CHARLESTON CONTRADICTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION THEORIES AND POLICIES

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CHARLESTON CONTRADICTIONS: A CASE STUDY
OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
THEORIES AND POLICIES

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Planning, Design, and the Built Environment

by
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August 2013

Accepted by:
Dr. Cliff Ellis, Committee Chair
Dr. Robert Benedict
Dr. Carter Hudgins
Steven Semes
ABSTRACT

The philosophy, policies, and practices of historic preservation are currently struggling with how to incorporate Modern architecture, as many of these buildings are reaching the threshold to be considered historic. Since one of the movement’s original goals was to counteract Modernism, it is ironic that many of the buildings initially opposed by historic preservation are now forcing the profession to consider their designation and preservation. The potential preservation of many of these buildings raises important philosophical and practical contradictions for the profession that require further study and resolution.

This study presents the results of a case study of three Modern buildings in Charleston, South Carolina—the old Charleston County Library building, the Rivers Federal Building, and the Gaillard Auditorium. All three buildings are civic buildings, built in the 1960s, and located very close to one another in what is now the historic district in Charleston and under the purview of the Board of Architectural Review. While only the library building has reached the 50-year threshold to be considered historic, the other two buildings will reach it soon and, despite similarities among the buildings, each is receiving a different preservation treatment.

The qualitative study utilized an explanatory case study methodology and analyzed several different sources of evidence in order to triangulate the results between them. Sources of data included archival evidence, minutes from Board of Architectural Review meetings, and most significantly, in-depth interviews with a small number of expert participants. The participants included architects, preservationists, members of the
Board of Architectural Review, attorneys and others with knowledge of Charleston’s preservation community.

The findings from this research suggest that the potential preservation of Modern architecture presents numerous contradictions for the field of historic preservation and has implications for the field of architecture as well. By dictating that new buildings must express the *zeitgeist*, both architecture and preservation are creating and supporting an unsustainable cycle of constantly needing to break new ground, rather than relying more on the tried-and-true solutions from the past. Analysis of the cases of the three buildings in the study suggest that the problem is only going to become more acute, as more and more Modern buildings become eligible for historic designation.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my sons, George and Charlie, and my wife Beverley. Her love and encouragement made this work possible and I will always be grateful for her positive attitude and everlasting support.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members for their guidance and support during my time in the PDBE program. In particular, my committee chair, Dr. Cliff Ellis, who not only provided expert academic advice, but also successfully steered me through a mountain of red tape and enabled me to complete the program, as well as providing inspiration and a role model for my future academic career; Dr. Robert Benedict, as a graduate of the PDBE program, gave me constant support and encouragement that I could complete the program; Dr. Carter Hudgins provided me with an opportunity to teach and interact with the Clemson Historic Preservation Program in Charleston; and Steven Semes provided invaluable and needed insight into the fields of both historic preservation and traditional architecture.

I would also like to acknowledge the many people who assisted me with this project, most notably the participants who gave freely of their time and opinions, as well as Karen Emmons of the Margaretta Childs Archive at the Historic Charleston Foundation and Libby Wilder of the Post and Courier archives.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my mother, Catherine Payne-Podsadowski, who taught me the value of hard work and instilled in me a love of learning.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The historic preservation movement has been enormously successful in preserving both individual buildings and historic districts in the United States. However, while historic preservation has increased awareness about the past, its philosophy, policy, and practice have struggled to incorporate buildings from the Modern movement in architecture. The Modern movement emphasized a complete break from the past and produced buildings that, in some cases, replaced historic buildings that early preservationists fought vainly to save. In short, preservation philosophy is advocating for the preservation of existing buildings that contradict the original aims of the movement and might hamper efforts to build new buildings similar to the ones that inspired preservationists in the first place.

The problem is compounded by opposing viewpoints of contemporary and traditional architecture. As Carroll Westfall explains in *What are the Preservationists Preserving?*, the modern historic preservation movement is more closely allied with the Modern rather than the traditional movement in architecture. Because the modern historic preservation movement has taken a positivistic stance towards architecture, this encourages the status of historic buildings as static museum pieces that are unable to evolve over time. By assigning buildings a “period of significance” and labeling them with a specific style, it is treating any change to the building as an intrusion that must either be stopped or clearly differentiated. Basically, the modern historic preservation
movement is interrupting architectural traditions that have produced the buildings and urban settings that the movement has tried so hard to preserve.

