

### A. General Review Criteria

Historic buildings are irreplaceable community assets and once they are gone, they are gone forever. With each succeeding demolition or removal, the integrity of the district is further eroded. The new building or the parking lot that often replaces the removed historic building is seldom an attribute to the historic character of the district. Therefore, the moving or demolition of any contributing building in a preservation district should be very carefully considered before approval is given.

Smithfield's Historic Preservation Areas Overlay District (HP-O) ordinance contains provisions that restrict the property owner's right to raze, demolish, or move buildings in the local historic district. For contributing buildings in the district, the Board of Historic and Architectural Review (BHAR) must review any plans to remove buildings. For noncontributing buildings, the Planning and Zoning Administrator can approve such actions.

The owner has an automatic right of appeal to the Town Council and then to the Circuit Court. In addition, the ordinance allows demolition if the owner has offered the building for sale at a reasonable price related to its fair market value and has waited the required period based on that value.

Smithfield's ordinance provides general standards for all decisions made by the BHAR, and some of these apply to moving and demolishing buildings.

1. The public necessity of the proposed construction, demolition, or use.
2. The public purpose or interest in land or buildings to be protected.
3. The historic or architectural value and significance of a particular structure and its relationship to the historic value of the surrounding area.
4. The age and character of a historic structure, its condition, and its probable life expectancy.
5. The view of the structure or area from a public street or road, present and future.
6. The present character of the setting of the structure or area and its surroundings.

In addition to these general standards, the town should consider adopting more specific standards, as suggested below. As extensions of the general guidelines, they focus more clearly on the issues surrounding building removal.

## **XII Moving and Demolition of Historic Buildings**

### **B. Additional Criteria for Moving Historic Buildings**

1. Whether or not the proposed relocation may have a detrimental effect on the structural soundness of the building or structure.
2. Whether or not the proposed relocation would have a negative or positive effect on other historic landmarks or on other sites, buildings, or structures within the historic district.
3. Whether or not the proposed relocation would provide new surroundings that would be compatible with the architectural aspects of the building or structure.
4. Whether or not the proposed relocation is the only practicable means of saving the structure from demolition.
5. Whether or not the building or structure will be relocated to another site within the historic district.

### **C. Guidelines for Moving Historic Buildings**

1. Move buildings only after all alternatives to retention have been examined, including a professional feasibility study.
2. Contact the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for assistance prior to moving the building if it is to remain listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.
3. Seek assistance on documenting the building on its original site before undertaking the move. Photograph the building and the site thoroughly and also measure the building if the move will require substantial reconstruction.
4. Thoroughly assess the building's structural condition in order to minimize any damage that might occur during the move.
5. Select a contractor who has experience in moving buildings and check references with other building owners who have used this contractor.
6. Secure the building from vandalism and potential weather damage before and after its move.
7. If the site is to remain vacant for any length of time, improve the empty lot in a manner consistent with other open space in the historic district.

## Moving and Demolition of Historic Buildings **XII**

### D. Additional Criteria for Demolishing Historic Buildings

1. Whether or not the building or structure is either a historic landmark or is a building within a historic district that contributes to the district character.
2. Whether or not the building or structure is of such old or uncommon design, texture, or scarce material that it could not be reproduced or could be reproduced only with great difficulty and expense.
3. Whether or not historic events occurred in the building or structures.
4. Whether or not a relocation of the building or structure or a portion thereof, would be to any extent practicable as a preferable alternative to demolition.
5. Whether or not the proposed demolition could potentially adversely affect other historic landmark(s) located within the historic district or adversely affect the character of the historic district.
6. The reason for demolishing the building or structure and whether or not any alternatives to demolition exist.
7. Whether or not there has been a professional economic and structural feasibility study for rehabilitating or reusing the structure and whether or not its findings support the proposed demolition.

### E. Guidelines for Demolishing Historic Buildings

1. Demolish a historic building only after all preferable alternatives have been exhausted.
2. Document the building thoroughly through photographs and measured drawings according to Historic American Building Survey Standards. This information should be retained in the town office and with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.
3. If the site is to remain vacant for any length of time, improve the empty lot in a manner consistent with other open space in the historic district.