

This Plan affirms the Preservation Ordinance and the responsibility of the BAR to “prevent developments which are not in harmony with the prevailing character of Charleston.” However, since the Ordinance was first written in 1931, Charleston has changed dramatically. The Lower Peninsula remains the historic heart of the city, but the rapid development and annexation policies of the last several decades have added more buildings, more people, and consequently more potential for confusion over historic preservation processes and even what “harmony” means. Significant past and projected growth require continuing stewardship of existing historic areas—and a visionary growth plan to ensure that new development contributes to Charleston’s unique history.

Established standards, vision, and design principles are needed so that the Board of Architectural Review can effectively evaluate an unprecedented variety and number of projects. Some ambiguity allows the BAR and its staff to use their best judgment, ensuring the flexibility



3.22 *King Street, circa 1905*

necessary for a growing, diverse place, but clear and defensible standards will provide an invaluable framework for evaluating historic structures and landscapes. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties provide widely accepted guidelines for changes to historic buildings, with room for flexibility on a case-by-case basis. The Secretary’s Standards should be included in staff, BAR, and public education and cited in relevant applications and BAR decisions.

## Secretary of the Interior's Standards

*The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (Standards) are set of guidelines for the appropriate management of historic resources. The Standards are utilized by Federal agencies and many local government bodies as a tool for understanding, describing, and evaluating rehabilitative work on historic properties. The Standards provide guidelines for four treatments of historic properties: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. Of these four treatments, the *Standards for Rehabilitation* are the most widely used:

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. Archaeological 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 shall 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 such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

*Though younger resources may be less traditionally “historic” than the Lower Peninsula, they should be recognized and protected.*

Just as the Secretary’s Standards establish a basic framework for preservation decisions, the Charleston Vision and urban design principles set forth in this Plan, along with a Charleston-specific overlay to the Secretary’s Standards, should create a common foundation for preservation of place in Charleston. These vision statements and principles set a course for the BAR, City government, and residents to ensure that Charleston’s growth will reinforce its unique sense of place for decades to come.

In most of the country, landmarks are lauded as outstanding historic resources or paramount examples of architecture or culture. In Charleston, designated landmarks are properties outside protected areas that are recognized as worthy of protection. To better reflect the status of these properties, the Landmark Overlay should be renamed the Protected Resources Overlay, with its components called Protected Resources. All properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places should be added to the Protected Resources Overlay, and the Preservation Ordinance should establish a process open to the public for designating other local resources as Protected Resources.

Other smaller changes to the Preservation Ordinance will address persistent issues. The Ordinance should censure demolition by neglect, or the willful neglect of a deteriorating property in order to obtain permission for demolition, and create authority and procedures for BAR City staff to enforce this regulation. It should be cross-referenced with the Tree Ordinance to emphasize

the importance of preserving trees as sustainers of the city’s historic character. It should condemn inappropriate lighting in historic areas. (See Land Use and Regulation.) Finally, it should establish a procedure for creating, updating, and publicizing new BAR policies.

- ◆ Apply the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as the formal basis for project evaluation, with a Charleston Standards Overlay
- ❖ Establish urban design principles as citywide policy
- ◆ Review all façades for Category 1 and 2 buildings
- ❖ Amend the Preservation Ordinance to clarify enforcement procedures for the BAR
- ◆ Establish demolition by neglect as an issue under BAR purview
- ◆ Redefine the Landmark Overlay as the Protected Resources Overlay
- ◆ Establish and communicate a Protected Resources designation process; establish means for public input to promote designation and inform the City in making designation decisions
- ◆ Cross-reference the Tree Ordinance with the Preservation Ordinance

### Expanded Areas of Protection

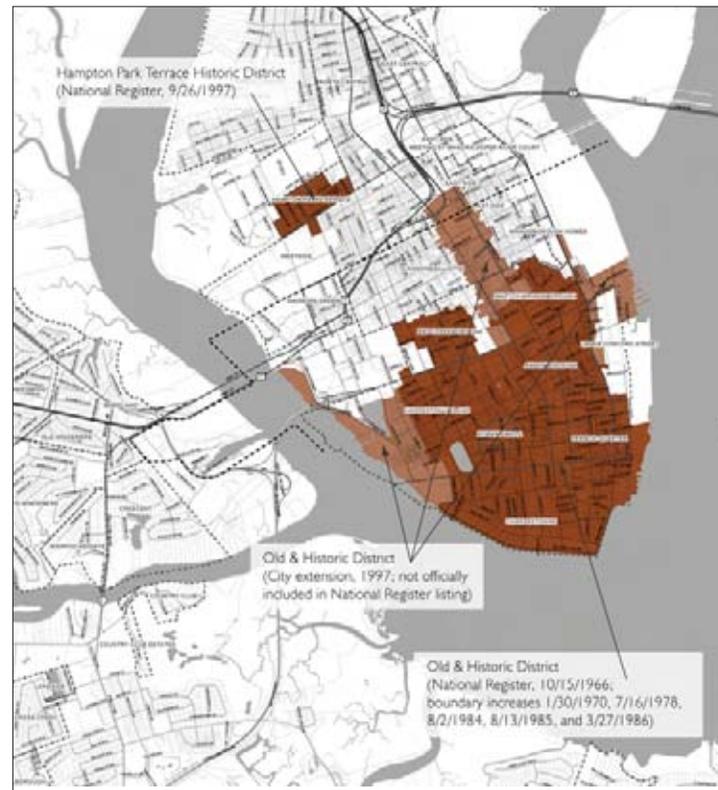
The passage of time, additional research, and an assertive annexation policy have resulted in a greater number of buildings recognized as potential historic resources. The Mid-Peninsula, Upper Peninsula, West Ashley, and James and Johns Islands contain built resources that also speak to the city’s history. Though some of these resources may be less traditionally “historic” than the Lower Peninsula, they should be recognized and protected.

The Preservation Ordinance designates the Old and Historic District and the Old City District as local historic districts and provides for BAR oversight of new construction, alterations, and demolitions within them. A major step was made in placing the Old and Historic District under BAR review in 1931, and this district has been expanded three times since then (*Figure 3.23*). Now it is time for another major step.

Three National Register Historic Districts within the city limits currently have little or no BAR oversight (*Figures 3.23-3.25*). These districts, the Hampton Park Terrace National Register Historic District, the Cainho National Register Historic District, and part of the Ashley River National Register Historic District, deserve local as well as national recognition. This recognition should come with protection: these areas should receive the same level of BAR oversight as properties in the Old

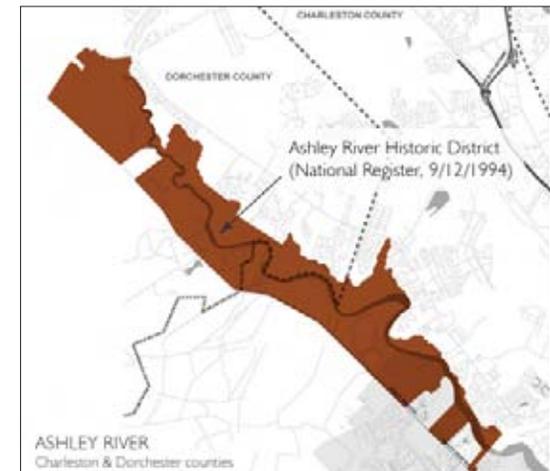
### National Register of Historic Places

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places honors properties that are associated with significant events or people, or that embody distinctive construction or architecture. Listing in the National Register does not come with any obligations unless the Federal government is involved. The Incentives for Preservation section explains some of the benefits that come with National Register listing.

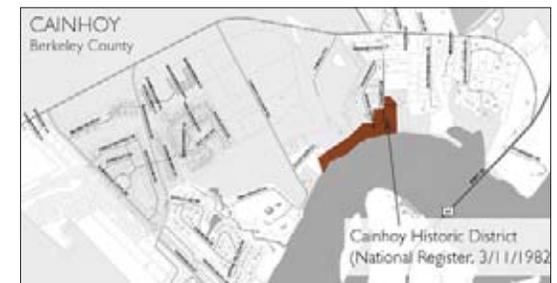


Existing Historic Districts  
(National Register)

Existing Old & Historic District  
(City of Charleston)



ASHLEY RIVER  
Charleston & Dorchester counties

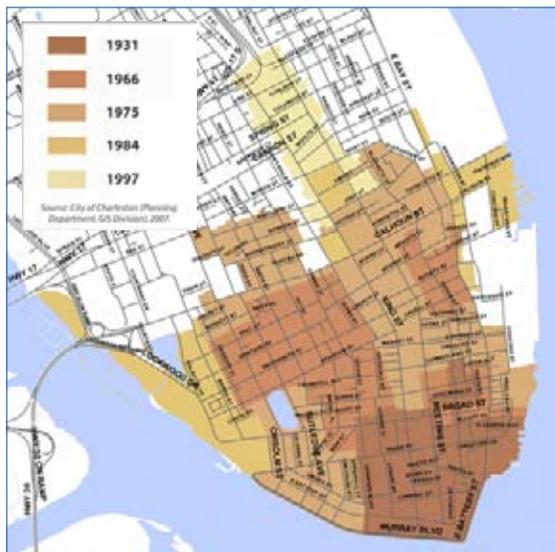


CAINHOJ  
Berkeley County

Cainhoj Historic District  
(National Register, 3/11/1982)

Existing Old City District  
(City of Charleston)

**3.23-3.25** National Register Historic Districts within the city limits include the Old & Historic District, Hampton Park Terrace, Ashley River Historic District, and Cainhoj Historic District. These districts do not currently have uniform levels of BAR oversight.



**3.26** *The local Old & Historic District boundaries have changed over time.*

and Historic District and Protected Resources (formerly called Landmarks).

In 1985, the Geier-Brown-Renfrow Survey determined that the area north of the Charleston National Register Historic District and south of the Crosstown Expressway was eligible for listing on the National Register, and State Historic Preservation Office staff completed a nomination to expand the existing National Register Historic District. However, outreach efforts promoting National

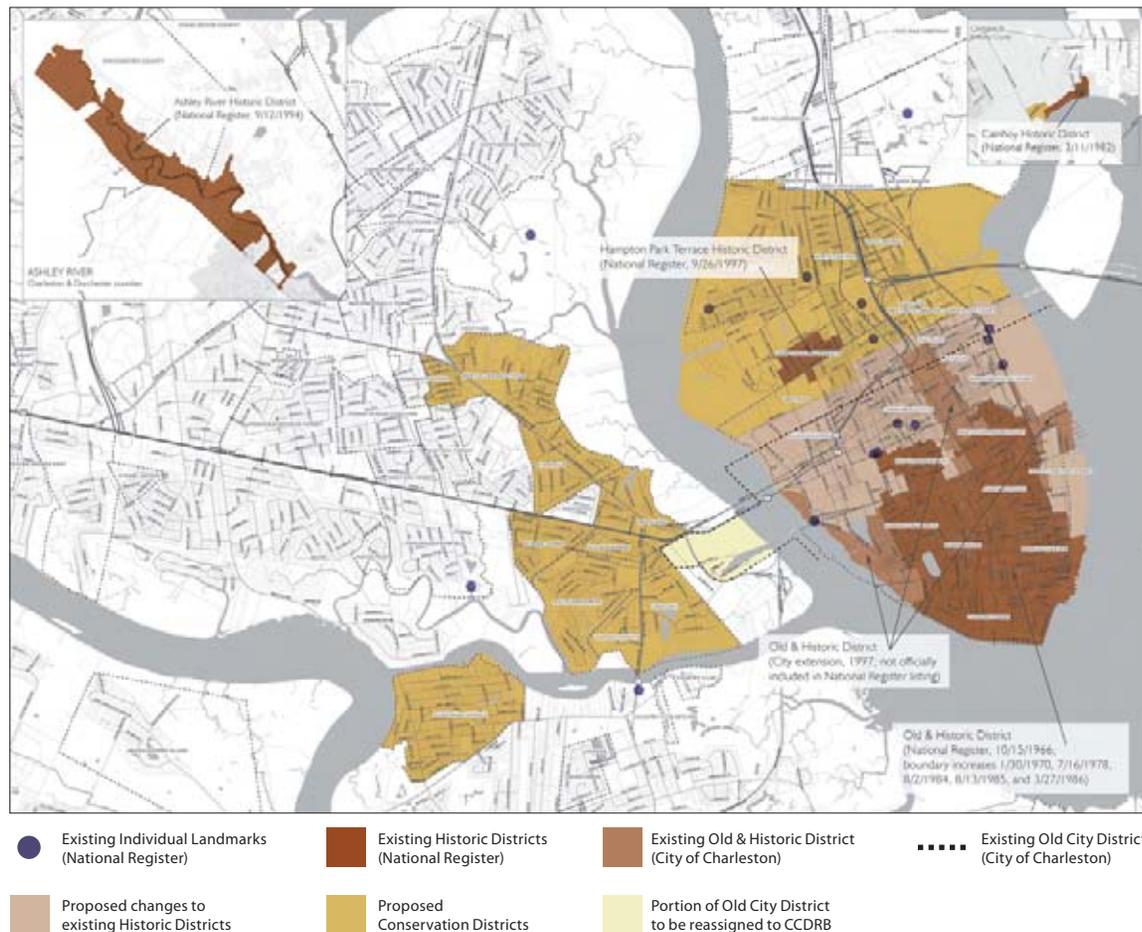
Register status raised alarm among residents about BAR review, increased property values, higher property taxes, rising rents, and displacement of long-term residents by outside speculators. Outreach efforts did not effectively address these concerns, and widespread public outcry led to the proposed expansion not being listed due to owner objection. (Figure 3.26)

Changes to the Zoning Ordinance subsequently expanded the local Old and Historic District to cover the King Street commercial corridor to the Crosstown Expressway, enabling the same level of review as the National Register Historic District without the benefits. The local Old City District, established south of Line Street to protect the numerous historic resources recognized by the survey, faces a similar situation. BAR jurisdiction was expanded to this area, adding a layer of oversight similar to that of the Old and Historic District. Like the King Street addition to the Old and Historic District, the Old City District is eligible for listing as a National Register Historic District and thus is subject to historic resource regulations with none of the advantages that accompany National Register listing.<sup>10</sup> The substantial federal and state tax credits for rehabilitations and federal tax deductions for easements are linked to National Register status. (See Incentives for Preservation.)

