

III Before You Begin

A. Using These Design Guidelines

Read the chapters in this section before you attempt to make exterior changes to your building or build a new structure in the district. It will help you to understand the local architectural review process (“Going Before the Board of Historic and Architectural Review”). The remaining chapters give you an overview of the issues that you might face during the project. For rehabilitations, “Planning Your Project in the Historic District” will help you to understand basic standards of appropriate maintenance and rehabilitation, evaluate whether you can qualify for state and/or federal tax credits, and determine how building codes and zoning regulations can affect your plans. This section will also give you similar advice from a new construction perspective.

The heart of the handbook is the following major section, “Guidelines for Rehabilitation and New Construction,” which provides recommendations for appropriate rehabilitation and new construction in the district. These recommendations move from the general to the specific, beginning with site and concluding with decorative features. You can turn to the page of a particular topic, such as windows, but you would probably also benefit from skimming the chapters before it so that you can put the windows into a more general context, such as scale. All of the guidelines topics have some bearing on the design of new

construction. Others relate primarily to rehabilitation.



“Tip” boxes contain practical advice to complement the guidelines.



“Information” boxes provide definitions and useful background information.

The guidelines are arranged as follows:

- **Building Site** (setback, spacing, off-street parking, site features);
- **Building Mass** (form, scale, height & width, foundation, roof);
- **Building Elements** (solids & voids, windows & doors, porches, storefronts, cornices);
- **Materials** (masonry, wood, architectural metal, synthetic siding);
- **Decorative Features** (paint, signs, awnings);
- **Streetscape** (walks & curbs, lighting, utilities, parking, open space, landscaping);
- **Removing Buildings** (moving, demolition).

This handbook can express only general design principles. There is a great deal of variety within the Smithfield historic district, and the application of these guidelines can vary according to the characteristics of the subareas described previously in “Understanding District Character.”

The basic components of this handbook are 1) a framework for recognizing the important features of an area and 2) the tools, the design guidelines, for maintaining these characteristics.

In the Appendices are a glossary of architectural terms and a bibliography. If you need more information on a topic, the bibliography provides a starting point. The Smithfield Board of Historic and Architectural Review or the Virginia Department of Historic Resources also can help you with many technical questions.

B. Going Before the Board of Historic and Architectural Review (BHAR)

Architectural review is required for most projects. If you own property in the district (whether or not it is historic) and want to make exterior changes to your building(s) that will be visible from the exterior or to build a new structure, you probably will need approval from the Board of Historic and Architectural Review (BHAR) otherwise known as a Certificate of Appropriateness. The Town Planner, who serves as the staff for the BHAR, can approve many small exterior changes such as fences, minor sign changes, minor paint changes, etc. For more significant alterations, the project must be reviewed by the Board, which functions as the architectural review board for the local historic district.

1. Procedures

Your first step is to contact town staff to determine if your project requires BHAR approval. If your project is minor, then it may be able to be approved administratively by town staff. Examples of minor projects include, but are not limited to:

- fences
- minor exterior changes
- painting using the same colors, installing a new roof using the same type of roof material
- routine maintenance

For a complete list please refer to the Smithfield Zoning Ordinance, HP-O, Historic Preservation Overlay District (Article 3.M, Sections E3 & E5)

If your project is major, then it must be reviewed by the BHAR.

Examples of major projects include, but are not limited to:

- new construction
- demolition
- sheds or gazebos
- additions
- color change
- roof change
- siding change, etc.

For a complete list please refer to the Smithfield Zoning Ordinance, HP-O, Historic Preservation Overlay District (Article 3.M, Section E7)

Town staff will inform you of the materials that need to be submitted although a general list is printed here. All materials shall be submitted to town staff at least twenty-one (21) days before the scheduled meeting. A completed BHAR Application is required to be filled out if the action requires BHAR review. Applications are available at the town offices and on the town's website www.co.smithfield.va.us.

Every application approved by the BHAR shall be subject to the following conditions:

- The applicant(s) shall begin construction, installation, etc. of their approved BHAR project within one (1) year from the date of approval; and

- The applicant(s) shall complete the project within two (2) years from the date of BHAR approval
- If these two (2) conditions are not met, then the application becomes null and void, and the applicant(s) shall reapply to the BHAR.

2. What to Submit

The review board must receive from you enough information on which to base its decision. Depending on the type of project that you intend to do, will determine what materials you need to submit for the meeting in addition to the BHAR application. See the list below:

- a. New Construction/Addition (commercial or residential)
 - a plat/survey of the property with all existing and proposed structure(s) drawn on the plat/survey (to scale);
 - location of site improvements
 - landscape/buffer plan
 - signage plan
 - elevations of the new structure(s);
 - color sample(s);
 - siding sample(s);
 - roof/shingle sample;
 - window details

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B. Going Before the Board of Historic and Architectural Review (BHAR)

- b. Accessory Structures
(detached garage, shed, gazebo, etc.)
 - a plat/survey of the property with the accessory structure(s) drawn on the plat/survey (to scale);
 - elevations;
 - color samples;
 - siding sample;
 - roof sample.
- c. Color Change
 - color samples
- d. Roof Change
 - roof/shingle sample
- e. Siding Change
 - siding sample(s)
- f. Window Change
 - window sample
- g. Demolition
 - letter of reason for demolition

3. Appeals

Any person aggrieved by any decision of the BHAR may appeal such decision to the Town Council, provided that such appeal is filed within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date of notification of the Review Board decision. The Town Council shall consult with the Review Board in relation to any appeal and may require documentation of any Review Board decision prior to hearing the appeal. The Town Council may affirm, reverse, or modify the Review Board decision and shall notify the Planning and Zoning Administrator of its action.