

CHAPTER 2

DESIGN REVIEW IN THE HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICTS

Sullivan's Island Design Review Board

The Town of Sullivan's Island created a Design Review Board (DRB) in 2003 to provide design review in the historic overlay districts. The DRB was established within the provisions of South Carolina Code, Title 6, Chapter 29, Sections 870 through 940 and in accordance with the Town of Sullivan's Island's Comprehensive Plan. The intent of establishing the DRB and initiating design review was to enhance the community's character, preserve property values and protect the unique identity of Sullivan's Island. The design review process is intended to promote design that is compatible in mass and scale with and in harmony with the natural environment. The process is aimed at improving and augmenting other development controls included in the Town's Zoning Ordinance.

The powers granted to the DRB are as follows:

- The preservation and protection of historic and architecturally valuable districts and neighborhoods or significant or natural scenic areas;
- The protection of and/or provision for the unique, special, or desired character of Sullivan's Island and defined districts within the Island or any combination of it; and,
- Governing the erection, demolition, removal in whole or in part, or alteration, of historic buildings, structures and/or grounds by the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA).

Buildings, structures, site and streetscape features within the Town's local historic districts must receive an approved Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) prior to the start of planned work. A CoA is a permit issued to ensure that the work will meet the design criteria for the districts. A CoA is not the same thing as a building permit, which is a separate form and may or may not be needed depending on the scope of work. CoAs are required for a range of projects within the districts. No material change to the exterior of a historic property, new construction, or demolition can occur within the local overlay districts without an approved CoA. This includes site work, fences, walls, pergolas, gazebos, hardscape, signage, driveways, and changes in front and side yard landscape features.

The DRB is the appointed board that performs the primary duties associated with approving or rejecting applications within the historic overlay districts. The DRB is composed of seven (7) members of which six (6) must be residents of the Island. The seventh may be a non-resident if so appointed by the Town Council. DRB members serve overlapping terms of three (3) years each. The Town Council appoints members of the DRB based on their knowledge and demonstrated interest in architecture, history, archaeology, planning, urban or community design, landscape architecture, construction and restoration, or law. At least one state licensed architect or other professional is required. All members are expected to have knowledge and demonstrated interest in the design and preservation of buildings and places.

To date, the DRB has conducted its design review duties consistent with the National Park Service's "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation," hereafter referred to as "Standards." The Standards pertain to historic buildings, relating landscape features, site conditions, as well as new construction and rehabilitation. These Standards are used throughout the country as a basis for local design review guidelines and for projects utilizing federal or state funds and tax credits. The design guidelines contained in this manual augment the standards and focus on specific character defining details that are important for the Island's historic overlay districts.

Routine maintenance and actions deemed minor work are reviewed by the Zoning Administrator (Staff). The Staff has the ability to provide administrative approval to minor work. Staff may refer minor projects to the DRB if the changes are substantial, do not meet the guidelines, or are of a precedent-setting nature. Major work projects are reviewed by the DRB. In general, major work projects involve a change in the appearance of the structure or site, such as new construction, expansion of a building footprint, façade or fenestration changes, or significant alterations in landscape features.