This Plan maintains that properties in the 1985 survey are worthy of National Register listing and recommends that the Charleston National Register Historic District be expanded to the 1985 Geier-Brown-Renfrow Survey

boundaries, roughly to the Crosstown Expressway. The listing process must be preceded by extensive community outreach that considers residents' concerns, addresses them effectively, and obtains neighborhood support for the listing. National Register listing makes primary residences eligible for state tax credits, which benefits area homeowners tremendously. With support from property owners, the state's Bailey Bill may be passed by the City, enabling special assessments for rehabilitated historic properties—and low- to moderate-income rental properties. Tax credits for the King Street commercial corridor could help to revitalize the area. Coupled with the provisions for housing affordability in this plan, National Register listing can help all residents, not just homeowners. Benefits of listing in a National Register Historic District are substantial, but without clear communication and a thorough community process, they may never be realized.

Prior to the consideration of the area as a National Register Historic District, the Charleston National Register Historic District was expanded on a building-by-building basis, using the tax credits to spur revitalization projects, but the National Park Service now requires that the eligible district be listed in its entirety or not at all. Though this Plan recommends National Register Historic District expansion to the 1985 survey boundaries, protection and revitalization of historic resources in any measure should be encouraged. The possibility of renewing incremental additions to the National Register Historic District should be explored with the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.



3.27 Map of proposed changes to protected areas, including expansion of historic districts and creation of conservation districts

The introduction of conservation districts provides an opportunity to protect areas important to the context of the City of Charleston. Based on Area Character Appraisals (ACAs), these locally designated districts hold resources that help make Charleston what it is: they make Charleston a city of history, *tout ensemble*, instead of just one or two isolated historic districts. While they may not meet national standards as places essential to Charleston as a whole, conservation districts should receive oversight of new construction and alterations to a lesser degree than the National Register Historic Districts, as well as demolition review. (See Conservation Districts.)

The threshold for demolition review in all areas should be lowered to 50 years. This is especially important for the proposed Peninsula City District, the area bounded by Mt. Pleasant Street on the north and Fishburne and Jackson streets on the south. Upper Peninsula neighborhoods are notable for their cohesion, and oversight of these high concentrations of early to mid-twentieth-century resources should be continued and expanded. Demolition without input could cause widespread erosion of the historic character for which Charleston is famous.

Historic trees add shade, scenery, and a distinctive sense of place to Charleston's rural, urban, and suburban landscapes. Charleston has a Tree Ordinance protecting trees and landscaping, with special attention to "grand trees," defined as 2 feet or more in diameter when measured 3 feet from the ground.<sup>11</sup> A public hearing must occur

before the removal of grand trees, and developers are required to survey existing trees and their sizes before beginning work. The Board of Zoning Appeals—Site Design reviews requests for tree removal.

- ❖ Create the Peninsula City District from the Cross-town Expressway to Mt. Pleasant Street, with BAR demolition review of all properties over 50 years old
- ◆ Refine the boundary of the local Old and Historic District to Fishburne and Jackson streets, including the Sofia Wilson Tract generally bordered by Rutledge Avenue and Sumter, King, and Fishburne streets
- ❖ Apply to expand the Charleston National Register Historic District to the 1985 Geier-Brown-Renfrow Survey boundaries and the Sofia Wilson Tract
- ❖ Extend BAR oversight of new construction, alterations, and demolitions to the Hampton Park Terrace National Register Historic District, the Cainhoy National Register Historic District, the Ashley River National Register Historic District, the William Enston Home National Register Historic District, and all Protected Resources
- ◆ Identify concentrated areas of historic resources outside the historic districts and create conservation districts under the purview of the Commercial Corridor Design Review Board (CCDRB), BAR, and/or another established review board, with re-

view of new construction, alterations, and demolitions of properties over 50 years old (review criteria should be less stringent than those for National Register Historic Districts)

- ◆ Establish review criteria for conservation districts
- ◆ Seek to renew incremental additions to the National Register Historic District, working in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service ■

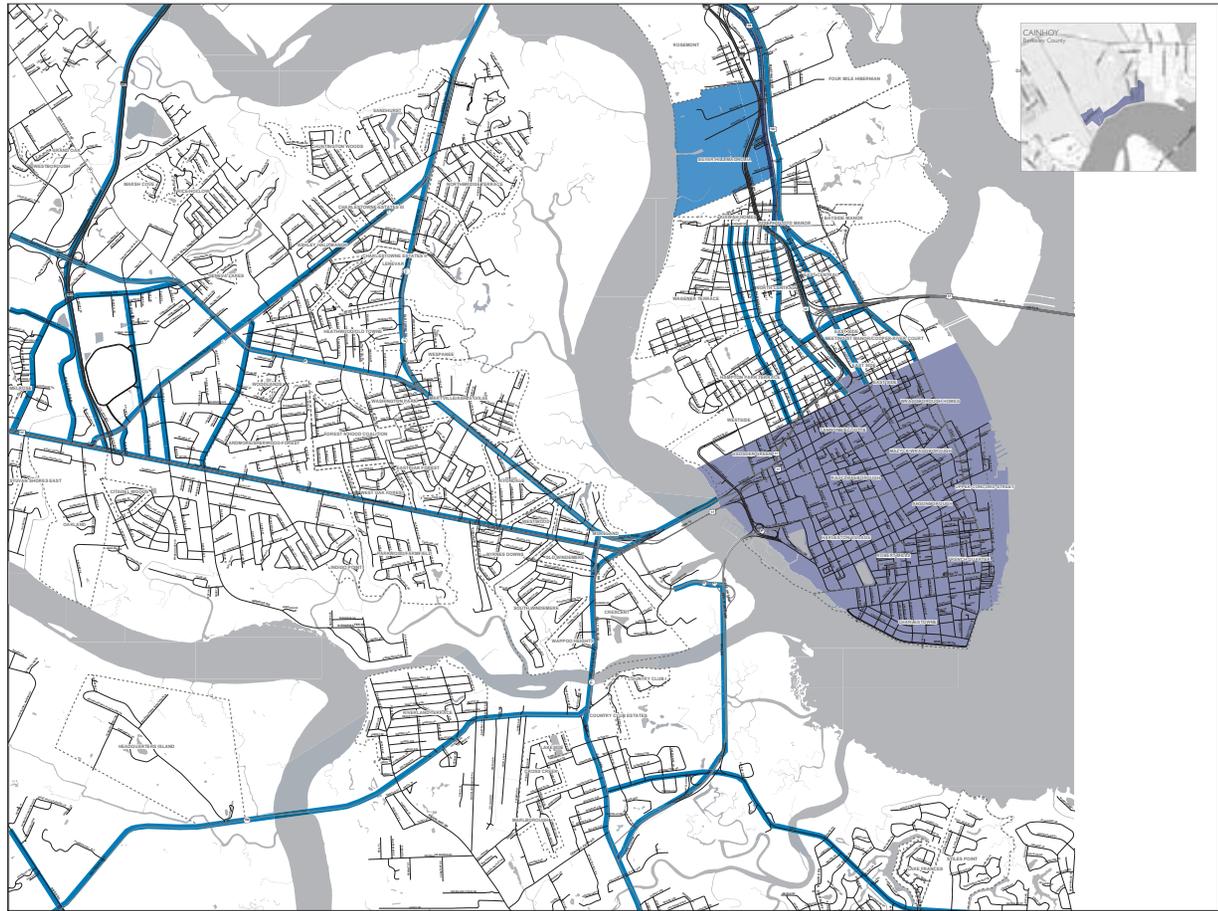
### Rethinking Board Responsibilities

The recommended expansion of BAR jurisdiction and the growing volume of BAR applications create a new need. Realistically, as proposals for development north of Calhoun Street and off-peninsula increase and the Lower Peninsula continues to require attention, the BAR will not have the capacity to consider all project applications. Increasing staff responsibilities, training, and resources will help streamline the review process and enable the BAR to focus more time on Major projects.

However, the BAR may still not have sufficient time to review all projects. The Commercial Corridor Design Review Board (CCDRB) currently reviews commercial and multifamily development and significant changes along major commercial corridors outside the historic districts. This Plan recommends amending the focus of

the CCDRB and expanding its jurisdiction outside designated corridors to include the Neck and conservation districts off-peninsula (*Figures 3.28-3.29*).

- ◆ Extend CCDRB review and jurisdiction to include portions of the Neck not currently under review as well as new conservation districts off the peninsula (excepting Cainhoy)
- ◆ Remove the streets between Calhoun and Mt. Pleasant streets from CCDRB jurisdiction and place them under BAR review



Existing Commercial Corridor Design Review Board (CCDRB) jurisdiction      Existing Board of Architectural Review (BAR) jurisdiction

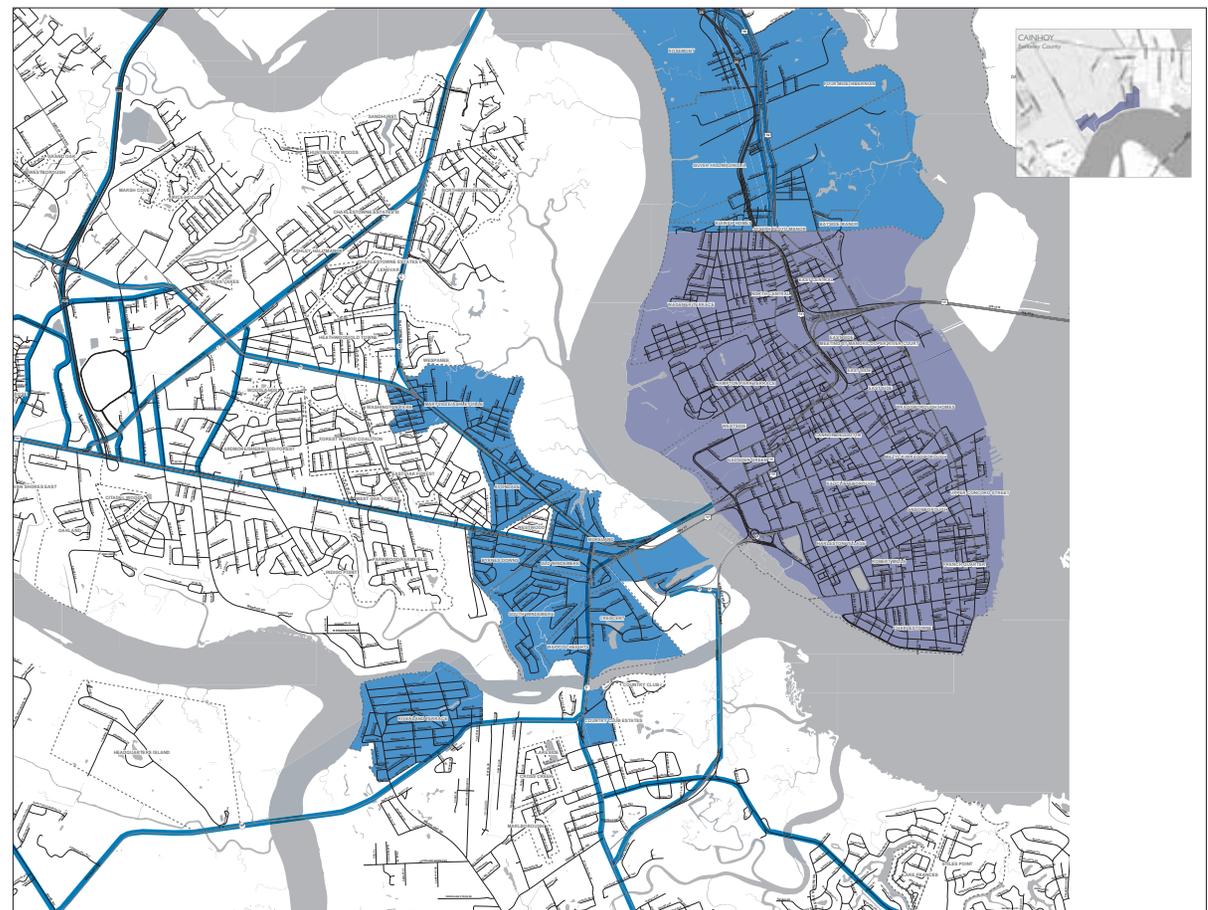
**EXISTING REVIEW**

BAR currently provides minimal review south of Mt. Pleasant St.
<p><b>South of Mt. Pleasant Street</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demolitions or Relocations of Buildings over 75 years</li> </ul>
<p>BAR currently provides various levels of review in the Old &amp; Historic District (Local &amp; National Register) and Old City District</p> <p><b>Old &amp; Historic District (Local/National Register)</b> (see map boundaries)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All Demolitions</li> <li>- New Construction</li> <li>- Exterior Alterations / Modifications</li> </ul> <p><b>Old City District</b> (south of Line Street; Albemarle Point)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demolitions or Relocations of buildings over 75 years</li> <li>- New Construction</li> <li>- Exterior Alterations to structures more than 100 years or listed as 1,2,3 &amp; 4 on the historic inventory map</li> </ul>
<p>BAR currently provides minimal review in Hampton Park Terrace (National Register historic district)</p> <p><b>Hampton Park Terrace National Register District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demolitions or Relocations of buildings over 75 years</li> </ul>
BAR is not currently responsible for any additional areas
<p>BAR currently reviews individual city landmarks</p> <p><b>City Landmark</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demolitions</li> <li>- Exterior Alterations / Modifications</li> </ul>

3.28 Existing jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and the Commercial Corridor Design Review Board (CCDRB).

