

## CHAPTER XI DEMOLITON

It is the intent of the demolition section of the *Design Review Guidelines* to ensure that property owners consider the role which existing buildings play in defining the character of the community. In addition, certain buildings possess individual significance as examples of certain architectural styles and periods in the City's history. Williamsburg has experienced in a high level of demolition activity within the last eighty years, which significantly altered the character of certain areas in the community. In addition as a result of the restoration of the Colonial Capitol, the City's redevelopment efforts, and continuing development pressures on land adjacent to the Historic Area, demolition has removed a sizeable portion of the City's post-Colonial era historic fabric. Historic resources, which are especially threatened, are from the City's depleted supply of Victorian and early twentieth century buildings. These non-colonial historic buildings contribute to the City's character and are evidence of the City's evolutionary process between the colonial period and the present time.

A 1930 survey and buildings map illustrates the level of demolition and redevelopment that has occurred within the last eighty years in the areas surrounding the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area. Of the approximately 286 buildings (156 residential, 24 commercial, 106 accessory), which existed in the area bounded by Virginia Avenue, Richmond Road, North Boundary Street and the CSX Railroad right-of-way in 1930, 241 (84%) have been lost (119 residential, 21 commercial, 101 accessory). The Peacock Hill area (Boundary Street, Prince George Street, Nassau Street over to Lafayette Street) contained 123 buildings (61 residential and 62 accessory). 79% of the 122 buildings (37 dwellings and 59 accessory) have been lost. In the area of South Boundary Street, Ireland Street and South Henry Street 68% (17 residential and 21 accessory buildings) of the 56 (35 residential and 21 accessory buildings) have been lost. In the Colonial Extension Subdivision, 70% (21) of the 30 residential buildings have been lost. All of the buildings, which existed on York Street, have been lost. It is not known how many buildings, which existed prior to 1930 in the area now known as the Historic Area, were lost to make the restoration project possible. Redevelopment pressures and the phenomenon of demolition by neglect continue to threaten the City's remaining nineteenth century and early twentieth-century historic buildings.

The Architectural Review Board reviews all proposals to demolish buildings in the **Architectural Preservation Districts**. Prior to submitting a proposal for demolition of a building listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 1), it is recommended that property owners analyze the situation carefully and explore alternatives to demolition. Depending on the condition of the building and the nature of the intended land use, property owners should consider the potential of the building for rehabilitation. Many historic buildings are suitable for adaptive re-use projects and the Rehabilitation (Chapter IX) section of the *Design Review Guidelines* outlines this 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 property owners should refer to the Relocation (Chapter X) section of the ***Design Review Guidelines***.

If, after every other option is considered, the property owner still wishes to demolish the building, the procedures outlines in the Architecture Review Article of the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter XII, Appendix 6) must be followed. The applicant must apply to the Architectural Review Board for the right to demolish the building. At this time, if the building is listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 1), the applicant should submit interior and exterior photographs of the building and site to the Planning Department, or the property owner should allow the City access to the property to photograph the building and site. 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 demolition in **Architectural Preservation Districts**, many of which are listed in Section 21-855(c) of the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter XII, Appendix 6). These factors include:

1. Whether or not the building or neighborhood in which it is located is listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 1).
2. The historic and architectural value of the building.
3. The effect the demolition will have on the surrounding neighborhood.
4. The type and quality of the project that will replace the building.
5. The Comprehensive Plan's goals for historic preservation.
6. The condition of the building.
7. The economic feasibility of restoring the building.

The Board must strike the proper balance between preserving buildings that make important contributions to the history and character of the City, the surrounding neighborhood and allowing for new development in **Architectural Preservation Districts**. A listing of buildings in the **Architectural Preservation Districts** that are 50 years old or older has been compiled to assist the Board in its deliberations (Chapter XII, Appendix 2).

If the Architectural Review Board denies the demolition request, the applicant may appeal to the City Council. If demolition is denied by the City Council, the property owner has the right to demolish the building if no buyer has been found for the property within the stipulated time period after a bonafide effort has been made to sell the property under the procedures outlined in Section 21-858(a)(3) of the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter XII, Appendix 6). An alternative to this process is for the applicant to appeal the City Council's decision to the Circuit Court.