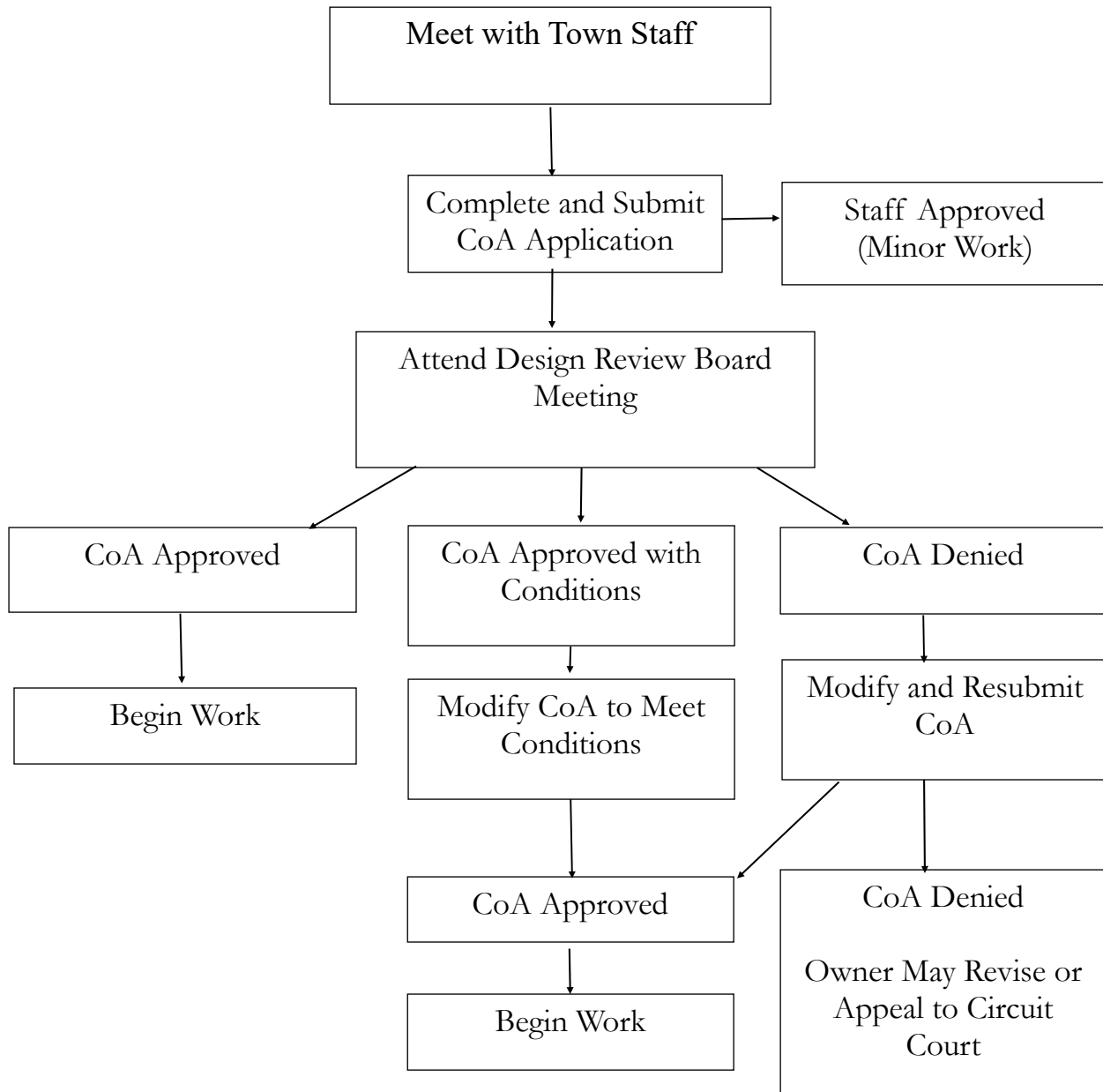
There are properties in the historic overlay districts that are considered “non-contributing” due their recent age or extent of alterations. Non-contributing buildings may still possess characteristics that make them important to overall district character. They may possess design elements such as scale, massing, setback, lot placement, and materials that have the potential to positively affect neighboring historic structures. Each case will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine how the proposed work will impact the property, adjacent properties, the streetscape and historic district. Restoration of a building that lost its contributing status due to alterations is strongly encouraged, and the Staff and DRB can provide guidance as requested.

In order to receive a CoA, applicants or their representatives must be present at the DRB meeting to address potential questions. It is also recommended that samples of any substitute materials to be used be made available for inspection by the DRB. Following questions and discussion by the DRB and comments by the public in attendance, the DRB will vote on each application. Based on the outcome of the vote, under the parameters of the Historic District Ordinance, each CoA application may be approved as submitted, approved with revision, denied, or extended until the next meeting such as for receipt of additional information. Upon approving the application, the DRB issues the CoA which includes a list of approved work. Then, and only then, can the applicant begin to undertake the work that has been approved.



The DRB conducts design review for rehabilitation to ensure that the plans are in keeping with the property's architectural and historical character (2624 I'on Avenue).

Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) Flow Chart



How to Use This Manual

Property owners, real estate agents, developers, contractors, tenants, architects, and building designers should use these guidelines when considering any project that will affect the exterior elements of a property in Sullivan's Island's Historic Overlay Districts. For any project that is subject to review by the DRB and Staff, the applicant should refer to the guidelines at the beginning of the planning process to avoid efforts that later may prove to be inappropriate and are ultimately rejected by the DRB.