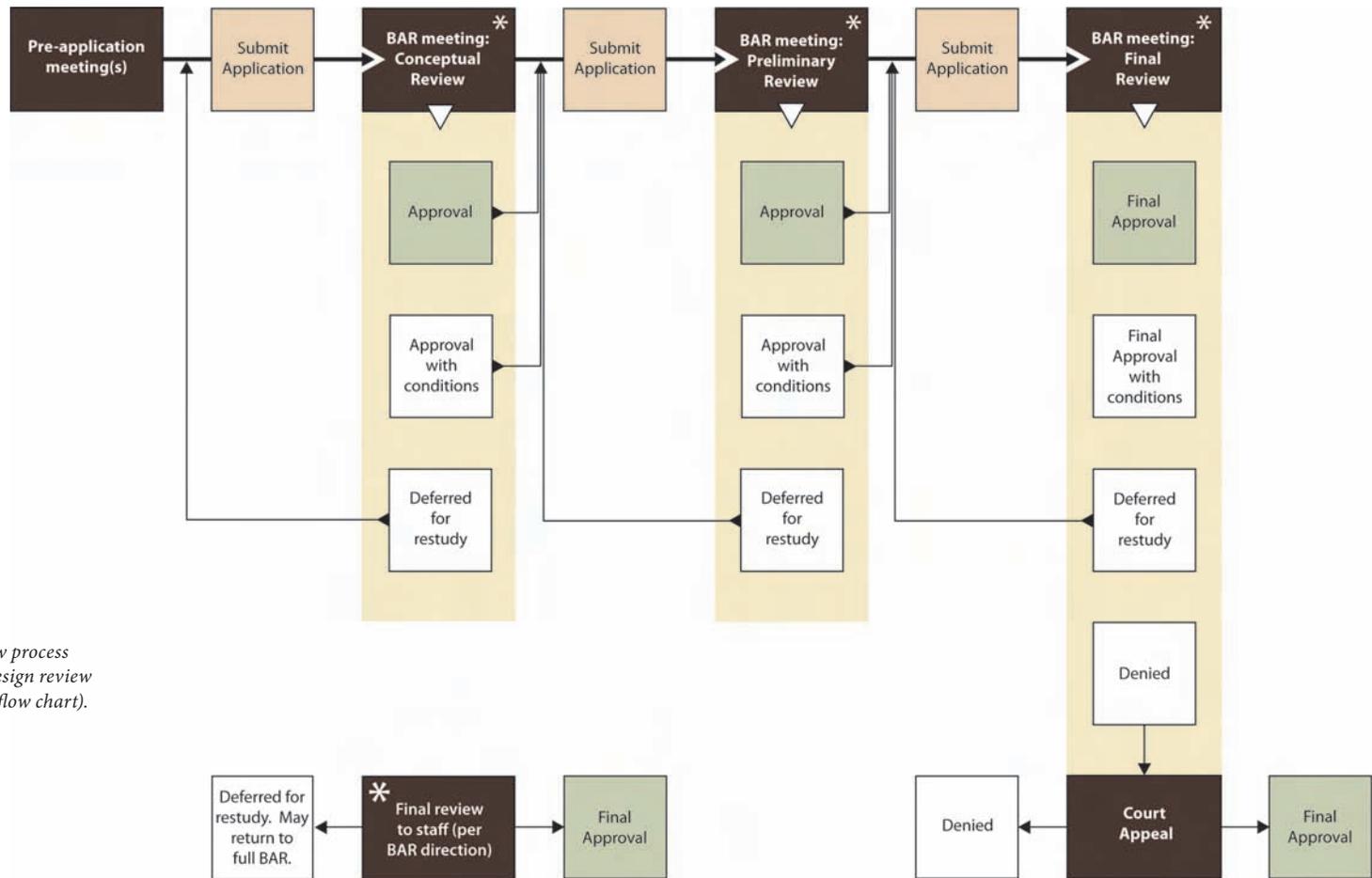
**PROPOSED REVIEW**

Create "Peninsula City District" to receive expanded BAR review
<p><b>"Peninsula City District"</b>  <i>(South of Mt. Pleasant Street to the Old &amp; Historic District)</i>                  Short-Term:                  - Demolitions or Relocations of buildings over 50 years                  Long-Term:                  - New Construction                  - Exterior Alterations / Modifications</p>
Consolidate and redefine boundaries of Old & Historic District, and create uniform level of BAR review throughout
<p><b>Old &amp; Historic District (Local/National Register)</b>  <i>(South of Fishburne &amp; Jackson streets, plus the Rutledge-King-Sumter Sofia Wilson Tract)</i>                  - All Demolitions                  - New Construction                  - Exterior Alterations / Modifications                  - Review all facades for Category I &amp; II buildings</p>
<p><b>Former Old City District</b>  <i>(south of Line Street, Albemarle Point)</i>                  - BAR review south of Line Street (same as Old &amp; Historic District)                  - CCDRB review in Albemarle Point</p>
Expand BAR responsibilities in Hampton Park Terrace & other National Register historic districts
<p><b>All National Register Historic Districts</b>                  - All Demolitions or Relocations                  - New Construction                  - Exterior Alterations / Modifications</p>
Create Conservation Districts with BAR or CCDRB review
<p><b>Conservation Districts</b>                  - Demolitions of buildings over 50 years                  - New Construction: No review if consistent with area character appraisal                  - Exterior Alterations / Modifications: No review if consistent with area character appraisal                  - BAR reviews peninsula and Cainhoj Conservation Districts;                  CCDRB reviews all other off-peninsula Conservation Districts</p>
Continue BAR review of individually recognized historic resources
<p><b>Protected Resource</b>                  - Demolitions                  - Exterior Alterations / Modifications</p>



Proposed Commercial Corridor Design Review Board (CCDRB) jurisdiction
  Proposed Board of Architectural Review (BAR) jurisdiction

3.29 Proposed jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and the Commercial Corridor Design Review Board (CCDRB).



3.30 A clear, consistent review process must accompany changes in design review standards (right: BAR process flow chart).

## Review Process

Preservation is not sustainable unless it is accessible to everyone. Public involvement and investment in historic resources helps ensure that preserving and enhancing those resources remains a priority. To promote preservation as a tool for the entire community, procedures must be clarified and translated into language that citizens and developers alike can understand.

Consistent standards are key in the review process. The Charleston Vision and urban design principles should serve as overarching ideals for shaping the city, and employing the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties ("Secretary's Standards") with a Charleston Standards Overlay will provide clear guidelines for the project applicant, City staff, and BAR members. Area Character Appraisals (ACAs) will tailor the review process to protect character-defining features of particular neighborhoods.

A clear procedure must accompany unambiguous standards (*Figure 3.30*). Three formal review tracks based on project size and complexity should be established for Staff-Level, Regular, and Major projects, with well-defined eligibility and procedures for each track. Neighborhood participation should continue to be promoted as part of the review process, with applicants strongly encouraged to meet with neighborhood associations prior to Board review.

In addition to providing more clarity around the review process, continuing growth requires increased coordination and oversight by the BAR and the Department of Planning, Preservation and Economic Innovation. Potential development sites should be mapped to maintain an ongoing record of major short- and long-term changes and enable a comprehensive approach to planning. To more fully protect historic resources, preservation review should expand beyond the Old City and Old and Historic Districts (see Expanded Areas of Protection). A process should be established for BAR review of suspected instances of demolition by neglect.

Recommended changes to requirements give more responsibility—and more resources—to the applicant. An applicant statement of how the project complies with the Secretary's Standards will provide a basis for evaluation that is understood by the applicant, staff, and BAR members. Requiring a project model and historical research on the property in some cases will help all involved parties to understand the visual impact and the property's history, respectively.

This Plan recommends charging an initial flat application fee for all project reviews, with a scaled bonus fee (based on the construction contract) due upon issuance of the building permit. The bonus fee should be allocated to fund process improvements or incentive programs related to historic preservation. For example, bonus fees might cover review fees and/or rehabilitation grants

for historic property owned by low-income earners who have been approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

## Project Process

- ◆ At every stage of review, articulate findings that lead to approval, deferral, or denial of a project
- ◆ Establish three formal review tracks for Staff-Level, Regular, and Major projects
- ◆ Codify eligibility and procedures for all review tracks; make clear process charts available to public
- ◆ More formally define conceptual approval to ensure that projects approved for height, scale, and mass will not be reevaluated on those aspects at a later approval stage
- ◆ Use ACAs to assess development proposals in the neighborhood context
- ❖ Assess a project's impact on archaeology as part of the permitting and review process if it falls inside an Archaeology Zone (see Archaeology)
- ◆ Formalize participation of preservation staff in the Technical Review Committee project forum to review pre-applications for Major projects and anticipate future difficulties

- ◆ Increase BAR support-staff capacity and training, along with increased staff-level review; periodically analyze staff capacity and need for growth
- ◆ Publish staff-level approvals online for projects within BAR purview or conservation districts

#### Requirements and Fees

- ◆ Require applicants to state how projects comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties ("Secretary's Standards") and the Charleston Standards Overlay
- ◆ Require historic background research as part of project applications for Regular and Major projects
- ◆ Require models that show building context for all Major projects and Regular projects in sensitive areas
- ◆ Charge flat application fee for project review, with a scaled bonus fee due upon issuance of building permit; direct bonus fees to a fund to cover review fees and/or rehabilitation grants for owner-occupied low- to moderate-income housing
- ❖ Charge an archaeology fee for projects that fall inside specified Archaeology Zones

#### Deadlines

- ◆ Extend review period for Major projects to allow additional study by the public and BAR members
- ◆ Post a hearing notice on the affected property 7 days before the BAR meeting at which a project application will be heard
- ◆ Provide the application packet in either hard copy or electronic format to board members 7 days before the meeting

#### City Standards

- ❖ Create methods for determining the impact of Major projects or projects in sensitive areas: a citywide 3-D digital model (for visual impact), a Citywide Transportation Plan, and traffic studies for individual Major developments
- ◆ On the City's website, provide historic guidelines, survey area maps, and links to the State Historic Preservation Office website and other relevant resources
- ◆ Use BAR files of individual buildings when reviewing neighboring properties or the same buildings at a later time
- ❖ Consider a form-based approach to zoning **A**

*Preservation is not sustainable unless it is accessible to everyone.*

## Public Participation

Public participation in the review process creates support for and awareness of historic resources. A review process that includes a variety of community members can broaden the scope of the preservation movement to more fully incorporate the histories of traditionally underrepresented groups or areas of the city. Though public comment should not determine Board decisions, it should inform them.

During the public process for this Preservation Plan, efforts were made to include the African American community. The Charleston preservation community has been primarily composed of white citizens, and it was difficult to involve African American Charlestonians, even with a concerted campaign. The proposed Charleston African American Preservation Alliance would optimally continue the work of reaching out to African Americans and engaging them in the important work of preserving the buildings and communities of Charleston. The Alliance would research, document, and publicize African American built heritage and encourage more public participation in preserving it, in partnership with the state-level African American Heritage Commission. The planned International African American Museum and future Borough Houses projects should also help demonstrate that preservation is relevant to all communities.

Several of the measures recommended below are already done by the City; however, the procedures should be codified in order to ensure consistency.

### Improve Access to Information

- ◆ Develop a campaign to improve public perception of the BAR and to educate people on BAR procedures

### Increase Public Participation

- ◆ Support formation of a Charleston African American Preservation Alliance
- ◆ Encourage all neighborhood councils within the historic districts to create preservation subcommittees to monitor and respond to proposed projects
- ◆ Strongly encourage applicants to present Major projects to the neighborhood council before the initial BAR hearing, in addition to public comment at the application hearing
- ◆ Create volunteering and/or job training opportunities for community members in the proposed salvage program (see Materials)



**3.31-3.32** Public participation is an essential component of the review process

## Enforcement

Like the review process, enforcement practices may seem oblique to outsiders. Explaining timelines and penalties in publicly available materials will raise awareness and reduce the need for penalties, while codifying enforcement responsibilities in the Preservation Ordinance will establish clear authority and responsibility. Expanded educational programs should preclude enforcement as a response to ignorance or misunderstanding.

Direct improvements in the enforcement system will increase both confidence in ordinances and motivation to act in compliance with them. Ensuring consistent interpretation and enforcement of ordinances throughout the city and between cases should be a priority. Addressing demolition by neglect, tracking work after permit issuance, and penalizing work without permits are other salient issues.

