

2017 BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW PRINCIPLES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATIONS AND REPAIRS

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Charleston is a city of international acclaim due to a myriad of factors, but particularly because of the steadfast commitment of its citizens and leaders to maintain and promote architectural principles that document its history, culture and heritage and encourage new construction that is compatible with that culture and heritage. These Principles are intended to provide guidance and suggested techniques for new construction. They are not intended to be exclusive, and because each building has its own context, they are not to be construed as giving rise to by-right entitlement of approval of an application.

PRINCIPLES:

A principle activated by “shall” is a mandatory rule, unless applicant makes a compelling argument to the contrary.

A principle activated by “should” is a generally acceptable practice encouraged by the BAR.

A principle activated by “may” is an option that can be requested by the BAR.

Principle: Higher ceiling heights present a more gracious façade to the street. On the interior, taller ceilings provide better light and ventilation.

Building height shall be measured in number of stories, not in feet. The main floor shall be higher than the other floors; a minimum of 14 feet, measured from floor to floor, for nonresidential buildings and 10 feet, measured from floor to floor, for residential buildings **are required unless waived by the Board.**

Principle: A building should present a high quality tactile and visual experience to the passerby and articulated at a human scale. Better materials and workmanship are especially critical at street level as it is within eye level and reach of pedestrians.

A means of achieving this principle may be by way of a base, wherein the bottom of the building is articulated differently from the rest of the building, either by a change of material, or a setback above the base. Material and craftsmanship on the base should be **of the highest, most** durable quality. For buildings less than six stories, the base consists of the ground floor. For buildings more than six stories, the base shall be taller and proportionally appropriate to the building.

Principle: Narrow frontages permit a larger number and variety of structures to line the sidewalk, thereby enlivening the pedestrian experience. Additionally, vertical orientation reinforces Charleston’s visual character, which has always tended towards the vertical.

A means of achieving this principle are buildings that are narrow towards the frontage—even commercial buildings, which may be massed as a single bar or as a series of wings.

Principle: To work in harmony with surrounding buildings, buildings should not pretend to be isolated objects, but rather work together with their surroundings to define and enhance the public realm.

A means of achieving this principle is by way of building frontages, on both large and small buildings that reflect the rhythm of the adjacent or fronting buildings. This may be achieved either by breaking up the project into several buildings or articulating a single mass as a series of smaller forms.

Principle: The visual appearance of parking lots and garages should be mitigated to support pedestrian experience.

A means of achieving this principle is shielding the frontage of Parking Garages and ground level parking in habitable buildings in A-Zones to a minimum depth of 30 feet of habitable space. In V-Zones and residential areas in A-Zones where flood elevation precludes habitable space at the street level, parking should be shielded by louvers, landscaped trellises, crafted ornamental metal screens or other comparable architectural masking features. Open parking lots **shall be** screened by walls between 4.5 and five feet in height. The walls shall be masonry matching the principle building if such exists.

Principle: Street life on the sidewalk should be supported.

A means of achieving this principle may be the inclusion of a primary entrance to all buildings that is located on street frontage and not directly on a parking lot or garage.

Principle: The authenticity of Charleston should be supported by the use of materials that are authentic in their appearance and function.

A means of achieving this principle may be through the use of exterior materials as brick, cut stone, smooth stucco and clapboard. Composite and processed materials, steel sections, cast stone, and cementitious boards, in limited quantity, may be acceptable upon submittal of a sample to the BAR. Vinyl, Styrofoam, GFRP and other synthetic materials should be avoided, or if not avoided, concentrated on the higher levels of the structure.

Principle: The authenticity of construction should be supported and the architectural language of the building legible.

A means of achieving this principle may be by way of tectonics. For example, heavier materials below lighter materials, wood and metal above brick, and all above stone.

Principle: The harmony of building facades and the streetscape should be enhanced.

A means of achieving this principle may be by way of a unified design among storefront glazing, doors, and building signage.

Principle: Clear glass increases interest and security for pedestrians. Dark, opaque and/or reflective glass is not in the local vernacular.

This principle may be achieved by **encouraging clear glass** on storefronts on the ground level.

Principle: Vertical windows allow greater depth of light into a room and, by providing a frame in proportion with the human body, express the human occupation within.

This principle may be achieved by way of wall openings, with the exception of storefronts and transoms that are vertical in proportion, generally displaying a ratio between 2/1 and 3/1.

Principle: The size and frequency of windows is one of the most significant visual characteristics of a building. They should provide repetitive rhythm horizontally, but not be too repetitive vertically.

A means of achieving this principle may be by way of facades that have more than one window size, with smaller sizes above. Three sizes should be provided for buildings taller than four stories and two sizes for buildings four stories or less.

Principle: The achievement of small-scale texture, visual structure and relief to otherwise large, unsupported pieces of glazing.

Thin mullions or muntins may be required on windows larger than two feet in any direction and cannot be located between or behind the outer glass surface. The depth of the mullion should not be less than the width.

Principle: The achievement of a building with relief and the avoidance of the impression of cheap, paper-thin facades.

This principle may be achieved with glazed openings that show a minimum wall depth of four inches clear to the frontage.

Principle: The use of detail provides points of visual interest to pedestrians and enhances the articulation of the human scale of a building.

This principle may be achieved through the use of an array of small scale detail derived from the modularity of the material (brick or clapboard), elements such as mullions, louvers, string courses, trim details, brackets, cornices, and/or column details.

Principle: A Charleston tradition is the adaptation of buildings to its climate which has established the City's aesthetic identity and enhanced the sustainability of its building stock.

A means of achieving this principle may be by the use of shade fenestration facing south and west, with elements such as roof overhangs, arcades, porches, awnings, loggias, balconies and piazzas.

GENERALLY EASIER TO APPROVE < > MORE DIFFICULT TO APPROVE

URBAN GUIDELINES

TALLER CEILING HEIGHTS < > SHORTER CEILING HEIGHT

NARROW TO THE FRONTAGE < > WIDER TO THE FRONTAGE

BASE DIFFERENTIATED < > BASE CONTINUOUS

MANY SMALL BUILDINGS < > FEW LARGE BUILDINGS

PARKING MASKED FROM FRONTAGE < > PARKING VISIBLE FROM

PARKING PROVIDED < > EXCESS PARKING PROVIDED

ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES

NATURAL & INTEGRAL MATERIALS < > COMPOSITE & CLADDING MATERIALS

STRUCTURAL EXPRESSION < > SURFACE EXPRESSION

APPLICATION OF LOCAL CRAFT < > ABSENCE OF CRAFT

UNIFIED STOREFRONT DESIGN < > STOREFRONT BY COMPONENT

CLEAR GLAZING < > DARK OR MIRROR GLAZING

VERTICAL PROPORTIONS < > HORIZONTAL PROPORTIONS

REPETITIVE FENESTRATION < > MIXED FENESTRATION

SMALL MULLIONS < > LARGE OR NO MULLIONS

THICKER WALL DEPTH < > THINNER WALL DEPTH

SIMPLE MASSING < > COMPLEX MASSING

SHADING ELEMENTS PROVIDED < > NO SHADING ELEMENTS

RENOVATION AND REPAIR:

The renovation and repair of existing structures shall be in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation.

Places of Public Use or Assembly:

These places and buildings are generally large. The predominant standard in the review of these buildings, to performance halls, museums, libraries or other places of public assembly (excluding churches) should be the architectural expression of the structure's intended use.