The Town's Historic Preservation Ordinance grants the DRB review of proposed projects in the historic overlay districts. In each case, a unique combination of circumstances and preservation variables will require the DRB to conduct its review and make its decision on the merits of the particular case. In making its determination of the appropriateness of a project, the DRB will determine whether or not the proposed modification is compatible with the historic district. In making this determination the Board shall consider, with reference to adjoining lots, lots facing across the street, and lots in the immediate vicinity:

- The pattern of setback, foundation elevations and building heights;
- The massing and orientation of structures;
- Fenestration (windows) and doorway spacing and alignment patterns;
- The placement and use of porches, decks and patios;
- The placement and alignment of driveways;
- The treatment of front and side facades;
- Where appropriate, the types of roofs, the roof pitches, and other aspects of roof design;
- Where appropriate, distinctive architectural styles that characterize a street or neighborhood; and
- Such other factors as the DRB may consider relevant to defining the character of the neighborhood.

Each chapter of these guidelines is organized to provide specific regulatory principles and requirements. Each design guideline element is described with a broad policy statement followed by specific guideline statements based on design principles. The information in the policy statement and specific itemized guidelines all serve as the basis for DRB decisions.

There are three primary approaches to work in the Historic Overlay Districts:

- ⇒ **Maintenance**
This refers to proper care and regular maintenance of a building. Typically regular maintenance will not require Staff or board review.
- ⇒ **Staff Review**
Many actions involving historic buildings can be reviewed directly by the Zoning Administrator (Staff). Some actions can typically be reviewed by Staff in a brief period of time if they are consistent with the requirements contained in the guidelines.
- ⇒ **Design Review Board Review**
Projects with greater complexity and more permanent effect on the historic district or property including extensive alterations to historic buildings, new construction, and requests for demolition are among the actions that require review by the DRB.

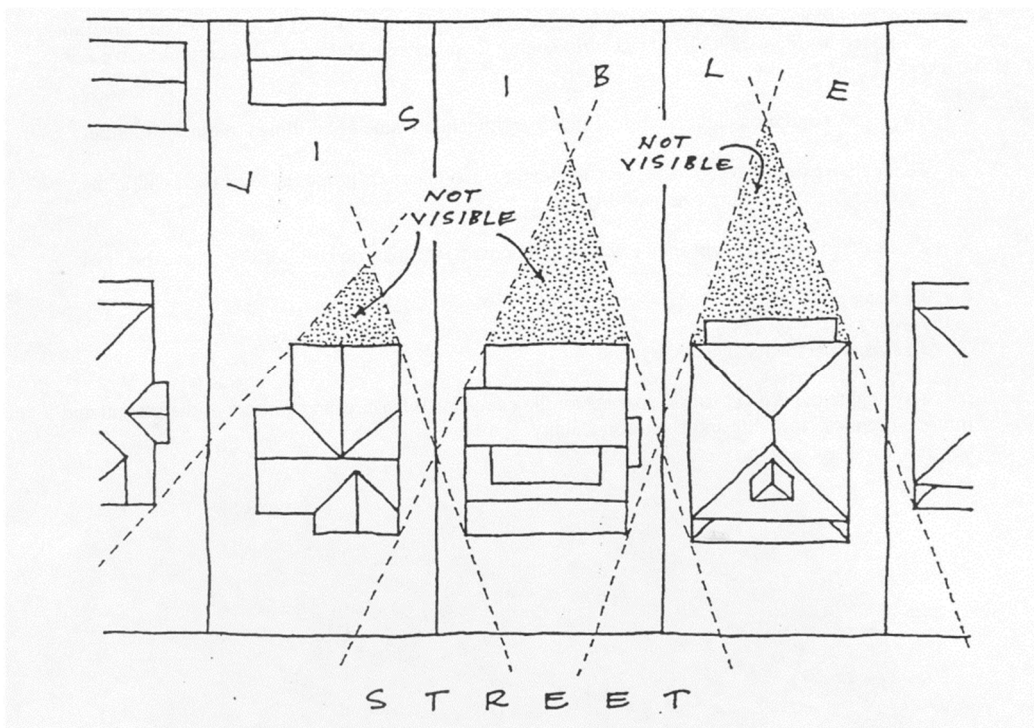
Property owners are encouraged to contact the Staff if they have any questions concerning the need for a CoA and the level of review required for their specific project.