Current practice does not reflect stated procedures. While the zoning code states that the building inspector will monitor the project, it is the Department of Planning, Preservation and Economic Innovation that tracks violations and brings the case to Livability Court if unresolved. Thus, lack of staff hours reduces enforcement of BAR decisions. Responsibility for addressing violations must be delegated more clearly.

Livability Court was created in 2002 to handle minor disturbances and ordinance violations, including preservation-related issues. A partnership of judges, code enforcement officers, and police officers operates Livability Court, which heard over 1,300 cases in 2006.<sup>12</sup> The issues it addresses seem minor in comparison with larger crimes heard in Municipal Court but can be central to quality of life. Great potential exists for continuing cooperation between the preservation community, the City, and Livability Court.

## Process

- ◆ Amend the Preservation Ordinance to clarify enforcement procedures for the BAR
- ◆ Budget to allow for more staff to enforce BAR regulations
- ◆ Work with the Building Inspections Division to explore ways to better link the two departments and streamline code violation enforcement
- ◆ Provide a website and dedicated phone line to allow the public to report any violations or unauthorized construction activity
- ◆ Incorporate enforcement procedures—including timelines and fines—in handouts explaining the BAR process and on the City's website

## Penalties

- ◆ Increase fines for repeat offenders and more significant violations, and channel penalty fines into a grant program or revolving loan fund for repairing low-income historic houses **L**
- ◆ Institute penalties for buildings demolished without approval
- ◆ Revoke business and contractor licenses as the penalty for repeated or significant violations **L**
- ◆ Set firmer deadlines for Livability Court-mandated actions



3.33 *Demolition by neglect should be penalized.*



3.34-3.35 *Interesting historic details are part of the city's building fabric.*



## Materials

All buildings should employ high-quality materials in keeping with Charleston's rich heritage. Charleston can and should expect materials and designs on the same level with its architectural fabric. No exceptions should be made: the real estate market, the booming economy, and Charleston's reputation allow the city to demand more.

The BAR currently reviews new and replacement materials. In-kind replacements go through staff-level review, and the BAR reviews changes in materials unless an equivalent substitute is used. This process should remain in place, with the addition of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties for evaluating replacement materials.

Materials on new buildings should meet standards for quality, longevity, context, and scale. Materials should have stood the test of time. Furthermore, materials should show the quality of the design and craftsmanship; spray-on stucco will not do justice to a building's fine design. New materials and methods proposed for historic buildings—e.g., liquid vinyl, elastomeric paint, and masonry sealers—should be reviewed with extreme caution, with applicants required to demonstrate the need for use and that the methods will not damage the historic fabric.

The Secretary's Standards require that deteriorated materials on historic buildings be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. The presence of local contractors accustomed to working on historic buildings, as well as preservation education programs, should be capitalized on through creative partnerships to ensure that historic buildings receive appropriate repairs. Workshops and educational programs could provide low-cost consultations to homeowners of all income levels and promote the inherent benefits and sustainability of retaining existing materials.

Replacement should be the last option considered, as it has the very real potential to damage the building's integrity.<sup>13</sup> When replacement is necessary, replacing deteriorated items with matching salvaged historical materials (in-kind replacement) is preferable. In-kind replacement helps protect the building's architectural integrity, or the authenticity of its historical identity. New elements crafted to match may be acceptable if no matching historical materials are available or if the historical materials have demonstrated inherent flaws. New nonmatching materials should be avoided.

The BAR can and should make judgments on how replacement materials affect a building's integrity. In some cases, a deteriorated building is not repaired because of perceived costs of materials and/or misconceptions around the BAR review process. Public education about the review process can help demystify the review process, but the first concern remains: historically appropri-

ate, well-installed repair and replacement materials for historic houses may be more expensive than cheap siding and windows. The investment will pay off in the long term due to the higher durability and quality of the materials, but initial costs still may be prohibitive for lower-income building owners.

Standards should not be compromised, but they must be flexible enough to ensure that historic preservation can be supported by the entire community. High, inflexible standards may make repairs financially impossible for some building owners, increase the possibility of demolition by neglect, and drive up the cost of affordable housing. Thresholds can help determine where less-expensive replacement materials are acceptable. A tiered threshold that considers owner income, level of building deterioration, and historic significance should be established by the BAR, the Building Inspections Division, and the Department of Housing and Community Development and specifically referenced in BAR decisions. The development review/affordable housing liaison would serve as an advocate for affordable housing and adviser to the BAR. He or she would set a threshold for a collection of properties and make recommendations to the BAR on the appropriateness of nonhistoric replacement materials.

Flexibility should be used in circumstances in which the benefit to the public good outweighs or is comparable to the benefits of preservation by the letter of the law. A public good might include circumstances that



**3.36** Ideally, weathered materials should be repaired, or replaced in kind if repair is not possible.

allow long-term retention of the following: very low- to low-income homeowners, historic building form and function, housing stock for very low- to low-income earners, or the social and cultural heritage of the district or area. However, even in affordable housing projects, where lower-cost materials may be permissible to allow project feasibility, obviously cheap materials or shoddy workmanship should not be tolerated. Gap financing and low-interest loans from a revolving loan fund could enable necessary repairs when cheaper replacement materials are not appropriate.

### Recommendations

- ◆ Require the use of quality materials that have proven themselves over time
- ◆ Conduct public education about the inherent benefits of older, historic materials
- ❖ Publish a Preservation Manual for Charleston that details types of buildings and materials, as well as an explanation of the Secretary's Standards and recommendations for conserving and adapting buildings for modern use<sup>14</sup> **A**
- ❖ Articulate circumstances in which the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties might allow more cost-efficient materials to be used in affordable housing rehabilitation projects<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ Organize a salvage program, such as the warehouse run by the Historic Charleston Foundation
- ◆ Provide rehabilitation consultation sessions and workshops to homeowners and tenants through a nonprofit-run educational program

### Interiors

A strong history of preservation is evident in the historic resources of the city's local historic districts. However, some resources are still not addressed by current preservation policies. Protecting historic interiors requires thoughtful discussion and well-crafted strategies. Many of the interiors of Charleston buildings are world-class examples of design and craftsmanship (*Figure 3.37*).

The desire to adapt historic buildings to modern preferences such as large kitchens, spacious bathrooms, and open floor plans threatens many of Charleston's historic interiors. Refitting historic interiors can involve indiscriminate gutting of irreplaceable historic components: wood floors, wood- and plasterwork, and even entire floor plans.<sup>16</sup> Property rights issues make landmarking private interiors difficult, but public education and incentives can encourage interior preservation through other means.

### Recommendations

- ◆ Adopt an ordinance enabling interiors of publicly owned Category 1 and 2 buildings to be protected through BAR review **L**

- ❖ Include historic interiors in the survey rating system
- ❖ Increase education for prospective property buyers, real estate agents, contractors, architects, and current owners on the value of retaining historic interior materials and finishes
- ◆ Require that demolition plans and existing conditions photographs be part of the design review submittal for Category 1 and 2 building projects
- ❖ Require Historic American Building Survey (HABS) Level II extensive photo documentation of interiors in historic district and landmark buildings that will be drastically altered **L**
- ◆ Encourage donations of easements on privately owned interiors through better publicity and more incentives from the easement-holding organization (*Figure 3.39*)
- ◆ Set a precedent by encouraging the donation of easements on publicly accessible interiors of publicly owned historic buildings
- ◆ Encourage property owners who remove historic elements to salvage and store them on-site in basements or attics, or to donate them to a salvage program

*Many of Charleston's building interiors are world-class examples of design and craftsmanship.*



3.37 Drawing room of the Aiken-Rhett House (built 1818).



3.38 Historic interior materials and finishes are important examples of architectural craftsmanship, but can be threatened by remodels.



3.39 Easements on privately-owned interiors protect them from inappropriate alterations. Historic Charleston Foundation owns an easement on this home in the Old & Historic District.



3.40 National Park Service preservation briefs and similar publications should be widely available for city staff members, BAR members, and the general public.

## Preservation Education

No one can argue that Charlestonians aren't aware of their surroundings. Buildings are hot topics at social gatherings, and citizens often align historic preservation with quality of life. Despite this, many real estate agents, contractors, homeowners, and other community members lack basic knowledge about what preservation is, how it is practiced responsibly, and how decisions about preservation are made in Charleston.

Applicants and prospective applicants should know what to expect in review processes, as well as the basic when, how, and why involved in BAR and staff decisions. Beyond familiarity with the procedural nuts and bolts, every Charlestonian should have the opportunity to learn what makes the city's fabric unique, from the urban Lower Peninsula and Mid-Peninsula areas to the suburbs of West Ashley to the landscapes and archaeology of rural Johns Island.

Existing educational and informational resources for the public should be expanded to increase awareness of design principles and project review processes, neighborhood histories, and historic resources from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A regular preservation bulletin series might explore issues in depth and be made available to members of the public as well as the BAR. Improving the accessibility and publicity of such materials should be a priority, with unconventional forums such as churches used to reach traditionally underrepresented groups.

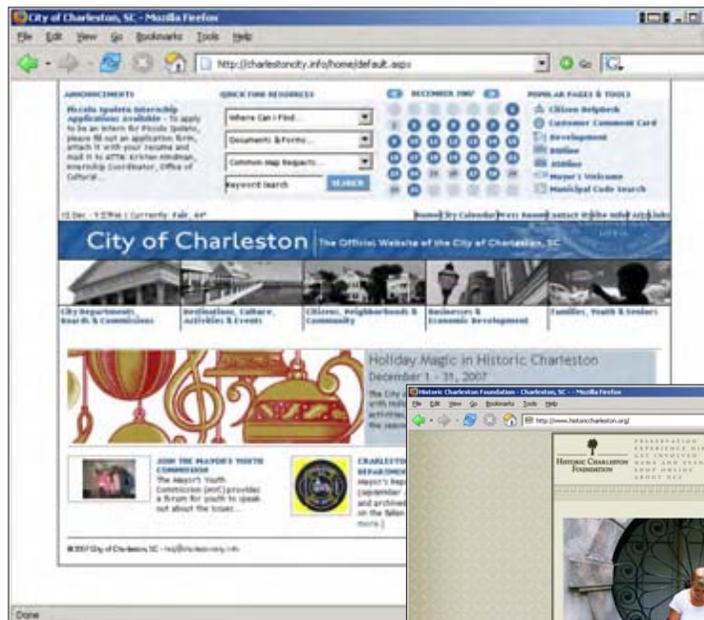
A comprehensive education process for BAR members and staff will increase the efficiency and consistency of application review. Mandatory orientation for new members and staff should cover general preservation topics such as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, urban design principles, National Park Service preservation briefs, the sustainability-preservation juncture, and affordable housing challenges; as well as Charleston-specific issues such as Area Character Appraisals (ACAs), piazzas and gardens, the single-house style, and how FEMA regulations affect preservation. Mandatory continuing education should review orientation material and explore more nuanced issues (Figure 3.40).

A "recent projects" review/critique will allow identification of successes and failures.

### Educate the Public

- ❖ Encourage local preservation organizations to staff an educational program, with community education seminars and presentations that reach out to and engage all areas or neighborhoods
- ❖ Publish a Preservation Manual for Charleston that details types of buildings and materials, as well as an explanation of the Secretary's Standards and recommendations for conserving and adapting buildings for modern use<sup>17</sup> **A**

- ◆ The following materials should be widely publicized and made available to community members: relevant ordinances, processes and procedures, public notices of BAR meetings and decisions, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, preservation bulletins, Sanborn maps, best practices of preservation, and guidelines on how to conduct research on historic properties
- ◆ Use the Civic Design Center as a forum to educate and engage the community on important preservation topics and relevant design issues
- ◆ Provide web links to related organizations and programs: historic preservation, affordable housing, award-winning projects, etc.
- ◆ Provide welcome packets at real estate agents' offices which illustrate spaces that have been rehabilitated according to the Secretary's Standards
- ❖ Increase education for prospective property buyers and current owners on the value of retaining historic interior materials and finishes
- ❖ Partner with schools, contractors, and artisans to do energy-efficient retrofits, training in sensitive rehabilitation and traditional building trades, and window repair<sup>18</sup>
- ❖ Educate the public about archaeology



3.41-3.42 The websites of local preservation and government organizations offer information about preservation-related issues and events.



- ◆ Work with congregations that own significant historic buildings and cemeteries to educate the public and preserve the historic fabric
- ◆ Expand home tour programs to include historic homes of a variety of styles and scales, or those that have won preservation awards in the past
- ◆ Encourage the Historic Charleston Foundation and the Preservation Society of Charleston to reassess the financial value of easements as associated with their donation fee requirements, increase the fees, and use the additional revenue to staff education programs

#### **Educate BAR, CCDRB, and Staff**

- ◆ Expand Board orientation and continuing education program to provide all members with common understanding of standards, different types of projects, and vernacular Charleston architecture and twentieth-century architecture
- ◆ Provide continuing education for staff members to ensure common background on preservation issues and improve speed and consistency of review process
- ◆ Budget for preservation/Board staff to allow for continuing education opportunities through conferences, seminars, etc.

