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The Challenge of Balance: A Study of the Recent History of the Board of Architecture Review and its Design Standards on the Calhoun Street Corridor in Charleston, South Carolina

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THE CHALLENGE OF BALANCE: A STUDY OF THE RECENT HISTORY OF THE
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURE REVIEW AND ITS DESIGN STANDARDS ON THE
CALHOUN STREET CORRIDOR IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Schools of
Clemson University and College of Charleston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Historic Preservation

by
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May 2015

Accepted by:
Carter Hudgins, Committee Chair
Amalia Leifeste
Craig Bennett

ABSTRACT

Applauded as the United States' first city to create a historic preservation ordinance, Charleston, South Carolina boasts a strong tradition in architectural protection. Presiding over this process of design review and its connected provisions, the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) evaluates any new construction, additions, and changes to any property visible in the public-right-of-way that falls within the historic district. According to the zoning ordinance, this governing body protects and preserves "the old historic or architecturally worthy structures and quaint neighborhoods which impart a distinct aspect of the city and which serve as visible reminders of the historical and cultural heritage of the city, the state, and the nation."

Hoping to accommodate the needs of a modernizing city, the BAR's responsibilities and philosophies have adjusted and evolved. In an effort to define the BAR's operating strategy and Charleston's urban development as it stands today, this study concentrated to the Calhoun Street corridor. Calhoun Street acts as a main artery into the city, connecting many of the neighborhoods of the peninsula and serving as a main thoroughfare for pedestrian and automobile travel. Much of the street yielded to new construction in the last few decades, which allows it to serve as a case study of where the city and its BAR jurisdiction stands today. Through this corridor study, a firm explanation of key principles guiding these changes and the city's historic preservation theory is expressed for leader and layperson alike. Ultimately, it can be concluded that the BAR has had minimal effect on the outcome of the corridors' designs; and

furthermore, tended to focus on secondary architectural features rather than significant overall design alterations.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Mark and Helene Johnston, and my three siblings, Chandler, Bailey, and Watts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I complete this still daunting process they call “thesis,” I still have trouble understanding how my advisor and professor, Carter Hudgins, remained patient with me. Supporting and taming my millions of ideas by helping me hone in on what really matters, Carter’s ability to understand and interpret my thought process led to the success of this project. I also want to thank my other committee members, Amalia Liefeste and Craig Bennett. Their insight was appreciated and their contributions valuable.

The research portion of this thesis could not have been as comprehensive without Erin Stubblefield of the city’s planning, preservation, and sustainability office, and Karen Emmons of Historic Charleston Foundation. Thank you for pulling files, answering questions, and scheduling repeat visits with me. Thank you to Robert Gurley of the Preservation Society of Charleston, for filling in those last few blanks I had towards the end of my project.

Finally, thank you to all of my other professors, my classmates, and my “MSHP” family. The laughter and enjoyment of this two-year experience would never be the same without y’all! You are my mentors and my lifetime friends.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The city of Charleston is unique among American cities. Its history and its historic buildings draw in locals and tourists alike. A vivacious history is tangible along its streets and alleys. A respect for historic architecture and its preservation is clear. Much of the community grasps why the past is important, and they continue to foster what physical aspects they can through fundraising, awareness, and maintenance. Charleston prides itself as one of the few cities that holds claim to such leverage within the realm of architecture heritage and its protection.

Charleston's historic buildings take the mind back in time—but astonishingly, the city is flourishing and thriving in the new millennia. For some, Charleston provides an escape mechanism from what David Lowenthal called “the tyranny of the modern lock-step world of digital watches and computers.” Charleston is one of those places that invites people to “slacken the pace of life and regain a sense of *rootedness*.”¹ It beckons the soul to take a minute, and *slow down*. To an extent, the downtown area has escaped the burden of modernization that so many other smaller cities face today. However, Charleston does not fall into an “anachronistic” category where the “inhabitants are not moderns being quaint, but ordinary people leading normal lives.”² While the focus here is not merely on the city's people but also on the city's surroundings, Charleston does retain a degree of “quaintness,” yet still boasts an innovative, original mode of thought.

¹ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

² *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 49-50.

In order to protect the city from unwanted change, each piece of history that combines to create what defines Charleston is carefully maintained and continuously explored as positive growth and redevelopment unfolds. In 1931, the city enacted the nation’s first historic preservation ordinance. Its purpose was to protect and preserve “the old historic or architecturally worthy structures and quaint neighborhoods which impart a distinct aspect of the city and which serve as visible reminders of the historical and cultural heritage of the city, the state, and the nation.”³



Figure 1.1: Panoramic View of Charleston, 1912; image courtesy Page & Turnbull and the City of Charleston, Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina, for the City of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation, January 2008, 22.

A government body known as the Board of Architecture Review (BAR) presides over this ordinance and reviews proposed architectural and design changes, additions, and development. This Board works to preserve the city’s architectural heritage. More importantly, it is also responsible for conserving the architectural context of the area. The BAR’s status and jurisdiction have changed significantly over the past eight decades, but the Board’s founding goals and aspirations still actively shape buildings—new and old—in the city. The Board acts as the ultimate authority over any proposed architectural

³ “Board of Architecture Review (BAR),” Overview, City of Charleston, accessed October 14, 2014, <http://www.charleston-sc.gov/index.aspx?NID=293>.

design within the boundaries of what is known as the “old and historic district.”

Charleston’s BAR format is the model of many other design review boards across the country set in place to manage the built environment.

The BAR balances between new and old architecture. Every meeting, the Board faces the extremely difficult task of determining the appropriateness of new construction designs embedded within the old and historic district. Many preservationists believe that, while new structures should work within their environment and compliment the historic architecture of its neighbors, they should not mimic history, pretending to belong to another decade that is not their own. Because the city is growing at a rapid pace and, moreover, because so many decades of architectural history are represented in such a small geographic region, it can be difficult for the BAR—as well as local developers and architects—to determine what is suitable in such a unique environment.

The peninsula of Charleston is home to over 35,000 year-round residents. It is also a hub for commercial and professional real estate activities.⁴ While much of the architecture south of Broad Street remains residential and (mostly) historic, much of the property north of Broad Street faces redevelopment and reinvention. The downtown area can be categorized simply as three different kinds of areas: (1) stable, (2) in transition, and (3) re-developable.⁵ The largely commercial areas north of Broad Street like Calhoun

⁴ 2014 estimated population of the peninsula of Charleston derived from 2010 census population; City of Charleston Department of Planning, Preservation, & Sustainability, “Population Estimates 2014,” last modified January 2014, Accessed January 22, 2015, <http://www.charleston-sc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5988>.

⁵ Urban Strategies Inc., Development Strategies Inc., SBF Design, “The Charleston Downtown Plan: Achieving Balance through Strategic Growth,” Adopted November 23, 1999, ii.

and Meeting Streets drastically changed in the last thirty years. Issues like automobile traffic and parking accommodation, commercial and educational expansion (especially for the College of Charleston, Medical University of South Carolina, and other various large, local businesses), and natural disaster recovery (namely Hurricane Hugo in 1989) shaped what Calhoun and Meeting Streets look like today.

These areas are considered “transitional” in city preservation plans, designating them as inclusive of noteworthy historic architecture yet intermingled with both residential and commercial new construction. As a transitional zone, Calhoun Street plays a serious role within the present and future of downtown. Calhoun Street serves as a main artery into the city, connecting many of the neighborhoods of the peninsula and serving as a main thoroughfare for pedestrian and automobile travel.

Much of Calhoun Street yielded to new construction in the last few decades, which allows it to serve as a conclusive example of where the city and its BAR jurisdiction stands today. This corridor study expresses a firm explanation of key principles guiding these changes and the city’s historic preservation theory. What does the evolution of Charleston’s BAR’s growth, identity, authority, and philosophies reveal about the process in the past few decades for the Calhoun Street corridor?

Despite the fact that the BAR is an integral and critical to Charleston’s historic district’s everyday functions, significance, and overall identity, its responsibilities can be confusing at times. Some critics claim that the BAR only allows traditional designs. Others claim that the Board forces modernism on the community. In order to comprehend the opinions, decisions, and actions of this Board’s position and the standards from which

it works within the development of Calhoun Street, one must first be introduced to philosophies that have guided the city's growth—especially during the development boom right after Hurricane Hugo. How influential were and are community leaders and board members' opinions during their time serving the city of Charleston? How influential are their past opinions on today's city?

As a thriving city with a vivid past and vivacious future, it is crucial to remember that Charleston is a *living* city despite its rich history, and furthermore, should represent that in its architecture. A firm explanation of key principles outlining urban planning within the city's Historic Preservation theory must be compiled and thoroughly described. Understanding the history and evolution of the BAR is important, but having a grasp on its goals to protect and present the historic architecture within the defined district as the treasure of Charleston is just as crucial.

Has the current BAR successfully modernized the process in order to accommodate the growing city, its needs, and its demands? Does the current, short and succinct BAR Policy Statement of Charleston design Standards provide enough guidance for both the board members and design teams? And furthermore, have the Board's goals and aspirations changed over time? If so, why? This, along with an analysis of Charleston's growth and focus on preservation planning, will add a comprehensive understanding of what Charleston looked like in the past, where it stands today, and most importantly, what it hopes to be in the future within the field of Historic Preservation.

The majority of the information for historic context and evolution of the BAR was gleaned from primary source research, newspaper research, and meetings with key

figures integral to the BAR process in the last 20 years. Primary source research largely consists of document collection at the BAR headquarters, Historic Charleston Foundation, and the Preservation Society of Charleston. Secretarial minutes, position statements, and Calhoun Street file folders have been critical within the development of the study. A general survey of all BAR jurisdiction buildings situated on Calhoun Street was completed before in-depth analysis concerning each case study property was investigated. This study collected the building and lot history, as well as its historic interaction with the BAR—including all submissions, revisions, and conceptual planning documents that were available. Accessible historic photographic research is also included in this portion of research.

After collecting this information, each property was considered through a consistent set of criteria in order to assess the property from a theoretical perspective. Philosophies surrounding factual, objective information will develop answers in this portion of research. Using the existing 2008 survey, this thesis continues and extends the study while reviewing the old and combining the already established information. Developing the reader's understanding of modernism and architectural style within a historic context—as well as its complex position with historic district review boards—will be critical in this section as well. The balance of design and its context is also woven throughout this survey.

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN CHARLESTON

The Formation of a Greater Initiative: Historic Preservation in Charleston Before 1931

One of America's oldest cities, the city of Charleston boasts a multitude of architectural treasures. This architectural wealth is often attributed to Charleston's economic slump after the Civil War and other events that left locals too poor to rebuild or renovate in popular styles. Although the preservation ethic that shaped the city had its roots in misfortune, the survival of ancient buildings is what makes the city unique.

While economic hardship was a factor in the city's architectural preservation, Charlestonians realized the importance of their city's architectural heritage as early as the mid-nineteenth century. After a devastating fire in February of 1835, St. Philip's Episcopal Church burned to the ground. Before its destruction, the building stood as one of the city's most cherished buildings. Over a century old at the date of the fire, the Church already witnessed (but survived) fires in 1796 and 1810.⁶ Instead of seeking a newer, more modern style for their church, the congregation commissioned architect Joseph Hyde to design a building similar to the previous masonry structure.⁷ This veneration for historic buildings was not only apparent in the rebuilding of St. Philip's Church, but also in the upkeep of colonial buildings before the Civil War. In 1860, a

⁶ "The 1830s: A Decade of Fire," Preservation Society of Charleston, last modified 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www.halseymap.com/Flash/window.asp?HMID=61>.

⁷ South Carolina Department of Archives and History, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: St. Philip's Episcopal Church, May 1st 1973, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/charleston/S10817710072/S10817710072.pdf>.

visitor from New York noted the city’s “quaint old residences—(showing their occupants had grandparents),” noting social status and wealth.⁸



Figure 2.1: St. Philip's Episcopal Church, 1977; image courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, SC, 10-CHAR, 58-7.

As nationalism and the preservation of America’s history began to spread across the country, examples of heritage preservation began to gain attention. After the establishment of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, known for their successful efforts saving George Washington’s Mount Vernon, societies like the National Society of

⁸ Robert P. Stockton, “Charleston’s Preservation Ethic,” in *Preservation Progress for the Preservation Society of Charleston*, Vol. 50 No. 4 (Winter 2006), 13.

Colonial Dames and the Daughters of the American Revolution developed interest in the safeguarding significant sites. In 1902, the Colonial Dames acquired Charleston's Powder Magazine, a pre-revolutionary building historically associated with the original Walled City design dating back to 1680. Shortly thereafter, the Daughters of the American Revolution gained ownership of the federally owned Old Exchange and Provost. Both buildings now hold National Historic Landmark status, these women were clearly focused on preserving buildings that represent pivotal periods of our nation's colorful history.⁹ This evidence (as well as other citations and historic references behind the financial effort put into the city by locals in both their residents and public places) causes many to question the argument behind lack of wealth in the city leading to the preservation of old buildings.

According to Stephanie Yuhl, the wave of automobile traffic and tourism that came to Charleston following World War I was the driving factor behind the formal preservation movement in the city.¹⁰ In order to save cherished sites of extraordinary architecture, locals began to rally against the widening of roads and the construction of gas pumping stations across the peninsula. In response to this issue and others associated, the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings was established in 1920. With Miss Susan Pringle Frost at the helm, the Society helped to save the Joseph Manigault House (c. 1803) from destruction for new development. They also helped

⁹ "Charleston and Preservation," National Park Service: U.S. Department of the Interior, written by Charles Chase, last modified 1998, accessed February 2nd, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/charleston/preservation.htm>.

¹⁰ Stephanie E. Yuhl, *The Making of Historic Charleston: A Golden Haze of Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 27.

spare the Heyward-Washington House (c. 1770) from removal of its interior woodwork and paneling as was popular at the time. The help of Mayor Thomas Porcher Stoney further bolstered the Society's efforts by working to establish the first Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1931.

Before the Ordinance could reach an active status, the recently established the Special Committee on Zoning needed to define what areas should be considered historically sensitive to development or change. The Committee hired planning consultant Morris Knowles of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and architect Albert Simons of Charleston to create a preservation plan for the city that would assist in defining the boundaries of the historic district, demarcating areas that included buildings historically significant and deserved protection. Although the preservation plan was never used, the extensive survey acted as a foundation for the city's Zoning Ordinance.

On October 13, 1931, Charleston enacted the first Preservation Ordinance in the United States, which established a governing body that would protect "the old historic or architecturally worthy structures and quaint neighborhoods which impart a distinct aspect of the city and which serve as visible reminders of the historical and cultural heritage of the city, the state, and the nation."¹¹ This revolutionary governing body serving to enforce the ordinance established two sectors: the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and the Zoning Board of Adjustment (BZA). It is no surprise that each of the five members received nomination due to their background of expertise: the Carolina Art Association, a local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Charleston Real Estate

¹¹ "Board of Architecture Review (BAR)," Overview, City of Charleston, accessed October 14, 2014, <http://www.charleston-sc.gov/index.aspx?NID=293>.

Exchange, the local chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the city's Planning and Zoning Commission were all represented in the first Board.¹²

At this point, the BAR served solely as an architectural negotiator for the city, simply reviewing demolition requests or large projects. That said, they had no power to stop any demolitions at this time, but could only review a structure that was to be built upon the old building's site. As simply a negotiating power, the board's role was very limited, and mostly focused on "working with applicants to find mutually acceptable solutions to design problems."¹³

The ordinance specified five serving members on the Board who had limited powers to "pass upon the appropriateness of exterior architectural features of buildings and structures hereafter erected, reconstructed, altered, restored or used in [the] Old and Historic Charleston District wherever such exterior features are subject to public view from a public street or way."¹⁴ Unlike today, meetings were not scheduled regularly, and only occurred when building permit applications processed through the city. The most critical responsibility of the BAR and BZA, however, was not only preserving individual specimens of architecture, but also the historic environment and "feel" of the city.

¹² Debbi Rhoad, "The Board of Architectural Review in Charleston, 1931-1993," *Preservation Progress*, Mary Moore Jacoby, ed. Charleston, South Carolina: Preservation Society of Charleston, special ed., Spring, 1993:14.

¹³ "Board of Architecture Review (BAR)," Overview, City of Charleston, accessed October 14, 2014, <http://www.charleston-sc.gov/index.aspx?NID=293>.

¹⁴ City of Charleston, *Zoning Ordinance*, Charleston, South Carolina: City of Charleston, August 11, 1931.

1931-1966: Creating an Ethic

Historic Preservation and stewardship of the built environment's popularity quickly began to grow within the city. In 1944, the Carolina Art Association published *This Is Charleston*, a pictorial survey of significant buildings on the peninsula. Led by Helen Gardner McCormack, the survey included over 1,000 buildings. The first of its kind, *This is Charleston* was the first architectural catalog of an American city and paved the way for architectural research in other cities. This ultimately led to the establishment of the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁵

By 1947, Historic Charleston Foundation, Inc. established itself after Kenneth Chorley, president of Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. encouraged the formation of “an independent, non-governmental organization which could set its own agenda without ties to any existing organization or city policies.”¹⁶ Providing the city with public education opportunities through events like the Spring Tour of Homes, assisting private property owners, businesses, and civic organizations with preservation guidance, and pushing awareness and advocacy of historic sites protection, Historic Charleston Foundation joined the cause as one of its greatest preservation leaders. Unlike the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, Historic Charleston Foundation was not formed as a membership organization, and furthermore, consisted exclusively of its Board of Trustees. In the 1950s, the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings chose to

¹⁵ “Charleston and Preservation,” National Park Service: U.S. Department of the Interior, written by Charles Chase, last modified 1998, accessed February 2nd, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/charleston/preservation.htm>.

¹⁶ “Charleston and Preservation,” <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/charleston/preservation.htm>.

rebrand itself with a new name, the Preservation Society of Charleston, hoping to define their place and responsibilities within the community in a larger light.

After completing financial and restoration projects at The Old Exchange (c. 1771), the Heyward-Washington House (c. 1772), and the Nathaniel Russell House (c.1808), Historic Charleston Foundation delved into an innovative project the country had never seen: a rehabilitation revolving-fund that would turn into an “aggressive purchase and resale agenda” targeting the Ansonborough neighborhood.¹⁷ This initiative led to the entire rehabilitation of a neighborhood. After the purchase and resale of many of the buildings in this district, Historic Charleston Foundation had the ability to place easements on these properties, creating jurisdiction over changes (both to the interior and exterior) and maintenance regimens indefinitely in the future. While this program helped to rehabilitate an area that was once suffering and dilapidated architecturally, it also helped to create a new vision for Charleston’s preservation movement in the form of redevelopment through rehabilitation.

Even after 24 years of operation, the BAR had not dealt with any form of outward challenges to its authority. In 1955, chairman Frederick McDonald wrote, “the community had high regard for the need [of the board] and the results gained; and we have not had to resort to enforcement measures... We have had no court contests of architectural control because we have been able to satisfy applicants.”¹⁸ Because

¹⁷ “Charleston and Preservation,”
<http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/charleston/preservation.htm>.

¹⁸ Debbi Rhoad, “The Board of Architectural Review in Charleston, 1931-1993,”
Preservation Progress, Mary Moore Jacoby, ed. Charleston, South Carolina: Preservation Society of Charleston, special ed., Spring, 1993: 14.

preservation began to take a leading role in the city's agenda for development and growth, the city council decided it was finally time to revise the zoning ordinance established almost thirty years prior. In November of 1959, the BAR gained the authority to halt any demolitions for any building that fell within the Old and Historic District (regardless of age), as well as control over alterations to any building constructed before 1860.¹⁹ A huge step for the BAR, this ordinance adjustment gave them a significant gain in authority over architectural changes within the district.

1966-2008: The Beginning of the Modern Era of Preservation

Nationally, action-oriented historic preservation and its connected interests finally began picking up attention. Although President Truman signed the National Trust for Historic Preservation into action in 1949, it was not until 1966 that the nation established a law assisting in the preservation movement. The National Historic Preservation Act “establish[ed] a national preservation program and a system of procedural protections which encourage the identification and protection of cultural and historic resources of national, state, tribal and local significance.”²⁰ Following the enactment of this law, Charleston's city council decided to revise the Historic Preservation Zoning Ordinance again, which further augmented the structure and responsibilities of the BAR. Completely reorganizing the zoning laws and its categories, the city not only increased

¹⁹ Debbi Rhoad, “The Board of Architectural Review in Charleston, 1931-1993,” 15.