Guiding Principles for Sullivan's Island's Historic Overlay Districts

Historic preservation is a set of methods and treatments that can help you, as the owner of an older building, maintain the historic appearance of the property you live in and appreciate. The historic appearance of your building may be the first thing that drew you to it. Whenever you take steps to maintain the original appearance of your historic property, you are practicing historic preservation. As the owner of an older building you might be wondering about remodeling your property in the context of historic preservation. Historic preservation's "best practices" recognize that buildings must evolve with the people who use them and with their changing needs. If you live or own property in one of the Town's Historic Overlay Districts, the DRB will only be reviewing exterior changes, not interior. It is the intent of design review to preserve the exterior while allowing the owner to remodel the interior as they desire. As you begin a rehabilitation project it is helpful to consider how to achieve the right balance between keeping or restoring original features while providing updates for modern living.

The most important character-defining features on a building is its public face, the one facing the street. Here you find the architectural details, porches, windows, and doors that especially define its style and character. These are some of the most important qualities that make properties significant for their architectural character. Therefore, the emphasis of historic preservation and design review is to maintain the essential character of a building on its front and readily visible side elevations.

Whether you are buying an older building as an investment or to live in the rest of your life, it is wise to keep future resale in mind. When considering remodeling projects, aim to keep any work consistent with the style and character of the building. Potential future buyers will be drawn to the historic quality of the building just as you were. Remodeling projects should use materials and designs in keeping with the historic character of the building. If you desire new living space, the guidelines generally allow for additions on the rear elevations of buildings. Such additions are usually not readily visible from the street and can be designed to be both contemporary and complementary to the original building. Rear additions are commonplace in our historic districts and allow for remodeling projects such as attached garages, porches, and outdoor decks.



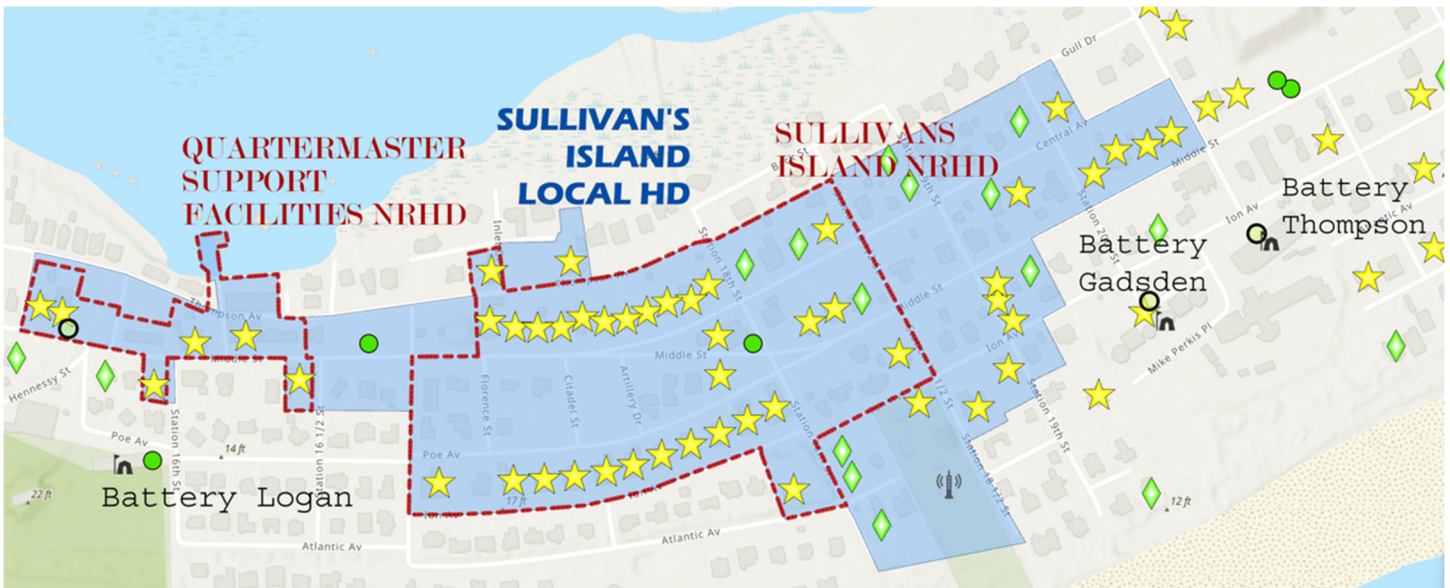
The DRB may consider flexibility in the guidelines for rear elevations not readily visible from the street.