- ◆ Continue and strengthen annual review of BAR-approved projects to identify and learn from successes and failures

#### **Educate Professionals**

- ◆ Offer preservation seminars and workshops to real estate agents and contractors
- ◆ Introduce contractor accreditation/continuing education unit program through local historic preservation organizations and colleges
- ◆ Consider ways to educate banks and insurance agencies about historic preservation

*Benefits of historic preservation include identity and pride, economic stimulators, and property values.*

## Incentives for Preservation

Providing incentives for historic preservation acknowledges its benefits for the whole community: identity and pride, economic stimulators such as tourism, and property values. When private property is involved, incentives help establish common ground between private property rights and the public good.

### Existing Incentives

A number of programs encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings and property. However, these programs often operate under the radar of public awareness.

*Tax Credits:* The federal 20 percent Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit allows 20 percent of rehabilitation costs of historic income-producing properties to be counted as a tax credit.<sup>19</sup> (In this case, “historic” is judged by a property’s listing on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as contributing to the character of a listed Historic District.) The federal 10 percent Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit allows a 10 percent tax credit to be taken for a substantial rehabilitation of nonresidential buildings built before 1936 and not listed on the National Register or in a National Register Historic District. At the state level, the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit allows 25 percent of the rehabilitation costs of a historic primary residence to be subtracted from state income taxes. South Carolina allows state and federal tax credits to be combined.

### Tools and Incentives for Preservation

- Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credits
- Easements
- Covenants
- Tax Abatement
- Grants
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

A combination of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HRTC) can be used to rehabilitate buildings for affordable housing units. New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) encourage private investors to lend money to smaller projects in low-income areas through Community Development Entities (CDEs) in exchange for tax credits.

*Easements and Covenants:* Easements are a partial interest in property that allows the easement holder to regulate the uses of and changes to historic property without owning the property; this program has tax benefits. Historic Charleston Foundation and the Preservation Society of Charleston both accept easements from



**3.43** Historic Charleston Foundation holds an easement on the Cleland-Wells House at 58 Tradd Street (built 1760).

owners of historic properties, and the Lowcountry Open Land Trust accepts conservation easements throughout the Lowcountry. Covenants are restrictions attached to the deed of a historic property that protect the integrity of the property; these also have tax benefits (*Figure 3.43*).

*Legislation:* The Bailey Bill places a temporary ceiling on a historic building's assessed value to encourage rehabilitation; it prevents taxes from rising due to capital improvements for up to 20 years. It also includes provisions for tax ceilings on low- to moderate-income rental properties. It is a state law (Code of Laws Sections 4-9-195 and 5-21-140) that must be adopted by the municipality. Charleston has not yet adopted it.

*Transfer Development Rights (TDRs):* Transfer Development Rights benefit owners of rural landscapes and historic buildings by allowing developable space—either the land or the airspace above the building that is allowed for development under zoning—to be sold and applied to another building. As the name suggests, TDRs allow development rights to be transferred from one designated area or property to another. “Sending areas” and “receiving areas” are often designated in conjunction with TDRs, where areas of targeted development (such as the Neck) “receive” TDRs “sent” from historic districts or specified cultural/rural areas. South Carolina state law does not currently enable TDRs.

The Charleston County Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan includes a Conservation Toolbox appendix that lists a number of other useful tools for conserving green space, along with the benefits and drawbacks of each. It should be referenced as part of incentive development programs.

### Recommendations

- ❖ Apply to expand the National Register Historic District to the 1985 Geier-Brown-Renfrow Survey boundaries and the Sofia Wilson Tract
- ❖ Campaign for state legislation to explicitly enable Transfer Development Rights (TDRs) to be used from designated historic properties or historic rural/cultural landscapes to other areas of the city targeted for dense development **L**
- ◆ Reduce fees and expedite reviews of designated historic buildings and properties that have easements or covenants<sup>20</sup>
- ◆ Create local incentives, including adopting local property tax incentives (like the Bailey Bill) for historic preservation
- ◆ Encourage Charleston and Berkeley counties to partner with the City of Charleston in enabling and offering TDRs
- ◆ Support state and national legislation that encourages use of historic resources through tax credits and other measures
- ◆ Focus a portion of Tax Increment Financing and Community Development Block Grant funds on reuse and rehabilitation projects in target areas
- ◆ Creatively use transportation funds to support preservation and rehabilitation of historic roadways and commercial corridors
- ◆ Create and publicize an information clearinghouse for preservation-related incentives
- ◆ Encourage existing nonprofit organizations to work in partnership with the City's Redevelopment and Preservation Commission to take advantage of New Markets Tax Credits;<sup>21</sup> the Commission might act as a funding clearinghouse for renovations and maintenance of resident-owned buildings in the Renewal Community
- ◆ Offer support to property owners who may be interested in incentives through “office hours” at local preservation organizations or the City, where citizens can obtain guidance on qualifying and applying for incentives

## Economic Impact

Historic preservation produces direct effects and multiplier effects.<sup>22</sup> A direct effect would be money spent on rehabilitating a historic building, while multiplier effects would include jobs, income, wealth generated, and taxes. In Missouri, an estimated \$346 million spent in one year on historic rehabilitation projects produced significant economic impacts: nearly 14,000 new jobs, \$459 million in income, \$678 million in wealth generated, and \$144 million in taxes.

Preservation plays a similarly important place in Charleston's economy. Rehabilitation projects create construction jobs. Tourism generates service and retail jobs.<sup>23</sup> The resulting income and tax revenues add much more economic activity than can be easily quantified. A portion of the tax revenue should benefit employees of the tourism industry through affordable housing.

Heritage tourism especially is an important multiplier effect of historic preservation and a significant contributor to the Charleston economy. The Charleston area hosted 4.21 million visitors in 2006, each spending an average of \$235 per day.<sup>24</sup> Lodging sales for 2006 were calculated at over \$465 million, and 12 percent of total sales were attributed to tourism. Direct and indirect jobs created by tourism numbered 50,000, with the earnings of those jobs totaling \$1.1 billion; total economic impact of tourism in Charleston was figured at \$3.06 million for the year. History, architecture, and culture rated as the top three assets of the area.<sup>25</sup>

A vital city must maintain a diverse economic base. That said, revenue from sustainable tourism will help safeguard Charleston's unique character and cultural identity, from precolonial times to today.<sup>26</sup> Tourism should reflect Charleston's ongoing story, including the years during the World Wars, the Cold War, the beginning of the preservation movement, and events like the Spoleto Festival that celebrate the life and energy in local culture.

### Recommendations

- ◆ Encourage sustainable tourism through high standards for tour companies and showcasing educational attractions
- ◆ Promote exhibits and tours that include Charleston's evolution to the present
- ❖ Petition the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee to direct Accommodations Tax revenue to support housing for employees of the tourism industry **L**



**3.44** Rehabilitation of historic properties plays an important role in Charleston's economy, and many businesses have taken advantage of the city's historic building stock.



**3.45** Heritage tourism is a major contributor to the Charleston economy.

*Charleston's commitment to universal access should be explicitly set forth in City policy.*

## Accessibility

The American Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards mandate that alterations to historic buildings must comply with accessibility regulations, unless compliance would threaten or destroy the historic integrity of the building. The National Park Service echoes this, stating that historic properties should be accessible insofar as possible without compromising the historic significance of the building.

Difficult decisions arise around when and how to make historic buildings accessible to everyone. Public accommodations such as shops, restaurants, and theaters are required by law to make “readily achievable” changes. For changes not deemed readily achievable and for other historic properties open to the public, the options should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with the expectation of providing a high level of access without compromising significant features or the overall character of the property.

Charleston's commitment to universal access should be explicitly set forth in City policy. The National Park Service publication “Making Historic Properties Accessible” provides guidance to owners of historic properties.<sup>27</sup>

### Recommendations

- ◆ Continue the ADA Compliance Office task force that assesses properties' level of accessibility; include preservation representatives
- ◆ In the proposed Preservation Manual, include examples of sensitively designed accessibility features that are well integrated into the historic fabric **A**
- ◆ Make ADA Standards available through the City and preservation organizations, along with an explanation of what they might mean for owners of historic properties



**3.46** *Sensitively-designed accessibility features help make historic buildings accessible to everyone.*



*9 East Bay Street*



# CHARLESTON'S EXPANDING HORIZON





*Freedman's College*

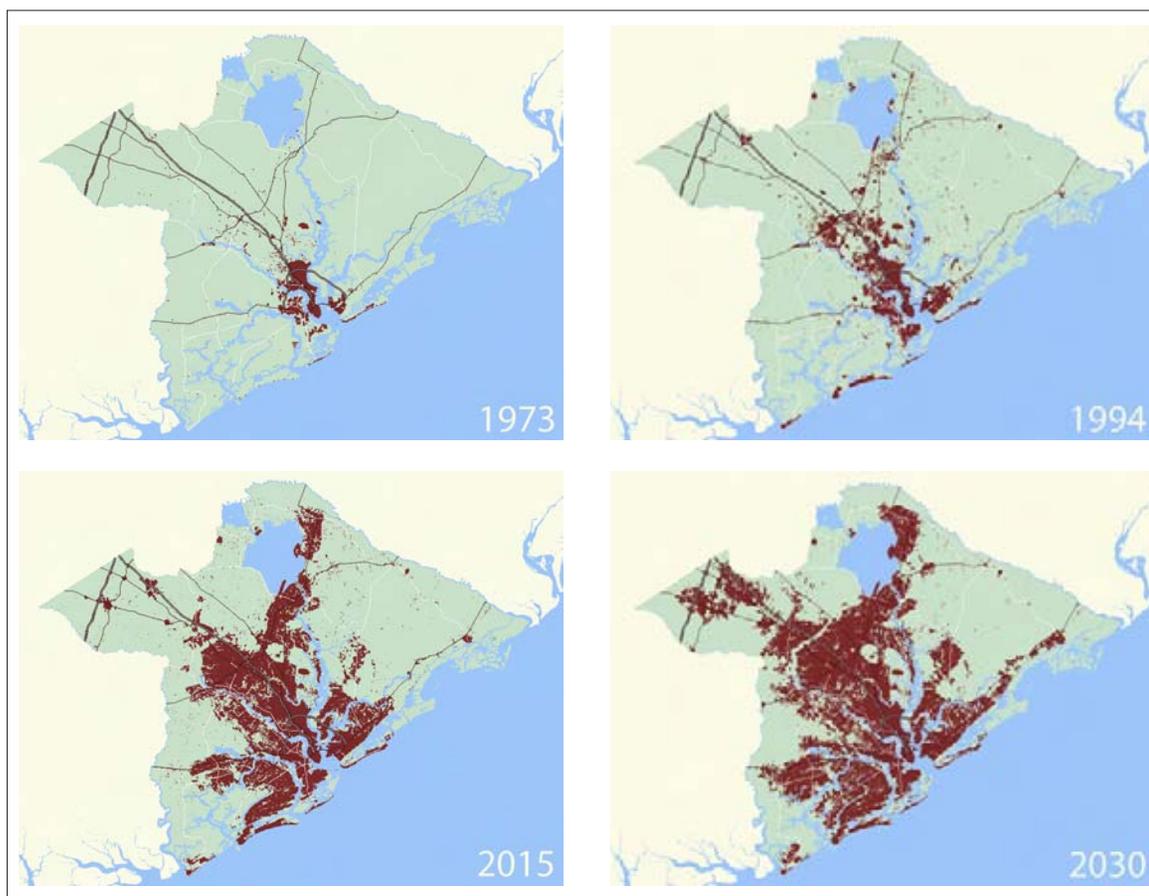
The expansion of city limits and unprecedented population growth call for a visionary approach to planning. Indeed, with development prospects placing the future shape and nature of the Charleston metropolitan area on the drawing board, the city cannot afford not to learn from its rich past.

Each of the sections in Charleston's Expanding Horizon offers one piece of the vision based on preservation tenets and the deep-rooted history of the Lowcountry. Growth and Sprawl incorporates smart growth tactics and cultural landscape values with rural preservation. Built heritage is considered in Transportation and Infrastructure. Institutional Stewardship recognizes the importance of institutions in planning for and around historic resources.

## Growth and Sprawl

If growth continues at the current pace, the Charleston metropolitan area is projected to cover over 550,000 acres by 2030, ten times its size in 1973 (Figure 4.1).<sup>1</sup> Land is not unlimited, and the ecological, economic, and social disadvantages of sprawl should not be underestimated. Growth must be controlled and assimilated into appropriate areas, rather than sprawling into the historic countryside. Just because there is land available does not necessarily mean it should be developed.

Indeed, metropolitan regions are finite, with natural edges created by geographic features like topography, watersheds, coastlines, and farmlands. Within a region, a variety of landscapes exists, from the very rural to the very urban. The City of Charleston sits in a metropolitan region that includes other villages, towns, and cities, along with undeveloped natural areas. Each area is an important part of the region, and each has its own center and natural edge. Smart growth on the local and regional level reinforces these natural urban/rural boundaries with policies and regulations that direct development back into already urbanized areas.



**4.1** Growth of Urban Areas, 1973-2030. This recent growth projection study completed by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG), the University of South Carolina, and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources projects the future urban growth in the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester area.

*Smart growth reinforces natural urban/rural boundaries.*

Charleston's rural vicinity forms an important part of the city's historic character. Countryside interlaced with the edges of the city reinforces Charleston's historic and cultural identity. Johns Island is an increasingly rare sea island with only scattered development; its rural landscapes comprise an area of great natural beauty and environmental importance and contain an enclave of affordable housing. Cainhoj Village and West Ashley's former plantation lands also deserve the attention of preservationists.