²⁰ The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Federal Preservation Laws, National Historic Preservation Act, accessed February 4, 2015, http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/law-and-policy/legal-resources/preservation-law-101/federal-law/nhpa.html#.VNKXt4rF_4N.

the Old and Historic District to three times its original coverage, but also added two more members to the BAR (totaling to seven members). Term limits were finally defined.

Now with seven BAR members, the Board could entirely deny demolition within its jurisdictional boundaries.²¹ A pivotal phase in the BAR's development, members began to consider applications on a much deeper level than ever before. As Debbie Rhoad explained in her piece on the history of the Board of Architecture Review, it was at this point that the board members "considered not only actual building plans, but also plans for site improvements and landscaping features. They also 'made a practice of requiring more drawings, pictures, and other evidence of the applicant's plans' that had previously been the case."²²

Until the adoption of the Feiss-Wright Anderson Survey Historic Preservation Plan completed in 1974, the BAR operated without much transition (and without a full time staff!). Building off of the 1944 Carolina Art Association survey (marketed to the public as a book called *This is Charleston*) and the 2,800 sites categorized in its efforts, the Feiss-Wright Anderson survey created an innovative agenda for the city to carry out in the next twenty years. Suggesting a comprehensive methodology to approaching city development, the Plan encouraged litter and maintenance control, stricter building code enforcement (especially height restrictions), and the establishment of a downtown revitalization initiative. Uplifting the BAR, the Feiss-Wright Anderson Preservation Plan encouraged more authority for the board, suggesting conversion from an advisory group to a Historic Commission. While certain aspects of the plan were never instigated, the

²¹ Debbi Rhoad, "The Board of Architectural Review in Charleston, 1931-1993."

²² Debbi Rhoad, "The Board of Architectural Review in Charleston, 1931-1993," 16.

city finally had a formalized plan of action for the Historic District and its surrounding neighborhoods.

With a new set of guidelines in place, the city council and the BAR began to make several changes to its operating structure and jurisdiction. At this point, the BAR possessed full control over property that fell south of Line Street—which was quite a gain from its previous jurisdiction only South of Calhoun Street. With this change, the city had control over any alteration to a building over 100 years old or that fell in three of the four historically significant categories that the Feiss-Wright Anderson survey stipulated. Compounding this huge change for Charleston was the election of Mayor Joseph P. Riley in 1976. Recognizing Charleston’s lack of economic development despite its many resources, Riley pushed historic preservation in the city to a new level. Utilizing Charleston’s distinctive nature from the beginning, Riley uplifted architectural preservation through urban design and planning efforts that would ultimately take the form of “an aggressive agenda of stimulating a city that was supported by a large military establishment (Navy and Air Force), constant port traffic, and a small tourist economy.”²³

Riley and his staff quickly realized the 1974 Preservation Plan did not include all of the tools they needed for successful implementation of their vision for Charleston’s future. In 1985, the City of Charleston commissioned Geier, Brown, Renfrow (GBR) Architects of Washington, D.C. to create an updated survey, correcting whatever deficiencies they found in the 1974 plan. The focus, this time, was to be centered on the

²³ Charleston and Preservation,” National Park Service: U.S. Department of the Interior, written by Charles Chase, last modified 1998, accessed February 2nd, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/charleston/preservation.htm>.

commercial core of the city, while also expanding the survey of critical historic districts that were not included previously. The 1985 survey led to yet another revision to the BAR jurisdiction, this time giving them control to deny demolition for any building constructed 75 years ago or earlier and south of Mount Pleasant Street. The GBR Architects survey was formally adopted in 1987. A defining moment for the BAR and the City of Charleston, the citizens and city officials finally began to recognize the importance of preserving “newer” turn-of-the-century buildings that did not merit much attention until the 1985 plan’s creation.

The Old City District grew again in 1987, spreading now into the Albemarle Point region, located on the west bank of the Ashley River. This increase amounted in BAR jurisdiction covering over 4,000 buildings.²⁴ Because the BAR now held authority over new construction review, the city hoped to control the environment by supervising what designs were elected for new construction. Growth ensued quickly. Unfortunately, all progress was quickly halted September 21, 1989. A shattering hurricane struck the coast of South Carolina hard, devastating the entire region. With over eighty-five percent of the city damaged, preservation interests and restoration efforts shifted dramatically. Private and public sectors banded together to create a survey of the losses within the historic district, salvaging and stabilizing whatever possible.²⁵

²⁴ Robert P. Stockton, “Charleston’s Preservation Ethic,” in *Preservation Progress for the Preservation Society of Charleston*, Vol. 50 No. 4 (Winter 2006), 8.

²⁵ Charleston and Preservation,” National Park Service: U.S. Department of the Interior, written by Charles Chase, last modified 1998, accessed February 2nd, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/charleston/preservation.htm>.

Despite the economic hardship homeowners faced in the aftermath of the hurricane, the city “refused to reduce or diminish its requirement for compliance with local building codes and the BAR did not reduce its standards or relinquish the right of approval for changes within the historic district.”²⁶ Refusal to accept substitute or lesser quality materials for standard repairs brought animosity from homeowners, but subsequently saved a multitude of buildings from demolition.

As revitalization efforts continued in the wake of Hurricane Hugo, the city began to develop at a more rapid pace than ever. Because some properties did face demolition,



Figure 2.3: A woman on East Bay after Hurricane Hugo; image courtesy The Examiner, <http://www.examiner.com/article/charleston-remembers-hurricane-hugo-20-years-later>

²⁶ “Charleston and Preservation,” <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/charleston/preservation.htm>.

new development had to occur in the commercial districts. In order to manage the balance between new construction and historic properties, the city council commissioned a new preservation plan: *The Charleston Downtown Plan*. Urban Strategies, Inc., Development Strategies, Inc., and SBF Design created the newest “*Charleston Downtown Plan*.” Enacted in 1999, this Plan focused on real estate and economic development—not only on the peninsula, but in greater Charleston as well. Redirecting attention to strategic growth management, *the Charleston Downtown Plan* concentrated attention on the future of the city in a much different light than previous plans. While this plan was incredibly comprehensive, only a fraction of its recommendations were enacted. The following preservation plan, *Charleston 2000: The City of Charleston’s Comprehensive Plan*, clearly outlines the city’s historic preservation objectives as one of the most important sectors of city development and management.

As discussed in the last chapter, in 2008, city council and Historic Charleston Foundation partnered to commission Page and Turnbull of California to generate the most recent city preservation plan to date, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*. Undertaken partly because Historic Charleston Foundation noticed the beginning of large development projects hitting the peninsula in “rapid-fire succession” in the early 2000s, partly because the city had changed immensely even since 2000, and partly because the city, committee, and the Foundation needed to reassess the role of preservation in Charleston. Focusing on stewardship principles, resource protection and uplifting, common design principles, and Charleston’s expanding horizon, this plan proved to be the most approachable from a planning perspective.

Post-2008: Historic Preservation in Charleston Today

Just as the 2008 Preservation Plan says in its Housing Affordability chapter, “Only a preservation effort that maintains the vibrancy and diversity of a community as well as its built heritage can truly succeed.”²⁷ Today, the City of Charleston still strives to carry out the objectives and goals put into motion by their efforts in 2008. However, design control has become more sensitive than ever. With the need to acclimate to the overwhelming aspects of the tourism industry hitting an all-time high in the past few years, Charleston currently struggles with the push for accommodation and commercial developments. Retaining the diversity of a community has become difficult with the influx of tourism and the cost of real estate, but the city still works relentlessly to maintain a happy, livable, and loveable environment for its residents.

That said, it is also clear that historic preservation is now approached as a multi-dimensional concept in Charleston’s community. Sustainability, urban design, and community planning all describe different aspects of the historic preservation movement in Charleston. While preserving historic buildings is important, holding on to the “sense of place” Charleston offers is just as important. Today, with ensuing development rising further and further up the peninsula, city planners, community organizations, and citizens must remain focused on retaining Charleston’s sense of place. How will new developments impact the city atmosphere? What ways can we preserve the graces of Charleston’s built environment? Forward thinking is mandatory in such a setting. As

²⁷ Page & Turnbull, Inc. for the City of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, January 2008: 120.

Mayor Riley wrote, “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.”²⁸

²⁸ Page & Turnbull, Inc. for the City of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, January 2008: introduction.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CALHOUN STREET CORRIDOR & PRESERVATION PLANS

Site History: Calhoun Street Corridor

Now the geographic center of the peninsula, Calhoun Street is no longer considered the northern tourism boundary but instead acts as an artery to the city. It connects the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) to the College of Charleston, and the College of Charleston to Marion Square—the great intersection of the city. Meeting and King Streets flow north and south, providing commercial and business connections to the east-west corridor. Calhoun Street also houses several prominent civic and educational buildings today, including the Buist Academy, the Charleston County Public Library, the Charleston County School District Building, and several other large commercial buildings. It took nearly two centuries for the street to assume its role as a civic thoroughfare.

In the eighteenth century, Calhoun Street marked the edge of the city. The eastern end known ironically as “Boundary Street,” and the portion west of King Street as “Manigault Street,” Calhoun Street was practically rural to Charlestonians.²⁹ By 1849, the street was renamed to honor South Carolina Politician John C. Calhoun. Before the twentieth century, much of where MUSC sits today was rice millponds. In 1792, the Charleston Orphan House was constructed close to the intersection of King and Calhoun Streets. Unfortunately, it was demolished in 1951.³⁰ The central and eastern sections of

²⁹ Buckhurst Fish Hutton Katz Inc. and Thomas & Means Associates, *Calhoun Street Corridor Study, Charleston, South Carolina*, January 1989, 9.

³⁰ 1989 *Calhoun Street Corridor Study, Charleston, South Carolina*, 11.

the street saw residential development, both large and small in scale, throughout the mid-1800s. Several churches were built along the street during antebellum period, including Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (now Zion Presbyterian Church) and Old Bethel Methodist Church. The eastern end of Calhoun Street served more industrial purposes as the shipping industry grew in Charleston. This area functioned as a port and housed its workers up until the twentieth century. In 1989, Hurricane Hugo damaged this region extensively. This led to cleared lots and massive vacancy throughout the area.³¹

In order to understand this corridor's long history of urban development challenges and successes within a city that prides itself on historic preservation principles, it is important to review its many Preservation Plans. The 1974 Historic Preservation Plan by City Planning and Architectural Associates of Chapel Hill, North Carolina was the first formal Preservation Plan enacted by the city. The city commissioned an area specific plan in 1989 by Buckhurst Fish Hutton Katz Inc. and Thomas & Means Associates known as *The Calhoun Street Corridor Study*. In 1999, the city enacted another plan called *The Charleston Downtown Plan: Achieving Balance Through Strategic Growth*, created by Urban Strategies, Inc., Development Strategies, Inc. and SBF Design. The city had the most recent Preservation Plan, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina* completed in 2008 by Page & Turnbull, Architecture, Historic Preservation, and Urban Planning of California. As a measure for creating a stronger set of goals for an evolving city,

³¹ CKS Architecture, "*Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina*," for the City of Charleston Department of Planning, Preservation, and Sustainability, February 9, 2010, 6.

redevelopment plans for blighted or contextually confused areas, and economic growth strategies, these plans provided frequent focused objectives for the city.

*1974: The Historic Preservation Plan, Charleston, South Carolina
City Planning and Architectural Associates of Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

In 1974, the City of Charleston Planning and Zoning Commission chairman Robert M. Hollings and his team released its first historic preservation plan. After three years of research and compilation, the commission and its hired team, City Planning and Architectural Associates (CPAA), of Chapel Hill, North Carolina had achieved a set of goals that would protect Charleston's historic heritage. This plan suggested both short and long term action. Some goals would demand implementation of new ordinances by the City, while others would involve reinforcement of present programs or dynamic application of existing ordinances.³² Spearheaded by the demand to identify what properties south of the Crosstown Expressway (Highway 17) needed preservation protection, this plan proposed actions that led to an implementation program that would guide the city through its future challenges with urban development.

The first step in the plan's implementation was a historic architecture inventory. According to their survey, Charleston's architectural heritage was "in jeopardy through encroachment by incompatible land uses, by highway construction and by other proposed large scale 'improvements.'"³³ CPAA began with the Carolina Art Association's 1944 building survey (*This is Charleston*), revising and adding observations to fit the needs of

³² City Planning and Architectural Associates and the City of Charleston, *Historic Preservation Plan: Charleston, South Carolina*, June 1974, i.

³³ City Planning and Architectural Associates and the City of Charleston, *Historic Preservation Plan: Charleston, South Carolina*, June 1974, 3.

1974. Noting that it was not possible to save every historic structure due to the demands of “overwhelming public necessity,” the plan sorted buildings into four separate categories:

- (1) Group one- exceptional (buildings of the highest design quality)
- (2) Group two- excellent (high style regional architecture)
- (3) Group three- significant (good architectural quality of vernacular mode)
- (4) Group four- contributory (of architectural value).

Unfortunately, while the survey could have been useful, it does not seem to fold into much of the plan that follows.

Hoping to preserve “Old Charleston,” CPAA diverted on a romantic tangent not seen in the other preservation plans. They explained “the total effect,” describing the city as “a superb accident of assembly: buildings of fine design, superb scale, sensitive detail, great sophistication, architecturally innovative and frequently of great dignity.”³⁴ After a lengthy discussion on the unusual mixture of historic architecture throughout the city, the plan finally began to address the problems it uncovered through its investigation. The plan made a series of observations. First, King Street hit a low point in the 1970s. Not only were buildings beginning to crumble slowly and fall apart, but businesses also began to close at rapid pace due to suburban developments outside of the historic district. Second, the study gave Meeting Street even poorer prospects. During the analysis, the surveyors witnessed several building demolitions on Meeting Street. What once was a

³⁴ *Historic Preservation Plan: Charleston, South Carolina*, June 1974, 9.

vivacious business quarter known as the “cast iron” district, Meeting Street faced growing vacancy.

The Plan also discussed environmental and visual influences across the city. The crosstown expressway was unsightly and led to automobile pollution, especially in the areas elevated over historic neighborhoods. The Cooper River waterfront’s shipping and cargo businesses brought unwanted industrial waste into the city, while shipping warehouses proved to be rather unsightly for neighborhoods and businesses surrounding them. Other unsightly elements, such as chain-linked fences, unpaved parking, litter and unkempt spaces, were descriptively noted by CPAA as a severe problem. Most important, the CPAA considered large tracts of under utilized, vacant waterfront land that lined the Cooper River side of the peninsula waiting for positive land use development.

Finally, CPAA noted the lack of general maintenance seen on historic residential and commercial properties throughout the peninsula, but especially above Calhoun Street. Ranking each block and quarter on a percentage level of deterioration, almost every section above Calhoun Street were compromised of over 50% deteriorated buildings. Dirty streets were also a problem: “nothing detracts more from the image of a city than litter.”³⁵ Curbs and streets needed repairs; vacant lots needed manicuring; out-of-character buildings needed revisiting, and “street furniture” needed redesigned. According to CPAA, Charleston had a lot of work to do.

In order to carry out these improvements successfully, a series of steps were necessary to maintain historic buildings while also embracing the demands of future

³⁵ City Planning, *Historic Preservation Plan: Charleston, South Carolina*, June 1974, 19.

urban growth. According to the 1974 plan, these improvement steps could be followed incrementally by the CPAA's "land use plan." Dividing Charleston's land use into fifteen land use groups, CPAA proposed a series of actions for each category. The land use categories were defined as residential, highway commercial, local business, regional city, specialty commercial, office-financial, office-institutional, market street commercial, industrial ports, neighborhood centers, waterfront open space, coast guard stations, coliseum-convention center, college-institutional, and hospital-educational.

Of all of these proposals, only the coliseum-convention center, college-institutional, and hospital-educational groups directly affected Calhoun Street. Grounding the coliseum-convention center proposal on the open land on the Cooper River waterfront and proximity to the Galliard Auditorium, CPAA suggested this area house a coliseum development. Calling the Cooper River waterfront "badly blighted," CPAA advocated "restaurants, motels (including a 'botel'), a waterfront park, and housing" should replace the "aged and unattractive Marsh Street public housing project."³⁶ While the college-institutional and hospital-education groups only include Calhoun Street because the College of Charleston and MUSC straddle the road, the future development of these institutions and their facilities would, the study predicted, affect the corridor greatly if not monitored and implemented correctly.

Unlike the preservation plans that followed, the 1974 Plan aimed a series of critiques at state and city legislation. Tax credits were introduced as an incentive to encourage homeowners to carry out needed repairs and restorations. They even

³⁶ City Planning and Architectural Associates, *Historic Preservation Plan: Charleston, South Carolina*, June 1974, 25.

suggested adjusting property taxes in order to alleviate any pressures to demolish a historic building for a more “marketable structure.”

The Preservation Plan also tackled one of its most important subjects: the Board of Architecture Review. No other subsequent plan designated this much detail on BAR strengthening and reform. Ultimately, CPAA called for reinforced BAR power. Basing this suggestion off of their findings from the historic architecture survey, CPAA noted “a great many buildings which should be preserved are outside the Old and Historic District.”³⁷ Not only that, many buildings were under one hundred years old, leaving them outside of BAR jurisdiction. Instead of suggesting enlarging the Old and Historic District, CPAA recommended that buildings that fell in groups one through four that fall outside of the District should be under the Review Board’s power. However, doing this would have two negative consequences. First, it would probably cause general upheaval from property owners newly designated as under the control of the BAR without the inclusion of the rest of the district. Second, it totally segregates them from what was apparently so important previously—the historic context surrounding the properties.

The Plan proposal collapsed under the weight of their previous statement. Lamenting that special designation status may become “unnecessarily difficult,” CPAA explained that such a plan might “[deprive the city] of all evidence of where and how its ordinary men and women lived, leaving a distorted picture of an upper-class

³⁷ City Planning and Architectural Associates and the City of Charleston, *Historic Preservation Plan: Charleston, South Carolina*, June 1974, 32.

environment.”³⁸ Their proposal touched on a number of other issues like possible jurisdiction over public domain furnishings and changes (streets, sidewalks, plantings, lighting, signs, and over physical features), a reconsideration clause for declined plans and projects, revolving-fund creation and administration powers, and application requirements for all new construction projects. Many of these suggestions originate to the late 1950s, when consultant Carl Feiss provided advisement for Historic Charleston Foundation’s trustees as they began their rehabilitation projects.³⁹ One of Fiess’ suggestions included a comprehensive historic buildings survey. In 1971, CPAA and the city of Charleston collaborated with Feiss to create the “so-called Feiss-Wright-Anderson plan” as part of the 1974 Preservation Plan.⁴⁰ While many of these suggestions were never implemented, the BAR, its application requirements, and processes became increasingly formal between 1975-1991.

Furthermore, CPAA critiqued the current zoning ordinance, asserting that “none is more potentially damaging to the cause of historic preservation than the unlimited building heights permitted in nonresidential zoning districts.”⁴¹ To curtail this problem, height ordinances should be implemented accordingly in delineated “height districts” prescribed by the plan. This was the first instance formal enforcement of height limitations was suggested.

³⁸ City Planning and Architectural Associates and the City of Charleston, *Historic Preservation Plan: Charleston, South Carolina*, June 1974, 32.

³⁹ Robert R. Weyeneth, *Historic Preservation for a Living City*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2000), 82.

⁴⁰ Robert R. Weyeneth, *Historic Preservation for a Living City*, 82.

⁴¹ City Planning and Architectural Associates and the City of Charleston, *Historic Preservation Plan: Charleston, South Carolina*, June 1974,34.

