



POLICY STATEMENT

GUIDELINES FOR ELEVATING HISTORIC BUILDINGS

CITY OF CHARLESTON
2 George Street, Third Floor

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY
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Building Categories

Category 1 (Exceptional) and Category 2 (Excellent) Buildings:

- Requires Board approval.
- If situated below the BFE, the BAR is supportive of elevating up to the necessary FEMA requirement.
- All Preservation and Architectural Guidelines in this document are mandatory for these structures.
- If approved, must provide documentation of the building in its existing state, to include as-built elevations, floor plans, site plan, and photographs.

Category 3 and 4 Buildings:

- Elevating 3'-0" or less may be staff approved. Anything above 3' requires board approval.
- If approved, must provide documentation of the building in its existing state to include as-built elevations, floor plans, site plan, photographs.

Streetscape/Context Considerations:

- Broadly, submittals should include careful study of the following:
 - Impact on important streetscape features (fences, walls etc.).
 - Impact on relationship to immediate context and neighboring buildings.
 - Impact on streetscape scale and building pattern.
- More specifically, submittals should include careful study of contextual examples including but not limited to elevated buildings, typical materials, and the following specific architectural details:
 - Relationship of entrance to street.
 - Staircases.
 - Piazza Screening
 - Railings, balustrade and Ironwork.
 - Foundation Treatments.
 - Walls (garden and site).
 - Fenestration Patterns.
 - Stair Configuration.
 - Green space.
- Relocating buildings on the same lot may be more sympathetic to the context. For example, moving a house back to allow for the construction of steps typical to the context.
- Elevation of sister houses should be architecturally coherent within the grouping. The first sister house to be elevated shall instruct precedent for the future elevation of structures within the grouping. The BAR will require the highest quality of design of the first building in a sister house grouping to be elevated.

Site Design Considerations:

- Buildings should not be moved to accommodate additions, parking, etc.
- It is preferred to maintain a direct stair connection perpendicular to the sidewalk.

- Entry stairs are preferred to be constructed of masonry, unless context dictates otherwise.
- Buildings should remain in their original location on the lot, unless doing so prevents the reasonable introduction of stairs.
- It may be acceptable to move buildings back on a lot to correspond to adjacent properties (i.e. to align with neighboring buildings).
- If necessary to move the building on the property, minimize the impact with transitional porches, low walls, iron fencing, planting beds, and terraced landscaping.
- An alternative entry location might be considered in cases where the structure does not have a traditional sidewalk entry.
- In instances where a structure has to be raised a full story, study introducing entry at the ground level (maintain piazza entry to a ground level lobby).
- Maintain existing historic hardscape features, such as planter walls, fences, and gates.
- Retain to the greatest extent existing circulation paths from the street/sidewalk to the building.
- Introducing planter walls (approximately 30'' max.) will help mitigate transition in height.
- Front fencing should be relatively transparent (wrought iron or wood picket).
- Encourage use of plantings or other pervious materials to help absorb water.

Architectural and Preservation Considerations:

- Quality of historic material and detail should be maintained at the pedestrian level.
- Buildings that have a direct architectural relationship with its neighbors (such as sister houses or adjoined row houses) will be considered within their context and the effect on one another and future elevations.
- Historic, character defining features should be retained first, salvaged and reused second, or rebuilt when necessary as a last option.
- Chimney options (in order of preference):
 - Preferred method: retain chimney and elevate with the structure
 - Elevate the house around the chimney, and extend the chimney to match the existing height above the roof. Reuse bricks now concealed by the chimney.
 - Least preferred method: remove internal portions of the chimney and only elevate that which extends above the roofline with appropriate structural support.
- Piazza screen and all associated elements should be conserved at current elevation (including doorway surround, steps, and railing). Stairways within the piazza and piazza screen dimension may increase to mitigate the elevation change.
- Primary entries should maintain the existing circulation pattern.
- Stairs should generally occur in front of or within piazzas, rather than extending from the side.
- Employ architectural devices relating to the specific context to lessen the overall impact of the raised structure:
 - Continue siding down foundation. Consider adding windows,
 - Lowering window level to relate to streetscape pattern and pedestrian scale
 - Add a skirt board/water table
 - Introduce a coping wall
- Significant elevation changes should create the appearance of an additional floor that proportionally relates to the floors above and fenestration patterns on the streetscape.

Foundation Design Considerations

- Generally, should be based on historically elevated foundations in Charleston.
- New foundation should match the historic foundation type and material, and when possible, use salvaged material from the historic foundation.
- Foundation should also be based on neighborhood/context specific examples.
- Foundation components should complement existing façade features:

- Visual support of upper floor columns.
 - Pilaster expression.
 - Solid foundation wall under main body of house, especially at the street front, and piers at piazza with traditional infill screening.
 - Use traditional masonry materials.
 - Use existing elements as visual references to be repeated and extended throughout foundation design.
- Pier infill:
 - Recessed.
 - Use wood louvers or custom lattice.
 - Avoid “beachy” style horizontal slats or stock lattice.
 - Any required venting should be limited to the sides and rear of the house, however if using decorative ironwork, it may be acceptable at the front of the house.
 - Front elevation mitigation strategies include decorative iron vents/grilles, water tables, elevated planters etc.
 - Use of creative openings/windows to break up wall expanse is encouraged.
 - For buildings elevated 6ft or more, parking underneath the structure is discouraged.
 - For new construction, parking underneath the structure may be possible, but only where garage openings are located toward the rear and not visible from the ROW. Garage doors on front elevations are prohibited. (Note: Elevation in excess of 6'-0" will count as a story in height districts by story).