Historic preservationists increasingly seek to protect these rural landscapes of cultural, environmental, and historical significance. Called "rural preservation" or "preservation of place," this type of protection involves working with land conservation organizations, local zoning, and regional governments. Restricting development in sensitive locations preserves traditional communities and culturally significant landscapes and directs development to infill areas that already support an urban growth pattern and infrastructure.

Sprawling development is detrimental to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Ecologically important marshlands are destroyed and scenic byways impacted by growth in formerly rural areas. Development leads to urban heat islands, or expanses of paved surfaces, that intensify heat waves and cause smog.<sup>2</sup> Transportation projects such as the proposed I-526 and Highway 61 Expressway extensions change land use patterns by facilitating access to formerly hard-to-reach areas.

Rising property values often decrease the stock of affordable housing and displace long-term residents of rural areas. One especially vulnerable group in the Lowcountry is heirs' property owners. An estimated one-third of all property owned by African Americans in the rural South is owned as heirs' property, with 2,000 tracts of heirs' property in Charleston County and 1,300 tracts comprising 17,000 acres in Berkeley County.<sup>3,4</sup> This is a crucial issue for preservation of both traditional communities and rural land, since heirs' property makes up so much of the Lowcountry.

As shown by successful preservation-of-place efforts around the United States, sprawling development is not inevitable. Rural preservation would and can be an aesthetic, cultural and economic asset to the community. Proposals for smart growth developments, such as those laid out in the 2007 Johns Island Community Plan, represent one approach to developing culturally important landscapes that would preserve more land than other development patterns (Figure 4.3). Local or regional land trusts preserve significant natural areas by enabling conservation easements or directly purchasing land. South Carolina is home to some of the oldest and most active land trusts in the nation.



4.2 Sprawling development is detrimental to social, economic, and environmental sustainability.



4.3 A walkability diagram laid out in the 2007 Johns Island Community Plan represents one approach to responsible development of outlying areas.



4.4 Sapelo Island, formerly the private reserve of R.J. Reynolds, is currently owned by the State of Georgia and operated as a state park.



4.5 Marin County, California, successfully resisted the construction of a freeway in the 1960s and 1970s; the area's rolling hills have been preserved as protected open space.

## Case Studies

Johns Island's neighbor Wadmalaw Island is well protected from development, and rural preservation efforts on Johns Island should follow in a similar vein. The Charleston County Council established a special Wadmalaw Island Land Planning Committee in 1987 in response to a petition from residents of the island who were concerned by proposals for an 800-acre development. The committee is charged with preserving Wadmalaw's rural character by studying and drafting planning policies. On the island, the historic community of Rockville has established a Design Review Board to ensure new construction is in keeping with the character of the community. One tactic that has proved effective for preserving rural character is the pursuit of conservation easements. The Lowcountry Open Land Trust holds easements on a large portion of the historic Rosebank Estates and part of the Rosebank cotton plantation, in addition to over 3,700 acres, or 20 percent of the upland area.<sup>5</sup> Overall, over 25 percent of Wadmalaw Island is under easements. Zoning restricts lot size on some parts of the island. Additionally, municipal water and sewer services will not be extended to the island, thus dampening development potential.

The State of Georgia has worked to protect Sapelo Island in a natural state (Figure 4.4). Formerly the private reserve of R. J. Reynolds, Reynolds' widow recognized that after her death the island was likely to pass into the public market and thus become open to development.

The result would have been the destruction of much of the island's natural state, and Georgia's last autonomous Gullah community would likely have been dispersed by rising land values. At the urging of Reynolds' widow, the State purchased the island and made it into a state park. Drawing from this example, it is possible that areas of Johns Island could become a national or state recreation area, given sufficient support.

Perhaps the most dramatic success story for preservation of place comes from Marin County, California, a semirural area in the San Francisco Bay Area (Figure 4.5). In the mid-1960s and early 1970s, Marin residents successfully resisted the construction of a transportation corridor through their community and passed zoning regulations to promote agricultural use. To facilitate development in the area, the district supervisor announced that a freeway, not unlike the I-526 extension, would be routed through their county. Concerned citizens organized a campaign to visit every house in the affected area, finding that few residents knew about the issues surrounding the proposed freeway. The resulting public concern led to a major change of direction by district politicians, who scrapped plans for the highway and began to support the land preservation efforts that have made Marin famous. Restrictive rural preservation measures have had both positive and negative effects on Marin County. The county is renowned for its natural beauty; however, property prices have skyrocketed to be among the highest in the nation because of the high demand for land in the area.

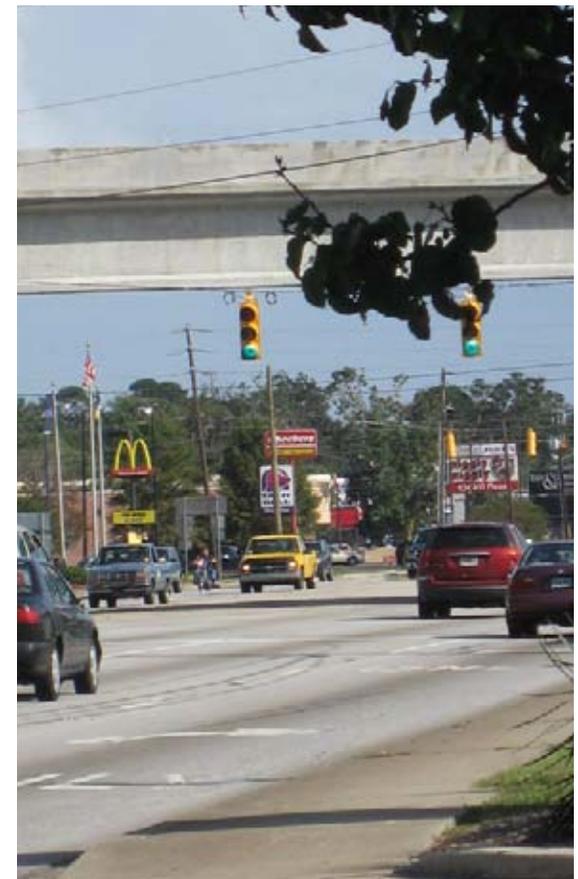
The Bay Area's mix of protected open space and urban development is unique in the nation, with almost 25 percent of land protected from development.<sup>6</sup> The Charleston area, like the cities and counties around the San Francisco Bay, should work to maintain the balance of green space and urban development within its borders that helps to make it such an attractive city. It is rare to have natural settings available within a short drive of an important city, and Charleston should recognize the recreational, economic, and ecological benefits this proximity affords.

Several other places should be mentioned for their successful rural preservation efforts. Eaton County, Michigan, succeeded in resisting a highway development in the early 1970s that would have destroyed its rural character by bringing a corridor of suburban development from nearby Lansing. Rural Connecticut and the villages around Boston have staved off large-scale developments that threatened the rural landscape. Boulder, Colorado, has restricted development through an urban growth boundary to protect its mountain setting, despite incredible pressure for growth.

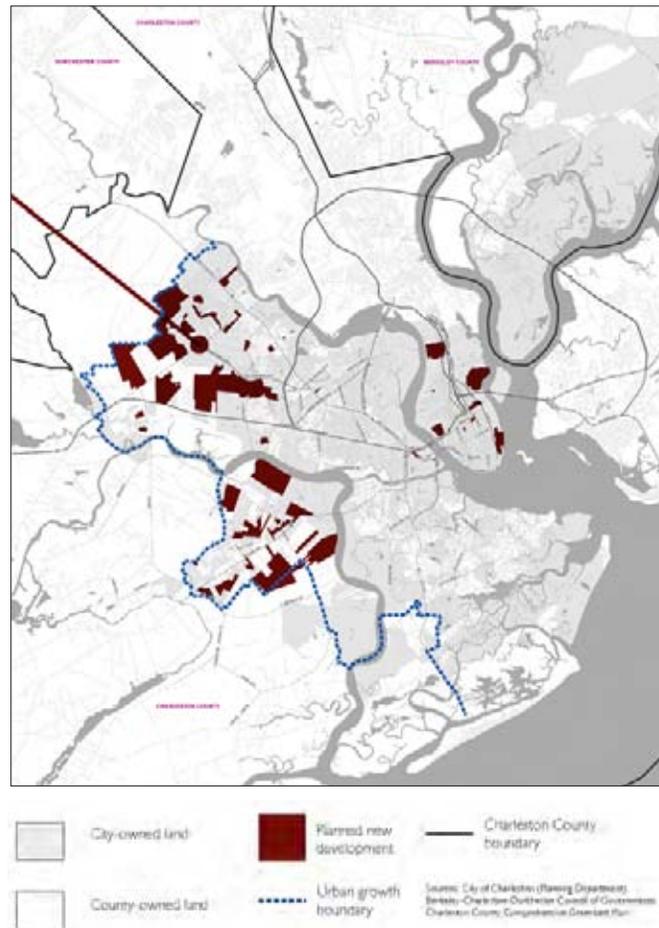
### Mitigation of Existing Sprawl

While considering future actions for rural preservation and smart growth is essential, it is also important to reduce the negative impacts of existing sprawl. One crucial step is the delineation of suburban edges. Landscape elements such as street trees, generous setbacks, and buffers of open space should be employed to create distinct development edges and mitigate some of the negative aesthetic effects of sprawl. Such improvements are relatively inexpensive to institute. Careful attention should be paid to the reinforcement of landscape character to create a comfortable transition from rural to urban. New Urbanism's transect model, in which mixed-use developments decrease in density and height as they move away from the urban center, presents one example of how to create this transition.

The transition from rural surroundings to the historic city center becomes a critical issue as the city continues to expand. Residents, visitors, and tourists should pass through unique entry corridors instead of the current sprawl, which vastly undersells Charleston as a historical and cultural resource. In the Lower Peninsula, tree-lined "grand spines" have been proposed for Calhoun Street, Meeting Street, and King Street to create a more attractive entrance to the historic district. Such concepts should be applied to the city's outer approaches. A vision for appropriately scaled, well-designed commercial corridors and prominent streetscapes should be articulated as part of this process and ACA studies.



**4.6** *The transition from rural surroundings to the historic city center should be achieved with well-designed commercial corridors.*



4.7 A snapshot of known development proposals within the city limits, 2007

## Strategies for Rural Preservation and Smart Growth

Many residents of rural Charleston communities support the idea of preserving rural character. Johns Island stakeholders have expressed overwhelming support for rural preservation measures.<sup>7</sup> Residents of Cainhoy have stressed in community workshops that preserving the village character of their settlement is a top priority.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of the ultimate level of development in West Ashley, Johns Island, and Cainhoy, there are several ways rural conservation practices and smart growth policies can be encouraged.

Creating a unified vision of the Tri-County area is essential to curbing sprawl and controlling inappropriate infrastructure changes. There are currently dozens of municipal and county governments, as well as numerous water and sewer agencies, operating independently in the region. The Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments is a good step in this direction, though broadening of regional planning authority may be needed. Reinforcing the natural urban/rural edge with a regulatory tool like the Urban Growth Boundary and maintaining it in the face of development pressures is of utmost importance. The Mark Clark Impact Assessment, local land trusts, and preservation organizations support this policy. Transect zoning's "transition areas," which limit density and public services between urban and rural areas, could strengthen the Urban Growth Boundary and help preserve the urban/rural edge.

*Change will inevitably come to the rural areas of Charleston. The question is what the nature of that change will be.*

The I-526/Mark Clark Expressway extension is representative of a much bigger issue. Traffic and transportation problems will not disappear, nor will the need to balance solutions with potential side effects and cultural and historic preservation. The thorough evaluation conducted for the Mark Clark extension should be combined with an alternatives study; this approach should be used for all major transportation and development projects in the future.

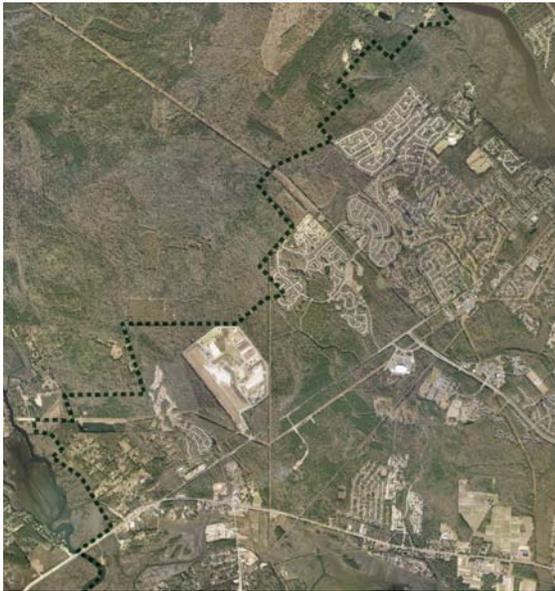
The most successful rural preservation programs come from public involvement and enthusiasm. Members of the public, working in concert with City staff and policy makers, can effect smart growth in their community while preserving the cultural landscapes and communities that make it attractive. Local preservation and conservation movements must work with the City to ensure that all possible policy tools are utilized and that the larger community is aware of the issues surrounding rural preservation. Organizing a group of interested people to attend public meetings and making sure members of the public are aware of any relevant issues in upcoming elections is the best way for members of the public to influence the decision-making process. Land trusts and preservation groups can help preserve large areas or even jump-start a movement to bring an area under state or national protection.