CPPA also advised that the city should impose an anti-neglect ordinance, create weed and litter control policies, and establish a downtown revitalization plan. This plan reflected the earlier complaints that the commercial districts were failing fast, especially along King and Meeting Streets, and needed a plan—now. However, their strategy for achieving this was slightly superficial. Besides creating a façade revitalization plan for the buildings that face King Street, not much else was offered. CPPA suggested the city assist business owners with “merchandising plans.” The plan complained about lack of parking, but only offered the solution of an added parking garage on Saint Philip Street. While this is a nice idea, one parking garage cannot provide enough space for the influx of automobile traffic they are seeking. Closing its study with emphasis on “citizen participation,” the document discussed a few other small issues and rehabilitation plans, keeping its suggestions rather shallow from a comprehensive standpoint. The city would wait another fifteen years before commissioning a new study on Charleston’s historic district.

*1989: Calhoun Street Corridor Study, Charleston, South Carolina
Buckhurst Fish Hutton Katz Inc. and Thomas & Means Associates*

Before Hurricane Hugo in September of 1989, the City of Charleston collaborated with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, the National Park Service, the United States Department of the Interior, Southern Bell, and Historic Charleston Foundation to commission Buckhurst Fish Hutton Katz (BFHK) of New York and Thomas & Means Associates to compile a urban design study for the future of Calhoun Street. Their scope of work was far-reaching. The firm focused on “defin[ing] problems

and opportunities, prepar[ation of] a conceptual land use plan and streetscape plan for the corridor, defin[ing] more detailed urban design criteria, with specific reference to designated potential development sites, and [ultimately suggesting] a framework for implementation of the strategic approach.”⁴²

This plan was prompted by a mass influx of new development that would significantly impact the function, feel, and appearance of Calhoun Street. Developments included the James Island Bridge, improvements at MUSC, the new South Carolina Aquarium and Fort Sumter tour boat facility, new hotels, offices, and gas stations. Before proceeding with these projects, the city halted all advancements until the completion of this study.

Dividing the corridor into three sections, the medical complex, the college of Charleston area, and the South Carolina Aquarium area, BHFk concluded on a number of recommendations. From a planning standpoint, the “objective [was] to find ways to simultaneously accommodate desired institutional growth [in these three areas], control but encourage the city’s crucial tourism base, and preserve the neighborhood scale and historic ambiance of the Calhoun Street context.”⁴³ Capitalizing on the city’s existing strengths and improving the visual and pedestrian qualities would lead to a revitalized core.

These improvements were defined through what BHFk called Charleston’s “rich design vocabulary.” Carefully curated building form and scale (with emphasis on height,

⁴² Buckhurst Fish Hutton Katz Inc. and Thomas & Means Associates, *Calhoun Street Corridor Study, Charleston, South Carolina*, January 1989, 4.

⁴³ *Calhoun Street Corridor Study, Charleston, South Carolina*, January 1989, 6.

scale, and mass), established street edges and forms, the addition of some screens, fences, and other forms of street furniture (paving, pedestrian amenities, and signs) were some of proposed improvements to Calhoun Street that could easily align with Charleston's traditional character. Because of the new landscaping ordinance, any new development had to incorporate a landscaping plan in their application, review, and approval. To give additional curb appeal to the Street, BHFk suggested working with South Carolina Electric and Gas (SCE&G) and removing all overhead wires and utility poles from the streetscape.

The 1989 plan also noticed transportation issues. Due to a combination of poorly coordinated planning and development in the medical complex (from a automobile and pedestrian perspective), influx of commuters to the peninsula, the introduction of the James Island Bridge, and the growth of the College of Charleston, automobile accommodation had become a pivotal problem. BHFk suggested limiting the James Island Bridge to only one inbound lane, removing some or all on street parking between Barre and Meetings Streets, and constructing a large parking garage to accommodate at least three hundred cars near the Aquarium facility. All of these suggestions were implemented.

BHFk saw great potential in Calhoun Street, but recommended that all future changes fall under a detailed design review process. Coupling strict design guidelines with “an equally sensitive approach to complementary streetscape...coordinated by a public-private partnership of committed participants, the resulting new urban boulevard will reflect not only Calhoun Street's part heritage and future function, but also its future

potential.”⁴⁴ Ten years later, the city of Charleston commissioned a more comprehensive plan that analyzed not only the Historic District, but greater Charleston as well.

1999: The Charleston Downtown Plan: Achieving Balance Through Strategic Growth
Urban Strategies, Inc., Development Strategies, Inc. and SBF Design

In order to manage the balance between new construction and historic properties, city council commissioned *The Charleston Downtown Plan* in 1999. Urban Strategies, Inc., Development Strategies, Inc., and SBF Design created the newest “*Charleston Downtown Plan*.” Published in 1999, this Plan focused on real estate and economic development—not only on the peninsula, but in greater Charleston as well. Redirecting attention to strategic growth management, *The Charleston Downtown Plan* focused instead on the future of the city in a much different light than previous plans. While this Plan contained comprehensive proposals, only a fraction of its recommendations were enacted.

This report proved to be more economically focused than previous surveys commissioned by the city. The downtown plan based its proposals upon a set of principles:

- (1) Nurture inclusive, vibrant neighborhoods
- (2) Pursue economic diversity
- (3) Foster sustainability
- (4) Reinforce the existing urban structure
- (5) Respect the grain, scale and mix of the peninsula’s urban fabric

⁴⁴ *Calhoun Street Corridor Study, Charleston, South Carolina*, January 1989, 4.

- (6) Ensure architectural integrity, encourage a balanced network for movement, use growth strategically
- (7) Maintain downtown as the center of culture and commerce⁴⁵

The plan emphasized the key term “strategic growth” throughout. New development should be encouraged in some areas, while other areas should warrant protection.

Unfortunately, this plan hardly donated any energy to the Calhoun Street corridor, and instead only used it as a demarcation boundary (“south or north of Calhoun street...”) when discussing other issues.

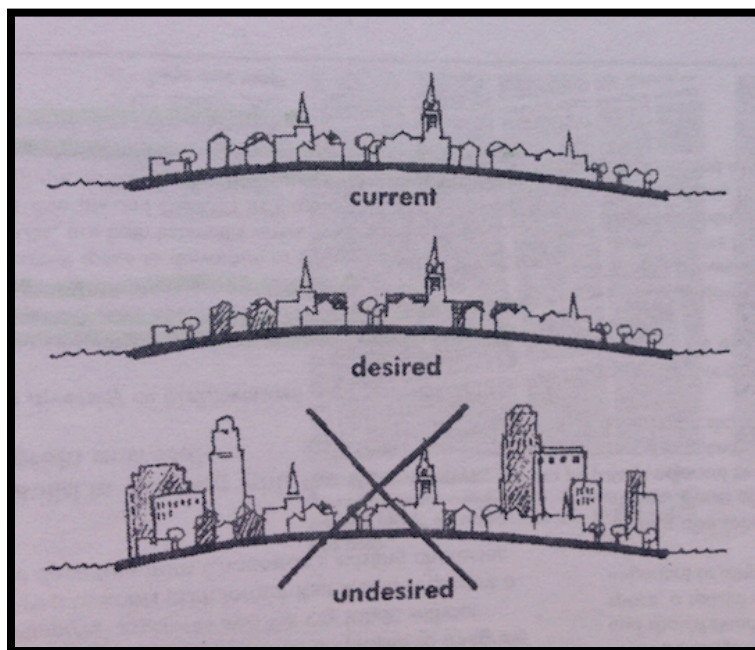


Figure 3.1: New development should be in keeping with the city's current skyline. The downtown plan recommends that the height regime be modified to clearly reflect the desired development; image courtesy Urban Strategies, Inc., *The Charleston Downtown Plan*, 62.

Recognizing that Charleston hit its stride with tourism, the plan suggested that the city needed to adjust. Charleston had become a desirable destination to visit, vacation, or

⁴⁵ Urban Strategies, Inc., Development Strategies, Inc. and SBF Design, *The Charleston Downtown Plan: Achieving Balance Through Strategic Growth*, November 1999, i.

live. However, with the influx of visitors and new residents, the city discovered it was behind in civic infrastructure development. The survey team suggested that reinforcing the key intersections and corridors, creating new activity on both waterfronts, and enhancing the public realm of streets like King, Calhoun, Meeting, and East Bay might lead to a stronger and more desirable city structure.⁴⁶ To provide a better living environment, the Plan envisioned creating a park with mixed-use development at the east end of Calhoun Street as its terminus with Cooper River waterfront.

Beyond the park suggestion at the Cooper River waterfront, the 1999 Preservation Plan does not devote much time to the Calhoun Street Corridor. Instead, it focused on areas “north of Calhoun” or “south of Calhoun.” Indirectly, the plan encourages the reinforcement of corridors and nodes like Calhoun Street. “Reinforcing” or “intensifying” these areas requires “selectivity: target those areas that will most contribute to the city and ensure that new development will be compatible with the existing urban form.”⁴⁷ While avoiding a building height increase, the efficient use of open lots by creating “dense, low-rise structures” would ensure appropriate intensification. To draw attention to these corridors, the Plan also suggested marking crossroads with focal points. Described as “places of intense public activity and life, where the public realm invites people to use the streets and the parks,” these focal points could be inserted at a variety of locations, including Spring Street at Spring Street Pier, Broad Street at Lockwood Drive, Calhoun Street at Aquarium Park, Meeting and Market

⁴⁶ Urban Strategies, Inc., Development Strategies, Inc. and SBF Design, *The Charleston Downtown Plan: Achieving Balance Through Strategic Growth*, November 1999, iii.

⁴⁷ Urban Strategies, Inc., Development Strategies, Inc. and SBF Design, *The Charleston Downtown Plan: Achieving Balance Through Strategic Growth*, 40.

Streets at the Market Building, and King and Calhoun Streets at Marion Square.⁴⁸ Some of the locational focal points were completed: the corner fountain at the southwest corner of Marion Square was installed shortly after the 1999 Plan was enacted, and the Cooper River Waterfront Park is still under construction today.



Figure 3.2: Marion Square Fountain; image courtesy Michael Van Valkenburgh & Associates Inc., <http://www.mvvainc.com/project.php?id=9>.

During the survey portion of the 1999 Plan, development ideas swarmed city for the Cooper River Waterfront at Calhoun Street. With the Charleston Aquarium about to start construction, and many plans for new projects at that end of Calhoun, it is not surprising that the strategists directed so much attention to that region of the peninsula. Extending the urban city fabric to the Cooper River waterfront was one of its most crucial

⁴⁸ Urban Strategies, Inc., Development Strategies, Inc. and SBF Design, *The Charleston Downtown Plan: Achieving Balance Through Strategic Growth*, 40-41.

goals. The Plan advocated expanding development to the river edge with new cultural and educational ventures by creating a separate waterfront park development plan. This proposal was implemented several years later with the creation of the Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront plan in 2010 (discussed later).

*2008: Vision, Community, Heritage:
A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina
Page & Turnbull, Architecture, Historic Preservation, and Urban Planning of California*

In 2008, the city council and Historic Charleston Foundation partnered and commissioned Page & Turnbull of California to generate the most recent preservation plan to date, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*. Contracted partly because Historic Charleston Foundation noticed the beginning of large development projects hitting the peninsula in “rapid-fire succession,” partly because the city had changed immensely even since 2000, and partly because the city, committee, and the Foundation needed to reassess the role of preservation in Charleston. Focusing on stewardship principles, resource protection and uplifting, common design principles, and Charleston’s expanding horizon, this proposal proved to be the most approachable from a planning perspective.

Similarly to previous plans, Page & Turnbull suggested an update to the city’s Preservation Ordinance “to reflect contemporary concepts of preservation.” They hoped the city would begin to use the Preservation Ordinance “as a local economic engine [while

also exploring] how the design review process can be streamlined.”⁴⁹ Noticing that modern architectural style and building practices contrast radically from historic construction, Page & Turnbull believed that; “without thoughtful guidelines, even well intentioned new construction may be hard-pressed to contribute to the city’s context.”⁵⁰ With this challenge as the central focus, the plan outlined new avenues for the preservation-minded city. Page & Turnbull believed that creating an archaeology ordinance, encouraging sustainability in all aspects of urban development, preserving the current community, and preparing for natural disasters and recovery efforts would surely lead the city to success.

In order to achieve these goals, the 2008 Plan suggested a number of changes to Charleston’s operational strategies from the preservation perspective. Recognizing the obstacles Charleston has struggled with and triumphed over since the implementation of the 1974 Preservation Plan, Page & Turnbull noticed that the city still needs traffic mitigation, street and sidewalk maintenance, zoning that assists with preservation efforts, more open space, and most importantly, greater BAR authority, enforceable guidelines, and a clear design review process for new construction.⁵¹ Analyzing the standing design guidelines and Charleston’s urban design principles, the 2008 Plan stipulated something different than all previous plans. Instead of demanding a specific set of rules for new

⁴⁹ Page & Turnbull and the City of Charleston, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, for the City of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation, January 2008, 4.

⁵⁰ Page & Turnbull and the City of Charleston, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, 4.

⁵¹ Page & Turnbull and the City of Charleston, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, 24.

construction in the historic district, Page & Turnbull recognized the importance of vagueness.

The Plan disagreed with using specific regulations to manage change. The firm explained, “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.”⁵² Because of the way Charleston developed historically, the city has few large building precedents for commercial district from which to draw design inspiration. Not only does that create a challenge for those designing new buildings for the historic district, but the “iconic small-scale” buildings make crafting relatable new construction even more difficult. Instead of creating a calculated list of building requirements, Page & Turnbull suggested to focus on respecting site surroundings and drawing from local traits.⁵³

Page & Turnbull chose not to dial in on small, detail-oriented concerns associated with downtown Charleston. Instead, they decided to concentrate on large spectrum issues that apply to the entire city, and not just isolated portions of the peninsula. They encouraged Area Character Appraisals in order to provide architects with accurate contextual guides for smaller design districts that comprise the city. The 2008 Preservation Plan also encouraged the development of the Cooper River Waterfront at Calhoun Street. Coining the area as “The Charleston Civic Design Center,” Page &

⁵² Page & Turnbull and the City of Charleston, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, 37.

⁵³ Page & Turnbull and the City of Charleston, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, 38.

Turnbull suggested “creating purposeful transitions between historic areas and new development” and “knit[ting the neighborhoods in the area] back together across the [old Cooper River Bridge’s] scar through new streets, small blocks, and land uses similar to historic ones” to connect back to Calhoun Street.⁵⁴

Ultimately, the 2008 Preservation Plan sought to create a new set of principles providing a new perspective for the city’s future. While vague at times, the plan successfully assessed deficits and strengths within Charleston’s urban development goals, and directed attention to areas that have recently lost or never warranted attention. Recognizing that preservation is not just about buildings, but also about a social, economic, and cultural phenomena, Page & Turnbull’s Plan provided a strong set of goals for the City of Charleston to build upon. However, in less than two years, the city would call on consultants to make further recommendations.

*2010: Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront
CKS Architecture & Urban Design with Code Studio, Inc., Economics Research
Associates, Gorove/Slade Associates, Inc., Walker Brands*

In 2010, the city of Charleston commissioned CKS Architecture to create a detailed and action-oriented plan for the Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront region. This is the most recent published urban planning document to date for the city of Charleston. Working from the 2008 Preservation Plan, CKS hoped to convert this “transitional zone” by “establishing policies and priorities for coordinated development,

⁵⁴ Page & Turnbull and the City of Charleston, *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, 145-147.

land use planning, and budgetary preparation.”⁵⁵ Calling this area “Charleston’s next opportunity to create a mixed-use neighborhood worthy of a city well known for its high standards for livability, beauty, and charm,” CKS gave the city a number of goals.⁵⁶ In order to redevelop this area previously dominated by industrial buildings, CKS suggested:

- (1) investing in a quality public realm
- (2) balancing modes of transportation
- (3) adopting form based design controls
- (4) using publicly owned parcels for public benefit
- (5) expanding the accommodations zone
- (6) utilizing public parking structures and other parking means
- (7) marketing and branding the district to new and emerging market businesses⁵⁷

Recognizing that pending developments including Concord Park, the International African American Museum, Charlotte Street Park, and Fountain Walk would significantly alter the current appearance and atmosphere of Calhoun Street, CKS recommended a few urban design principles that could mesh well with Charleston’s existing infrastructure. In order to create an appropriate transitional zone between historic buildings in the Mazyck-Wraggborough and Ansonborough neighborhoods and

⁵⁵ CKS Architecture, “*Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina,*” for the City of Charleston Department of Planning, Preservation, and Sustainability, February 9, 2010, 6.

⁵⁶ CKS Architecture, “*Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina,*” 2.

⁵⁷ CKS Architecture, “*Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina,*” 2-3.

the twenty-first century buildings, new construction between these two zones should be “carefully designed to respond to differing uses, heights, and character on blocks to either side of them.”⁵⁸ Doing so will prevent any new construction from overwhelming the historic neighborhoods.

While being sympathetic to the historic neighborhoods in the area, CKS also proposed several other goals for Calhoun Street development. Because the streetscape is just as important as the buildings that describe Calhoun Street, CKS encouraged strengthening important intersections, reducing congestion, introducing on-street parking, and providing greater protection to pedestrians.⁵⁹ If more pedestrian traffic is desired on Calhoun Street, then it is crucial that people using its sidewalks feel safe and comfortable. Trees should be added to provide shade and lower, pedestrian scaled lighting should be spaced evenly along the corridor. Claiming that traffic of Calhoun Street does not warrant four lanes, the Plan also suggested converting two of Calhoun’s traffic lanes to parking. The city of Charleston recognized that some areas of Calhoun Street dealt with more traffic than others, so they compromised by adding metered parking in certain zones that were less congested throughout the day.

Not only are public improvements important for aesthetic appeal, but they can also “greatly influence the quality of the pedestrian experience.”⁶⁰ CKS encouraged enhancing certain aspects of Liberty Park, a green space where Calhoun Street terminates

⁵⁸ CKS Architecture, “*Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina*,” 37.

⁵⁹ CKS Architecture, “*Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina*,” 46.

⁶⁰ CKS Architecture, “*Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina*,” 49.

on the Cooper River waterfront. As a space geared toward children and families, CKS wanted Liberty Park to not only provide a space for activities, but also hoped to improve its purpose as a connection between the maritime park and the street. They suggested replacing the current lower height trees with ones that are tall with high canopies, wider

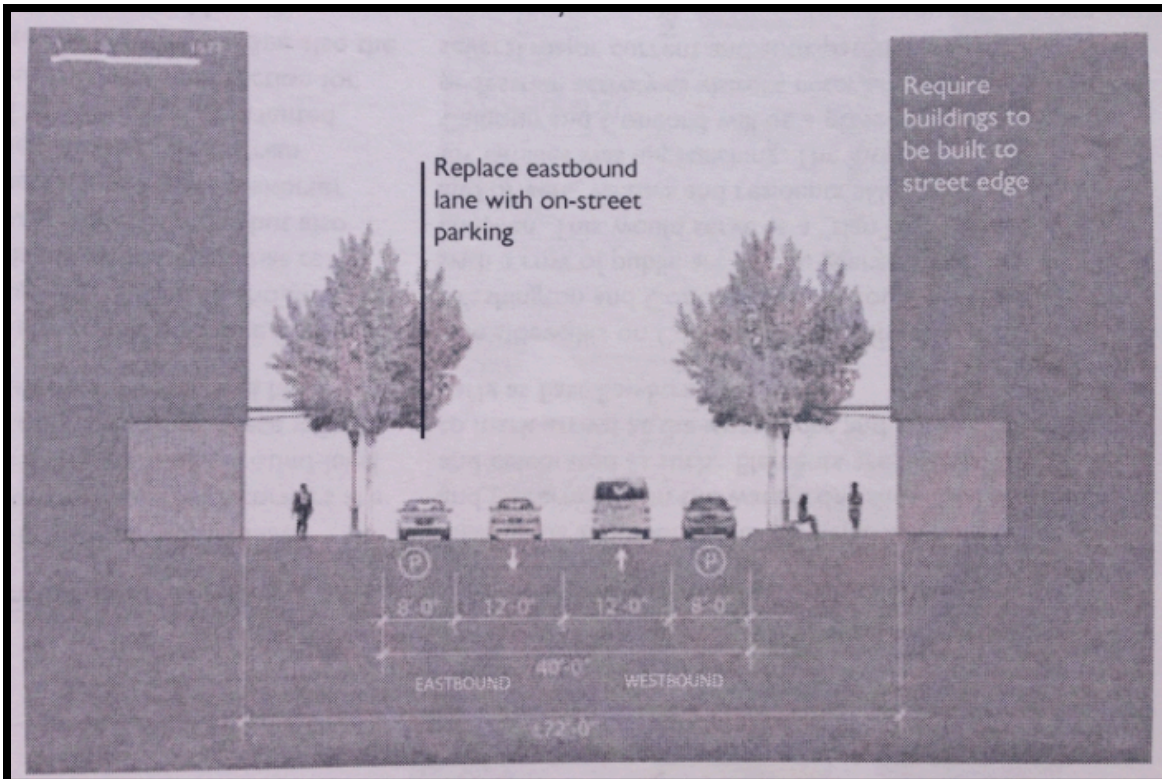


Figure 3.3: Proposed typical street section for Calhoun. Convert the east bound lane to parking. Prohibit parking from street frontage; image courtesy CKS Architecture & Urban Design, Special Area Plan, 48.

pathways, and more plantings that enhance the walkways and views.

