

## CHAPTER 2: THE CITY POINT HISTORIC DISTRICT AND THE DESIGN PROCESS

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### CHAPTER 2

#### A. THE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARDS

Architectural Review Boards, also known as Historic District Commissions or Historic Preservation Commissions, usually consist of a local volunteer group that works to protect historic resources in a community. Largely because most land-use decisions are made at the local level, local architectural boards offer the greatest levels of protection from threats that may compromise the historic integrity of a locality.

Review boards often have a range of responsibilities and power depending on state and local laws. Some boards are purely advisory or educational in nature, while others are regulatory. Both types of boards may conduct town and/or county wide surveys; designate locally significant landmarks or perform other duties that help protect local historic resources; however, *regulatory* boards have the legal right and authority to approve or disapprove applications which may alter historic structures and streetscapes so that the historic character of a designated historic district is not diminished. The Architectural Review Board in the City Point Historic District is a regulatory board.

Most architectural review boards utilize design guidelines, often based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, that provide guidance on the appropriate techniques for the rehabilitation of existing buildings and direction for compatible new infill construction. Guidelines recognize that change is inevitable and recommend reasonable ways to protect a historic district's character.

The first historic district in the United States was created in 1931 (predating the National Register of Historic Places) in Charleston, South Carolina. At that time Charleston enacted an ordinance that designated an "Old and Historic District" and also authorized that the district be administered by a Board of Architectural Review. This ordinance contained strong protection that local historic districts have since emulated.

The first historic district in Virginia, and the third oldest historic district in the United States, was created in Alexandria in 1946. Currently, there are approximately 257 National Register Historic Districts and approximately 175 local historic districts in Virginia.

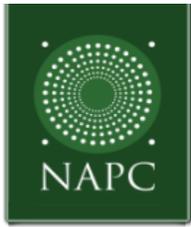


*The 3<sup>rd</sup> oldest historic district in the United States, established in 1946, is located in Alexandria, Virginia. The Historic Alexandria Foundation awards plaques, such as the one pictured at left, to those buildings that have retained their architectural integrity and that are at least 100 years old.*

The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions was created in 1983 to represent and assist the Nation's preservation design review commissions. The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions provides technical support and manages an informational network to help local commissions accomplish their preservation objectives. The alliance also serves as an advocate at federal, state, and local levels to promote policies and programs that support preservation commission efforts.

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### **NATIONAL ALLIANCE *of* PRESERVATION COMMISSIONS**

The City Point area was recognized as a State Historic District in 1978 by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (now the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, VDHR). The district was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Also in November 1979, the Hopewell City Council established a City Point Historic District to preserve and protect certain historically and architecturally significant buildings and places. The first City Point Architectural Review and Design Resource Handbook was adopted in January 1983. In 1997 Hopewell rezoned the City Point Historic District from Historic District (H-1) to Tourist/Historic District (TH-1.) The 1997 rezoning was intended to create an attractive surrounding that reflects the role of City Point as a commercial and residential town with a historic past. The area has benefitted from the on-going restoration of Appomattox Plantation by the National Park Service, the Walking Tour of City Point, and the St. Dennis Chapel Museum.

The City Point Historic District is located at the tip of a small peninsula at the confluence of the Appomattox and James Rivers. The district encompasses roughly seven blocks in area (39 acres) and is cut by an irregular grid of minor residential streets. Though late eighteenth and early to mid- twentieth century structures are found within the district's boundaries, most buildings date from the nineteenth century. Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and vernacular buildings mix equally with examples of

