

BAR Concept Review Policy

adopted January 2001, amended and restated December 2016

Background & Purpose

In addition to a Certificate of Appropriateness from the appropriate Board of Architectural Review (BAR), applications for development projects of a certain size are required to obtain development approvals (DSP or DSUP) from the Planning Commission and often the City Council. Because the size, footprint or design of a project may be amended during the DSP or DSUP process, a Certificate of Appropriateness is not typically granted until after the DSP or DSUP is approved. Therefore, the Boards of Architectural Review adopted a Concept Review policy in January 2001 as an optional, informal review at the beginning of the development process whereby the BAR provides the applicant, staff, Planning Commission and the City Council, with comments relating to the overall appropriateness of a project's **height, mass, scale and general architectural character**. The Concept Review is intended to minimize future architectural design conflicts between what is shown to the community, the Planning Commission or City Council during the development approval process and what the BAR later finds architecturally appropriate under the criteria and standards in Chapter 10 of the Zoning Ordinance and the BAR's adopted policies and *Design Guidelines*. The information provided by the BAR in the Concept Review will be used by the applicant, staff, Planning Commission and City Council to make decisions regarding the DSP or DSUP and as such serves as an important step in an efficient development review process. This document is an update and clarification of the policy adopted in 2001 and will serve as the current policy.

Principles

1. The BAR Concept Review process is encouraged – but not required – for any development project prior to submission of a development application to the Planning Commission and, if required, the City Council in order to ensure that each body has the information they need to make their decisions.
2. The Concept Review is not an approval by the BAR. If the application for the development project is approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council, then the applicant must apply for and obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the BAR following attainment of the DSP or DSUP.
3. The Concept Review will review:
 - a. The appropriateness of height, mass, scale and general architectural character based on criteria set forth in the BAR *Design Guidelines* for the historic districts.
 - b. If a project is located within the boundaries of Washington Street or the Potomac River Vicinity, the BAR will review the additional standards for these areas, to the extent possible without final architectural details.
 - c. The appropriateness of a Permit to Demolish, when one will be required for the project.
4. The project is discussed in an informal work session and is open to public comment. The BAR may require several work sessions and additional information before they provide comments and guidance. The BAR will then take a poll of its members on what their guidance is related to the height, mass, scale, and general architectural character of a project. They may also provide general feedback as to what additional information they would like to see when, and if, the project returns for a Certificate of Appropriateness and/or a Permit to Demolish.

5. As an informal work session, the applicant is strongly encouraged – but not required – to give public notice to adjoining property owners. Notice of the work session will be posted on the City’s web page and in the BAR’s preliminary docket and the property will be placarded by BAR staff as a courtesy.
6. The Concept Review by the BAR is advisory to the applicant, staff, the Planning Commission and the City Council, and is not intended to create vested or appealable rights.
7. The BAR Concept Review work session comments are shared with the Planning Commission and the City Council and may be used by those bodies for advisory purposes. The final Concept Review drawings shown to the BAR must, therefore, be the same architectural designs submitted for the Preliminary Site Plan.

Typical Proposals Reviewed in Concept by the BAR

- When the proposal requires a DSP or DSUP for additional density or height;
- When the proposal requires Planning Commission review for a new building; and
- When staff determines that the proposal requires preliminary review because the design would be a principal determining factor in the ultimate approval by other bodies.

Concept Review Submission Materials

Three 11” x 17” hard copies and one digital copy of the following:

1. An architectural site plan showing, at a minimum, building footprints on the block on which the project is located and the surrounding block faces
2. Schematic architectural drawings which show the proposed height and scale in relation to surrounding properties
3. 3D digital and/or physical massing study models
4. Building materials, precedent images, etc., as required to explain the concept

Process

1. The BAR will only review projects when staff has confirmed through the Development Concept Stage 1 review process that a proposed project complies with zoning requirements or where staff supports any required modifications. When the applicant is notified that they may submit a Development Concept Stage 2 package, the applicant may also apply for BAR Concept Review work session.
2. The City will place the Concept Review project on the next available docket and advertise it in the newspaper with the other cases for that hearing and placard the property. Notice by the applicant to abutting property owners is strongly encouraged but is not required.
3. BAR staff may prepare a report which will be available on the City’s web site the Friday evening prior to the BAR meeting.
4. BAR Concept Review requests are docketed for consideration under Other Business at a regular BAR public hearing. Additional work sessions may be requested.
5. The applicant is expected to make a presentation at the meeting to explain the concept.
6. The public will be invited to speak at the BAR meeting to receive their feedback only on issues related to the BAR’s purview.