Looking south on Calhoun Street, CKS acknowledged areas of potential redevelopment improvements. Recognizing Marion Square’s prominence within the community and urban landscape, CKS complained about the southeast corner of the park being occupied by a gas station, a drive through bank, and a hotel driveway. Claiming that “none of the buildings hold the corner at the street, and all...are more suburban than

urban in nature,” CKS asked for redevelopment in this zone. Instead, there should be “urban buildings that hold the corner, create street-level activity and mark this



intersection as a significant one in the city.”⁶¹ In place of the bank, CKS suggested an office or retail building, up to four floors in height, setback far enough to avoid casting shadow into the park. Where the gas station and Citadel Square Baptist



Figure 3.3 & 3.4: Liberty Park. Existing conditions above. The placement of low trees creates a visual barrier to the Aquarium and waterfront. Below, proposed landscape changes including removing visual barriers, introducing a water feature and trees with a higher canopy to create views to the Aquarium and Cooper River; image courtesy CKS Architecture & Urban Design, *Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront*, 56.

⁶¹ CKS Architecture, “*Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina*,” 59.

Church parking lot are located, they proposed a residential and institutional building, up to four floors in height. Ground floor retail would be a requirement. According to CKS, all new development suggested in this area would encourage pedestrian traffic to the waterfront park region.

While this Plan had some rather lofty goals, several were reachable from a city standpoint. Improving pedestrian traffic and building an identity for Calhoun Street seemed to be the most critical, followed by the hopes to develop an area that might benefit both residential and commercial uses while still being attractive to visitors.⁶²

⁶² CKS Architecture, *“Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina,”* 109.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite its status as the nation's oldest, Charleston, South Carolina's Board of Architectural Review and its history has gained little serious scholarly attraction. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated issue. Most public literature related to design review and architectural board guidelines generally consists of technical pamphlets intended for the use of members representing historic district commissions, board members, and residents in those areas. While prescriptive material is useful to a great extent within this study, technological manuals do not speak to or support the historic analysis of the operations and evolution of such committees and review boards, or most importantly, the architectural review board in Charleston.

When attempting to understand Charleston's rich architectural and cultural history in the context of the history of the BAR and its influence on the Calhoun Street corridor, there are several resources to be considered. South Carolina Historical Society's *Charleston: Alone Among the Cities* (2000), Jonathan H. Poston's *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture* (1997) and the Carolina Art Association's *This is Charleston: An Architectural Survey of a Unique American City* (1944) provide a general overview of the city's architecture. Books provide valuable input defining some of the original and subsequent land use for properties that lie along Calhoun Street. However, with the exception of the rehabilitation of the Francis Marion Hotel (1994-1996), none include any buildings constructed or altered on the street after the Historic

District was extended to this area.⁶³ Not only that, because the most recent publication is from 2000, nothing of the past decade was included in each book's architectural analysis.

As a bustling mid-size (and growing!) city, one could easily make the argument that Charleston's entire literary approach to architectural status and history has significantly changed in both physical and philosophical aspects. After all, the residing BAR and their tastes are never the same for more than a few months. Moreover, because of the typical obsession with the past that is often associated with Charleston, all of these authors, along with almost everyone else writing about the architectural history of the city, fails to ever mention anything built after 1940 (unless it was considered a huge mistake). While this amnesia towards the second half of the twentieth century and beyond to the twenty-first century seems to be rather widespread--and probably symptomatic of the fact that Charleston does contain an enormous amount of architecturally rare time capsules--it is interesting to consider.

When looking into the historic preservation movement within Charleston, this issue of poor coverage of the later twentieth century and beyond persists. Stephanie E. Yuhl's *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (2005) and Robert R. Weyenth's *Historic Preservation for a Living City* (2000) share a contextual background of the preservation movement and its progress in Charleston since its first steps in the 1920s. Preservation Progress writer Robert B. Stockton provides another interesting perspective on this topic in his article entitled "Charleston's Preservation Ethic" (1993). Stockton considers other aspects of Charleston's preservation movement

⁶³ Jonathan H. Poston. *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1997), 384.

that are uncommonly cited like the rebuilding of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in 1835. As a city distinguished for the first efforts towards preserving architectural history in the United States, Charleston is known for its 1931 Zoning Ordinance. This single fact can be found--standing alone--in many pieces concerning historic preservation in America. It is a rarity to find anything further. Yuhl continues the discussion until about 1940, but does not extend any further. Weyenth, on the other hand, carries the preservation story past this point, but with a central focus on the establishment and evolution of the Historic Charleston Foundation. This information, while still incredibly useful in the broader spectrum of this study, still stands as incomplete when attempting to understand the role of the BAR within the growth of the city, and furthermore, the evolution of Calhoun Street.

Not only are the BAR's influences, presence, and authority difficult to diagnose within any of its generations, its scholarly analysis of its interaction with the city and urban planners is historically...nonexistent. In order to gain a deeper understanding of Charleston's urban planners' and collaborators' efforts to improve the Calhoun Street corridor, several studies should be considered. As presented earlier, in 1989, Historic Charleston Foundation commissioned Buckhurst, Fish, Hutton, & Katz to complete what became known as the *Calhoun Street Corridor Study*. Unfortunately, the survey work was completed right before Hurricane Hugo ravaged the city in September of 1989. However, majority of the information and proposals were still very applicable to the area. As helpful as this information proves, it does not define the development of the area from the perspective of the BAR. Centered more on urban planning and cohesiveness rather

the the design review for buildings proposed for the corridor, this study lacks emphasis on new construction.

On a more isolated level, the 2010 *Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront* by CKS Architecture (with Urban Design, Code Studio, Inc., Economics Research Associates, Gorove/Slade Associates, Inc., and Walker Brands) provides a comprehensive program for further development of a mixed use neighborhood in the Cooper River waterfront area. CKS Architecture, or Chan Krieger Sieniewicz (merged with NBBJ since 2010) is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and known for its success in assisting companies and communities create comprehensive and innovatives spaces from sports arenas to healthcare facilities.

The Calhoun Street Waterfront plan sets forth a variety of goals, which planned to develop transportation, improve quality of life, adopt a “form based design controls,” find better use for public space for public benefit, construct hotels, improve parking, all while “vigorously market[ing] and brand[ing] the district to a new and emerging market business [corridor].”⁶⁴ Since the plans were meant to be implemented in full immediately, this information will be interesting to assess BAR rulings in regards their suggestions. However, this study also lacks emphasis on architecture and the design review process. Focused mostly on marketing the area’s appeal through small scale alterations, the plan only briefly discusses the general issue of height, scale, and mass in the eastern sector of Calhoun Street.

⁶⁴ CKS Architecture & Urban Design, et al. *Special Area Plan: Calhoun Street-East/Cooper River Waterfront, Charleston, South Carolina* (Charleston: City of Charleston Department of Planning, Preservation, & Sustainability, 2010), 2-3.

On a larger scale, an architecture, historic preservation, and urban planning firm out of California, known as Page & Turnbull, completed a study of the entire downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods in 2008 for which City of Charleston collaborated with Historic Charleston Foundation. This document, known as *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*, focuses on urban planning for the future in a unique context. Interestingly, Historic Charleston Foundation chose to fund this study due to a “growing concern over the onslaught of large development projects in [the] 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.”⁶⁵

As a reaction to this, Historic Charleston Foundation proactively held workshops over the span of a year, collecting public “oversight of a diversely represented Advisory Committee.” An extremely comprehensive plan, this analysis emphasizes the “stewardship principles” of the city defined in a number of categories, including new construction, land use and regulation, design review, and more. In an attempt to “safeguard and strengthen the city’s remarkable heritage,” the firm suggests the city direct their attention to “contextual new design, wise land use, and clear, inclusive design review processes.”⁶⁶ While this information may be thoughtful, it is useless without the approval of the BAR. Furthermore, the entire document’s commentary on the BAR’s role within the city is superficial. Beyond mentioning that the BAR was given greater control

⁶⁵ Page & Turnbull. *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*. (City of Charleston, 2007), introduction.

⁶⁶ Page & Turnbull. *Vision, Community, Heritage*, 35.

over architectural decisions within the historic district after Charleston's first preservation plan was adopted in 1974, there is not much attention placed on their significantly large role within city development. This plan deems the BAR's intentionally vague set of standards for design review and the city's zoning ordinance (which has defined the role of the BAR since 1931) as out of date and inadequate. The document carries on with a number of recommendations for improving the BAR, but never gives an in-depth explanation as to *why* such aspects of the BAR should be adjusted. It is easy to suggest providing the BAR with more thorough and updated "established standards, vision, and design principles" without attempting the exercise themselves.⁶⁷ Without providing a basis for critique, this document stands defenseless in describing examples of this where, how, or why the current standards fail. Page & Turnbull reiterate that their plan is meant to preserve Charleston's history while "developments herald significant change."

Page & Turnbull's downtown Preservation Plan acted as an updated effort continued from a 1999 study, *The Charleston Downtown Plan: Achieving Balance through Strategic Growth*. This plan was prepared by Urban Strategies (St. Louis), Development Strategies Inc. (also out of St. Louis), and SBF Design (Charleston). It is not surprising that this document places most emphasis on real estate and economic development, as it was completed a little over a year after the devastation of Hurricane Hugo. Some effort is donated to design review standards critique and recommendation section. However, this information seems slightly contradictory when employing the stance of acting towards the future: they offer no flexibility in adapting design standards.

⁶⁷ Page & Turnbull. *Vision, Community, Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, South Carolina*. (City of Charleston, 2007), 49.

For example, height, scale, and mass, urbanization changes, or building diversity out of context must not be permitted--despite the fact that much of these facets suit a growing city of the millennia and contradict their list of positive urban planning changes for the city. The emphasis here is managing and regulating growth, but it is clear that they hope to almost stop it entirely with the exception of a few isolated and discussed cases.

Although this collection of preservation plans and their included analysis will prove to be helpful in understanding the greater context of an urbanizing city and its need for design control and planning, the lack of BAR coverage and responsibility within these documents still persists.

The theory that describes design review is another facet within the exploration of Charleston's position in the process. Development is an important aspect to the BAR's responsibilities, and furthermore, within the exploration of this thesis topic, but attention to the Charleston BAR's design review theory in comparison to others is equally as important. Mark L. Hinshaw released a Planning Advisory Service Report through the American Planning Association in 1995 explained the role of design review and zoning in cities and their role in creating "quality development." Hinshaw helps to define exactly what design review is, separating it from aesthetic control. As he explains, aesthetic control "dwells upon the superficial aspects of the visual setting. [It] is narrowly focused and prescriptive." On the other hand, "design review should be broadly oriented and encourage the creative application of design principles to a specific site."⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Mark L. Hinshaw, "Design Review" American Planning Association: Planning Advisory Service Report Number 454 (1995), 4.

While Hinshaw's piece provides a great perspective on aesthetic control, David Ames and Richard Wagner of Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, compiled a collection of essays that also explore the critical questions that must be answered when looking at design review, new and old, in a historic preservation context. *Design & Historic Preservation: The Challenge of Compatibility* (2009) covers challenges faced in merging contemporary and historic design (very applicable to the Calhoun Street Corridor and still an issue today), design standards in dynamic and bustling environments, and modernism and postmodernism in preservation design.

Within aesthetic control and design review, preserving the historic context is critical to historic district, but keeping a certain balance between the past, present, and future in order to maintain a growing, liveable city is just as important. In her essay about defining context of new design within historic districts, Kate R. Lemos, associate at Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners in New York, explains that "over the past decade...preservation has been criticized for resisting changed and impeding creativity...In the sense that a narrow interpretation of the physical fabric of a district leads to a narrow idea of what might be an appropriate intervention, the answer is yes."⁶⁹ While this argument may not be representative of Charleston's BAR's point-of-view, this perspective is valuable. Do design boards limit modern creative expression in architecture? Lemos challenges design review boards to look deeper into their definition of "contextual application" and consider welding the past and future together as one

⁶⁹ Kate R. Lemos, "Defining Context: Promoting a Greater Level of Innovation in New Design within Historic Districts," in *Design and Historic Preservation: The Challenge of Compatibility*, ed. David Ames and Richard Wagner (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp, 2009), 29.

inclusive entity. The potential for preservationists to praise good design in historic and modern contexts is exciting, and expresses the dynamic status of the city. Cautious limitations on manifestations should be employed, but with a more open and less prescriptive spirit when considering new construction within a historic context.

Within this charge for balance between new and old, there is also the challenge of creating new designs within a historic context that do not emulate history--or what Daniel J. Levi calls "fake history." In his article, "Does History Matter? Perceptions and Attitudes toward Fake Historic Architecture and Historic Preservation," Levi discusses this ensuing problem in many cities that place large attention to the tourism industry. While review boards may encourage against the construction of fake historic buildings, it can be argued that their sentiment is contradictory: "design review boards may inadvertently encourage fake historic architecture because of their emphasis on contextualism."⁷⁰ Similarly to the essayists in *Design & Historic Preservation*, Levi identifies several circumstances and philosophies that lead review boards to condone fake historic architecture, exploring "the public's perceptions and attitudes towards this type of architecture, and the impact it has on the attitudes toward historic preservation."⁷¹

However, Levi is not the only one to explore this interesting concept. James Hare, Executive Director of Cornerstones Community Partnerships in Sante Fe, New Mexico, lays claim to a compelling and very applicable essay entitled "Exaggerated Reverence for the Past: The Challenge of Design Review in the Charleston Historic District" in *Design*

⁷⁰ Daniel J. Levi, "Does History Matter? Perceptions and Attitudes toward Fake Historic Architecture and Historic Preservation," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 22 No. 2 (2005).

⁷¹ Daniel J. Levi, "Does History Matter?"

& Historic Preservation. Hare recognizes the fact that design review boards serve to protect historic character while managing change. Within this duty, it is also clear that “the people [controlling] the process have a powerful influence over the evolution of architecture in their communities.”⁷² Just as the City of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation periodically commission firms to provide the city with a comprehensive preservation plan every few years, Hare charges preservation professionals to “assess the strengths and weaknesses of the [design review] process so that it does not cause more harm than good to the architectural character of the historic buildings and districts” they are working so hard to protect.⁷³

Hare is also one of the only expert writers to recognize some of the changes the BAR has witnessed since its establishment. Most importantly, he explains that the 1931 was vague purposefully--and not because the Board wanted to do whatever they wanted whenever they wanted. Because the ordinance could easily be seen as “a powerful attack on private property rights of Charlestonians, [an] indirect route [had to be taken] to achieve its goal.”⁷⁴ Towards the end of his essay, Hare questions the success of Charleston’s BAR against Sante Fe, New Mexico’s review board. Formatting their design guidelines around a set group of materials for new construction use, Sante Fe allows expressive design with a limited material palette. However, does this cause the

⁷² James Hare, “Exaggerated Reverence for the Past: The Challenge of Design Review in the Charleston Historic District Design” in *Design & Historic Preservation*, ed. David Ames and Richard Wagner (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp, 2009), 43.

⁷³ James Hare, “Exaggerated Reverence for the Past: The Challenge of Design Review in the Charleston Historic District Design,” 44.

⁷⁴ James Hare, “Exaggerated Reverence for the Past,” 44.

slight lean towards Levi's fake historic architecture? Charleston avoided strict guidelines for a reason.

According to Hare, because of this stance, "Charleston risks enforcing an obscurely defined conception of what the public considers to be appropriate new construction for the historic district."⁷⁵ Instead, Hare suggests Charleston should consider the limited materials approach, hoping that "this would anchor new construction more directly to the building traditions of the city's past, while giving Charleston's architects more room to create within a clearly prescribed boundary."⁷⁶ However compelling Hare's argument might be, Sante Fe's architectural breadth is much more limited than Charleston's. Prescribing a set material list for Charleston's residential construction, commercial construction, new construction, *and* renovations of historic properties would probably be a nightmare--and make Charleston more like Disney than ever before. Nonetheless, Hare's perspective is incredibly valuable and methodical, as he realizes this is an issue of the past, present, and most importantly, the future.

This is not the only instance that Hare has written about Charleston's design review. In 2001, Hare completed in thesis study at Goucher College, "Design Review and New Construction in the Charleston Historic District." Exploring the question of whether or not the BAR is responsible for impeding creative architectural expression for new construction in the historic district, Hare comes to some fascinating conclusions. Through the development of his research, Hare claims that evidence "demonstrated that the design review process in Charleston does not impose specific preferences for architectural styles

⁷⁵ James Hare, "Exaggerated Reverence for the Past," 57.

⁷⁶ James Hare, "Exaggerated Reverence for the Past," 57.

and forms--either traditional or contemporary--on new construction in the historic district.” However, he also concludes that “design review does have a significant impact on the creative process involved with the design and realization of Charleston’s new buildings. Architects in Charleston consciously anticipate the influence the design review process has on their work and they frequently modify creative impulses to conform to preconceptions about the aesthetic preferences of the city’s design review board.”⁷⁷ Hare does not describe this issue as a struggle, but more as a complex and unique relationship between the architect, the Board, and the physical design of the building.

On the contrary, David Payne describes this process very differently in his dissertation “Charleston Contradictions: A Case Study of Historic Preservation Theories and Policies,” (2013). Viciously defending older modern buildings nearing their fifty year consideration for historic designation, Payne declares that the “philosophy, policies, and practices of historic preservation are currently struggling with how to incorporate Modern architecture.”⁷⁸ Preservation professionals are ironically being forced to reconsider their stance on preserving buildings (especially in Charleston), as the rules they have so fervently enforced are now beginning to protect buildings that they have historically rejected. Payne goes on to explain the confusion behind the words “traditional” and “historic.” These words tend to be interchangeable for preservationists, but carry different meaning: “whereas ‘traditional’ refers to manner of design, building

⁷⁷ James Hare, “Design Review and New Construction in the Charleston Historic District (Masters Thesis, Goucher College, 2001), abstract.

⁷⁸ David Payne, “Charleston Contradictions: A Case Study of Historic Preservation Theories and Policies (PhD, Clemson University, 2013), ii.

techniques, and materials, ‘historic’ relates to the age of the building. A building can be both, neither, or one or the other, but one does not always necessarily follow the other.”⁷⁹

Payne applies this concept to his review of the BAR and its processes. Just as Hare and others have recognized, some feel that the BAR does not allow for architectural expression, while others think the BAR approves atrocious, highly out of context new construction concepts. Payne considers the growing area of BAR jurisdiction negative, as this growth now includes not only high style colonial and antebellum gems, but also commercial spaces, both new and older, and even vernacular buildings. This issue is further exasperating by the growing definition of “historic” architecture. Finally, Payne also questions the appointment process the BAR employs. Claiming that the city cannot be assured that the rulings of the BAR are objective until the individuals who comprise the Board are elected, Payne sees their appointment by the mayor with approval by the city council as not ideal. He even goes as far to say that Board members and local preservation organizations actions and motivations should be “questioned” due to various incentives.”⁸⁰ That being said, it could also be concluded that Payne is just as bias, as his emotions run rampant in his writing, his accusations not backed with contextual examples.

Ryan Pierce also explores the topic of modern architecture in a historic context in his thesis “404 King Street: The Charleston County Library and Modern Architecture in Charleston.” Exploring was he calls “Charleston’s recent architectural past,” Pierce

⁷⁹ David Payne, “Charleston Contradictions: A Case Study of Historic Preservation Theories and Policies” (PhD, Clemson University, 2013), 73.