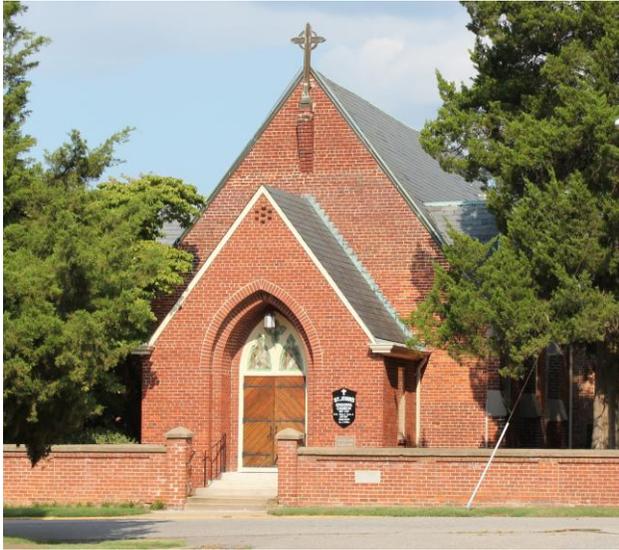
Colonial and Georgian Revival. Examples are found in Appendix B.

A detailed examination of the buildings within the district is located in Appendix C. By examining the City Point Historic District street by street, the historical and architectural character of each structure can be more fully studied and explored. The ARB hopes that this information will prove useful to homeowners within the district, fostering not only an appreciation of the architectural significance of each structure, but also providing critical information that is relevant to the on-going maintenance and/or restoration of their property.

The City Point Historic District is a work in progress. Several of the sites in the district have undergone extensive renovation; however, a great deal of work remains to be done. This revised handbook of the Architectural Review Board should encourage further development and restoration of the City Point Historic District.

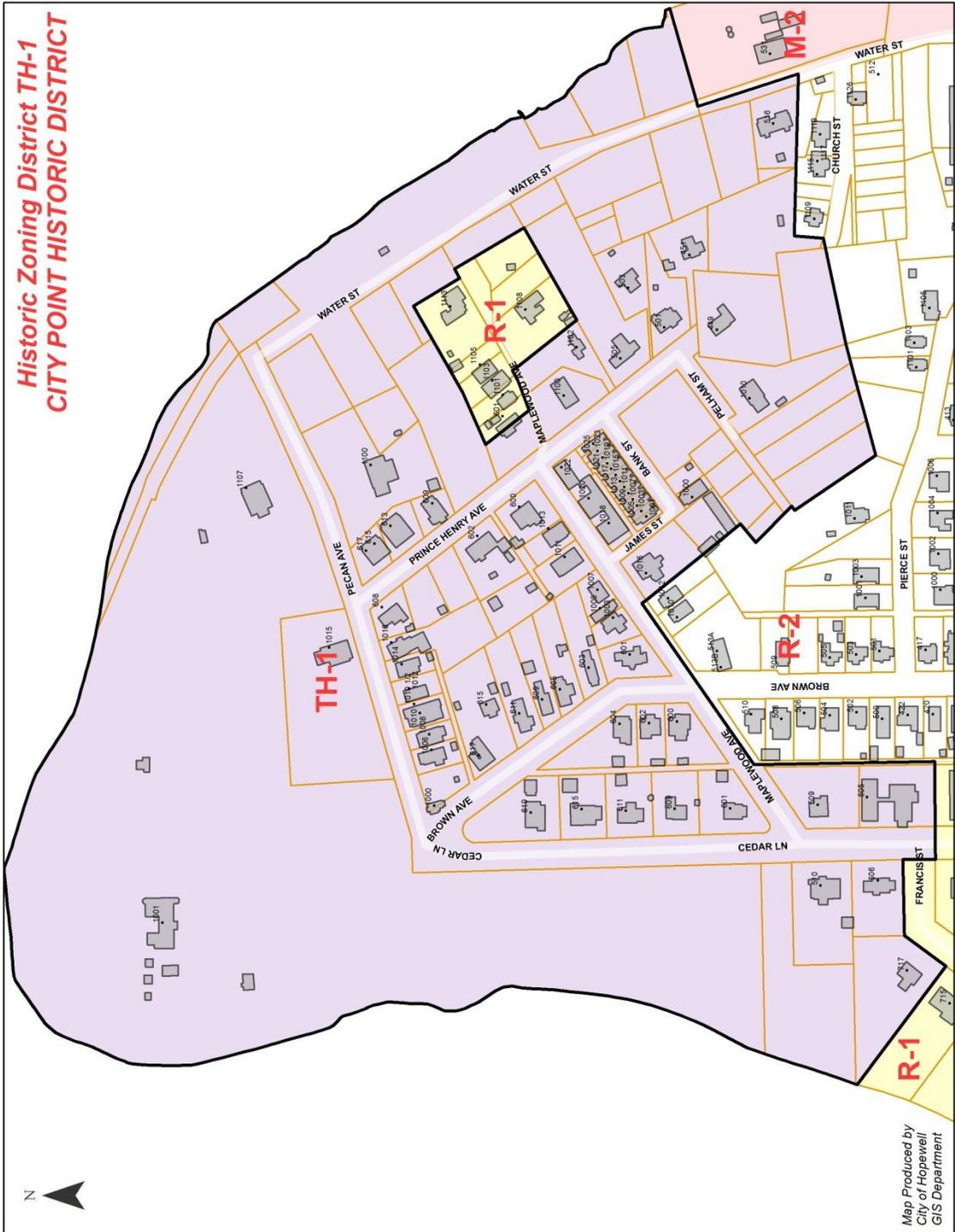
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*The first historic district was located in Charleston, South Carolina and predated the first U.S. federal government designated district by more than 30 years. Other local historic districts appeared in succeeding years, and in 1966 the federal government created the National Register of Historic Places. By the 1980s there were thousands of federally designated historic districts.*

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City Point Historic District Map

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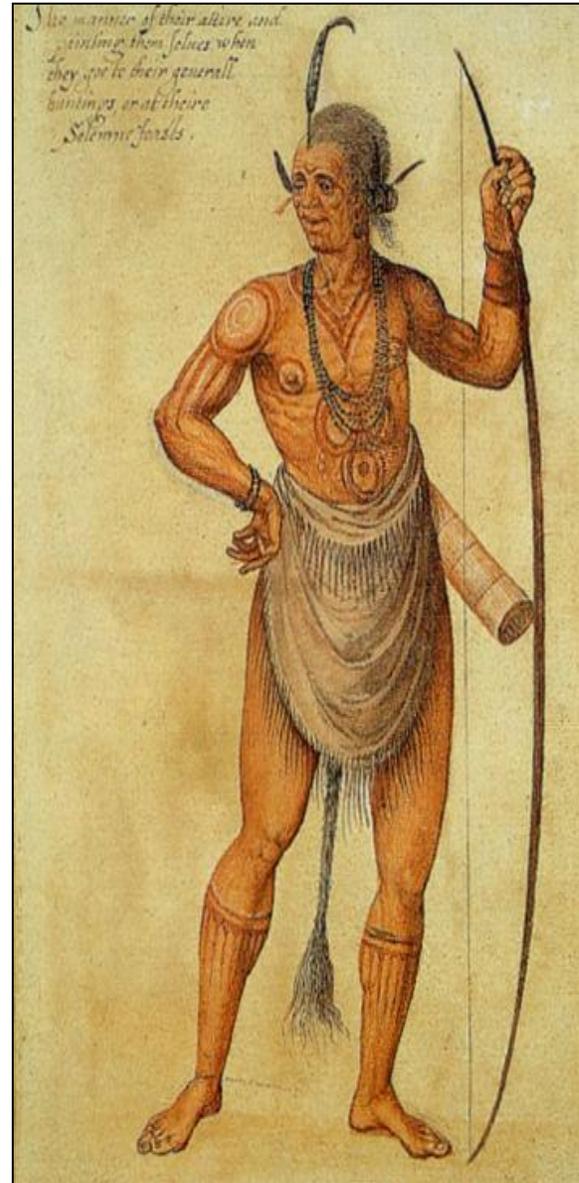
### B. THE HISTORY OF CITY POINT

Located at the confluence of the James and Appomattox Rivers in Hopewell, Virginia, City Point is one of North America's oldest English speaking communities. The area is historically significant as an eighteenth century port and World War I "boomtown", but is best known for the role it played in the final year of the Civil War. During the Siege of Petersburg (1864-1865), Appomattox Plantation at City Point was occupied by the Union army, under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant. Archaeological investigations of City Point indicate that the area has been continuously occupied from about 8,500 years ago to the present day.

In early May of 1607 Captain Christopher Newport, commander of the ships Susan Constant, Godspeed and Discovery, led a small group of men up the James River in search of a suitable settlement site. Newport was impressed by the area where the James and Appomattox Rivers meet and chose it to be the site for the English settlement. The native Appomattucks were initially wary of Englishmen, but allowed the visitors to stay in the area for five days. Newport and his party sailed back down the James to report their findings, only to discover that the remainder of the settlers had moved up river to Jamestown and unloaded the ships. Newport's report on the City Point area was ignored, and the settlers chose to remain at the Jamestown site.

The end of the "Starving Time" (1609-1610) brought changes to the fledgling settlement. Sir Thomas Dale arrived in Virginia as the acting Governor. He quickly realized that the Jamestown location was a mistake. In 1611 Sir Thomas Dale moved up the James River to Bermuda Hundred. Dale placed a small farming settlement on the south bank of the James and named it Bermuda Cittie.

The Bermuda Cittie location has been continuously occupied since 1613. Bermuda Cittie was renamed Charles City, then Charles City Point which became City Point and finally Hopewell.



*Watercolor painted by John White in 1585*

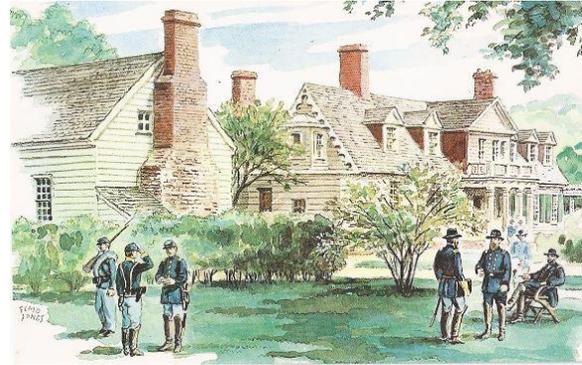
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City Point took on an active role in the New World. William Cawson was granted fifty acres of land in 1613 as a reward for his services in “watching the Indians.” Cawson’s grant represents the first privately owned farm in America. City Point sent two representatives to the first legislative assembly at Jamestown in 1619. The Rev. Patrick Copeland, on his second visit to the New World in 1621, realized there was a total lack of schools and churches in Virginia. Copeland set about raising funds and planning the colony’s first “free school”. He chose the City Point location for the East India School. The news of the 1622 massacre in Virginia and the dissolution of the East India Company ended Copeland’s dream.

The 1630s saw continued growth and expansion of the Virginia Colony. City Point’s unique location made it the major point of entry for the region. Agriculture and trade routes became firmly established. Tobacco, corn and timber were used in place of money, as well as export commodities, to the mother country.

In 1635, Captain Francis Eppes received a land patent for 1,700 acres which included Eppes Island, a part of Bermuda Hundred and part of City Point. In order to comply with patent laws, Eppes had to begin farming the land and build a home within three years of receiving the patent. The home, now overlooking the two rivers, is the second home built on the City Point site. Built circa 1763, Appomattox Plantation is of frame construction with clapboarding. The two wings were added before the Civil War.



*Appomattox Plantation – 1864-65 Civil War Sketch*

City Point was unaffected by the American Revolution until the final year of the war. In January 1781, the British fleet, commanded by Benedict Arnold, sailed up the James in an unsuccessful attempt to capture Governor Thomas Jefferson. The returning fleet was fired upon by cannons mounted near City Point. The British landed at City Point on April 24, 1781 and moved toward Lafayette’s forces stationed in Petersburg, Virginia. The French General repelled the British, forcing them to retreat down the James River.

Lord Cornwallis regrouped the British forces for another attack on Lafayette’s forces in Petersburg. Cornwallis spent one night in the Bolling family home, Mitchells. The visit gave rise to an interesting legend. During dinner, the British officers spoke freely of the plan to cross the James and attack Lafayette from the rear. Young Susanna Bolling listened carefully. In the dark of night, she slipped through a secret passageway, crossed the Appomattox River and made her way to the Half-Way House where Lafayette was quartered. Forewarned, Lafayette escaped Cornwallis’ trap. The British grew tired of the chase and turned eastward. Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in October 1781.

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In the decades following the American Revolution, City Point remained a small, quiet town. In 1797, the Port of City Point was recognized as a point of entry when the U. S. Collector of Customs was moved from Bermuda Hundred. Likewise, the United States Post Office was changed to City Point in 1801. The Briscoe-Partridge Steamship line began using the wharf in 1815. City Point entered a new age of transportation in September 1838 with the completion of the City Point Railroad. The railway connected the wharf at City Point with huge warehouses in Petersburg. An 1854 sketch of the City Point waterfront, shown below, accurately depicts a thriving port, with rail access. None of the changes had any effect on the population growth of City Point.

The early years of the Civil War had little impact on City Point. Steamships continued to ply the waters of the James on their routes northward from City Point. The wharf at City Point was used as a prisoner of war exchange site during the early years of the War; until the Union decided that the practice was not in their best interest.

City Point was thrust onto the world stage on June 15, 1864. Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant, General in Chief of all Union Armies, moved his headquarters to City Point. The waterfront was quickly turned into the largest supply depot of the Civil War. Wharves that could accommodate two hundred ships daily, and warehouses holding a thirty day supply of rations for the one hundred thousand soldiers involved in the siege of Petersburg, dotted the shoreline. The City Point Railroad was altered to fit Union rolling stock and extended behind the Union siege lines.



1854 Sketch of the Waterfront of City Point

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*City Point Waterfront, 1864-1865*

President Abraham Lincoln visited City Point twice during the ten month siege of Petersburg. Lincoln conferred with Grant either on Lincoln's steamer, the River Queen, or in Grant's cabin on the lawn of the Eppes' ancestral home, Appomattox Plantation. Lincoln sailed from the wharfs at City Point to visit Richmond, the Capitol of the Confederacy.



General Robert E. Lee abandoned Petersburg and traveled west to Appomattox Court House. The Union army left City Point in pursuit. Much of the physical evidence of the Union Army's occupation remains to be uncovered.

The Appomattox Plantation remained in the Eppes family in an unbroken chain of lineal descent from 1635 until December 1979, when the house and thirteen acres were purchased by the National Park Service. The property is now the City Point Unit of the Petersburg National Battlefield.

After the Civil War, City Point would become a quiet town with no growth, until another war knocked on the door. In 1913, DuPont built a dynamite plant on the land called "Hopewell Farm". With the onset of World War I in Europe, DuPont converted the dynamite factory into a guncotton production facility. The population climbed from two hundred to over thirty thousand. The population explosion was quickly followed by lawlessness and illegal activities. On December 9, 1915, a catastrophic fire engulfed the hastily constructed tents and wooden buildings. Three quarters of the area known as Hopewell was destroyed with losses approaching one million dollars.

In 1916, "Hopewell Farm" was incorporated as the city of Hopewell. The end of World War I led to the closure of the DuPont guncotton factory. Thousands left the area as quickly as they had come. The "Boomtown" became a ghost town with a population of less than two thousand. City Point was annexed by the City of Hopewell in 1923.



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### C. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### **What is the Architectural Review Board?**

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) grants Certificates of Appropriateness for the erection, reconstruction, alteration, restoration, demolition or removal of any historic building, structure, or area within the City Point Historic District. It is a regulatory review board that investigates and provides recommendations regarding other buildings, structures, places, or areas in the City having historic interest or value. This Board is established by City Zoning Ordinance Article 14-4-J-1 and consists of seven Hopewell citizens appointed by the City Council. The Board works concurrently with citizens, organizations, and City, State, and Federal governments, to develop and preserve the uniqueness of all recognized Historic Districts in the City.

#### **Who are the members of the Architectural Review Board?**

The seven-member Board is appointed by City Council, with each member serving for four years. One shall be a resident of the City Point Historic District. One may be an architect, and the remaining members must be residents of the City of Hopewell with knowledge of and demonstrated interest in the historic character of the city.

The Board is tasked with overseeing the City's City Point Historic District and assuring that the exterior architectural character and appearance of buildings and structures within the District are maintained. The Board is also charged with preserving the uniqueness of the District in addition to identifying and recommending other structures or areas within the City that have historic or architectural value. Meetings are held monthly, and the location is so noted in

the meeting announcement. The ARB is staffed by the Department of Development.

#### **What are the Architectural Review Board's procedures?**

Once an individual has decided precisely how he or she intends to erect, reconstruct, alter or restore a building or structure, application is made to the ARB for a Certificate of Appropriateness. When demolition of a building or structure is under consideration, other procedures (including an advertised public hearing) also apply. The Board renders its decision within 60 days of the meeting. Appeals of any Board decision must be taken to the City Council of Hopewell.

#### **How does being in the City Point Historic District affect my property?**

Properties in the City Point Historic District are subject to the rules and regulations of the City Point Historic District Article of the City's Zoning Ordinance and the ARB. In addition to other City rules and regulations, no one may erect, reconstruct, alter, restore, demolish or remove a building, structure or area located within the City Point Historic District without approval from the ARB.

#### **When would the Board become involved with my property and me?**

The Board should consult with you and assist you in planning any rehabilitation or new construction which will affect the exterior architectural appearance of your building, structure, or area. Exterior architectural character includes the following: the general arrangement of the exterior of a building or structure; the general composition of building materials, including type, color and textures; the type and character of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, appurtenant elements, landscaping and fencing, and other elements

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subject to public view from a public street, right-of-way or other public place.

### **Why must I adhere to City Point Historic District requirements if my home is not “Historic”?**

While many structures in the district are not “historic”, their presence within the boundaries of the district causes them to have a relationship with the other qualifying structures. The goal of the City Point Historic District is to create and preserve the elements which best characterize the original concept of the City Point Area as a commercial and residential town.



**601 Cedar Lane**

### **D. THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

#### **Step 1**

Before any new construction or rehabilitation is done on your property, please contact the Department of Development at 804-541-2220. Your project may require ARB approval which would necessitate the submission of an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA.) In addition, your project may require a building permit and/or zoning variance.

#### **Step 2**

If your project requires a Certificate of Appropriateness, you may obtain an application by calling a member of the Department of Development staff, visiting the website, [www.hopewellva.gov](http://www.hopewellva.gov), or by visiting the Department of Development, located in the Municipal Building, Room 321; 300 N. Main Street, Hopewell, Virginia.

#### **Step 3**

Submit a completed COA application to the Department of Development, along with supporting graphics, photographs, and/or written documentation, by the posted deadline. A member of the Department of Development staff will provide you with an agenda before the meeting, along with the Department’s recommendations concerning your project.

#### **Step 4**

Attend the ARB meeting. If you cannot attend, please send a representative who is knowledgeable about your project. The ARB may defer action on an application if questions raised during the review cannot be answered by Development staff alone.

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**City of Hopewell  
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD  
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

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**Name of the Property Owner(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address** (if different than street address): \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Description of Work:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Rehabilitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Painting
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Construction <i>(accessory structure)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintenance <i>(i.e. repointing brick, cleaning)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Construction <i>(single family dwelling)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Check all that apply

**Approximate cost of the Work:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide a brief Description of the Work:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I (We) \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ respectfully request that a review be made by the Architectural Review Board in accordance with Article of the Zoning Ordinance to determine if the following proposal is acceptable for the granting of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

**Please Remember to Attach Pictures and/or sketches of the Proposed Improvements**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPROVED**

**DENIED**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department of Neighborhood Assistance & Planning

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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**Possible Architectural Review Board Outcomes**

<b>ARB Action:</b>	<b>Application Approved as Submitted</b>
<b>Staff Response:</b>	Issue a COA describing the scope of the approved work within 5 business days of the ARB decision.
<b>Applicant Response:</b>	Wait for receipt of a building permit, if one was requested, before starting work on your project. *Process generally takes between 7-10 days.

<b>ARB Action:</b>	<b>Application Approved with Modifications</b>
<b>Staff Response:</b>	Notify the applicant in writing of the ARB’s decision to approve the project. Issue a COA describing the scope of the approved work, with modifications, within 5 business days.
<b>Applicant Response:</b>	Wait for receipt of a building permit, if one was requested, before starting work on your project.

<b>ARB Action:</b>	<b>Application Deferred</b>
<b>Staff Response:</b>	Either ask for additional information from the applicant or convene a meeting with the applicant and an ARB member prior to further review by the full ARB. Work with applicant to address deficiencies in the project application, or organize an ARB subcommittee to meet with the applicant.
<b>Applicant Response:</b>	Provide additional information to Department of Development staff if requested. Meet with ARB subcommittee if requested. Submit additional material reflecting the requested changes to the scope of the project.

<b>ARB Action:</b>	<b>Application Denied</b>
<b>Staff Response:</b>	Inform the applicant in writing of the ARB’s decision to deny, and inform the applicant of the appeal process.
<b>Applicant Response:</b>	Submit a new COA application reflecting the requested changes to the project. The applicant may also file an appeal with the City Clerk’s Office within 30 days of the ARB’s decision.

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### E. FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL INCENTIVES

#### Rehabilitation Tax Credits

If you are undertaking a major rehabilitation of a historic building in either a State Landmark or National Register Historic District, you may be eligible for certain tax credits. These credits may be used to reduce your income tax liability dollar-for-dollar.

To be certified as eligible, under either the state and/or federal programs, you must file an application with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) before the work begins and follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings found in Chapter 1.

Qualifying project expenses under both the state and federal program include approved work on structural components, new mechanical systems, updating of kitchens and bathrooms, ADA compliance, fire escapes and suppression systems and associated architectural, engineering, project management and developer fees. Both programs also require that the project be completed within two years, unless it is pre-approved as a phased project with a timeline of five years or less.

#### Local Program

There is a partial property tax exemption on rehabilitated structures at least 50 years old. Contact the City of Hopewell Real Estate Assessor's Office at 804-541-2234 for more information.



#### Virginia Program

The State credit is 25% of qualifying expense for either owner-occupied or income-producing properties. For a property to qualify for the program, it must either be individually listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register, be deemed eligible for such listing, or contribute to a so listed historic district.

The owner investment required to meet the state's definition of a material rehabilitation for an *owner-occupied* structure must be at least 25% of the assessed value of the building for local real estate tax purposes in the previous year.

For other income-producing structures, an investment of at least 50% of the assessed value of the building for local real estate tax purposes in the previous year is required.

Unlike the Federal program described on the following page, some site work may be carried forward for up to ten years with no carryback. The property may be sold upon completion of the project and upon certification that it was carried out as approved.

For more information on the Virginia program visit the Virginia Department of Historic Resources website at: [www.dhr.virginia.gov](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov)

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### **Federal Program**

The Federal credit is 20% of qualifying expenses for the rehabilitation of income-producing properties and requires that the property be listed on the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as contributing to a listed historic district.

As defined by the National Park Service who oversees this program, a substantial rehabilitation requires an investment in the building equal to or greater than the building's purchase price minus the land value and any claimed depreciation, plus the value of any earlier capital improvements (adjusted basis.)

The Federal tax credits may be carried forward twenty years and carried back for one year. The Federal program requires that the owner of the building receiving the credits retains ownership for five years.

For more information visit the National Park Service's Tax Incentives website at: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)