

January 16, 2007

Honorable C. Nelson Harris, Mayor
Honorable David B. Trinkle, Vice Mayor
Honorable Alfred T. Dowe, Jr., Council Member
Honorable Beverly T. Fitzpatrick, Jr., Council Mayor
Honorable Sherman P. Lea, Council Member
Honorable Gwendolyn W. Mason, Council Member
Honorable Brian J. Wishneff, Council Member

Dear Mayor Harris and Members of City Council:

Subject: 2006 Annual Report
Architectural Review Board (ARB)

I am pleased to provide City Council with the following information on the Board's accomplishments and attendance for calendar year 2006.

The ARB met 12 times during 2006. In addition, a review committee met 10 times to review applications and recommend improvements to individual applications. Actions taken by the Board, staff and City Council are summarized below.

	Total	Percentage
Total Requests for Certificates of Appropriateness (COA)	139	
Requests reviewed and approved by Agent	63	45%
Requests referred to ARB	76	55%
H-2 requests – 65		
H-1 requests – 11		
Requests approved by ARB	64	84%
Requests denied by ARB	5	7%
Total requests approved by Agent and ARB	127	91%
Requests withdrawn	7	--
Requests denied for work begun without COA	3	--
Denials appealed to City Council	4	--
ARB decisions upheld by City Council	3*	--
*one appeal was continued at request of applicant		

- Investment in historic district rehabilitation continues to accelerate. 2006 had another double-digit increase (20%) in case activity over the previous year.
- ARB and staff considered 139 applications and approved 127 or 91%.
- While the number of approvals continued to increase over previous years, the number of denials remained in the 5-7 range seen over the past four years. Three of the five denied applications were for work already commenced or completed without approval. These cases accounted for three of the four appeals to City Council.
- One denial was a project on Market Street that would have added a story to an existing building. The applicant modified the project to one where a new building will be constructed. The ARB approved the new application later in the year.
- To expedite approvals, the ARB delegates approval authority for certain types of projects to the Agent. Almost half (45%) of all applications were reviewed and approved by the Agent. Typically, such approvals are given within five business days of receiving the application.

Major ARB activities during 2006:

- Approved four applications for new construction:
 - Retail/office building at 308-310 Market Street.
 - Large office building in the 1100 block of 1st Street, SW.
 - 20 townhouse units located on a new loop street which will connect the ends of Janette and King George Avenues.
 - 4 townhouse units on Woods Avenue at 6th Street.
- As a Certified Local Government (CLG) with the Department of Historic Resources (DHR), the City of Roanoke had direct support from the state and federal governments with grant money for historic preservation studies and for ARB training.
 1. Worked in coordination with DHR for a cost-share project to survey and nominate the Salem Avenue Historic District to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.
 2. Staff and the Vice-Chair received training through the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. These workshops train local historic preservation commissioners and staff in community revitalization methods.

- Continued annual spring mailings to all property owners in the historic districts and contractors in the Roanoke Valley to increase awareness of the historic districts. The Department of Real Estate Valuation also sends notices to all new property owners in the historic districts.
- Continued the Design Assistance Review Committee comprised of two ARB members to review applications prior to the Board meetings. Two members and staff attend the monthly meetings and notify applicants of preliminary recommendations.
- Continued annual in-house ARB workshops to improve the application process and Board meetings.
- Invited DHR to review and assess the ARB's processes. DHR staff completed the assessment and provided recommendations for improvements.

The Board's current initiatives:

- Review and update the H-1 and H-2 Architectural Design Guidelines to incorporate information on new materials that were not available when the 1995 guidelines were written, delete outdated information or materials, and comply with zoning provisions contained in the adoption of the new zoning ordinance in December, 2005. The first workshops with property owners in the H-1 and H-2 Districts will be held on January 17, 2007. This initiative was undertaken using a 50/50 match of State and City funding.

A detailed list of Certificates of Appropriateness is attached for your information.

Sincerely,

Lora Katz, Chair
Architectural Review Board

cc: Darlene L. Burcham, City Manager
William M. Hackworth, City Attorney
Steven J. Talevi, Assistant City Attorney
Stephanie Moon, Acting City Clerk
R. Brian Townsend, Director, Planning Building and Economic
Development
Anne S. Beckett, Agent, Architectural Review Board