⁸⁰ David Payne, “Charleston Contradictions,” 206.

concluded that his study “reveal[ed] a general hesitancy within the city of Charleston to embrace the Modern style.”⁸¹

Weighing in on the community’s involvement, opinion, and reception to the construction of the former Charleston County Library (opened in 1960), Pierce found that, in hindsight, the building “qualifi[ed] at minimum for protection under the Charleston Board of Architectural Review.”⁸² Just as Payne concluded, Pierce believes the Board should be protecting modern buildings just like the Library from destruction due to its architectural and cultural significance. Instead, the Board approved its demolition. Although Pierce’s thesis was written before the building was approved for demolition, his analysis is extremely valuable when attempting to define the historic significance and integrity of a modern style historic building. While he does not give much attention at all to the BAR’s reaction and interpretation of the project, Pierce’s analysis shares an important aspect of the city’s emotional regard for modern construction--new or old.

Lisa Felzer, graduate of the University of Pennsylvania’s Historic Preservation Masters Program, also wrote her thesis on the topic of modern construction, preservation policy, and design review. In “Avoiding the Theme Park: A Study of the Architecture of Augustus Edison Constantine, and the Need for Preservation Policy Reform in Charleston, South Carolina” (2000), Felzer believes that a revision of the historic

⁸¹ Ryan Pierce, “404 King Street: The Charleston County Library and Modern Architecture in Charleston” (Masters Thesis, Clemson University and the College of Charleston, 2011), 1.

⁸² Ryan Pierce, “404 King Street: The Charleston County Library and Modern Architecture in Charleston” (Masters Thesis, Clemson University and the College of Charleston, 2011), 88.

preservation ordinance would in turn protect the modern buildings that she, Payne, and Pierce so fervently want preserved. In the new construction realm, many argue for new building to look contemporary, reflecting the era in which they were built: “one of their greatest fears is if new buildings do not reflect when they were designed, and are created in more traditional modes, the city will turn into a theme park.”⁸³ Felzer takes a rather radical stance towards the BAR just as Payne does in his dissertation, but for the defense of twentieth century structures, namely Augustus Constantine’s buildings that stand in the historic district.

As a thriving city with a vivid past and vivacious future, it is crucial to remember that Charleston is a *living* city despite its rich history, and furthermore, should represent that in its architecture. However, taking a radical stance claiming that the BAR does not care to protect older modern buildings or allow the construction of buildings that exert their own form of creativity without ample evidence is unfair. While perspectives like Payne’s and Felzer’s are appreciated, their stance sounds defensive instead of analytical. Instead of pointing fingers, a firm explanation of key principles outlining urban planning within the city’s Historic Preservation theory must be compiled and thoroughly described for leader and layperson alike. This exercise, achieved through the study and analysis of new construction overseen by the BAR on the Calhoun Street corridor, will hopefully provide a fair and comprehensive explanation of the BAR’s rulings. Understanding the history and evolution of the BAR is important, but having a grasp on its goals to protect

⁸³ Lisa Felzer, “Avoiding the Theme Park: A Study of the Architecture of August Edison Constantine, and the Need for Preservation Policy Reform in Charleston, South Carolina (Masters Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2000), 2.

and present the historic architecture within the defined district as the treasure of Charleston is just as crucial.

CHAPTER FIVE

CALHOUN STREET CORRIDOR, 1988-1998

Calhoun Street finally began to see improvements and changes anticipated by the 1974 Preservation Plan almost ten years after the plan's implementation. In 1989, Hurricane Hugo swept through the city, creating mass damage—ultimately diverting any developmental progress. Focus shifted to disaster relief and repairs. After the city began to recover, delayed success began to set in as the city started to act on the 1974 Plan. Unfortunately, many of the changes suggested were not met with praise. In 1987, Gulf Oil Company demolished their “outdated” filling station that rests at the corner of Meeting and Calhoun Streets (320 Meeting) to make room for the construction of a new design.



Figure 5.1: Shell Oil Gas Station, Previously Gulf Oil Company, 320 Meeting Street; author's photo

Under BAR jurisdiction, the plans for the new convenience store and gas station had to be approved before construction. In October 1987, the head architect for the

design sheepishly declared he was “[putting] his best foot forward with the design.”⁸⁴ His design did not convince the Board, which voted three to three deadlock and concluded with a deferral until the next meeting in November. At the next meeting, Board member Frances Edmunds broke the deadlock and voted that the BAR approve the design. Although Edmunds initially opposed the design, she explained, “the longer I’ve thought about it, I don’t think you can design a filling station for Charleston.”⁸⁵

Not many agreed with Edmunds. Reverend A. Stuart Arnold, minister of adjacent Citadel Square Baptist Church at that time, told *the Post and Courier*, “It is, in my opinion, an eyesore that works against the architecture of our church.”⁸⁶ Historic Charleston Foundation and the Preservation Society of Charleston offered robust opposition to the design as well. Jonathan Poston, Historic Charleston Foundation’s director of programs, called the recently finished building “worse than [he] imagined,” explaining, “I find it extremely disturbing. It is not by any means wrong to have designed a contemporary building, but the problem is that the design obviously is not intended for an urban setting and particularly not a historic setting.”⁸⁷

Although the developers incorporated a sophisticated landscape design and used high quality materials, Poston said the building still did not integrate materials and colors that shared a relationship with its surrounding as the preservationist requested. Not only that, Poston also said the Foundation received more complaints from a diverse group of

⁸⁴ *Post and Courier*, “An Architectural Challenge,” June 6, 1988.

⁸⁵ *Post and Courier*, “An Architectural Challenge.”

⁸⁶ Kerri Morgan, “Downtown convenience store is next to historic churches. Minister Calls New Building ‘Eyesore,’” *Post and Courier*, June 2, 1988, 12-W.

⁸⁷ Kerri Morgan, “Minister Calls New Building ‘Eyesore.’”

people about the construction of this building than any other instance of new construction in recent years. City Preservation Officer and architect Charles Chase objected, claiming that the argument of historic value has no place at this location. “It was,” Chase said, “a site that had already been compromised and nothing on the four corners relates historically to anything.”⁸⁸ Defensive attitudes were further expressed by BAR chairman and architect William D. Evans. His architect firm, Evans and Schmidt, represented Gulf as local consultants for the design. Evans defended the design fiercely, exclaiming “I love it...I think it’s a well-designed contemporary statement for contemporary use...it’s generating a lot of reaction both positive and negative. I’m not sure that’s bad.” Evans refrained from voting on this project.

Evans told *the Post and Courier* that design debate like this was a good sign. He said, “You know you’re at the cutting edge when you elicit this kind of response. The building is not in the background; it is an expensive, quality statement.” To protect historic buildings of the city while hoping to maintain a certain respect for its historic context, why would representatives of a group working for this want to push a “statement” design? On the other hand, was it not just as important to create new architecture that stands in contrast with the historic examples so that we not perpetuate a “fake architectural history” in new design? The BAR constantly straddles this blurred line of opinion. It’s true, this building (updated again in more recent years) can be considered respectful or distasteful in many arguments. As Evans said, “the board’s primary role is to encourage good design...the board must recognize the role of functional 20th century

⁸⁸ Kerri Morgan, “Minister Calls New Building ‘Eyesore.’”

buildings such as gas stations. ‘We are not trying to develop [Charleston] into Disneyland or Williamsburg—it is a vital city.’”⁸⁹

This is a perfect illustration of the BAR’s struggle with contemporary design. While it argues that higher quality materials and good landscaping can provide a buffer shield between contemporary and historic design, its representatives also fight for emblematic design. Nothing is quiet about this gas station’s design even today, but is that actually a problem? While it may be difficult to create a tasteful gas station design, a simple answer might be incorporating small details and material changes that can make a big difference.



Figure 5.2: BP Gas Station and Kangaroo Express Store, 130 Rutledge; author's photo.

Consider the design of the BP gas station and Kangaroo Express store at the corner of Calhoun and Rutledge (130 Rutledge). Its design includes a stylized metal-hipped roof over the pump stations, a quiet convenience store tucked back in the corner, and all neutral colors. Its design is discreet. Compare this design to the old Gulf Oil station and the new Shell gas station and Circle K store. These designs boast bright colors and streamlined corners. Nothing is understated about these designs besides the larger

⁸⁹ Kerri Morgan, “Minister Calls New Building ‘Eyesore.’”

trees and landscape that has matured over the years. While the BAR had jurisdiction over both of these designs, it is interesting to consider their differences, successes and weaknesses. Weaknesses could be blamed solely on design preferences, franchise requirements, or budgets.

However, it is more important to consider the date of review and the members residing over the review. While the BAR strives to have a diversity of expertise demonstrated on the review board, sometimes connections to projects or personal absences change its composition. Furthermore, this project faced review in the late 1980s when Charleston was just beginning to learn how to express itself in modern design. The BP design is more recent, but not recent enough to give the Shell design an excuse for its more outdated look. Sitting in very prominent locations on Calhoun Street and within the city core, these designs are something to deeply consider within the greater context of design review in Charleston.

Construction of First Citizens Bank (317 Meeting) at the southwest corner of Meeting and Calhoun Streets immediately followed the Gulf Oil convenience store and gas station construction. Once the site of a beautiful residence built by prominent family in Charleston, the land yielded to a filling station in 1939.⁹⁰ In 1963, South Carolina National Bank constructed a contemporary building with a minimalistic design, large windows, and metal detailing for their use until 1984 when First Citizens Bank and Trust

⁹⁰ Charleston City Directory, 1939.

Company of South Carolina purchase the building.⁹¹ Following this transaction, First Citizens built the building that currently occupies the site—barely altered from its original appearance. A suburban design, the bank—including its parking lot—falls far from functional for an urban setting. Occupying the opposite corner to the Gulf Oil design, the building’s design was approved about the same time as its neighboring gas station. Many of the same board members reviewed and approved both designs. The suburban influence on both of these buildings can be attributed to design preferences of the residing Board. Whether these designs were successful or failures are beyond the point—it is their similarity that resonates. No public commentary survives discussing the building, which leads to further mystery behind its acceptance and place within the community.



Figure 5.3: First Citizens Bank, 317 Meeting Street; author's photo.

⁹¹ Deed of Conveyance from Hay Oil Company to South Carolina National Bank of Charleston, 3 October 1963, Charleston County, South Carolina, Deed Book U77, page 166, Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston South Carolina. Deed of Conveyance from South Carolina National Bank to First Citizens Bank and Trust company of South Carolina, Charleston County, South Carolina, Deed Book W139, page 869, Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, South Carolina.

In contrast, a building situated close to this intersection faced years of debate before its erection. Several years after the completion of the First Citizens Bank building and the Gulf Oil convenience store, the city of Charleston purchased several lots and buildings for the future location of a Charleston County library (68 Calhoun). Working in collaboration with Charleston County Council, the city of Charleston promoted this site for the library. First, a civic building in this location—on Calhoun Street and across from the Gaillard Auditorium—aligned with the city’s “plan to transform Calhoun Street into a handsome boulevard.”⁹² Second, it would also stop the plans for a potential “McSleep Inn” slated for the same spot. With the approval of the initial development plans came the challenge of re-locating several historic buildings that stood where the new library was to be constructed. Three buildings remained: 76 Calhoun Street, 4 and 4 ½ Harlem Court. According to Historic Charleston Foundation’s position statement, 4 Harlem Court (assessed as a “good if [sic] dilapidated 1840’s house”) deserved relocation.⁹³ The City chose to demolish all three buildings.

When the conceptual plan approval process began for the library in 1993, the architect leading the project requested permission to build above the city’s height ordinance. Pete McKellar of McKellar & Associates, Inc. proposed the maximum height of the building rise to sixty-five feet (fifteen feet over the limit), with the eaves rising only to forty-three and a half feet. Some attending the Board of Adjustment meeting

⁹² Arthur M. Wilcox, “An offer that mustn’t be refused,” *The News and Courier*, February 23, 1989, 8-A.

Arthur M. Wilcox, “Let Calhoun be Calhoun Again,” *The News and Courier*, January 27, 1989, 6-A.

⁹³ Historic Charleston Foundation and Jonathan H. Poston, Letter of Transmittal: Zoning and Planning Review Program, Re: BAR Meeting, November 14, 1990.

opposed the special modification because they feared the building would overpower smaller residential buildings in the adjacent Mazyck-Wraggborough neighborhood. However, McKellar reassured both the Board and those concerned by explaining, “The edge of the building determines the sun angles, so the neighborhood shouldn’t be shaded except perhaps in the early morning. I hope everybody is satisfied that it won’t impact the neighborhood anymore than it has to.”⁹⁴



Figure 5.4: Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun Street; image courtesy *The Post and Courier*.

After the BAR approved the height variance, the BZA also waived the typical parking zoning codes. Normally, a building like the proposed library would have to provide 363 parking spaces, but the city approved the creation of only 81 parking spots

⁹⁴ Robert Behre, “Library proposal gets approval,” *The Post and Courier*, February 18, 1993, 1-B – 4-B.

due to free parking offered across the street at the County School District Building. In addition to these variances, the BZA also rezoned the land for the library efforts, as it was initially zoned for “diverse residential.” Although much of the plan was well received by many preservationists, Historic Charleston Foundation offered several critiques.

Jonathan Poston expressed concern about the volume of the building, writing it was “too much for [the] site.” He requested deferral of approval until the building’s context was further studied.

Poston also expressed concern about the building materials, suggesting the architect reconsidered his selections with care.⁹⁵ The Preservation Society of Charleston also expressed unease. The Society considered the “design relationships fully developed with the new County Office Building proposed across the street.”⁹⁶ However, they found that the improved designs are still not “reasonably scaled.” John W. Meffert, then Executive Director of the Preservation Society of Charleston, wrote, “The structure is too large for the site, and will overwhelm the existing residential structures on Calhoun, Alexander, Elizabeth, and Charlotte Streets.”⁹⁷ On February 10, 1993, the BAR gave conceptual approval for the \$11 million design, with requests to see more drawings at the next meeting.

In November, the plans came in front of the BAR again, this time seeking preliminary construction approval. Gretchen Johnson, one of the project architects from

⁹⁵ Jonathan Poston, letter to the members of the Board of Architecture Review, Re: Application 932-10-4, 68 Calhoun Street, February 10, 1993.

⁹⁶ John W. Meffert, Executive Direction, The Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement, Application No. 932-10-4, February 10, 1993.

⁹⁷ John W. Meffert, Executive Direction, The Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement, Application No. 932-10-4, February 10, 1993.

McKellar's firm, shared plans for a three-story building that incorporated stone, brick, and a "Charleston green" metal roof. Due to budgeting issues, the county and city had to exchange the stone finishes above the water table on the building to a stucco finish at a later date. As a compromise, the architects and the library construction committee (under the leadership of Carl Simmons) decided that the ground floor rustication, water table, window sills, and coping be stone. The cornice and the balance of the first and second floor would be stucco.⁹⁸ To separate the massing, the architects chose to design the front elevation with two recesses, making the large building appear as three smaller buildings instead.

Separating the new library from the neighborhood behind it, the architects proposed a ten-foot wall. The BAR requested this wall be constructed in real stucco instead of a synthetic material. BAR Chairman Charles L. Wyrick Jr. explained, "this is a major building and we seek permanence in our public buildings...not just because we pay the bill, but because we want it to be here 100 years from now."⁹⁹ During the design review, the BAR offered only a few critiques. City preservation officer Charles Chase "suggested increasing the number of open windows, especially on the northern side, and restudy[ing] whether the 6-by-9-foot openings should be divided into 3-foot squares or some other design."

In a preliminary submittal meeting, Charles Chase and Gretchen Johnson discussed several changes made for the building since its initial submission. Chase

⁹⁸ Facsimile, from Gretchen Johnston of McKellar & Associates Architects to Charles Chase, November 8, 1993.

⁹⁹ Robert Behre, "Library design receives praise," *The Post and Courier*, November 16, 1993.

recommended revising the elevations, stating “the development of the pediments and entry were moving in the right direction.”¹⁰⁰ Chase and Johnson also discussed adjusting the square cut aluminum window details to molded profile, the possibility of using pierced brick for ventilation of cooling towers, deleting the horizontal reveals from the inset areas at the emergency exits, and compare brick sizes. All of these adjustments were quite small and did not alter the original design significantly.¹⁰¹ These submissions were implemented, leading to the building’s final approval on May 2, 1994.

Almost five years later, the new county library opened on April 7, 1998. Falling perfectly into the plan of the city’s Calhoun Street Corridor plan, this building had achieved the “monumental and permanent” look and feel the city was hoping to achieve.¹⁰² However, no building is devoid of criticism. Charleston architect Jane Maybank discussed the library and the Charleston County School District building it faces in an issue of *Metropolis Magazine*; “Both modern structures are clothed in loosely adapted historical styles applied in typically economical fashion—without the attention to material or detail that might have refined them.” Maybank recognized that the buildings’ form successfully fulfill the needs of an urban setting, but calls them “undistinguished. Without the deeper wells that thick, old walls create, the windows seem almost pasted on, making these large structures appear somehow unsubstantial. Each represents a missed

¹⁰⁰ Meeting minutes, McKellar & Associates Architects Gretchen Johnson and Preservation Officer Charles Chase, October 25, 1993, Project: Main Library, Charleston County.

¹⁰¹ Meeting minutes, McKellar & Associates Architects Gretchen Johnson and Preservation Officer Charles Chase, October 25, 1993, Project: Main Library, Charleston County.

¹⁰² Robert Behre, “Library a grand addition to downtown,” *The Post and Courier*, March 30, 1998, www.postandcourier.com.

opportunity for Charleston to continue—not dilute with generic infill—its architectural heritage.”¹⁰³

Unfortunately, criticism did not end there. During a BAR meeting in 1998, journalist Robert Behre reported a negative assessment on the building’s thermal expansion joints. Meeting across the street in the county building, distinguished New York architect Jaquelin Robertson pointed to the score lines on the building’s façade through the window while discussing the future courthouse project, explaining that “the design for the new courthouse would attempt to hide those breaks with vertical bands to avoid the look that the siding is ‘brick wallpaper.’”¹⁰⁴ Another mark of budget constraints, score lines are typically only noticeable to those working in the field.

Continuing the era of commercial revitalization in collaboration with the implementation of the Calhoun Street Corridor plan, another closely watched building hit the BAR around the same time as the Charleston County Library building. In December of 1995, Cannon Park Place, a new development planned for the North edge of Cannon Park (once the site of Thompson Auditorium, 1890, and the Charleston Museum that burned to the ground in 1980), was brought in front of the BAR for conceptual approval. Designed as a mixed-use commercial facility facing the MUSC complex across the street, this building faced several geographical obstacles. Not only was this area considered “one of the least attractive sections of Charleston under BAR jurisdiction,” but this area is also “filled with both low- and high-rise structures that lack any coherent architectural

¹⁰³ Robert Behre, “Library a grand addition to downtown.”

¹⁰⁴ Robert Behre, “Library a grand addition to downtown.”

appearance and are part of a long commercial strip that runs from King Street to the Ashley River.”¹⁰⁵

Epps-Edwards Architects took on this project. Charged with the challenge to create a smooth transition between the residential area directly behind the new building to the institutional hospital setting on the other, principal architect Robert Epps selected a flat roof, contemporary design.¹⁰⁶ When first brought in front of the BAR, immediate deferral was requested for further study. Over the next nine months, Epps continued modifying the building. Interestingly, the most substantial change proved to be the height of the building—the BAR wanted it taller and larger.



Figure 5.5: Cannon Park Place, Southeast Facade, 261 Calhoun Street; author's image.

¹⁰⁵ James Hare, “Exaggerated Reverence for the Past,” in *Design and Historic Preservation: The Challenge for Compatibility*, ed. David Ames and Richard Wagner, Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp, 2009, 52.

¹⁰⁶ James Hare, “Exaggerated Reverence for the Past,” 53.

