

# ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

## WORKSHOP HELD APRIL 13, 2026

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mr. Kevin Jayroe, Ms. Lynn Robb, Ms. Debra Smalls, Mr. David Rice, Mr. Neil Lareau, Mr. Dwayne Vernon, Ms. Ede Graves

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mrs. Brittany Powell, Mrs. Clarissa Tindall, Mrs. Jennifer Boyer

I. **Call to Order** “Notice of this meeting has been made in accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws as Amended.”

II. **Historic Buildings District Kickoff Workshop:**

A) **2:00 pm – 4:00 pm – Meador’s Presentation to Architectural Review Board and Discussion with Architectural Review Board Members**

**The Architectural Review Board (ARB) convened for a work session facilitated by consulting team members Jeremy Tate and Maria Short of Metters, a Charleston-based firm with experience in architecture, conservation, and historic review processes. The consultants outlined their background, including their role as staff architects for the City of Beaufort and their involvement with multiple review boards in Charleston. The session, held from two to four p.m., was structured as a collaborative discussion with the Board, with public comment reserved for a separate portion of the meeting.**

**Transition of ARB Guidelines into the UDO:** The Board discussed the ongoing transition of existing ARB guidelines into the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), raising concerns about the current status of the consultants’ work and prior efforts by the Board to refine the guidelines. Members emphasized the importance of preserving visual aids such as photographs and diagrams that had been included in earlier versions, noting their value in clarifying expectations. The consultants agreed that codification strengthens the Board’s authority but stressed that visual references should be retained or reintroduced to support both applicants and decision-making.

**Public-Facing Guidebook and Website Navigation:** The Board expressed the need for a comprehensive, user-friendly guidebook that goes beyond a simple brochure, combining visual examples with clear code references and making the information easily accessible online. Discussion included the potential for offering the guidebook at a nominal cost and the importance of creating a clear entry point on the City’s website. A frequently asked questions format was proposed to guide applicants through common scenarios, helping distinguish between minor projects that can be handled administratively and more complex applications requiring Board review.

**Clarification of Guideline Language and Consistency:** Board members highlighted the need to eliminate ambiguous language such as “discouraged” or “not preferred,”

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advocating instead for clear, definitive standards to reduce repeated applications and inconsistent interpretations. The consultants supported this approach, noting that mandatory language strengthens legal defensibility. Additional discussion focused on ensuring consistency across all code sections, including proper cross-referencing between related articles, and aligning all public-facing materials with the codified ordinance to avoid confusion or legal challenges.

**Pre-Application Review and Process Improvements:** The consultants introduced the Historic Technical Review Committee (HTRC) model used in Beaufort as a pre-application tool to provide applicants with early, non-binding feedback from staff and technical experts. This process allows applicants to better understand project requirements before formal submission and helps prevent conflicts later in permitting. The Board discussed how a similar approach could reduce inefficiencies, improve application quality, and avoid situations where projects approved by the ARB encounter issues during building permit review.

**Contributing Status and Historic Designation Challenges:** The distinction between contributing and non-contributing structures was identified as both critical and challenging, with current guidelines largely focused on contributing properties and less clarity for non-contributing ones. The consultants explained the criteria for determining contributing status and recommended more flexible standards for non-contributing structures while maintaining stricter protections for historic properties. Discussion also addressed the complexity of reclassifying structures, coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office, and the possibility of individual National Register nominations for eligible properties.

**Design Standards and Material Considerations:** The Board and consultants discussed a range of recurring design issues, including window replacement, use of alternative materials, and the treatment of alterations over time. Clear policies were recommended for window materials and configurations, emphasizing durability and historical compatibility. The importance of requiring manufacturer documentation for approvals was noted, along with the need to address misrepresentations about prior approvals. Broader material standards were discussed, particularly the need for explicit prohibitions in the guidelines to ensure enforceability.

**Hardship, Insurance, and Special Circumstances:** Financial hardship and emergency situations were discussed as ongoing challenges, with the Board recognizing the need for clearly defined hardship provisions in the updated guidelines. The consultants emphasized that while economic factors are not the Board's primary consideration, practical solutions can help preserve structures without compromising overall integrity. Emergency procedures for insurance-driven requirements and pre-approved solutions for common issues were suggested as ways to address time-sensitive situations efficiently.

