

**Harrisburg Architectural Review Board Retreat  
Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

**Persons in Attendance:**

*HARB Board Members:*

Kristen McKissick, Chair  
Michael Snyder, Vice-Chair  
Dudley Smith  
Bill Fontana  
Arden Emerick, Asst. Code Director

*City Staff:*

Craig Peiffer  
Beth Ellis  
Candace H. Stowell

*Public Participation:*

City Council Member Gloria Martin-Roberts  
Jean Cutler, PHMC  
Nevin Mindlin  
Jane Allis, Capitol Area Neighbors  
Sloan Auchincloss  
Susan Auchincloss

Dane Felton  
Jerry Rogers  
Randy Smedley  
Dot Montaine  
Karl Singleton

**Minutes:**

Following introductions, Craig Peiffer gave a brief overview of the City of Harrisburg municipal historic districts and the role of the Harrisburg Architectural Review Board (HARB). Several handouts were provided including recent HARB case reports, articles on historic preservation, a summary of 2008 HARB cases, and a listing of properties which have received historic rehabilitation tax credits in the City of Harrisburg since 1980 (\$13.5 million in tax credits).

Substitute Materials

While the preferred method of preservation is always repair instead of replacement, there are many instances where repair is no longer feasible. Many property owners do not wish to replace windows, doors or other visible features with identical, in-kind materials and wish to use modern replacement materials. Craig showed examples of substitute materials for properties along 310 Boas Street, 1633 N. Third Street, 1808 N. Third Street, 1519 N. Front Street (Riverview Manor), and 1110 N. Third Street (Harrisburg Midtown Arts Center).

Bill Fontana asked whether HARB was protecting historic integrity if the Board was only concerned about what is visible from the front of the property and allowed any materials on the non-visible sides. Dudley Smith commented that substitute materials can be used and are often indistinguishable from the original materials. Jane Allis noted that if there are products that improve energy efficiency and maintenance, then HARB should allow property owners to use those materials. There followed a discussion about what type of products would be acceptable and the importance of looking at the type of materials that are used on the entire property. One suggestion was to create a materials list categorized as good, better, best, where the best materials would receive administrative approval. Another suggestion was to maintain the existing approach, repair or replace in-kind, and create a short-list of alternate materials for HARB's consideration. Councilwoman Roberts pointed out the need for a referral list of reliable

contractors. One attendee asked about historic review procedures in Lancaster and the perception that Lancaster was much stricter.

The general consensus based on comments from several members was that HARB should allow the use of some substitute materials and allow these materials to be used for the entire property. Furthermore, there was support for a review of the historic district ordinance, with the prospect of expanding HARB review to non-visible facades and incentivizing applicants who adhere to the HARB Process.

### Education and Outreach

There was extensive discussion concerning the need for education and outreach to realtors and potential homebuyers. Many realtors do not understand the municipal historic districts and potential buyers need more information before they decide to purchase a property within a district. Councilwoman Roberts stressed the need for more outreach to realtors and Jane Allis recommended the development of a brochure (Are you thinking of buying a property in an historic district?), which could be disseminated by neighborhood groups. The group offered a list of methods for community outreach, which included: real estate agencies, historic organizations, builders associations, city newsletter and website and neighborhood associations. Jean Cutler noted that PHMC provides training for realtors about historic districts and grants for assembling and printing historic district documents for public distribution.

### Proposed Municipal Historic Districts

Beth Ellis provided an overview of two proposed municipal historic districts. The North Front Street district is proposed for parcels with frontage only on Front Street starting at 2147 N. Front and continuing until 3207 N. Front. The second proposed district would cover Academy Manor. Academy Manor was previously recommended for approval by the Planning Commission but did not receive final action by the City Council. Beth explained that the Planning Bureau would prepare the necessary case reports for the Planning Commission. The proposed historic districts would not need to go through HARB for review and approval although HARB input would be helpful. The attendees expressed general support for both proposed historic districts.

### Certified Local Government Program

Beth Ellis explained that the City is submitting an application to PHMC to become a Certified Local Government (CLG). If the application is successful, the City will be allowed to apply for annual CLG grants that can be used to offset staffing costs and to apply for additional historic preservation grants. The City had participated in the CLG program several years ago.

### Roof Top Decks

Craig Peiffer reviewed some recent examples of roof top decks within the municipal historic districts. The addition of roof top decks raises many issues, including safety, permanence of the structures, and impact on the district. It is difficult for HARB to judge aesthetics but HARB can continue to require low visibility and non-intrusiveness. There were various opinions about allowing roof top decks but the general consensus is that HARB needs to have a process in place, with consideration given to altering the second floor roof. Moreover, it would be helpful if HARB could require the removal of roof top decks that did not receive HARB review.

### Contemporary Design

The retreat concluded with a brief discussion concerning new infill projects, particularly the proposed house at the corner of Penn and Pepper Streets. Modern construction needs to be compatible in massing, scale, and character in order to be acceptable.

Craig Peiffer suggested as there was not enough time to discuss each agenda topic, the Planning Bureau would create a workshop series where each topic would be discussed in an evening session.

End.