The Preservation Society did not approve. Robert Gurley, Assistant Director at the time, wrote a position statement explaining their distaste for the design: “The Society believes that many of the concerns expressed at an earlier BAR meeting have still not been adequately addressed.”¹⁰⁷ He continued, explaining, “The use of fig vines to break up the north façade is inappropriate and does not represent a permanent solution to the problem.”¹⁰⁸ Gurley noted that the windows are too high and flat, and did not fit the scale of the building. Epps created a corner entrance design to the building to mimic the look of historic corner stores scattered throughout the downtown area. Despite this effort, the Preservation Society called the entrance placement “inappropriate” and without the architectural feel of a traditional styled entrance.

Later that year, John W. Meffert also made a position statement on behalf of the Preservation Society against the design of the building. Although he supported the increased height, as well as the scale, mass, and site plan, Meffert expressed concern about the “minimalist, contemporary nature of the design [being] inadequate” for such a prominent site.¹⁰⁹ The BAR addressed these concerns a few ways: they requested a restudy of the first level windows (seeking a look that was more “pedestrian in scale”), a deeper recess of the windows and thicker glazing, and a “restudy for the brick-to-glass

¹⁰⁷ Robert Gurley, the Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement to the Board of Architecture Review, September 22, 1996, 261 Calhoun Street, Tax Map No. 460-15-03-04.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Gurley, the Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement to the Board of Architecture Review, September 22, 1996, 261 Calhoun Street, Tax Map No. 460-15-03-04.

¹⁰⁹ John W. Meffert, the Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement to the Board of Architecture Review, December 13, 1996, 261 Calhoun Street, Application No. 9512-13-07.

ration on the north elevation of the building.”¹¹⁰ Lastly, the BAR wanted the HVAC system relocated to somewhere completely hidden, like on the roof.



Figure 5.6: Cannon Park Place, Northwestern Facades, 261 Calhoun Street; author's image.

This design debate continued for months. On September 5, 1996, Robert Epps wrote a letter to Charles Chase complaining about the level of citizen participation in the last meeting, and furthermore, how it conflicted with the “clients’ right and [their] right to a fair and proper hearing.” Epps continued describing the meeting, saying, “the ‘free-for-all’ atmosphere of the last BAR appeared to ignore previous approvals to the point of individual BAR members raising questions about issues that he or she had previously approved. Our construction documents are based on the approvals of pervious submissions. Our client should not be financially harmed by revisiting approved

¹¹⁰ Board of Architecture Review. Board Review Statement, January 24, 1996 and August 28, 1996. City of Charleston Archives.

design.”¹¹¹ To Epps’ defense, the alleged situation the firm faced in front of the community and the BAR was absolutely inappropriate. While this had nothing to do with actual design guidelines, this part of the review process needed to follow a protocol and protect the architect and client. If an element of a design was reviewed previously and passed, the BAR should not be able to refute it later. This not only breached the trust between the reviewer and the reviewed, but it also caused financial stress in many aspects of the overall process.

After these matters were settled, construction began in 1997. Despite the long process and many visits to the BAR, not much of the original design was changed upon completion. As James Hare wrote in his essay entitled “Exaggerated Reverence for the Past: The Challenge of Design Review in the Charleston Historic District,” the example of “Cannon Park Place foil[s] the assertion that the BAR in Charleston exerts a heavy hand in the design process, whether it be to impose traditional design values or to enforce modernist architectural doctrine.”¹¹² What is evident in the case of both the Charleston County Library and Cannon Park Place is the fact that Board members and clients alike exert too much effort reviewing smaller, secondary design issues rather than “big picture” conceptual appeal. No one was complaining about the massing of either of these buildings—in fact, the fiercest complaints against these buildings (as well as the other instances of new construction on the Corridor) were over purely aesthetic details.

¹¹¹ Robert Epps, Epps Edwards Architecture, letter to Charles Chase, Preservation officer, Re: 261 Calhoun Street/Cannon Place, September 5, 1996.

¹¹² James Hare, “Exaggerated Reverence for the Past,” in *Design and Historic Preservation: The Challenge for Compatibility*, ed. David Ames and Richard Wagner, Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp, 2009, 54.

Between 1988 and 1998, the city of Charleston began to finally implement some of their goals reflected in the Calhoun Street Corridor Study. The addition of the Charleston County Library was probably their biggest success. Not only was the design well received by those both inside and outside of the architectural community, a public institution such as this one can drive a lot of positive forces into the area. Unfortunately, not much has changed with respect to the Gulf Oil (Now Shell Oil and Circle K) convenience store and First Citizens Bank. The buildings remain largely suburban, and do not fit well within the urban context of the city today. Finally, Cannon Park Place continues to be a perplexing design to many around town. However, many preservationists in the community like Robert Gurley are finally “warming up” to the design. Housing a Rite-Aid pharmacy, this building functions as a popular location for residents, hospital staff and patients to stop by and pick up everyday necessities. While the design was not well received initially, it has blended with MUSC’s campus.

CHAPTER SIX

CALHOUN STREET CORRIDOR, 2000-2008

The debate between neo-traditionalism and modernism has engaged Charleston architects, the BAR, and their surrounding community since the 1950s, but intensified in the first decade of the twentieth century. It is not surprising that this argument became more complex as the city grew. Robert Behre observed in his *Post and Courier* column that most professionals in the preservation community argue that new construction in the historic district should “look contemporary, to reflect when they were built.” He continued, and said, “Do anything different, they say, turns the city into a theme park and scuttles progress of the city’s real architecture treasure: its diverse collection of buildings from the early 18th century onward.”¹¹³

Then there is another side to the argument. Some residents, organizations, and architects feel that modern architecture has no place in the historic district. They feel that “while modern design might be OK for modern neighborhoods, the rules change when new buildings are built near older ones...And they ask: If it was acceptable to return to classical motifs in the early 20th century, why not in the early 21st?”¹¹⁴ This is a perplexing debate. Some preservationists seek to differentiate new and old, while others prefer to mix historic building patterns.

The College of Charleston’s new library design fueled this discussion in the early 2000s when the school hired architect Bill McCuen of Enwright Associates to design

¹¹³ Robert Behre, “Design philosophies at odds over library,” *The Post and Courier*, April 3, 2000, accessed December 3, 2014, www.postandcourier.com.

¹¹⁴ Robert Behre, “Design philosophies at odds over library.”

their new library (to be located at the southwest corner of Coming and Calhoun Streets). Before submitting a final design for the new building, College of Charleston President Alex Sanders worked alongside Bill McCuen to collect commentary from city residents, preservation leaders, and other architects to create a building suitable for the prominent street corner. Despite the general approval from the BAR, the Preservation Society, and Historic Charleston Foundation in one of the design's first review meetings, several complaints were heard from others. Both Sheila Hodges of Committee to Save the City and Karen DelPorto of Harleston Village's neighborhood association urged a more traditional design. Hodges said, "We are disappointed in the design before [us.] It does not speak to the architectural language of Charleston." DelPorto claimed that students preferred older buildings over new designs.¹¹⁵

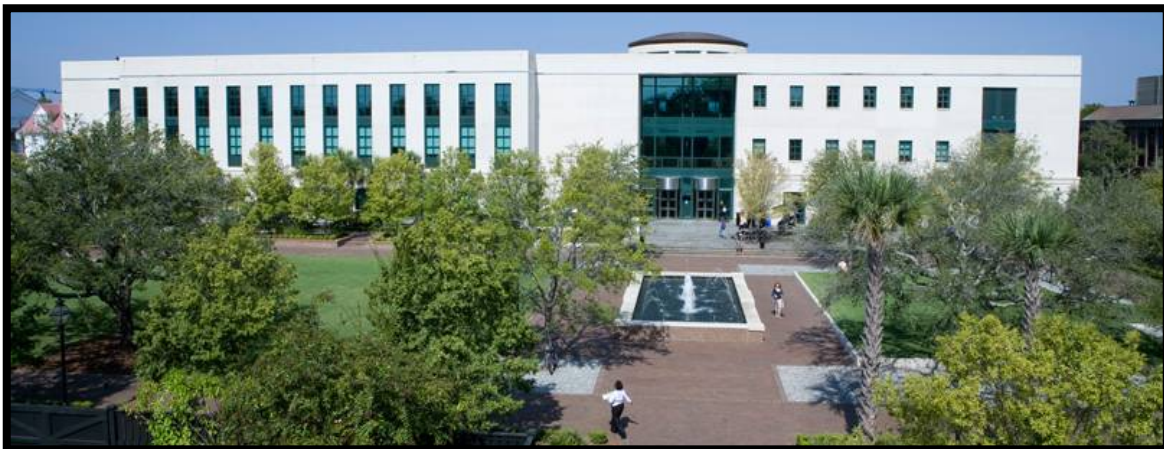


Figure 6.1: Addlestone Library, McCuen design, Southeast facade, 205 Calhoun Street; image courtesy Society for Eighteenth Century Music, <http://www.secm.org/Conferences/secm5/secm5pictures.html>.

Submitting to these requests, McCuen met with prominent New York architect Robert A.M. Stern to create a more traditional design. Dean of Yale's School of

¹¹⁵ Robert Behre, "Architectural board accepts Addlestone Library plans," *The Post and Courier*, May 20, 2000, accessed December 3, 2014, www.postandcourier.com.

Architecture, Stern is known for classical architecture and new urbanism designs. The meeting with Stern resulted in reformatting the front elevation: they “Eliminate[d] the large square opening and replace[d] it with a series of columns rising from a second-floor piazza. The first-floor entrance was through a series of arches, and while the cupola survived it was broken up to feature a series of square, traditional windows where there was once a band of glass.”¹¹⁶

In May 2000, McCuen’s design had a large entrance separated with a series of revolving doors. The western end of the design facing Calhoun Street was finished with stucco and pierced with expansive green metal windows. The cupola was supported with large columns, and the glass windows west of the Calhoun Street entrance were removed.¹¹⁷ In preliminary meetings before the official BAR review, the BAR, HCF, and the Preservation Society expressed disappointment and their preference for the previous design. This resulted in McCuen completely pulling the new design from the agenda. Even after the redesign, the Committee to Save the City was still not impressed.

The Committee to Save the City requested an alternative design from another architect. New York based architect Richard Sammons mimicked the old Charleston Orphan House in his design for the committee. 40 years prior, this neoclassical historic building once stood across the street from the proposed library location but was torn down in the 1950s. Sammons’ design included a copula and neoclassical detailing. In an online petition, the Committee to Save the City wrote that they believed “new

¹¹⁶ Robert Behre, “Design philosophies at odds over library.”

¹¹⁷ Robert Behre, “Design philosophies at odds over library,” *The Post and Courier*, April 3, 2000, accessed December 3, 2014, www.postandcourier.com.

construction in the Old and Historic District should speak the traditional language of Charleston architecture, such as the classical modern” Sammons design.¹¹⁸ BAR member and local architect Sandy Logan responded to the neo-traditional submission with distaste. He stated, “Too much reverence can be as damaging as too little. A city, even the most beautiful, is not a passive object, any more than a beautiful person is a statue; to treat it as such is to preserve an exquisite corpse.”¹¹⁹



Figure 6.2: Richard Sammons of Fairfax & Sammons Architects design for Addlestone Library, commissioned by Committee to Save the City; image courtesy Fairfax & Sammons, <http://fairfaxandsammons.com/press/editorial/charleston-city-guardian-april-2000/>.

¹¹⁸ The Committee to Save the City, Petition for Architectural Style in Historic Charleston, “Which design for the College of Charleston library do you consider to be more appropriate for Charleston?” last modified August 22, 1999, <http://www.savethecity.org/petition.htm>, Board of Architectural Review archives.

¹¹⁹ Robert Behre, “Architectural board accepts Addlestone Library plans,” *The Post and Courier*, May 20, 2000, accessed December 3, 2014, www.postandcourier.com.

This discourse resulted in a full rejection of the Sammons design, and a restudy for McCuen. In September 2000, McCuen submitted a design very similar to his first. The BAR was pleased but asked for a few small reconsiderations. The BAR requested McCuen reassess the outdoor area south of the building. Concerned with the planter walls keeping material continuity with the perimeter of the building, brick type and color, ramp material, loading and dumpster access, and a few other technical features, the BAR recommended changing those features to receive full approval.¹²⁰



Figure 6.3: Addlestone Library, McCuen Design, Northwest façade, 205 Calhoun Street; image courtesy College of Charleston flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/collegeofcharleston/9263425178/>.

Although the process had been frustrating for McCuen over the months, he considered the dialogue between organizations, the community, and the city “healthy.”

¹²⁰ Design Review Committee Comment Sheet, October 5, 2000, Board of Architectural Review Archives.

As McCuen explained, while conflicting opinions “certainly delayed the design of this specific building, and it’s been frustrating for me personally...the overall discourse [and] the overall issues on the table have been exactly the right issues to have on the table.”¹²¹ After several years of construction, the Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library finally opened to students on January 17, 2005.

During the height of the Addlestone Library debate, the city began to tackle a vast project of their own. Revising the recommendations from the 1989 Calhoun Street Corridor Study, the city initiated renovation plans for Marion Square. At the center of town, Marion Square serves as the junction between the residential, commercial, and tourism districts. Historically used as a military marching ground, Marion Square still has a designated parade space. Before 1999, the parade ground was complemented by a band stand (known to locals as the “bandshell” due to its iconic design) that sat close to the Old Citadel Building.

The 1989 Calhoun Street Corridor Plan suggested “maintaining the traditional parade ground on the interior, but defining it with a transparent wrought-iron fence—a ‘square within a square.’”¹²² Outside of the fenced parade ground, the Plan suggested adding larger tree plantings. In 1998, the city of Charleston hired landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh to assist with the Marion Square redesign suggested almost nine years prior. In Van Valkenburgh’s \$4 million renovation, he chose to forgo the fenced parade zone, while keeping all monuments intact except for the bandshell. Instead

¹²¹ Robert Behre, “Design philosophies at odds over library.”

¹²² Buckhurst Fish Hutton Katz Inc. and Thomas & Means Associates, *Calhoun Street Corridor Study, Charleston, South Carolina*, January 1989, 52.

of retaining the diagonal paths that intersect at the center of the lawn gravel, Van Valkenburgh proposed bluestone pavers.¹²³

Demolishing the bandshell was a controversial submission. Designed in 1944 by respected local architect Augustus Constantine, the two story brick and stucco building was one of the last World War II-era structures to remain downtown.¹²⁴ According to architectural historian Gene Waddell, the structure was initially built as a latrine for white servicemen during World War II.¹²⁵ At the time of its removal, the bathrooms (originally designed to be segregated) were no longer in use. Its link to civil rights history connects the building to more controversy—some wanted it gone, and some thought it should serve as an example of the past. City Preservation Office Charles Chase sought its removal, explaining that the bandshell’s “separation of restroom facilities between blacks and whites” left the building with a “history that should [not] be propagated.”¹²⁶ Conversely, resident Bryan Jones “noted the World War II history of the bandshell blends nicely with the new Holocaust Memorial going up about 100 years away” in Marion Square.¹²⁷

Other residents also supported its place within the square. Lifetime resident John Rathjen “remembers performances there. ‘The whole square was full of young kids. It

¹²³ Robert Behre, “Marion Square plan builds on the past,” *The Post and Courier*, July 8, 1998, Section 7-A.

¹²⁴ Robert Behre, “City asked not to pick, choose worthy history,” *The Post and Courier*, September 20, 1998, 6-B.

¹²⁵ Robert Behre, “Old bandstand’s swan song looms,” *The Post and Courier*, September 1, 1998, www.postandcourier.com.

¹²⁶ Robert Behre, “Old bandstand’s swan song looms,” *The Post and Courier*, September 1, 1998, www.postandcourier.com.

¹²⁷ Robert Behre, “City asked not to pick, choose worthy history,” 6-B.

was full. After the war, they still brought military bands in. After the Korean War, it just kind of died.”¹²⁸ Van Valkenburgh twisted statements like this one (“it just kind of died”) to fuel his argument pushing its removal. Not only did Van Valkenburgh claim that the bandstand brought in unwanted and illegal traffic from the homeless, but it was oriented wrong, too small for a symphony, and created a forty foot void in the center of the square. To his defense, a report by the General Engineering Laboratories “found that while the bandstand shows no serious signs of deterioration, it fails to meet several current building codes and couldn’t meet them without some costly upgrades.”¹²⁹

Major Joseph P. Riley also advocated the bandstand’s demolition, calling it an “intrusion.” He explained, “It was built 50 years ago or so. I would argue it was a mistake and that Marion Square...deserved better treatment than what I consider a plopping down of a building to meet a convenience.”¹³⁰ Historic Charleston Foundation also voiced its opinion. Preservation Programs Director Jonathan Poston weighed in; “We’re not necessarily opposed to demolition, but we don’t want it to be said later that they demolished one of the best examples of that style or one of the few examples of that style.” Poston continued, “We’re at this stage in our history where we don’t want to be criticized for tearing down 20th-century buildings that are now more than 50 years old.”¹³¹ The bandshell’s demolition was approved by the BAR August 1998, and razed in 2000 when Van Valkenburgh’s redesign began.

¹²⁸ Robert Behre, “City asked not to pick, choose worthy history,” 6-B.

¹²⁹ Robert Behre, “Old bandstand’s swan song looms,” www.postandcourier.com.

¹³⁰ Robert Behre, “City asked not to pick, choose worthy history,” 6-B.

¹³¹ Robert Behre, “Old bandstand’s swan song looms,” www.postandcourier.com.



Figure 6.4: Marion Square; image courtesy Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc., <http://www.mvvainc.com/project.php?id=9>.

After Van Valkenburgh recovered from the bandshell debate, he and his team were prepared to move forward with Marion Square’s renovation. Van Valkenburgh’s design focused on accessibility. He added a paved promenade to accommodate a farmer’s market, and redesigned all site furnishings, finishes, plantings, lighting, and signage. Van Valkenburgh also wanted to “[reflect] Charleston’s horticultural role as a port of entry for exotic vegetation in the southern United States...[so he incorporated] promenades framed by native and exotic plants species [bordering] the square, creating a shady and cool microclimate.”¹³²

¹³² Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc., Marion Square, Charleston, SC (1998-2002), accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.mvvainc.com/project.php?id=9>.



Figure 6.5: Holocaust Memorial, Marion Square, Jonathan Levi Architects, <http://www.leviarc.com/holocaust.swf>.

In 2000, the Holocaust memorial (independent of Van Valkenburgh’s project), was in the process of construction on the southeastern edge of the square, and plans were being finalized for the redesign. Neither project met significant opposition (after the bandstand was removed) by the BAR. Designed by architect Jonathan Levi, the Holocaust Memorial’s location was selected “to reflect the intent of the city and local community to highlight the mission of remembrance.”¹³³

Although it might appear to be a plainly designed metal cage to some, its design is an expression of deep emotion. Levi said the sculpture was “conceived through the eyes

¹³³ Jonathan Levi Architecture, Holocaust Memorial, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.leviarc.com/holocaust.swf>.

of local survivors whose names are inscribed on a wall which forms the backdrop to a long bench which accommodates meditating visitors.”¹³⁴ Jewish cultural history is not only a huge part of the nation’s history but also holds deep roots in Charleston. Its placement, design, and significance passed quickly through the BAR. The project was completed and dedicated by June of 1999.

After the completion of Van Valkenburgh’s renovation, the Committee to Save the City (CSC) decided that the built environment surrounding the Square needed an entirely new look and feel. Without consulting with the property owners, CSC hired five architecture firms, including New York based Fairfax and Sammons (the same firm they hired to create a new design for Addlestone Library), Evans & Schmidt, Goff-D’Antonio, Ralph Muldrow, and Randolph Martz to design new buildings that would surround Marion Square. Claiming the current buildings were suffering from abandonment and lacked purpose, CSC asked for the area to be “brought back to life with a common vision or dream behind it.” They claimed this would give Charleston the ability to “create an urban square that rivals anything you find in Paris or any of the cities that roll of the tip of your tongue.”¹³⁵

Unsurprisingly, this massive rehabilitation plan led to heated debates. Some said, “The architects who came up with the vision were operating in a dream world, one devoid of clients, property owners, budgets, and other real-life constraints.”¹³⁶ Others

¹³⁴ Jonathan Levi Architecture, Holocaust Memorial, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.leviarc.com/holocaust.swf>.