On the community preservation front, several measures can be taken to address heirs' property issues. Zoning that allows clustered dwellings in a "family compound" provides for the continuance of traditional land use patterns. (Beaufort County has implemented this type of zoning.)<sup>9</sup> The Gullah Culture Preservation Exemption proposed by Faith R. Rivers proposes limiting the assessment ratio to a percentage of the current use value. This has the potential to preserve traditional ownership and use of rural lands without restricting property rights. Tied to the land rather than the owners' income tax liabilities, the exemption would simplify paperwork, lower implementation costs, and avoid the title clearance requirement involved in conservation easements. This exemption, if enacted at the state and local level, could help safeguard traditional African American culture.

Over the coming decades, change will inevitably come to the rural areas of Charleston. The question is what the nature of that change will be. There is a range of ways to deal with sprawl, from public activism that brings growth to a halt to allowing unchecked sprawl. The best path for Charleston lies somewhere in the middle. Charleston needs to actively work to maintain its urban/rural edge, direct growth into targeted areas, reinforce its streetscapes and entry corridors, and strategically mitigate existing sprawl.



**4.8** *Johns Island and Cainhoy both have distinctive rural characters that should be retained through a strong rural preservation program.*



**4.9** West Ashley Urban Growth Boundary, 2007. A regulatory tool like the Urban Growth Boundary can help preserve the city's natural urban/rural edge in the face of development pressure.

### Recommendations

- ◆ Support and participate in integrated regional planning
- ◆ Reinforce Charleston's natural urban/rural edge by formalizing the Urban Growth Boundary in the City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning regulations; strictly maintain the boundary
- ◆ Use zoning to encourage compact development patterns that minimize land consumption
- ◆ Develop strategies to encourage infill development
- ◆ Restrict the provision of public water and sewers to areas within the Urban Growth Boundary, as was done on Johns Island in 2007
- ❖ Work with the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation to publicize heirs' property assistance and implement policies conducive to preserving traditional communities, such as the Gullah Culture Preservation Exemption
- ◆ Work closely with land trusts and encourage their work outside the Urban Growth Boundary
- ◆ Campaign for state legislation to explicitly enable Transfer Development Rights (TDRs) to be used from designated historic properties or historic rural/cultural landscapes to other areas of the city targeted for dense development **L**
- ◆ Encourage Charleston and Berkeley counties to partner with the City of Charleston in enabling and offering TDRs
- ❖ Consciously plan for the scale, form, and landscape of roadways, with special attention to entry corridors from outlying areas into the historic center of Charleston
- ❖ Evaluate the land use and transportation issues that the I-526 extension is intended to address, and engage in a thorough analysis of alternative projects that could also solve the problems and avoid sprawl
- ◆ Explore the possibility of creating state or national recreation areas

## Transportation and Infrastructure

Transportation and infrastructure shape how people experience the historic fabric of Charleston. The street grid reinforces or dismisses historic development patterns in defining residential and commercial areas with major roads that serve as neighborhood boundaries. Smaller blocks echo the street grid of historic neighborhoods and play a part in discouraging crime, slowing traffic, and creating livelier pedestrian environments. Traffic directs use patterns: high traffic volume through traditional residential areas discourages people from living there, especially the elderly and families with children. In rural areas, roads showcase or de-emphasize historic land uses.

As a regional issue, transportation should be addressed collaboratively. Existing plans should be starting points for a Citywide Transportation Plan, with county and regional agencies as ongoing partners in transportation planning and improvement efforts.

### Transportation

Though transportation does not directly fall under the auspices of this Plan, it is closely tied to quality of life and thus to historic preservation. This section offers brief recommendations on aspects of transportation closely related to preservation. It is not meant to be a comprehensive offering of transportation solutions for Charleston.

Large trucks and buses can damage historic sidewalks and narrow streets. Vibrations caused by large vehicles also may directly damage buildings built on sand foundations, as the vibrations cause minuscule shifts in the sand. Vibrations may also contribute to deterioration and residual strain from soil movement, moisture and temperature cycles, poor maintenance, or past repairs.<sup>10</sup>

To reduce wear and tear on streets, several measures should be taken. Charleston's current restriction on the number of tour buses in the city at any time, accomplished by issuing limited trip-specific permits and limiting large buses to perimeter routes and designated streets, should be continued.<sup>11</sup> Public transportation can reduce traffic downtown and around the region, reducing the need for new or widened roads. The public transportation system should be improved in conjunction with efforts to raise awareness about traffic congestion, smart planning, pollution, and global warming. Locating housing and commercial centers near transportation hubs also facilitates public transportation and reduces traffic.

The I-26 linear park has been noted as an ideal opportunity for light rail. The corridor, which developed as a rail line, could reduce commuter and visitor traffic between North Charleston and Charleston and along the peninsula.



4.10 Development like the I-526/Mark Clark extension impacts natural and cultural resources.



4.11 King Street, circa 1905. Public transportation has always been an important part of Charleston's infrastructure and should continue to be improved.

*Maintaining existing streetscapes helps to sustain historic character.*



**4.12** Encouraging bicycle transportation will reduce the impact of automobile traffic on historic buildings and landscapes and will reinforce transit-oriented development.



**4.13** Historic streets should be properly maintained, and historic paving materials should be repaired and retained.

The City of Charleston Century V City Plan and the Charleston Downtown Plan both have traffic and transportation components, and the Century V City Plan recommends developing a Citywide Traffic Plan and Off-Street Connector Plan. This recommendation is supported by significant public concern and the recent release of several countywide and regional transportation plans: clearly, it is time for an improved, sustainable transportation system.

The Citywide Transportation Plan must address preservation-related challenges. The topics discussed here—maintenance of historic infrastructure, reducing traffic’s impacts on historic buildings and landscapes, and development around transportation hubs—require further attention. Seemingly straightforward traffic solutions such as building or widening roads through rural landscapes pose serious challenges to preservation of place in Johns Island, West Ashley, and Cainho, while the widespread assumption that newer roads are better could damage the historic fabric on the peninsula. Thoughtfully addressing preservation-related transportation and infrastructure concerns will make Charleston a stronger, healthier city without compromising its essential cultural resources.

### Transportation Recommendations

- ◆ Develop a phased Citywide Transportation Plan, including pedestrian and bicycle routes, and provide for regular updates
- ❖ Develop a traffic flow model and require developers to evaluate large new developments using the model
- ◆ Divert heavy traffic flow away from residential areas
- ◆ Improve mass transit throughout the city
- ◆ Reduce traffic flow south of Calhoun Street through free downtown shuttles and more traffic-calming measures
- ◆ Further restrict large trucks and allow only smaller buses south of Calhoun Street to reduce potential damage from heavy vehicle vibrations
- ◆ Begin and implement Park and Ride programs to downtown; incorporate Park and Ride areas into large new residential developments like Magnolia
- ◆ Reduce speed limits south of Calhoun Street to reduce vehicle vibrations
- ◆ Levy a traffic impact fee on new developments (scaled by size) to fund the Citywide Transportation Plan and traffic flow model **L**

## Infrastructure

Charleston likely received its first permanently paved streets in the late 1870s, when important commercial roads were paved with blocks of granite.<sup>12</sup> At the time, only a third of Charleston's 53.5-mile street network was paved with wood and shells. Most wood-built streets had been laid with stone by 1882, but Meeting Street remained a shell-paved road.<sup>13</sup> The 1910s saw extensive street improvements, including asphalt paving for major roads, as the automobile gained in popularity and state law allowed the City to charge property owners half the cost of improvements.<sup>14</sup> Asphalt paving projects continued into the 1920s.

Charleston's historic streets should be catalogued and improved as a component of ongoing streetscape improvement projects. Where original street materials have been paved over, removing the asphalt should be considered, taking into account that historic paving materials may pose difficulties for cyclists and disabled pedestrians. The recommended City archaeology program and advanced historic preservation students at local colleges could be excellent partners for this effort.

Maintaining existing streetscapes helps to sustain historic character and encourages private and public investment in surrounding areas. Historically appropriate streetscaping elements such as lampposts, street furniture, and street trees enhance historic buildings and the feeling of an area. Indirectly, streetscape improve-

ments affect long-term investment in a place and thus the integrity of an area. More immediately, streetscaping helps safeguard historic character. Street trees emphasize neighborhoods' historic nature, framing views of individual buildings and the block as a whole. With street furniture, street trees encourage people to walk around an area and notice its unique qualities. (See *Neighborhoods* for a discussion of trees in rural areas.)

In the public forums, a number of Lower Peninsula and Mid-Peninsula residents expressed frustration about deteriorated sidewalks and roads, flooding, and the need for more streetscape improvements. Driving or cycling on cracked, potholed road surfaces is dangerous, distracts from the surroundings, and lowers quality of life. Efforts to reduce car trips amplify the need for sidewalk and road maintenance; people are unlikely to walk and bicycle as a means of transportation if the infrastructure is in poor condition or nonexistent. Especially as sustainability moves into planning and public consciousness, well-planned and well-maintained pedestrian and bicycle facilities should become widely available.

On a citywide planning scale, the groundwork is laid for an influx of very large-scale development to occur in Charleston. Setting priorities and target growth areas—reinforced by the Urban Growth Boundary and sewer and water line limits—is a necessary method of directing development to areas where infrastructure already exists. (See *Growth and Sprawl*.)



4.14 Charleston's streets contribute to the character of the city's historic areas.



4.15 Scenic roads and historic oak avenues are important components of Charleston's rural infrastructure.

The City must prepare for substantial growth now in order to protect its built resources in the future. Introducing and maintaining sound financial policies helps ensure that costly maintenance of new developments does not drain funds from existing historic areas. Developers now pay an infrastructure impact fee to the City to contribute to the costs of roads and sewers, but larger planned developments will require coinvestment in infrastructure. Coinvestment would help reduce the financial burden of providing extensive infrastructure to new developments, a move especially important in the context of very large developments.

On the peninsula, changing one-way streets to two-way traffic flow can reduce traffic speed, increase pedestrian safety, and help knit neighborhoods back together. Off-peninsula, scenic roads such as Highway 61 should receive new or continued protection. (See Neighborhoods for further discussion of specific streets.)

### Infrastructure Recommendations

- ◆ Reinforce the role of historic corridors as commercial or residential corridors with future development projects
- ◆ Create design standards for all streetscapes where they do not exist already
- ❖ Assess the health of mature trees that define and enhance historic neighborhoods and scenic roads; develop a maintenance and replacement program for them
- ◆ Preserve street trees and plant more native trees
- ◆ Undertake a street survey to note paving materials and conditions, with special attention to original or historic paving
- ◆ Maintain and restore historic paving where it exists
- ◆ Codify policy to make grounding utilities a priority when repairing streets and sidewalks
- ◆ Maintain road surfaces, especially south of Calhoun Street, to reduce potential damage to buildings from vibrations
- ◆ Set policies that require that road improvement projects be sensitive to scenic and historic roads and streets, respecting trees, materials, and other character-defining qualities
- ◆ Apply for National Scenic Byway status for undesignated scenic roads
- ◆ Work with utility companies and private developers to maintain design standards; build standards into the project approval process
- ❖ Continue to implement stormwater capital improvements; increase investment in drainage efforts and update the Master Drainage and Floodplain Management Plan as needed
- ◆ Utilize railway rights-of-way as rail-to-trail bicycle paths and commuter railways
- ◆ Create more bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including bike path networks, dedicated bike lanes, and bike/pedestrian crossings at major arteries

*Several institutions oversee historic resources and land on a scale unmatched on a private level.*

## Institutional Stewardship

Charleston is home to a number of academic and commercial institutions and agencies that influence preservation. The South Carolina State Ports Authority, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), the College of Charleston, The Citadel, and the American College of the Building Arts (ACBA) oversee many of Charleston's historic resources and establish the city as a major center of medicine, commerce, and education (Figure 4.16). As active members of the peninsular city, they also engage in a give-and-take with surrounding historic residential and commercial areas.

Several of these institutions oversee historic resources and land on a scale unmatched on a private level. The American College of the Building Arts owns McLeod Plantation, a major part of local history. The College of Charleston holds three National Register-listed structures and many more buildings of significant local importance; it also has adapted a number of historic residences for use as administrative buildings. These colleges' abilities to focus funds and priorities in an integrated master plan can benefit preservation greatly.

The size and momentum of some institutions also present challenges to preservation, especially with regard to new buildings. For example, the growth of MUSC demands large new buildings that will probably be out of scale with nearby historic neighborhoods. Expansion of an institution's physical plant into residential areas is, to many neighbors, a threatening change.

These issues can be alleviated by coordinated planning efforts between the City and each institution. Campus boundaries should be unambiguously delineated through zoning, in consultation with institutional administrators and master plans. New buildings will most likely be larger than historic buildings, as dictated by program needs and the desire to increase density, but context-sensitive architectural design should not be compromised. Publishing design guidelines with relevant examples of large-scale institutional buildings that have contextual height, scale, and mass is a critical step to ensure design quality. Creating Area Character Appraisals for each institution can help work toward a consistent approach to design.

Although specific guidelines are important, long-term needs should also be recognized. Both the City and state-owned institutions should lobby for increased funding for deferred maintenance at the state level, lengthening building life. Similarly, an institutional impact fee should be levied on new development and invested in infrastructure to improve facilities, reduce the need for deferred maintenance, contribute to transportation studies, and make more City funds available for other purposes. An alternative might be to require institutions to construct or improve infrastructure to City standards in affected areas.



