

Landmarks Ordinance Review Committee
Nov. 2, 2014

Dear Committee Members:

I have concerns regarding information that Jeff Vercauteren provided in his Oct. 19, 2014, submittal to this committee. On page one he states that the Designation and Rescission sections of the Landmarks Ordinance “should reflect five principles that are not currently reflected in the revised draft.”

My comments relate to principle #5:

The standards for proposals in historic districts should focus on compatibility with the **character of the district**. (See Section 9(b) Attach.)

a. “Compatibility” means a positive relationship to existing buildings and their environs based on the individual visual character of **area**. *Savannah Ord. 8-3030*.

b. A proposal is not “compatible” where it is “not in harmony with the prevailing character” **of the district** or is “obviously incongruous with this character.”
Charleston Ord. 54-240.

Regarding a. above: Jeff presented an edited version of the definition. The unedited definition of “compatibility” from the *Savannah Ord. 8-3030(a)* reads:

*The positive relationship of alterations to existing buildings and designs for new construction to their environs; compatibility is measured by consistent application of accepted guidelines and standards defining the individual visual character of a **specific area**.*

Section 9(b): **Creation and Amendment of Historic Districts**. See attachment of Mr. Vercauteren’s page 5-6. Again, his “compatibility” definition focuses on a **district wide character** and to that end he has crossed out all the elements that together create visual compatibility on streetscapes.

Savannah’s Visual Compatibility Factors and Design Standards, to name a few, include: Height, Proportion of structure’s front facade, Proportion of openings, Rhythm of solids to voids in front facades, Rhythm of structures on streets, Relationship of materials, texture and color, Roof shapes, Scale of a building, Directional expression of front elevation, Building Form, Setbacks, etc. *Savannah Ord, 8-3030(m)(n)*

The Standards need to be very clear with specific criteria so that everyone will understand what is expected.

Regarding b:

b. A proposal is not “compatible” where it is “not in harmony with the prevailing character” **of the district** or is “obviously incongruous with this character.”
Charleston Ord. 54-240.

The review for new construction in Charleston that Jeff presents has been taken out of context and is misleading. The section of 54-240(b): Board of Architectural Review; powers and duties, of the *Charleston Ord.* reads:

B. In passing upon an application for new construction in the Old and Historic District or Old City District, the Board of Architectural Review shall consider, among other things, the general design, the character and appropriateness of design, scale of structures, arrangement, texture, materials and color of the structure in question, and **the relation of such elements to similar features of structures in the immediate surroundings.** The Board of Architectural Review shall not consider interior arrangement or interior design; nor shall it make requirements except for the purpose of preventing development which are not in harmony with the prevailing character of Charleston, or which are obviously incongruous with this character.

Mr. Vercauteren is representing developers who would like nothing better than to replace Madison's current 200 ft. visually related area with a district wide visually related area standard. I encourage you to reject Jeff's recommendations #5 stated in his submittal of Oct. 19.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Franny Ingebritson