



# CITY COUNCIL REPORT

**To:** Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council  
**Date:** February 7, 2011  
**Subject:** 2010 Annual Report of the Architectural Review Board (ARB)

I am pleased to provide this report on the Board's activity, accomplishments, and attendance for calendar year 2010.

## ARB Reviews

The level of activity in the historic districts during 2010 increased, despite the continued economic downturn. Staff and the ARB considered a total of 307 cases. Of those cases, 67 were heard by the ARB (61 approved, 5 denied, 1 withdrawn) and 240 (78%) were approved through the administrative approval process or through in-kind repair /replacement approval. A detailed list of Certificates of Appropriateness is attached. 98% of all submitted applications were approved by staff or ARB.

New bylaws adopted in 2010 expanded the types of work eligible for administrative approval. This fast track approval process typically takes three days or less. The attached chart shows the breakdown of cases that were heard by the Board, approved administratively, or approved as in-kind repair/replacement. In 2010, the percentage of cases requiring review by the full ARB was only 22%, while the two years prior was 26%. This streamlining continues to benefit owners because the approval time is significantly shorter.

Additionally, the ARB reviewed the H-2 Guidelines as request by City Council at the joint ARB/Council meeting in July 2010, and has made several changes and clarifications to the following sections of the Guidelines: Working with the ARB, Basic Design Principles, Porches, Windows and Doors, Siding, and Roofs.

Other changes in recent years have significantly sped up the pace of ARB meetings with no sacrifice to the level of oversight or adherence to standards. The ARB now uses a consent agenda for complete applications as well as an application review committee that provide a initial feedback to applicants so they can have a complete application when the case is heard by the ARB. Prior to these improvements, it was not unusual for meetings to run several hours. During 2010, however, many meetings were concluded within 30 minutes. These changes benefit citizens by reducing the amount of time they wait for their cases to be heard.

Typically, five to seven cases are appealed to City Council each year. However, only two appeals were filed in 2010.

The highlights of the past year were the start of the survey and inventory for the Wasena National Register Historic District, the creation of two educational training seminars for the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors, and continued outreach to various neighborhood groups through a monthly newsletter articles.

### Education/Training

Staff has continued partnerships with Old Southwest, Inc. and the Greater Raleigh Court Civic League to publish a series of articles in their monthly newsletters. Articles have included discussions on how to work with the ARB, dispelling myths about wood windows, alternate energy sources in the historic districts, prevention of water damage in historic houses, and history of catalog houses. Upcoming articles will include specifics on different architectural styles and elements found on homes in Roanoke.

Staff has worked with members of the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors (RVAR) to get two Realtor training courses approved. The topics of training are "Historic Preservation 101: The Basics" and "Roanoke Valley Architectural Styles 1800-2000." Staff and RVAR have partnered to present a course on March 14, 2011 at RVAR offices.

ARB and staff intend to identify options for potential hands-on workshops this year, pending available grant funding.

### Activities for 2010

Staff continues efforts to increase awareness of the historic district requirements through annual spring mailings to all property owners in the historic districts and all contractors in the Roanoke Valley. The Department of Real Estate Valuation also sends notices to all new property owners in the historic districts.

Staff leveraged Community Development Block Grant monies (2008) and private funding to start a citywide survey of historic sites and structures. This survey kicked off this fall with the survey and inventory of the Wasena neighborhood for listing upon the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. The citywide survey will continue throughout 2011/2012 with the survey of other Roanoke neighborhoods, pending availability of matching grants from Virginia Department of Historic Resource's CLG Cost-Share and Grant programs.

In closing, the caseloads of staff and ARB demonstrate that citizens are continuing to invest in and add value to Roanoke's historic districts and staff and the ARB continue to work with residents to make the historic overlay operate as effectively as possible. We are committed to continue in our role to facilitate this investment and ensure that Roanoke's historic downtown and neighborhoods are appropriately protected and preserved.

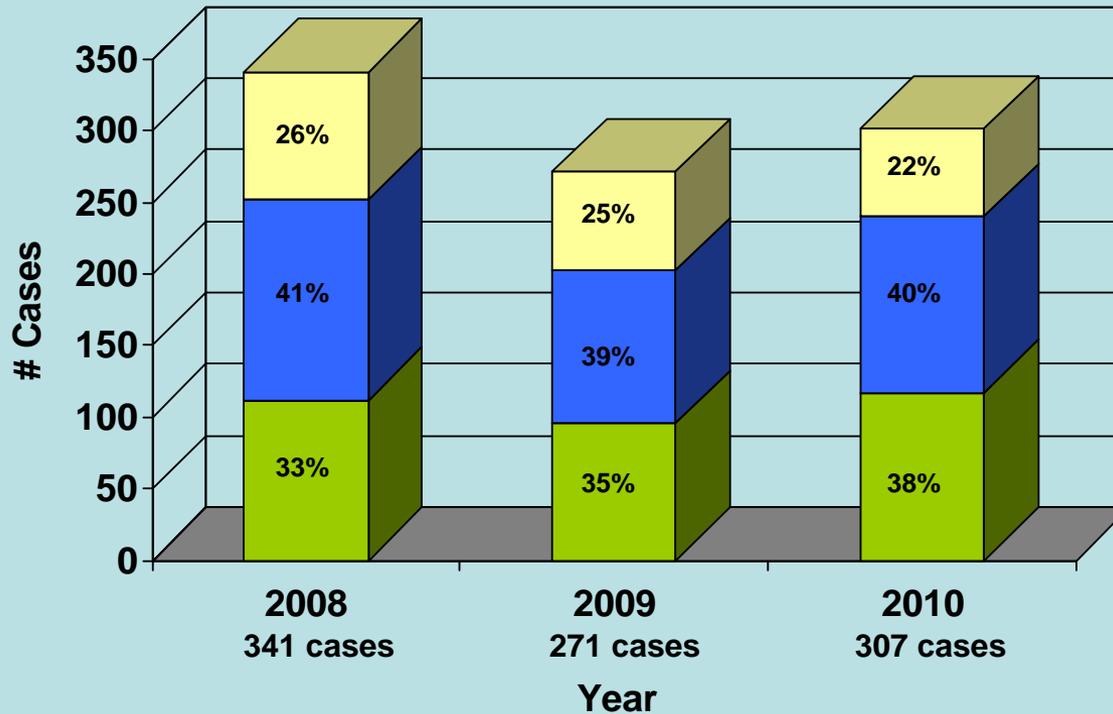
Respectfully submitted,

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Barbara A. Botkin, Chair  
Architectural Review Board

cc: City Manager  
Assistant City Manager for Community Development  
City Attorney  
City Clerk  
City Planner/ARB Agent

# Architectural Review Board Cases



Caseload was higher than in 2009 but still lower than in 2008.

Increasing the types of work eligible for administrative approvals resulted in far more fast-track approvals. Less than ¼ of cases needed ARB review.

- ARB Approvals
- Administrative Approvals
- In-Kind Repair/Replacement Approvals