At the same time, there has been a surge of interest and scholarship in what has been termed the “Recent Past,” meaning generally buildings built after World War II (Lambin 2007, 3). The vast majority of these buildings were built in the Modernist tradition, many using cutting-edge materials and technologies and often taking non-traditional forms and shapes. Currently, the age criterion used by the National Park Service to judge eligibility for the National Register is 50 years old. Advocates for the Recent Past argue that these buildings should be at the top of the preservation agenda, since many are being destroyed or altered before they have reached 50 years old and had a chance to have their significance evaluated.

This issue may be most acute in cities that are made up of more traditional architecture and urban environments, where buildings from the Recent Past may be more visible and therefore more threatened. The city of Charleston, South Carolina is a colonial-era city noted for its grand architecture, much of which has been preserved. As a result of this, tourism is a very important driver of the city’s economy. Because of the Board of Architectural Review that has been functioning in the city since 1931, Charleston’s weak economy in the mid-twentieth century, and other factors, relatively few Modern buildings were built in Charleston and the fates of those that have survived to this point are the subject of very heated debates in the architectural and preservation community. While some feel that these buildings do not fit in or belong in Charleston and
would not be opposed to their demolition, others feel that they are an important part of the city’s history and must be preserved to represent and speak for their particular era.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research study is to document how historic preservation policies and philosophies are being applied in Charleston, how successful they are, and how the results match with the larger philosophical frameworks of current preservation and architectural thought. It will generate new insights and practical recommendations for how to modify and apply the policies of historic preservation, using specific, real-life examples in Charleston. The study will examine the contradictions in current historic preservation philosophy and illuminate the role that traditional architecture can play in the twenty-first century. This is an important topic for research both because of the changing architectural culture as well as the need to reexamine preservation philosophy and policies and their effect on our built environment.

PURPOSE/SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore the contradictions that currently exist in historic preservation philosophy and policies in the United States, using Charleston as an example, and to determine whether they are inhibiting the development of our built environment and the continuity of our building tradition and culture. In order to do this, part of the study will examine the current preservation literature and compare, contrast, and align it with the literature from both traditional and Modern architecture. The study
will utilize a case study methodology to examine a group of three Modern buildings in Charleston and explore how the current philosophy of historic preservation is affecting the built environment.

It is significant in the sense that it hopes to break the stalemate that currently exists between designs advocated by traditional architects, designs advocated by contemporary architects, and the historic preservationists, who seem to occupy a bland middle ground that satisfies no one, all for the sake of “preserving” our shared history. This issue is particularly acute in Charleston, which has the oldest Board of Architectural Review in the United States, and where the design of new buildings and additions to historic buildings often leads to controversy and wildly different opinions on the best course of action. One of the current contradictions in historic preservation is that, while it developed as a response to the rise of Modernism, some critics have suggested that it has philosophically evolved into a Modernist endeavor in the sense that it discourages traditional architecture and the continuity of an architectural tradition and building culture that has developed over time. Ironically, the current focus of the preservation movement on the Recent Past is helping to preserve and maintain buildings that early preservationists fought against and led to the rise of historic preservation in the first place.

Thus, historic preservation is finding itself in an awkward position when it advocates for the preservation of a building that it initially fought against or would never allow to be built now. For example, there is currently a pitched preservation battle occurring over the fate of Boston City Hall, a 1960s concrete building revered by
Modernists. It was one of the buildings built after the entire neighborhood of Scollay Square was demolished—again, a situation preservationists would not permit if it were happening now. While the building is generally reviled by anyone who has seen or experienced it, preservationists point to it as a good example of the Brutalist style of architecture. Since the practice of historic preservation seeks a static environment, it is opposed to interventions that affect the perceived historical value of a place. So, while Boston City Hall is perceived as “historic” because it fits the criterion that historic preservationists have outlined, many architects and citizens of Boston are in favor of replacing it with a new building. As Carroll William Westfall states “Preservation wants to keep what tradition provides in its pure, unaltered state” (Westfall 2004, 226).