¹³⁵ Robert Behre, “The view from Marion Square,” *The Post and Courier*, November 27, 2003, www.postandcourier.com.

¹³⁶ Robert Behre, “The view from Marion Square.”

supported the redesign. Edward M. Gilberth, a local physician, wrote an opinion-editorial applauding the new plans, stating, “The suggestion that we need an evolution of architectural style within all aspects of the Historic District at the expense of Charleston’s historical identity is like forcibly emulsifying oil within water. It’s against natural law and tasteless.” Gilbreth continued to bolster his argument in the name of tourism, explaining, “Tourists don’t come to this city to see modern architecture and, I would assume, are not interested in having the spell of (relative) antiquity interrupted by structures that deface its historical integrity.”¹³⁷



Figure 6.6: Proposed plan for Marion Square Renovation; image courtesy Fairfax & Sammons, <http://fairfaxandsammons.com/portfolio/neighborhood/urban-design-marion-square-charleston-sc/>.

The plan called for demolishing or changing every building directly facing the Square but the two churches. The Old Citadel building (now an Embassy Suites hotel), the Knights of Columbus Building, and the Francis Marion Hotel (along with its parking

¹³⁷ Edward M. Gilbreth, “Marion Square redo: Style should be in keeping with period,” *The Post and Courier*, January 8, 2004, 3ZB.

garage) would remain but be “detailed” as journalist Robert Behre described. Most property owners were offended by their lack of knowledge of the plans. CSC claimed they commissioned these plans in order to start a dialogue about the future of Marion Square. Behre countered this in his *Post and Courier* article about the plan asking, “Should the dialogue have preceded the architects going to work?” According to CSC and Vangie Rainsford of the Mazyck Wraggborough-Garden District neighborhood, volunteers gathered several times during the Saturday Farmer’s Market at Marion Square to survey those shopping. According to their results, over ninety-nine percent of those surveyed said they preferred traditional architecture to surround the Square.¹³⁸

Other issues beyond community and property owner input existed. The height, scale, and mass of the proposed replacement buildings were far outside of the typical commercial ordinance and zoning limits. Preservationists also shared apprehension about the designs. One of the buildings slated to replace the Mendel Rivers Federal Building (at the northwest corner of the Square and built in 1964) was a reproduction of the old Charleston Hotel (once situated several blocks away and demolished in 1960). Local architect Jim Thomas expressed his disappointment in the philosophy behind this proposition, explaining “Every time you build an imitation...you dilute the power of the old city to speak to us. It becomes more of a Disneyland stage set.” Whitney Powers, architect and then member of the BAR, also voiced her opinion: “I’m not going to say there shouldn’t be traditional buildings. I’m not about to sort of nix it just for the sake of nixing it, but I think you run the risk, if you play this card, are you really just advocating

¹³⁸ Robert Behre, “The view from Marion Square.”

a stylistic return to slavery,’ Powers said. ‘Is there not at some level a point at which you’re rally wishing things were like they used to be if you go down that road?’”¹³⁹

Surrendering to the reality of the situation, Charleston architect Randolph Martz, who helped with the design, weighed in on the situation, stating, “Each individual owns their building, will hire, their own architect, has their own taste and their own



Figure 6.7: Proposed Marion Square Renovation; image courtesy Fairfax & Sammons Architecture, <http://fairfaxandsammons.com/portfolio/neighborhood/urban-design-marion-square-charleston-sc/>

¹³⁹ Robert Behre, “The view from Marion Square.”

budget... What happens next, we don't know." At this point in time, none of the building designs contracted for CSC for the "Rally Around the Square" project have moved forward.

Several years after CSC's surprise plan, College of Charleston initiated design plans for a new Science Center to be located across from the College's Addlestone Library on Calhoun Street. Designed by Dinos Lillio and Jeff French of the Ballinger architectural firm, the concept featured an internal courtyard with a "U-shaped" plan. They designed laboratories to face outward onto the streets, making the building's use and purpose obvious. Lillio said, "We're trying to put science on display."¹⁴⁰ The architectural discussion surrounding this building and its design review process was anything but terse. In September of 2006, the BAR deferred approval on the \$47 million design for the northwest corner of the Calhoun and Coming Street intersection. During the meeting, the BAR expressed concern about "the size and location of a generator on Duncan Street; the general design of the part of the building that will sit on the corner of Calhoun and Coming; and the look of the long, uninterrupted side of the building along Coming Street."¹⁴¹ Board member Robert DeMarco complained about the "factory" look of the building, explaining "it doesn't say Charleston in any manner."

¹⁴⁰ Diane Knich, "Science Center at C of C on ice," *The Post and Courier*, September 21, 2006, www.postandcourier.com.

¹⁴¹ Diane Knich, "Science Center at C of C on ice."

At the September 20, 2006 meeting, Robert Gurley presented the Preservation Society of Charleston’s position statement. While he found the general height, scale, and mass of the building design to be appropriate, Gurley believed there was “an opportunity for further refinement of [the] design...The southeast corner...is too aggressive in terms of its sharp edge and should be restudied.”



Figure 4.8: College of Charleston Science Building; image courtesy Ballinger Architecture, <http://www.ballinger-ae.com/#/projects/228>.

He approved the greenhouse design, but said, “More information is needed on how it will be maintained and how the glass panels will operate.”¹⁴² Similar to the BAR, the Preservation Society also voiced unease about the generator facing Duncan Street. Complaints continued to pile. Resident and future neighbor to the building described the

¹⁴² Robert Gurley for the Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement, Board of Architectural Review, September 20, 2006, 202 Calhoun Street, TMS#460-16-03-080,081, 088,089.

design as “dull and pedestrian.” City Councilman Henry Fishburne commented, “To put it simply, this is another ugly building.”¹⁴³

At a later meeting, the Preservation Society brought up the “sharp, aggressive edge” of the building again: “In our opinion, the design should recede from the corner, lessening the impact of the perceived mass. It would also create an open area that would provide a more welcoming and less brutal entrance more appropriate for an academic building.”¹⁴⁴ Eventually, the architects included the recessed opening Gurley described. The Preservation Society also felt that the design imitated that of the adjacent library “in terms of the width of the main openings and the use of alternating materials in each bay to break the length of the Coming and Calhoun Street facades.”¹⁴⁵

Architectural details and materials also raised questions. The Preservation Society said the detailing was not sympathetic to the building’s surrounding neighborhoods, and that the metal proposed was inappropriate. They did not approve of the elimination of the pre-cast water table element as it provides a visual anchor. Gurley wrote that the louvered canopy design (that survived despite their distaste) should be approached differently, and the cornice articulated to “[unify] the design and additional fenestration on the vertical brick element at the corner of Calhoun and Coming Streets.” Although the building did not suffer significant changes throughout its years in front of the BAR, small design alterations affected the look and feel of the building tremendously.

¹⁴³ Diane Knich, “Science Center at C of C on ice.”

¹⁴⁴ Robert Gurley for the Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement, Board of Architectural Review, January 24, 2007, 202 Calhoun Street, TMS#460-16-03-080,081, 088,089.

¹⁴⁵ Robert Gurley for the Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement, Board of Architectural Review, September 20, 2006.

While some architects are appreciative of the design review process, Liollo felt differently: “The one thing they can’t do...is blend different preferred styles together to create the building’s design. Compromise usually yields bad architecture.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Diane Knich, “Science Center at C of C on ice.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

CALHOUN STREET CORRIDOR: 2008-2015

As Charleston grew into the 2000s, renovations on newer buildings in the historic district continued. During these years, the city worked to implement suggestions from the 1999 Preservation Plan. Infill and renovation projects prevailed on Calhoun Street. These



Figure 7.1: The Courtyard by Marriott, pre-1997 renovation, 125 Calhoun Street; image courtesy Pleasant Family Shopping, http://pleasantfamilyshopping.blogspot.com/2011/09/holiday-inn-worlds-innkeeper_06.html.

renovation projects focused on outdated new construction built in the 1950s and 1960s.

After a 1997 renovation campaign at the Quality Inn, located at the southeast corner of Calhoun and Meeting Streets, the hotel rebranded itself a few years later and began plans for another update. This was the fourth name for the hotel (it operated as a Quality Inn and Holiday Inn Historic District until 2011 when it changed ownership and became Courtyard by Marriott). After the name change, Courtyard by Marriott hoped to

make substantial alterations to the exterior. The building consisted of one hundred and twenty six rooms and was over fifty years old in 2010, but the owners wanted to expand with an addition on a neighboring lot facing Meeting Street for another fifty rooms and a 2,500 square foot meeting space.

Ben Brunt, a principal and executive vice president of the Atlanta-based Noble Investment group that owned the building, considered the conversion to Courtyard by Marriott an “up-branding,” explaining, “Our expectation is that we are able to substantially improve our revenue and income stream and the value of the property.”¹⁴⁷ Brunt’s company only owned the hotel for a few months until they sold the site in October 2011 to RLJ Lodging of Bethesda, Maryland for \$42 million. During this transaction, the Noble Investment renovation for the property was active. Their design hid the previous look of the hotel with an update. This update included a more modern scheme with new materials and architectural detailing.

On October 24, 2011, Preservation Officer Dennis Dowd and Senior Preservation Planner Debbi Rhoad Hopkins sent final inspection notes to the hotel owners and their design team before the addition could be completed. Dowd and Hopkins listed twelve issues in the final inspection. They did not approve of “a large gap at the top of the columns on the west elevation balconies (it looks almost as if there were supposed to be

¹⁴⁷ John McDermott, “Downtown hotel now a Courtyard by Marriott,” *The Post and Courier*, March 9, 2011, www.postandcourier.com.

capitals that are missing).”¹⁴⁸ Dowd and Hopkins also asked why there was a “short” course of brick below the second window from the top of the west elevation that wrapped around the building. Excess mortar, manufacturing stickers, must be removed and repointing must occur in certain areas. Dowd and Hopkins also asked why certain utilitarian items like exposed pipes and gas meters were not relocated and hidden. They expected those issues to be corrected as well.¹⁴⁹ Overall, the issues fell into secondary design details. Large design changes were not demanded of the update.



Figure 7.2: Courtyard by Marriott today, 125 Calhoun; image courtesy Courtyard by Marriott, <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/chshd-courtyard-charleston-historic-district/>.

During the Courtyard by Marriott renovation, plans for a new office building near the Concord Park area were advancing. The second step in the revitalization of the

¹⁴⁸ Dennis Dowd and Debbi Rhoad Hopkins, Memorandum: to file, 125 Calhoun Street (Courtyard by Marriott), Re: Notes from Final CO Inspection, 10/21/11, October 24, 2011, Board of Architecture Review.

¹⁴⁹ Dennis Dowd and Debbi Rhoad Hopkins, Memorandum: to file, 125 Calhoun Street (Courtyard by Marriott), Re: Notes from Final CO Inspection, 10/21/11, October 24, 2011, Board of Architecture Review.

waterfront park region of Calhoun, Holder Properties began the development of a large multi-tenant office building between Washington and Concord Streets. Holder Properties proposed a four-story, 63,000 square foot LEED Green certified design to the BAR in 2010.¹⁵⁰ The design included “layering...[with] vertical wings projecting off the Calhoun façade, and recesses designed to keep it from looking like a flat glass box.”¹⁵¹ The architect also chose to incorporate references to traditional architecture in Charleston like a cornice on two of the facades.



Figure 7.3: 25 Calhoun Street; image courtesy Holder Properties, http://www.holderproperties.com/portfolio_item/25calhoun/.

When the Preservation Society reviewed the building in a June BAR meeting, they expressed concern with the design. Executive Director Robert Gurley said the Society was “disappointed.” He continued, explaining, “This is a prominent location and

¹⁵⁰ Holder Properties, online portfolio, accessed March 3, 2015, http://www.holderproperties.com/portfolio_item/25calhoun/.

¹⁵¹ “25 Calhoun ok, but no restaurant,” *The Post and Courier*, March 26, 2012, www.postandcourier.com.

this building will set the architectural standard for future buildings at Concord Park.”¹⁵²

The Preservation Society did not have problems with the contemporary nature of the building, but said they “do not feel the building has the boldness and design presence this prominent site deserves.”

As the months advanced, small design adjustments were made. In a letter to then BAR Chairman Craig Bennett, Jr. in December of 2011, a neighbor to the building and member of Historic Ansonborough Neighborhood Association (HANA) offered his praise for the design. Ed Harley wrote, “25 Calhoun meets and exceeds our expectations. It’s an attractive design built with high quality materials and certainly a great addition to the entire area.” Harley mentioned that Holder Properties met with HANA at the early stages of the project’s development, and requested the community’s input on the design. He continued, exclaiming, “Many of us believe this is the most attractive office building developed in the last 10 years.”

As one of the few modern buildings in the Historic District, architect Roberto Paredes of ASD Inc. expected the BAR to be more critical during his design’s review. He explained, “Unfortunately, there are not a lot of good examples of modern buildings in downtown Charleston, so they were skeptical at first.” Due to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations, the architect and developer were not able to get a ground level restaurant passed. Instead, they had to incorporate a screened parking garage. Paredes said, “We even had talked to one of the deli shops nearby to set up a kiosk so it would be moveable in one of the spaces facing Calhoun, and that was not

¹⁵² Robert Gurley, Preservation Society of Charleston, Position Statement, Board of Architecture Review, June 23, 2010, 25 Calhoun Street, TMS# 458-01-02-028.

allowed either.”¹⁵³ This was an issue unrelated to the BAR, the developer, or even zoning, and directly connected with federal government flooding regulations. Paredes expressed concern for the future development of Concord Park in relation to flooding requirements, calling the idea of no street level pedestrian interaction “really scary.” Nevertheless, this building was surprisingly well received by the surrounding community, despite its cutting edge design. Tenants began moving in right before the close of 2011.

As the 25 Calhoun and Courtyard by Marriott projects came to a close, the King and Calhoun, LLC. Project was working diligently on renovation plans for the large existing development at the southeast corner of King and Calhoun Streets. Known to many locals as the “Millennium Music” building, this site sat vacant since 2006. Originally designed in 1955 by prominent Charleston architect Augustus Constantine, the structural design of the large and plain two-story building covered over 29,000 square feet.¹⁵⁴ Its design was large, box, and had an industrial feel. From its opening in 1956, the building saw vacancy often after its construction. After King and Calhoun LLC purchased the property in 2007, the group proposed erecting an eight-story condominium and mixed-use development. The idea was quickly rejected by the city.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ “25 Calhoun ok, but no restaurant,” *The Post and Courier*, March 26, 2012, www.postandcourier.com.

¹⁵⁴ “W.T. Grant Planning Big Store Here,” *Charleston Evening Post*, June 9, 1955.

¹⁵⁵ “A New Vision,” *the Post and Courier*, February 10, 2007, A-1.

By 2012, King and Calhoun LLC were poised to make their last design proposal to the BAR. Frustrated with previous failures, the developers said they would “make one more attempt to please the city’s architectural review board, and if that fails it will lease the property as-is.”¹⁵⁶

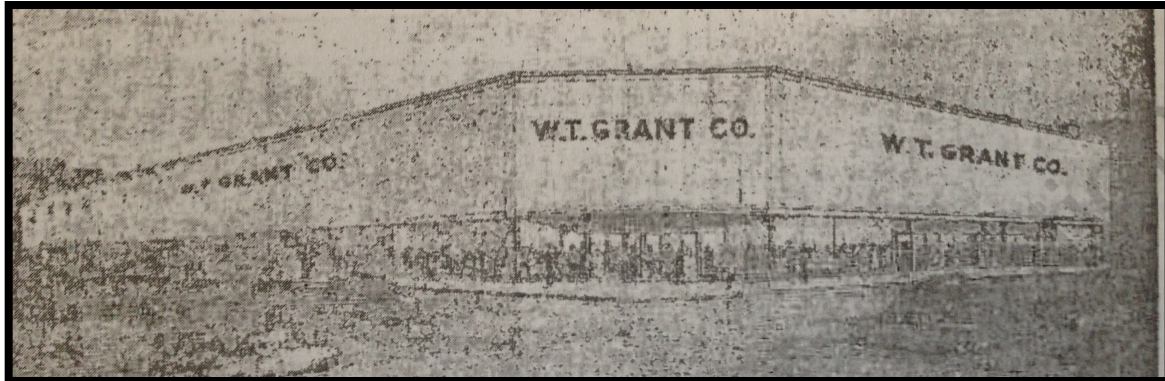


Figure 7.4: W.T. Grant Building by Augustus Constantine from News and Courier, June 12, 1955; image courtesy South Carolina Historical Society.

In early February of 2012, Goff D’Antonio Associates submitted a design “which called for constructing a multistory glass tower at the entrance to the former Millennium Music store.”¹⁵⁷ Even though the city’s design staff had recommended approval, the BAR rejected this concept 6-0. Tim Keane, director of Charleston’s Department of Planning, Preservation, and Sustainability, called the design “very interesting,” stating that it “held a lot of potential.” Keane also said that a BAR member “said the glass tower looked like something that belonged in Kyoto.”¹⁵⁸ Head developer Trevor Johrendt of Werner Real Estate Holdings in Roswell, Georgia weighed in on the situation, explaining, “We want to

¹⁵⁶ David Slade, “BAR rejects renovation of old Millennium Music Site,” *the Post and Courier*, February 14, 2012, www.postandcourier.com.

¹⁵⁷ David Slade, “BAR rejects renovation of old Millennium Music Site.”

¹⁵⁸ David Slade, “BAR rejects renovation of old Millennium Music Site.”

do what is right for the city, and we're really giving the architects some freedom.”¹⁵⁹



Figure 7.5: "Millennium Music" Building, pre-2014 renovation, 372 King; image courtesy Charleston City Paper, www.charlestoncitypaper.com.

Robert Gurley, director of advocacy for the Preservation Society of Charleston, called the big glass box in the design detracted attention from the historic buildings surrounding the site. The glass tower proposed would take away from the streetscape, and had a suburban, mall-like appeal. Not only that, the Preservation Society was concerned about possible “tenant mischief” with such a multi-story glass feature. With such an expansive and transparent tower at such a prominent location, the fear of tenants abusing the space by filling it with inappropriate text, signage, or objects like balloons

¹⁵⁹ David Slade, “BAR rejects renovation of old Millennium Music Site.”

was significant. Because these visual features would be considered interior additions, the city would have no regulation over the tower's "contents."¹⁶⁰

At a BAR meeting on March 14, 2012, prospects improved for Goff D'Antonio Associates and their developers for the project. Project manager Tony Giuliani submitted a design that produced a positive reaction from the BAR. It received approval with a 5-1 vote. This design removed the tall glass shaft for a quieter glass entrance that extended high above the street, but still carried the wide band of stucco across the top to break up the fenestration. The plans for the building were relatively simple in design. Large glass and metal panels encased warm beige minimalistic stucco columns. The BAR saw the general issue with the initial design that included the large glass tower, and agreed with the Preservation Society's concerns.

Overall, the BAR did not have significant critiques for the structure, but asked for adjustments secondary architectural features. When asked about the success of this design Gurley expressed indifference, explaining that the existing building was unwieldy and difficult to work with in the first place. Calling it a successful renovation of a standing property, Gurley considered it a respectful "upfit" and ultimately appropriate for the location.¹⁶¹

Three of the five tenants were decided at final design approval. Walgreens was to occupy the bulk of the building, with its entrance facing into the corner of King and Calhoun Streets. Signage review took some time for Walgreens. Initially proposing a

¹⁶⁰ Robert Gurley (Director of Advocacy for the Preservation Society of Charleston) in discussion with the author, March 2015.

¹⁶¹ Robert Gurley (Director of Advocacy for the Preservation Society of Charleston) in discussion with the author, March 2015.

series of different signs and window stamps to wrap around the building, Walgreens settled for a simple cut-metal logo design to rest above the main entrance awning. Chipotle, a popular fast-food joint, leased a smaller space facing directly onto King Street. Chipotle's signage matches the franchise logo with no color or material variation. The façade of this section of the building has a consistent and textural brick design that adds complementary yet subtle variation to that section of the building.



Figure 7.6: 372 King Street, conceptually approved plans; image courtesy the Board of Architecture Review.