**Site Elements, Utilities, and Sustainability Features:** Discussion included policies for solar panels, mechanical equipment, fencing, and other site elements, with an emphasis on minimizing visual impact and maintaining consistency. The Board considered adopting clear standards for placement, screening, and visibility, particularly for corner lots and highly visible areas. Solar installations were discussed

in terms of balancing preservation with modern energy needs, with reversibility and discreet placement identified as key considerations.

**Regulatory Conflicts and Accessory Structures:** Conflicts between overlapping overlay districts and inconsistencies in jurisdiction were identified as issues needing resolutions in the UDO update. The Board and consultants agreed that simplifying and consolidating regulatory authority would improve clarity and enforcement. Additional discussion focused on prefabricated and accessory structures, including the need to distinguish between low-quality and high-quality prefabrication and to address loopholes that allow certain structures to bypass full review.

**Application Standards, Revisions, and Enforcement:** The Board expressed concern over incomplete applications, excessive revisions, and challenges in enforcing approved plans. Recommendations included establishing clear documentation requirements, setting thresholds for when revisions require a new application, and taking a stricter stance on change of certification requests. The consultants also discussed enforcement limitations and proposed tools such as permit box compliance cards and dedicated compliance review processes to improve adherence during construction.

**New Construction and Code Clarity:** The complexity of new construction regulations was identified as an area requiring significant improvement, with staff noting difficulties in applying existing standards that were originally intended for historic structures. The consultants committed to clarifying and separating standards for new construction to ensure they are both practical and enforceable, particularly in light of increased development activity.

**Conclusion and Next Steps:** The session concluded with agreement on several key priorities, including the need for clearer mandatory language, improved public-facing resources, stronger documentation standards, and resolution of inconsistencies within the code. The consultants will continue refining the guidelines and UDO provisions based on Board feedback, with the goal of creating a more transparent, consistent, and enforceable framework for historic preservation and development review.

**B) 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM - Public Input Session:**

The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the clarity, accessibility, and overall effectiveness of the Architectural Review Board (ARB) process, with discussion centered on whether expectations are clearly communicated to applicants and whether relevant documents are easy to locate. Participants were invited to share personal experiences navigating the process and to identify areas where improvements could better support applicants and streamline review procedures.

**Commercial District Identity and Economic Challenges:** Discussion of Georgetown's commercial district was led by longtime resident and property owner **David Kossove**, who spoke on behalf of Front Street businesses from Frazier to Queen Street. He described the area as the city's primary economic engine but noted significant challenges, including rising utility costs, low rental rates that hinder building maintenance, limited foot traffic, and an undercapitalized municipal government. He

emphasized the need for Georgetown to embrace multiple identities—industrial, seaport, and retirement destination—while ensuring zoning supports economic vitality in the commercial core.

**Building Renovation and Flood Damage:** David Kossove shared his experience renovating multiple historic buildings over 26 years and highlighted ongoing flood-related damage affecting structures in low-lying areas. Repeated flooding from both storms and routine rainfall has caused structural deterioration, including rot and foundation issues. He advocated for rebuilding severely damaged structures—such as those at Front and Orange Street—elevated above flood levels, citing international examples of flood-resilient historic design that maintain visual character while improving longevity.

**Tiered Development and Waterfront Strategy:** A tiered zoning strategy was proposed to strengthen the commercial district, limiting waterfront buildings to three stories while allowing greater height and density on the landward side to increase property values and tax revenue. Mixed-use development was strongly encouraged, with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential condominiums above, as a means of generating higher taxable value and increasing activity in the district. Examples of successful local development were cited to illustrate the potential economic benefits of this approach.

**Accessory Dwelling Units and Density Considerations:** Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) were discussed as a strategy to increase residential density without significantly increasing parking demand. While examples from other cities were referenced as successful models, concerns were raised about infrastructure limitations, including sewer capacity, water pressure, and parking constraints in Georgetown’s historic district. Additional considerations included lot size, occupancy metrics, and the potential misuse of ADUs as short-term rentals, leading to recommendations for clear regulatory standards within the UDO.

