

BAR Concept Review Policy

Proposed Amendments **DRAFT**, September 21, 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 that lie within the historic districts are required to obtain development approvals (DSP or DSUP) from the Planning Commission and often the City Council. Because a Certificate of Appropriateness is not typically granted until after the DSP or DSUP is approved, 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. This early step in the development review process 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 in Chapter 10 of the Zoning Ordinance and the BAR's adopted policies and *Design Guidelines*.

The BAR takes no formal action at the Concept Review stage, but rather comments upon or endorses only a project's *height, scale, mass* and *general architectural character*. Detailed design elements, such as colors, signs, window details, etc. are not required and are included as part of the approval for a Certificate of Appropriateness if, and after, the project is approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council. The applicant thus avoids spending substantial additional money for design fees to develop architectural details and the BAR does not spend time reviewing those details for a project which may not receive approval of, or which may be modified by, the Planning Commission or the City Council. The applicant is also able to determine early in the review process whether the BAR feels the size or form of the building envelope is appropriate for its context and can verify the project proforma prior to a large expenditure of professional fees.

In the case of a development project falling under the purview of the additional standards for *Washington Street* or the *Potomac River Vicinity*, the BAR will make a finding as to whether the proposed development is consistent with the standards. Finally, in development projects also requiring a Permit to Demolish, the BAR will provide sufficient feedback as to whether the Permit to Demolish would be supported, should the project return to the BAR. As a Permit to Demolish is independent from a development proposal, the applicant also has the option of formally seeking a Permit to Demolish at this early stage.

If the BAR believes that the height, mass, scale, and architectural character, or the proposed building demolition is not appropriate and would not be supported in the future, the applicant should be advised as soon as possible. This will help the applicant in determining if it is worth pursuing development approval from Planning Commission and City Council.

Principles

1. The BAR Concept Review process is encouraged – but not required – for any development project prior to receiving approval from 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 DSUP or DSP.
3. The BAR's preliminary findings at Concept Review will address:
 - 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 make preliminary findings based on 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 endorse 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 pages 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 as such does not 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.

Typical Proposals Reviewed in Concept by the BARs

- When the proposal requires a DSUP or DSP 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.

The principal exception to the above is when the zoning approval needed by the Planning Commission or the City Council is so uncertain and so critical to the basic format of the proposal that, in Staff's opinion, changes to the application are likely so that BAR review would be repeated.

Application Materials

Provide one hard copy and one digital copy of the following.

1. Application form
2. Site plan
3. Schematic architectural drawings which show the proposed height and scale in relation to surrounding properties
4. 3d digital and/or physical massing study models
5. Materials, precedent images, etc., as required

Process

1. The BAR will only review projects when the Planning & Zoning staff has confirmed in the Development Concept Stage 1 review process that a proposed project complies with and 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. BAR Concept Review requests are docketed for consideration at a regular BAR public hearing. Additional work sessions may be required before the BAR endorses a project.

Recommended Schedule

1. Applicant submits Concept Review cover sheet (see attached) 30 days prior to next BAR hearing
2. The City will place the Concept Review project on the preliminary docket and it will be advertised
3. The City will placard the property (notice by the applicant is strongly encouraged but is not required)

Following the informal work session held during a regular public meeting, the BAR's conceptual findings regarding the appropriateness of a proposed project's height, mass, scale, and general architectural character are then included in the staff report to the Planning Commission and, in the case of a DSUP, to the City Council.

Administrative Materials

BAR Application Form

Application Materials

Legal Ad language

Other Business

CASE BAR #2016-00268

Informal work session for a concept review of proposed redevelopment at **203, 205, and 211 Strand Street**. (This item is open for public comment)

Applicant: IDI Strand, L.C.

Attachments: [203, 205, 211 Strand Application](#)