A restaurant, Carolina Ale House, rented the second floor of the far corner of the building that faced Calhoun Street. They have plans to construct a retractable roof design for a third floor rooftop bar, but have not received final approval as of March 2015. No tenants have been announced for the two smaller retail spaces that sit below Carolina Ale House on the ground floor level.

Still under construction, the developers hope to have the project totally completed by late spring. So far, the building seems to be well received by the community. It has a modern texture and feel, but still seems to comfortably blend with its surroundings. As

Charles Chase once explained, “It’s not about style; it’s about quality and compatibility, how well a new building relates to its neighbors.”¹⁶²

¹⁶² Robert Behre, “Design philosophies at odds over library,” *The Post and Courier*, April 3, 2000, www.postandcourier.com

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The debate over modern versus traditional design in new commercial construction resonates throughout Charleston's recent architectural development. This philosophical conflict was prevalent on Calhoun Street. Most of the buildings that face the street are newer than majority of the other buildings in the city's historic district. They serve the city's civic and institutional needs. The public continuously struggles to see this street as an ambassador to the city's architectural story despite the range of construction dates of the buildings that comprise the corridor. Many of the buildings on Calhoun Street lean toward modern design aesthetic that contrasts with the historic buildings found elsewhere in the historic district. The discussion over each project's appropriateness consistently asked, "Is there a solution?"

The prevalence of new construction on Calhoun Street is a product of years the city spent developing the street into a fluid and attractive corridor linking the many neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions integral to today's city. In the past thirty years, the city focused on rejuvenating Calhoun Street with new development paired with other improvements that, it was predicted, would positively affect the entire city. Still seen as a "transitional" zone, Calhoun Street's strategic development occupied a prominent position in each preservation plan commissioned by the city from 1975 to 2010.

Ultimately, after analyzing the development and completion of new construction projects on Calhoun Street in the past three decades, it can be concluded that the BAR

has had minimal effect on the outcome of the corridors' designs. Furthermore, the BAR tended to focus on secondary architectural features rather than significant overall design alterations. While the Board is actively involved throughout the life of each project, its comments and recommendations expressed to the presiding architect typically focused on small design details or slight modifications.

With difficult buildings like banks that needed drive-thru service and pump stations that roughly followed a franchise design presented in the 1980s, the BAR attempted to offer advice while still being respectful to the architects' designs. After all, Charleston had not hit its economic stride yet, so the area was not considered nearly as urban as it is today. The BAR offered a few aesthetic recommendations, but otherwise did not alter the overall design scheme.

When the Cannon Park Place project came in front of the BAR, the Board's comments were limited, and again focused on secondary architectural features like window heights, HVAC, and cornice design. Later, when the Charleston County Library faced review, the issues of budget and use were central. However, under review, the design was largely unchanged. The BAR discussed massing briefly, but the main alterations were strictly aesthetic and mostly concentrated on material usage. In 2000, Bill McCuen's initial design for College of Charleston's Addlestone Library leaned modern. This design won general approval of the BAR, Historic Charleston Foundation, and the Preservation Society of Charleston, but Committee to Save the City sought a traditional design instead. McCuen attempted to incorporate traditional features into his next submittal, but the BAR rejected the adjustments and requested he return to his

previous design. Ultimately, the pattern of secondary architectural feature adjustments proved consistent in this project as well.

While adjusting to accommodate the needs of a millennial city and its future, the BAR of the last several decades handled their responsibilities hardly differently than Charleston's first BARs. Although the public and other organizations were notorious for stabbing comments about the BAR's inappropriate use of architectural authority, it can be factually proven otherwise through the information presented in the previous chapters. On the contrary, the BAR worked as an architectural discussion forum. The Board was ultimately focused attention to small design features rather than demanding total project reinvention as commonly believed. This process of secondary feature review concentrated on respectfully catering to the historic district's overall context, as well as the overall success of the design.

Adding new construction commercial buildings to this historic district context was no easy task for both the architect and review board. Contrary to common belief, the BAR worked to pass both traditional and modern designs on Calhoun Street. Their influence on projects proved to be beneficial to final designs, but never significantly altered an original design. The architects, and more importantly, their clients, typically guided the design. If the client sought a modern design, the architect produced it. If Holder Properties wanted to design a traditional building at 25 Calhoun, they probably could have done it. The BAR welcomed both traditional and modern designs—it was the surrounding community who did not.

Throughout Calhoun Street's last thirty-year period of development, the public expressed consistent opposition to modern design, claiming that such architecture bruised the historic city's identity. More importantly, they tended to blame the BAR for allowing modern designs. In 2003, then president of the Committee to Save the City Truman Moore claimed, "We have a BAR that's out of balance. There's nobody on the BAR that identifies with what downtown residents want." He continued, saying the committee members were "off by themselves somewhere. They're not in step with the residents of the city."¹⁶³

To curtail this problem, the Committee to Save the City suggested that Mayor Joseph P. Riley add two new members to the existing seven BAR members (at least two are architects, one an engineer and an attorney) who publically supported traditional architecture. In response to this proposition, Riley called the inclusion of confirmed traditionalists "blatant meddling."¹⁶⁴ Riley also explained that he "does not believe the mayor's job is to dictate the style of buildings in the city. I don't, respectfully, feel that the mayor should be a style director." He asked, What if the next mayor was an unremitting modernist? Furthermore, Riley stated, "It would be a mistake to blatantly tinker with the makeup of the BAR, which he said generally improves the city's quality of architecture."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Jason Hardin, "BAR tastes too modern for old city, critics argue," *The Post and Courier*, February 5, 2003, www.postandcourier.com.

¹⁶⁴ Jason Hardin, "City's Identity at stake in debate over architecture," *The Post and Courier*, February 16, 2003, www.postandcourier.com.

¹⁶⁵ Jason Hardin, "BAR tastes too modern for old city, critics argue."

In Riley's forty years as mayor, he was elected ten times. Known for his successful efforts to revitalize a city considered "sleepy" forty years ago, Riley changed the economic, aesthetic, and urban face of Charleston. In 2014, Riley partnered with Historic Charleston Foundation and hired prominent architect and urban planner Andres Duany to assess the city—and particularly the BAR—and make recommendations for the future. As Riley prepares to step down from office in 2016, he and HCF hoped that Duany might provide the city with a new set of goals to work towards in the future. Not the place that Riley led in 1974—Charleston had entered a boom period—perhaps unprecedented.

Andres Duany, celebrated architect, urban planner, designer, and author, is known as founder of the new urbanist movement. New Urbanism focuses on form based zoning, dense and pedestrian friendly designs, and his Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) zoning ordinance. Duany is credited for the beachside development in Seaside, Florida, which ultimately started the new urbanist design style seen in developments close to Charleston like I'On Village in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina and Habersham in Beaufort, South Carolina.

To begin many of their projects, Duany and his firm use a creative process known as a "charrette." Visiting the development site for only a period of one or two weeks, the "charrette" gathers local experts, architects, city planners, and residents of the surrounding community to create a forum of "information sharing, interactive design

proposals, feedback and revisions, [which organizes] a complex project quickly.”¹⁶⁶ This format allows the firm, the developer, and the community to receive instant market feedback while managing a large audience: “the dynamic and inclusive process, with frequent presentations, is a fast method of identifying and overcoming obstacles.”¹⁶⁷ Duany and his team close the week with a final presentation exhibiting their findings.

While many Charlestonians and local preservationists expressed excitement about Duany’s visit and assessment of the city, others voiced concern. Duany arrived in Charleston March 9, 2015 and immediately began meeting with city officials, architects, preservationists, and residents. He framed his visit to follow the charrette process. Duany and his team were in town for one week, assessing and absorbing the city by taking tours, visiting restaurants, walking neighborhoods, and interacting with residents, tourists, and members of the preservationist and architectural community. On March tenth, Duany delivered a ninety-minute lecture at the Charleston Museum that “might go down as the most blistering critique ever leveled at Charleston’s architecture.”¹⁶⁸ Only a few days into his visit, Duany had already formulated his idea of what Charleston needed.

According to Duany, the BAR’s jurisdiction is far too widespread across the peninsula. He called the board members “confused,” their process “a crapshoot.”¹⁶⁹ Duany did not spare anyone. He rebuked preservationists, residents, Clemson University

¹⁶⁶ Duany, Plater-Zybeck & Company, “The DZP Charette,” accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.dpz.com/Charrettes/About>.

¹⁶⁷ Duany, Plater-Zybeck & Company, “The DZP Charette,” accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.dpz.com/Charrettes/About>.

¹⁶⁸ Robert Behre, “Andres Duany delivers Charleston an architectural earful,” *The Post and Courier*, March 10, 2015, www.postandcourier.com.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Behre, “Andres Duany delivers Charleston an architectural earful.”

(for their pulled design on a new academic facility), and the new fire marshal. Duany commented on the “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) residents who frequently complained or filed lawsuits to halt new projects, saying, “You’re entering a phase of your growth that is becoming very scary. You’re beginning to deploy lawyers. This ends very badly... You won’t even have cocktail parties any more.”¹⁷⁰ Duany even said that attempting to solve traffic problems was a waste of time: “No traffic problem has ever been solved. It never gets better. It always gets worse.”¹⁷¹

Duany’s harshest critiques focused on the BAR. After stating that the current BAR covered too much of the peninsula, he suggested two options: the city create several smaller design review boards to focus on certain areas and neighborhoods that comprised the historic district; or the board split into two different review groups, one for renovations and demolition requests, and another for new construction. Bigger, large scale projects needed more attention, so this would allow the new construction board to give these projects the deliberation they deserved. Former city architect Eddie Bello liked the idea of splitting up the boards and meeting twice as often. Sandy Logan, architect and former BAR member, also agreed: “It’s the bigger, more recent projects that Charleston has really gotten wrong.”¹⁷²

Duany also said the city’s zoning needed to be reassessed. According to Duany, the city’s zoning laws are outdated because they were written in the 1950s and 1960s. These zoning codes are “suburban and represent ‘the worse kind of hodgepodge.’ He

¹⁷⁰ Robert Behre, “Andres Duany delivers Charleston an architectural earful.”

¹⁷¹ Robert Behre, “Andres Duany delivers Charleston an architectural earful.”

¹⁷² Robert Behre, “Andres Duany unveils his prescription for Charleston architecture,” *The Post and Courier*, March 13, 2015, www.postandcourier.com.

encouraged a rewriting of the code with steps that would cap height by numbers of stories, not by feet.” Architect and professor Ralph Muldrow agreed that the city’s current zoning “doesn’t really make sense for what it’s coding.”¹⁷³

After his week in town, Duany ultimately felt that “Charleston” needed to work towards being “Charleston,” stating that the city “cannot be a net importer of architectural ideas.” He continued, saying, “Charleston has to model its own genetic material, which is considerable and sophisticated. And Charleston has to become an exporter of architectural ideas. The world is fascinated by Charleston. Charleston is the greatest influence of my own work.”¹⁷⁴

While Duany did address larger issues consistently associated with design review, he spent little time discussing their review process. Many residents complained about poorly designed or ugly modern buildings in the historic district. To this, Duany retorted, “There’s as much bad traditionalism as there is bad modernism.” In Duany’s survey of Charleston’s new construction, he noticed two issues: “One is the problem of style and the ideology of architects, which is quasi-religious, and the second is an entirely different problem of quality. There has been some very low quality of both modernism and traditionalism.”¹⁷⁵

Past and current members of the BAR and many architects agree with Duany’s philosophies on modernism. BAR members and most architects have consistently agreed

¹⁷³ Robert Behre, “Andres Duany unveils his prescription for Charleston architecture,” *The Post and Courier*, March 13, 2015, www.postandcourier.com.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Behre, “Andres Duany unveils his prescription for Charleston architecture.”

¹⁷⁵ Robert Behre, “Q&A, Urban planner Andres Duany talks about improving Charleston’s architecture,” *The Post and Courier*, March 8, 2015, www.postandcourier.com.

that “religiously imitating older forms of architecture is a kind of fakery that puts the city on a road to becoming another Disneyland or Williamsburg, Virginia [sic] – ‘stage sets’ that have nothing to do with the way a real city evolves over time.”¹⁷⁶ The BAR is on record for approving both traditionalist and modernist designs, despite the public’s charges against its modern tendencies. Board members claim “there is something fundamentally wrong with the idea that all architecture in historic areas should be the same.”¹⁷⁷

Ultimately, architecture, some argue, is a form of art—a subjective practice of expression. While it is important for an architect to communicate his or her distinctive style in his or her design, it is just as important for that design to be respectful of its surroundings. Former BAR member Sandy Logan once explained, “Ideally, different styles work when a new buildings takes cues from existing buildings but does not duplicate their appearance.” He continued, “When done properly...that can bring out the best in both buildings.”¹⁷⁸ Architects are just as much responsible for the successful design of a building as they are for explaining their intentions with the design. If the community became more open to this dialogue rather than automatically shunning a design that may not match their 1850s single house, then Charleston could develop a better forum of conversation. The problem is not just the BAR, the “not in my back yard” residents, or the architects. The problem lies in the lack of discussion between each party.

¹⁷⁶ Jason Hardin, “City’s Identity at stake in debate over architecture.”

¹⁷⁷ Jason Hardin, “City’s Identity at stake in debate over architecture.”

¹⁷⁸ Jason Hardin, “City’s Identity at stake in debate over architecture.”

Duany provided the city with valuable input to consider and potentially implement in the upcoming months. Most importantly, he opened the city to a shared dialogue that could potentially make the city even better. By what Duany called breaking the city's confidence, he hammered out a number of noticeable problems during the week. He considered the prevalence of "polite Southerners" in leadership positions one of the biggest difficulties in the realm of public debate. Breaking the shell of reverence by breaking down the city's confidence in their current operating structure, Duany hoped that asking the southern city to open up and talk about what they considered to be problematic was the first step to making the city prosperous.

Ultimately, dialogue is vital. However, implementation is even more imperative. After spending months entrenched in research, I have formulated my own opinion on Charleston's design review. Should the city adjust its jurisdiction? I don't think so. While it is a difficult burden and blessing to have such a large number of historic properties on the peninsula, a historic building on Tradd Street deserves just as much attention as a historic building on Line Street. Should the BAR split into two review boards? Maybe. This option would require the city to find several more representatives as qualified and passionate as the current board members—nonetheless those willing to commit even more time to a voluntary activity. However, more attention on large-scale buildings that will and have enormously impacted the cityscape would certainly benefit Charleston.

Is Charleston now (and was Charleston during the decades of this analysis) a better place in part because it had a BAR? Yes, when considering commercial new

construction buildings. Without an advisory board, outside developers and architects might have struggled to understand what the city strives for in architectural design. Furthermore, with many eyes and opinions on any given project—including those financially involved and not—always lended to better design exploration. Has the BAR’s posture stiffened over the years? This is debatable—possibly, and probably because the diversity of projects only continues to expand today. As commercial building projects continue to grow larger for the city, the more difficult it is to maintain the contextual connection between old and new buildings. This issue alone causes the BAR, the developer, and the architect to work harder to meet the aesthetic needs for Charleston’s historic district. Furthermore, that task alone requires a more developed sense of authority for the Board. However, this does not mean that the BAR has become overbearing. Instead, the Bar has just adjusted to the needs of the city.

And finally, does the BAR want to protect the city as much as the angry residents who attend the review meetings? Of course they do! Instead of complaining about what the city is doing wrong, a positive discussion of what the city could do better will certainly lead to positive change.

As what Duany calls “America’s favorite city,” Charleston has had its successes and failures in urban expansion. An ambassador of American architecture, the city represents almost every era of style—from Greek Revival treasures, Italianate magnificence, to Victorian masterpieces. While respecting and cherishing these historic buildings is critical, it is just as critical that the city not recreate these eras of architecture in new construction today. New construction prevails on Calhoun Street because it is still

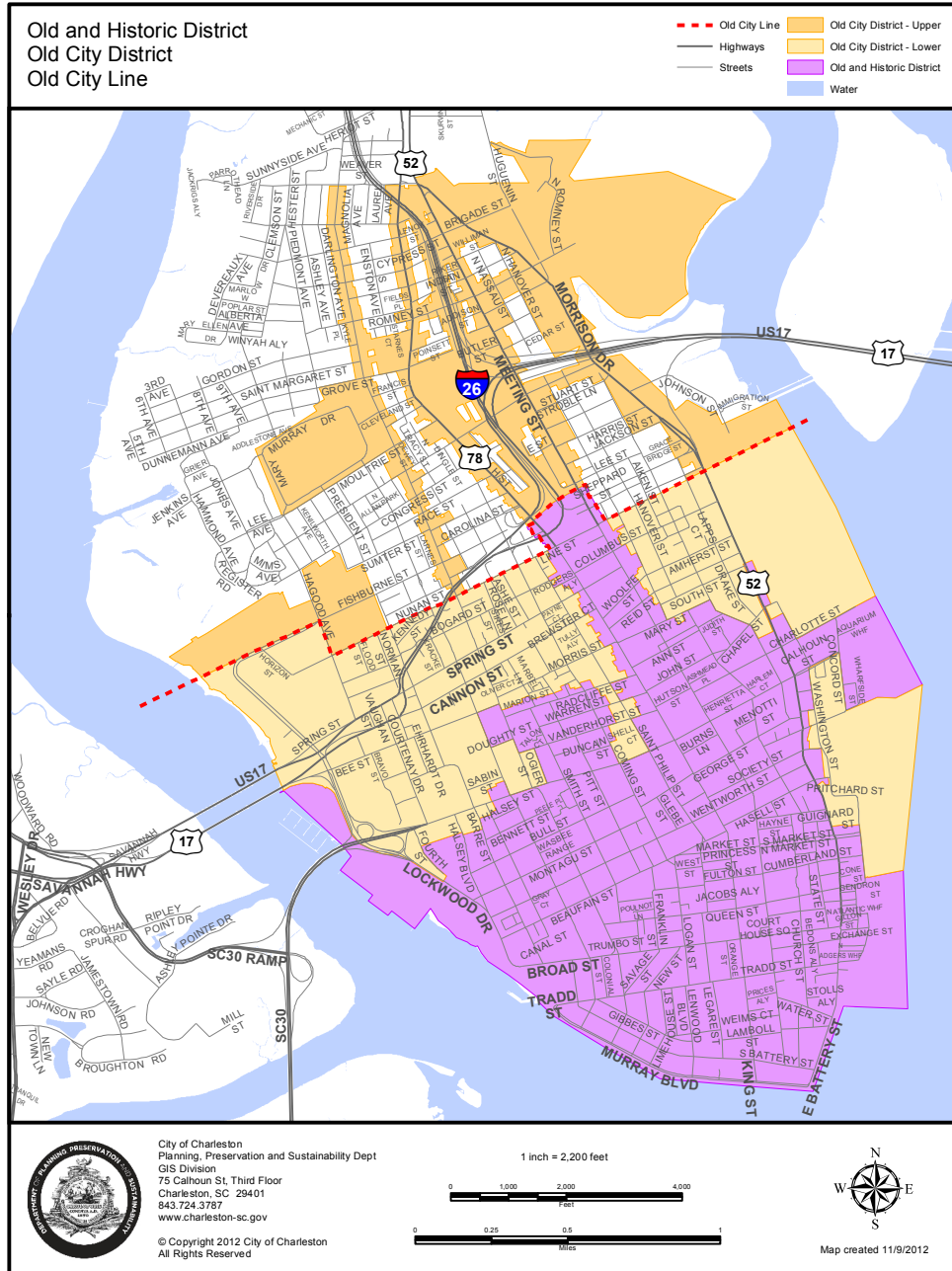
considered an area of transition. Because only a few historic buildings still stand on the street front, designing new architecture that can accommodate predominantly civic and institutional uses while respecting their surroundings is challenging.

Majority of architects working in Charleston hope to be considerate of their new building's environment while designing something useful for the client, attractive to the public, and representative of their style and decade. This task is daunting, but can be aided by the BAR and other members of the community. Dissonance is not the answer to maintaining a great city. The answer is collaboration. With collaboration and positive dialogue, Charleston will continue to grow as the remarkable city that it is.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Map of Charleston's Old and Historic District, Old City District, and Old City Line as of 2012, courtesy City of Charleston Department of Planning, Preservation, and Sustainability.



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