Another example of this phenomenon is the decision to demolish Penn Station in 1963 which preservationists fought vehemently against and was one of the defining events preceding the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. The building that replaced it in 1968, Madison Square Garden, is now the subject of a preservation battle itself, with preservationists arguing that it needs to be kept as a record of its time. Fighting to preserve a building that preservation did not support in the first place highlights a contradiction in how preservation philosophy has changed over time.

These issues are particularly important in Charleston, a city that has relatively few Modern buildings compared to the wealth of historic architecture. Today, Charleston has one of the largest historic districts in the United States and attracts a significant number of tourists who visit the city to enjoy its shops, restaurants, and ambience. Because real estate has become so valuable, the city is under constant development pressure. While the
Board of Architectural Review was founded before the Venice Charter and the Secretary of the Interior Standards were written, these documents have informed the Board’s decisions to a degree. In fact, the BAR has recently adopted a revised version of the Secretary of the Interior Standards to guide decisions. Additionally, Charleston is home to numerous active preservation organizations, neighborhood groups, universities, and a highly educated and interested public that are involved in preservation activities that affect the city. The city’s preservation plan, originally written in 1974, was updated in 2007 to account for changes that had taken place in preservation policies.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research project analyzed the treatment of three Modern buildings in Charleston with respect to historic preservation. It proposes that the three buildings are receiving differing levels of recognition and treatment because of gaps in the current structure of historic preservation theory and philosophy, especially when compared to more traditional buildings. The influence of positivism and relativism in historic preservation theory has led to fundamental changes in the goals of the movement, and this is reflected in the treatment of the three case study buildings.

Research questions addressed by the study were:

1) Why are the three buildings being treated differently from a historic preservation perspective and what does that say about how Charleston relates to both contemporary and traditional architecture?

2) How does the treatment of this group of buildings reflect a change in preservation theory and philosophy over time, especially considering that each of the three replaced one or more historic buildings?
PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

One of the potential issues with historic preservation is its lack of philosophical grounding. At the current time, preservation is influenced by both positivism and relativism—polar opposites that potentially make it more difficult to base decisions on solid ground. Positivism can be found in preservation’s emphasis on meeting certain criterion, which can eliminate the emotion from the field and reduce it to simply quantitative measures of significance. Conversely, preservation has also been negatively impacted by relativism in the sense that if a building is significant to anyone, then no one else can disagree, because everyone has their own perspective. If no perspective is better or worse than another, it makes it difficult to determine true significance for a historic designation purpose.

Positivism has been the dominant research method employed by the natural sciences for the last several centuries. It was founded by the philosopher August Comte and is “concerned with positive facts and phenomena, and excluding speculation upon ultimate causes or origins” (Ellis 2010a). The philosophy of positivism believes that the most accurate method to describe social science is the scientific method, which utilizes experiments and other quantitative methods to measure data. The scientific method analyzes only empirical data, which is data that can be observed or be experienced through the senses. Objectivity is also an important concept in positivism, meaning that different scientists should be able to agree on factual findings without the issue of bias.

Therefore, positivistic research methods are useful for gleaning some basic factual information about society and individuals, but its focus on numerical data fails to capture
the many and varied nuances that make up people’s thoughts, feelings, emotions, and actions. While positivism is not necessarily applied to the study of cultural material at the present time, that has not always been the case. As Jukka Jokilehto notes: “Towards the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, the romantic appreciation of historic monuments was given new vigour through the confidence provided by the development of modern science and technology, as well as by positivism in philosophy” (Jokilehto 2009, 137).