**Parking and Broad Street Gateway Proposal:** Broad Street was identified as an underutilized asset with significant potential to expand parking capacity due to its width and existing angled parking. A proposal was made to designate Broad Street as the primary gateway to the historic district and to implement a small trolley system connecting it to Front Street. This approach was described as a practical and cost-effective solution to improve access, increase visitor traffic, and support commercial activity.

**Site Planning and Long-Term Development Strategy:** Participants emphasized the importance of strategic site planning, noting that poorly planned developments can have lasting negative impacts for decades. Concerns were raised about the lack of a comprehensive land-use survey and the absence of a conceptual master plan, both of which are critical for guiding cohesive development. Without these tools, drafting an effective Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) was described as premature and potentially ineffective.

**ARB Guidelines and Fencing Impacts:** Concerns were raised by Carol Doshier regarding a recent fencing approval near pre-1800 homes, where vinyl fencing negatively impacted adjacent historic properties. This case highlighted shortcomings

in existing guidelines, which were described as insufficient in addressing the broader contextual impact of changes on neighboring structures. The need to strengthen guidelines to consider surrounding historic fabric—not just the applicant’s property—was emphasized.

**Database and Retrospective Review of Decisions:** A strong recommendation was made to create a comprehensive, publicly accessible database of all ARB applications, including both approvals and denials. Such a resource would provide historical context, improve consistency in decision-making, and help identify recurring issues. The absence of reliable data on contributing structures and prior decisions was identified as a major gap, reinforcing the need for a thorough retrospective review before finalizing new regulations.

**Contributing vs. Non-Contributing Structures:** The discussion highlighted the challenges faced by owners of non-contributing structures, which are currently subject to the same standards as historic properties despite differing conditions and resources. Greater flexibility was recommended for non-contributing structures, with Beaufort’s tiered district model cited as a potential framework. The importance of clearly communicating contributing status to property owners was also noted, along with concerns about affordability and equity.

**Derelict Properties and Preservation Challenges:** Vacant and deteriorating properties were identified as a persistent issue within the historic district, with some owners failing to maintain structures despite having the means to do so. Proposed solutions included increased fines or tax penalties for neglect, proactive outreach to property owners, and improved disclosure requirements for prospective buyers. The long-term consequences of inaction were emphasized, including irreversible deterioration and negative impacts on tourism.

**Economic Hardship and Application Process:** The Board discussed the proper application of economic hardship provisions, agreeing that property owners must be listed as the primary applicants, with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity serving only as agents. Staff should evaluate hardship eligibility and report findings to the Board to protect applicant privacy and streamline the process. Aligning inconsistencies between existing code provisions and ARB guidelines was identified as a necessary step.

**Preliminary Review and Applicant Guidance:** A preliminary or pre-application review process was recommended to help applicants better understand ARB requirements before formal submission. Modeled after Beaufort’s review committee approach, this process would provide non-binding feedback and reduce the number of incomplete or non-compliant applications reaching the Board. Improved guidance was seen as a way to increase efficiency and reduce frustration for both applicants and Board members.

**Citizen Engagement and Public Input:** Concerns were raised about limited opportunities for meaningful public engagement under the current meeting format. Interactive workshops were proposed as a more effective way to gather community input, allowing residents to review visual examples and provide feedback on specific

issues. Expanding outreach efforts was seen as particularly important given the appointed nature of the ARB and the need for broader community representation.

**Conclusion:** The meeting concluded with several key priorities, including developing a UDO that differentiates between contributing and non-contributing structures, creating a comprehensive database of ARB decisions, conducting a full survey of the historic district, and establishing a pre-application review process. Additional goals included refining hardship procedures, exploring tiered zoning and mixed-use development strategies, addressing parking and access through the Broad Street gateway concept, and implementing proactive preservation efforts for at-risk properties.

**III. Adjournment:** with there being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

**Submitted By:**

*Brittany Powell*

**Board Secretary**