- 1 American College of the Building Arts
- 2 The Citadel
- 3 College of Charleston
- 4 Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)
- 5 Port of Charleston

4.16 Charleston's major academic and commercial institutions, 2007



4.17 American College of the Building Arts (ACBA) teaches craft-based building practices.



4.18 ACBA has campuses at the Old City Jail (above, circa 1893), the Navy Yard in North Charleston, and McLeod Plantation on James Island.

The Charleston Independent School District, churches that own historic buildings, and smaller institutions such as Trident Technical College and the Law School of Charleston are not addressed in this plan. It is worth noting that they should be engaged in partnerships to combine preservation and planning in the future.

#### Recommendations for the City of Charleston

- ◆ Levy institutional impact fees on new construction for infrastructure investment, or require institutions to build infrastructure to City standards L
- ◆ Use zoning to clearly establish institutional boundaries
- ❖ Encourage all institutions to implement aggressive transportation demand management (TDM) programs
- ❖ Work with MUSC and the College of Charleston to produce design guidelines for larger buildings, with examples of recent buildings that successfully transition from larger-scale institutions to smaller-scale residential neighborhoods
- ❖ Lobby for increased deferred maintenance budgets at the state level
- ◆ Request that institutions complete housing master plans as part of any major increase in student or faculty numbers

- ◆ Encourage institutions to take responsibility for student housing and develop workforce housing programs
- ❖ Request state acknowledgement of historic campus buildings as a factor in state-level planning and budgeting

#### American College of the Building Arts

The American College of the Building Arts (ACBA) is the first national college dedicated solely to teaching craft-based building practices (*Figure 4.17*). ACBA focuses on educating craftspeople with a background in preservation tenets and quality contemporary and traditional building practice, maintaining that quality craftsmanship and preservation skills are necessary to save built heritage and build excellent new buildings for the future.

This small college is developing a program split between McLeod Plantation on James Island and the Navy Yard in North Charleston. ACBA also owns the Old City Jail in downtown Charleston, which is slated for use as a preservation center and living laboratory for preservation and craft-based building practice. Enrollment will peak between 160 and 200 students.

The adaptive reuse of McLeod Plantation is a priority. The college intends to renovate, conserve, and develop the property for use as its main campus in a process that will evolve over the next thirty years. Most recommendations for McLeod appear in the James Island section of Neighborhoods.

Numerous opportunities exist for partnerships between ACBA and other local organizations and agencies, such as the City, the Department of Housing and Community Development, Historic Charleston Foundation, the Preservation Society of Charleston, the South Carolina Heritage Corridor, the National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Charleston County Schools. Examples of these partnerships in action can already be seen in many locations in the Charleston region.

### Recommendations for ACBA

- ❖ Develop master plans for the McLeod Plantation campus and the Navy Yard campus
- ❖ Develop a public access plan and interpretive plan for McLeod Plantation (see Neighborhoods, James Island section)
- ◆ Continue with plans to develop the Old City Jail into a preservation center and laboratory

## The Citadel

The Citadel sits in the Upper Peninsula near Hampton Park Terrace. The military college was established in 1842 adjacent to Marion Square; construction on the current campus began in 1920. The Citadel currently has 3,000 students, with potential for growth in the graduate program and evening classes. It is not currently under BAR jurisdiction, except for demolitions of buildings over 75 years old (*Figure 4.19*).

Preservation should be a component of The Citadel's plans for growth and campus maintenance. The Citadel contains the Summerall Field and surrounding buildings, many of which are valuable elements of campus and city history that should be consciously preserved. Currently, historic preservation is not mentioned in publicly available materials.

The Citadel and MUSC both may be planning for expansion on the land that lies between the two schools. These institutions should engage in joint planning.



4.19 *The Citadel is a military academy established in 1842.*



4.20 *The current Citadel campus in the Upper Peninsula was established in 1920.*



**4.21** *The heart of the College of Charleston (above, 1883) is located in Harleston Village and contains a wealth of historic resources.*



**4.22** *Many of the buildings on the College of Charleston's campus were constructed after 1970. With plans to further develop the campus, the college should be sure to protect surrounding historic resources.*

### Recommendations for The Citadel

- ◆ Develop a growth and resources management master plan with a historic preservation component
- ◆ Establish a growth boundary and parking plan
- ◆ Engage in joint planning with MUSC
- ❖ Implement an aggressive transportation demand management (TDM) program
- ❖ Lobby for a deferred maintenance budget at the state level
- ❖ Request state acknowledgement of historic campus buildings as a factor in state-level planning and budgeting

### College of Charleston

The College of Charleston main campus sits at the border of the Lower Peninsula and the Mid-Peninsula, within Harleston Village and bounded by Radcliffeborough and Ansonborough. The College of Charleston contains historic houses adapted for academic use and larger historic academic buildings, but many of the campus buildings were constructed after 1970, when a major expansion program spurred construction of larger residential and academic buildings. The College of Charleston is located within a National Register Historic District, in addition to the local historic district; it is subject to BAR jurisdiction (Figure 4.21).

Over 10,000 students now use the campus redesigned in the 1970s to accommodate 5,000. Meeting program needs while preserving historic character is a challenge that the College of Charleston committed to in its 2004 Campus Master Plan. The College aims to continue expanding north of Calhoun Street to Vanderhorst Street; the southern boundary is projected to remain fairly stable at Wentworth Street. Clear boundaries between the College and neighborhoods should be established, an idea that the Campus Master Plan supports.

Deliberate transition spaces should be created between the historic district of the campus and new development. College administrators and the BAR should demand new and renovated buildings that contribute positively to their surroundings and demonstrate contextual sensitivity, while acknowledging that programmatic needs may require larger facilities.

Currently, 40 percent of students live on campus in student residences. Six hundred fifty new residential units are under construction, with additional residences planned in the campus core and north of Calhoun Street. Constructing additional student housing or partnering with the private sector to provide housing can reduce the number of students living off campus and meet both institutional and neighborhood goals, as well as reduce neighborhood density and make headway towards solving parking problems.

In addition to its main Lower Peninsula campus, the College of Charleston has a satellite campus in North Charleston and owns athletic facilities at Patriot's Point in Mount Pleasant, a marine laboratory on James Island, and Dixie Plantation near Hollywood, South Carolina. Development in these areas should be respectful of the natural environment and the rural or suburban character of the setting.

### Recommendations for the College of Charleston

- ◆ Add a historic preservation component to the Campus Master Plan
- ◆ Follow the Campus Master Plan recommendation to create deliberate campus edges, especially in the northern part of campus
- ◆ Restrict parking for freshmen
- ❖ Work with the City to produce design guidelines for larger buildings, with examples of recent buildings that successfully transition from larger-scale institutions to smaller-scale residential neighborhoods
- ❖ Expand Charleston urban design and architectural principles by showing examples of good execution in recent buildings
- ❖ Limit total enrollment to the number of students the College can physically accommodate
- ◆ Follow the Campus Master Plan recommendations to continue remote parking arrangements with CARTA shuttles, and seriously consider more satellite parking locations, possibly partnering with MUSC or The Citadel
- ◆ Aim to strike a balance between high-density buildings that will satisfy growth needs and smaller-scale designs that fit the historic character of the campus and surrounding neighborhoods
- ❖ Implement an aggressive transportation demand management (TDM) program
- ◆ Develop a workforce housing program to help faculty and staff live nearby
- ❖ Lobby for increased deferred maintenance budgets at the state level
- ❖ Request state acknowledgement of historic campus buildings as a factor in state-level planning and budgeting
- ❖ Continue to construct student housing on campus

### Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)

The main campus of the Medical University of South Carolina is located at the southwest edge of the Mid-Peninsula. MUSC was incorporated in 1823 as a small private physicians' college; it is now a state university with a medical center, six colleges, and over 3,000 full-time students and faculty. The Waring Historic Library, St. Luke's Chapel, and Colcock Hall are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (*Figure 4.23*). MUSC's piecemeal physical expansion has resulted in a campus without a common architectural style. The Vision 2020: Site and Facilities Master Plan sets as its goals beautifying the campus through more deliberate open spaces, gateways, and campus edges; renovating current facilities to meet modern research standards; and creating new facilities within the existing MUSC area, thus increasing density almost twofold. The Master Plan states that new buildings should be designed sensitively with regard to historic buildings and recommends preserving the old Charleston High School façade (completed); it does not otherwise mention historic preservation.

Maintaining a consistent architectural aesthetic for MUSC—one that relates to Charleston's exceptional historical character—should be a priority. Large research facilities are necessary, but new buildings on sites bordering historic neighborhoods should be designed with special regard to height, massing, scale, and rhythm. Vision 2020 recognizes the importance of scale in its



**4.23** *The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) was established in 1823. Its as-needed expansion over time has resulted in a lack of common architectural style.*



**4.24** *The MUSC's Vision 2020: Site and Facilities Master Plan includes goals of beautifying and expanding the campus but does not extensively address historic preservation.*

Campus Design Guidelines, which should be followed thoughtfully to achieve a more coherent campus with context-sensitive edges. The recent planning and update process should be viewed as an opportunity to create a cohesive built environment.

In the past, MUSC has not taken responsibility for housing its students, faculty, and staff. As long-term planning continues, housing should be added as an important factor in campus expansion. Integrated housing and research facilities can relieve housing pressure in nearby neighborhoods and reduce the need for parking facilities. Mixed-use developments that include housing, academic, and research functions can help provide a physical and social connection with surrounding residential areas and establish a 24/7 community rather than an institutional zone.

The Citadel and MUSC may both be planning to expand on the land that lies between the two schools. These institutions should engage in joint planning. MUSC also has several off-peninsula facilities. Development in these areas should be respectful of the natural environment and congruous with the character of the setting.

#### Recommendations for MUSC

- ◆ Identify historic buildings on campus and integrate maintenance and preservation into the Master Plan, along with appropriate smaller-scale uses
- ◆ Add a historic preservation component to the Master Plan
- ◆ Follow recommendations of Campus Design Guidelines to create a similar scale, proportions, materials, form, and hierarchy in all new construction and renovation projects
- ❖ Direct any campus growth and growth of associated facilities to the west and northwest, away from historic neighborhoods
- ❖ Work with the City to produce design guidelines for larger buildings, with examples of recent buildings that successfully transition from larger-scale institutions to smaller-scale residential neighborhoods
- ◆ Follow through to set guidelines for landscapes and streetscapes
- ◆ Create deliberate edges and gateways to the campus, as well as connections to the adjacent neighborhoods
- ◆ Use major corridors as dividing lines, with buildings of different heights but similar architectural styles and rhythms
- ◆ Develop mass transit/carpool/satellite parking systems to reduce congestion
- ❖ Implement an aggressive transportation demand management (TDM) program
- ◆ Engage in joint planning efforts with The Citadel

- ❖ Request state acknowledgement of historic campus buildings as a factor in state-level planning and budgeting
- ❖ Lobby for a deferred maintenance budget at the state level
- ◆ Develop a workforce housing program to help faculty and staff live nearby
- ◆ Partner with the City of Charleston to enact the Gateway District recommendations in the Spring and Cannon Corridor Plan as appropriate

## Port of Charleston

Charleston contains two ports owned by the South Carolina State Ports Authority, the Union Pier Terminal and the Columbus Street Terminal. In 1996, a Concept Master Plan explored redevelopment of the Union Pier Terminal as a 65-acre mixed-use project (Figure 4.25). The plan included housing, offices, shops, parks, waterfront restoration, and varied harbor activities. The street network was extended east from Ansonborough, though the plan breaks the street grid at Hasell and Society streets. The Union Pier redevelopment was put on hold several years ago when plans for a Port replacement/expansion site were hindered. It is uncertain when the expansion plans will proceed, if at all; the Union Pier Terminal is presently needed as an active shipping facility.

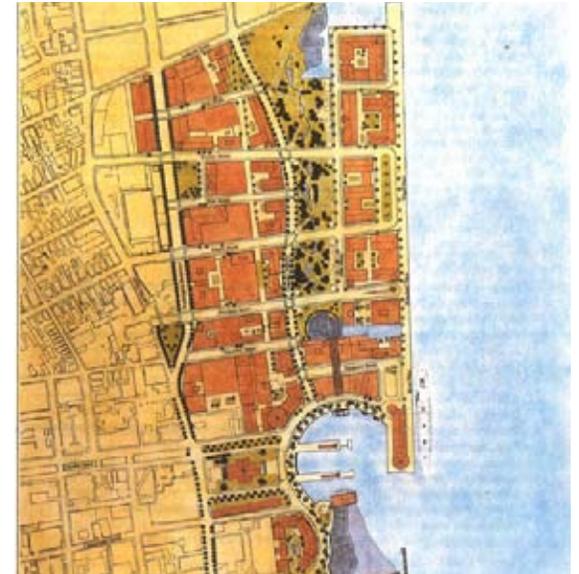
## Recommendations for the Port

- ❖ Evaluate and update the Union Pier Concept Master Plan when redevelopment is again considered, working closely with the City (Figure 4.26)
- ❖ Engage the City of Charleston in redevelopment planning efforts



4.25 The Union Pier Terminal is owned by the Port of Charleston and is currently used as an active shipping facility.

- ◆ Continue the street grid and respect viewsheds to the water when redeveloping the property
- ◆ Include affordable units in the housing component for the Union Pier redevelopment



4.26 Redevelopment of the Union Pier Terminal, presented in a 1996 Concept Master Plan (above), should respect the existing street grid, surrounding historic resources, and viewsheds to the water.