SULLIVAN'S ISLAND'S NATIONAL REGISTER AND HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICTS

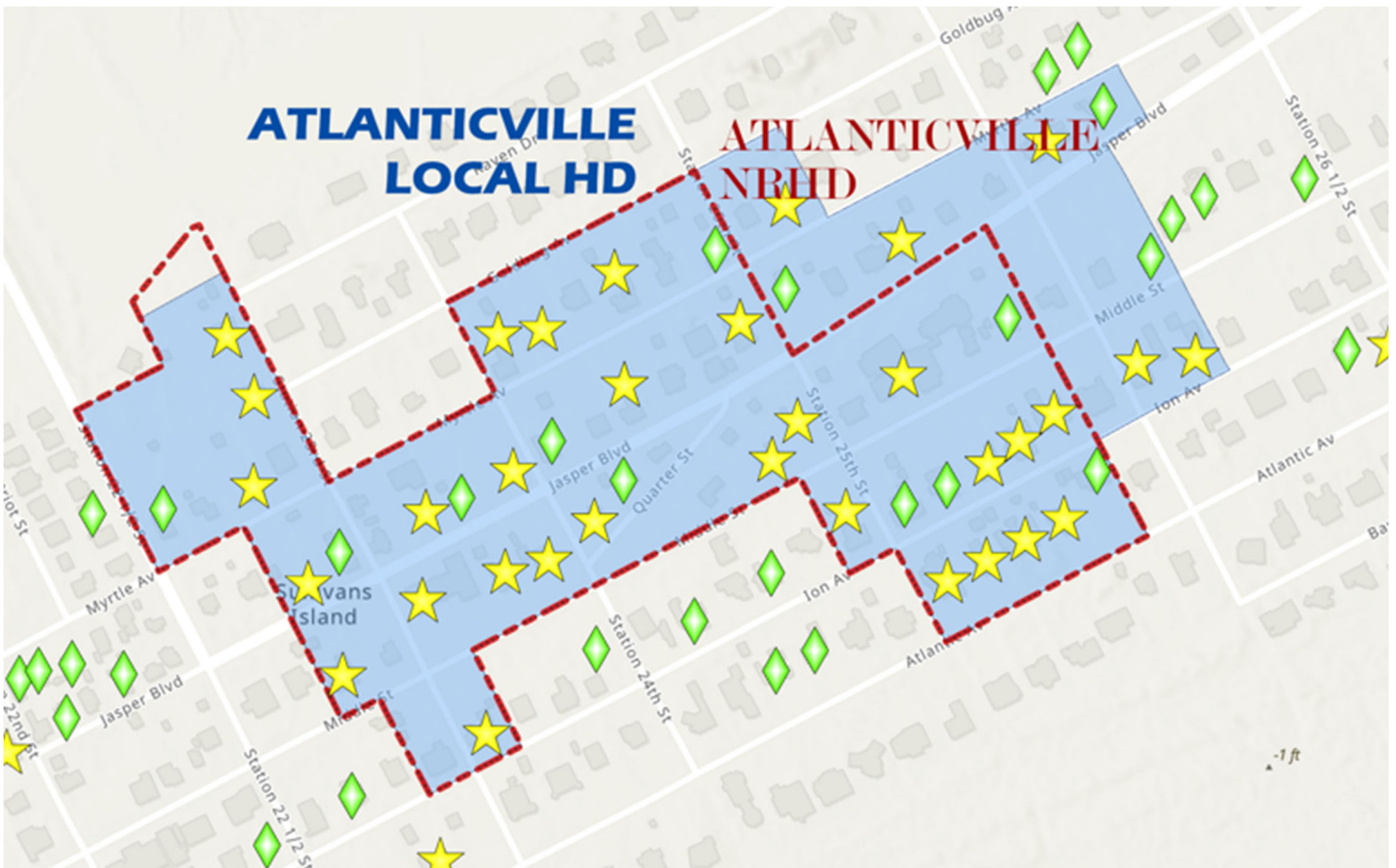


MOULTRIEVILLE NATIONAL REGISTER AND HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICTS

SULLIVAN'S ISLAND NATIONAL REGISTER AND HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICTS



SULLIVAN'S ISLAND NATIONAL REGISTER AND HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICTS



ATLANTICVILLE NATIONAL REGISTER AND HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICTS