

CHAPTER X RELOCATION

It is the intent of the Relocation section of the *Design Review Guidelines* to ensure that property owners consider the effect that relocation of a building will have on the neighborhood it enters or exit. The effect that relocation will have on the individual significance of the building is also a consideration.

Because of the continuing restoration and development activities by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the City, Williamsburg has witnessed an unusual amount of relocation activity. Non-colonial buildings have been moved out of the Historic Area and transplanted colonial buildings have been moved in and out of the Historic Area and around the City. While this activity has saved many older buildings the juggling of buildings has altered historical relationships in many of the City's neighborhoods.

Before any relocation permits are issued by the City for buildings moving either within, into or out of **Architectural Preservation Districts**, review by the Architectural Review Board is required. At the time of submittal of the application for relocation, if the building is listed or eligible for National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 1), the applicant should submit interior and exterior photographs of the building and its original site as part of the application. The property owner has the option to allow the City access to the property for photographic reporting. It is recommended that the applicant check with the Planning Department for available information on the property to avoid duplication of reporting.

Many factors need to be weighed by the Architectural Review Board when reviewing requests for relocation in **Architectural Preservation Districts**, many of which are listed in Section 21-855(c) of the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter XII, Appendix 5). These factors include the historical and architectural significance of the building, whether or not the building is listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 1) the effect that the relocation will have on the surrounding neighborhood, the type and quality of the project that will replace the building, the Comprehensive Plan's goals for historic preservation, the condition of the building, and the economic feasibility of restoring the building. The Board must strike the proper balance between preserving a building that makes important contributions to the history and character of the City, and allowing for new development in the **Architectural Preservation Districts**.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Relocation of buildings listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 1) should only be considered as a last resort before demolition. The location of the building plays a key role in determining its significance. When a building is moved from its site an important aspect of the building's identity is lost. The orientation of the building in the community, its

relationship with neighboring buildings and community features, and the characteristics of the site all play an important role in understanding the history of the building and its past occupants. When a building is separated from its site, the opportunity for archaeological and botanical research is lost. Relocation not only jeopardizes the integrity of older buildings, but also depletes the historic fabric of the original neighborhood and confuses the environs in the receiving neighborhood.

Because of the past and continuing threat to the stock of non-colonial historic buildings in Williamsburg, relocations from significant neighborhood groupings are strongly discouraged. In most cases, these buildings can be preserved and maintained in their original locations. However, if an earlier relocation project moved the building to the present site within the last eighty years (as part of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's restoration work and the City's redevelopment efforts), relocation of the building on its site might not be necessary to preserve its remaining historic character. Preservation efforts should include conservation of natural features, identified archaeological features, and secondary outbuildings present on the site, in addition to the principal architectural structure.

Prior to submitting a proposal for relocation of a building listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 1), property owners should analyze the situation carefully and explore alternatives to relocation. Property owners should consider the potential of the building for rehabilitation. Many older buildings are suitable for adaptive reuse projects and the Rehabilitation section of the ***Design Review Guidelines*** outlines the process. The Architectural Review Board may make recommendations to the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals for exceptions to standard yard requirements, off-street parking requirements, and open space and landscape requirements for significant buildings in older neighborhoods, which do not meet current zoning requirements.

If relocation is determined to be necessary as the only means of preserving the building, then careful consideration should be given to the selection of a suitable site. In addition, if the building is listed on either the State or National Register, the owner should contact the Department of Historic Resources prior to the move to request that the designation be retained. Usually, however, relocation will result in the removal of the designation. An attempt should be made to locate a site, which recreates as nearly as possible the orientation of the original site. If the site is too small or oriented inappropriately with neighboring features and buildings, the qualities, which made the building significant, may be lost. In addition, if the building is located among buildings of a different architectural period or in a district composed of a different land use, the relocated building may look displaced. It is suggested that relocated buildings be placed in neighborhoods with buildings of similar size and land use.

When moving a building, the property owner should hire a qualified structural mover experienced in moving historic buildings and contact the Planning Department for information on building permits and code compliance. Thorough early planning and

preparation will help to reduce costs and remove opportunities for unseen obstacles to slow the relocation process. Whenever possible, buildings should be moved intact, but if partial disassemble is necessary, than all disassembled parts should be labeled precisely to aid in re-assembly. If the moving route is planned to avoid narrow bridges, steep roads, low utility wires and tree limbs, disassembly may be avoided. During the relocation, measures should be taken to protect vegetation and adjacent buildings on the old and new sites.

Any further changes to a building moved into **Architectural Preservation Districts** will be subject to review by the Architectural Review Board. In order to reduce confusion that relocation may create, interpretative information about the building at the old site should be posted at the new site.