Conversely, relativism takes the extreme opposite approach and believes that each culture produces its own set of truths and no one from outside that culture can truly understand or evaluate it. Relativism believes that science is one possible approach to studying a social science issue, but is no better or worse than other approaches, since no viewpoint is really wrong (Ellis 2010c). The problem with relativism, taken to its furthest extreme, is that because human beings are so complex, no one can really ever understand anyone else (or even potentially themselves, for that matter), even if they are part of the same family or social group. Social science research becomes nearly impossible when extreme relativism is employed, since everyone is different and no one is able to interpret anyone else. While relativism does preserve the concept that everyone is unique and guards against ethnocentrism, it makes conducting social science studies more philosophically challenging, if not impossible. In short, “Relativism argues that we do not have access to independent criteria so that we can sort out better and worse descriptions and explanations” (Ellis 2010e).
Items that are created by human beings, such as books, paintings, buildings, live performances and other artistic endeavors are difficult, if not impossible, to measure and evaluate with the traditional scientific method. This is due to the fact that, unlike empirical knowledge that can be measured and quantified, these items are laden with meaning that requires interpretation from the social scientist studying them. Further complicating the issue is the fact that different social scientists can disagree on the meanings that these objects generate. Hermeneutics is the discipline that is concerned with the study and interpretation of meaning that is generated by these cultural objects (Ellis 2010b). Neither positivist research methods, which are the methods traditionally employed by science, nor relativistic methods, are adequate to study hermeneutics. Therefore, while it is possible to incorporate elements from each of the philosophies, for this research project it is necessary to turn towards a different philosophy that will enable a more accurate and better interpretation of the three buildings and the preservation treatments that they are receiving.

Several theorists have written books that attempt to locate the study of social science research between the disparate poles of positivism and relativism, including Andrew Sayer and Brian Fay, in order to create a better interpretation of the meaning of cultural materials. Central to these arguments are the authors’ positions on how knowledge is both gained and interpreted. Sayer’s book *Method in Social Science* was originally published in 1984 and introduces the philosophy and methodology of Critical Realism and how it relates to the field of social science. He is concerned about the state
of social science and feels that, since qualitative research methods are looked down upon by quantitative scientists, the proper approach to social research is in doubt.

Critical Realism has emerged as a reaction to the philosophies of positivism and relativism, as well as naïve objectivism, which believes that the same methods used for natural science can be applied to social science (Ellis 2010b). While Sayer agrees that a strictly positivist approach can yield some basic factual information about a population, it is not able to give a complete and nuanced image of the complexities of society. While positivism and the scientific method have been at the forefront of research for several centuries, Sayer explains how other methods are beginning to gain ground, commenting that “present doubts about objectivity and the status of scientific knowledge followed a period of relative confidence and certainty” (Sayer 2010, 45). At the same time, he argues that it is possible to gain some understanding of a group or culture to which one does not belong, in direct conflict with relativism. To support his ideas about Critical Realism, he states that both “our knowledge of the world is fallible and theory-laden” and “knowledge is not immune to empirical check” (Sayer 2010, 5).

In terms of gaining knowledge, Sayer believes that it can be obtained through numerous sources and that there are several types of knowledge, which are appropriate for different uses and in different contexts. The two main contexts that knowledge is utilized in, however, are work and communicative interaction. (Ellis 2010b). Understanding Sayer’s philosophical position on how knowledge can be gained and interpreted is central to understanding his arguments about Critical Realism. Sayer believes that it is not the mere accumulation of data that will give us insight into social
science, as the positivists would have us believe, but rather how that data is analyzed and interpreted. When social phenomena are being studied, Sayer believes that meaning is the most important thing to understand and that everything is “concept-dependent.” This is because social science research is not studying inanimate objects that can be quantified, but rather elusive concepts like thoughts, ideas, emotions, beliefs, and knowledge (Ellis 2010b).

He uses the example of currency to explain how dependent things are on their concept, stating that “A necessary condition of the use of money is that users should have some understanding of what the act of exchanging little metal discs and specially printed pieces of paper for commodities means or ‘stands for’” (Sayer 2010, 30). While coins and bills can be evaluated on the basis of their physical properties (weight, thickness, material, chemical makeup, etc.), this evaluation using positivistic methods would not provide any insight to the social scientist seeking to understand why these objects have cultural significance or what their cultural value is.

Likewise, employing the tenets of relativism would not necessarily aid social science research using the same example of currency. A relativist would argue that the social scientist would need to be part of the social and cultural group that created and traded the currency in order to truly understand the meaning it has to that particular group. Therefore, an American would not be able to interpret the meaning behind a Euro, since that is not the currency used in the United States. Sayer argues that the philosophy of Critical Realism provides a basis for the currency to be evaluated that avoids the
pitfalls of both relativism and positivism and thus provides a better interpretation of meaning.

Another theorist critical of positivism and relativism that has written about another approach to the philosophy of social science methods is Brian Fay. His book, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science*, was published in 1996 and attempts to demonstrate how a multicultural approach to social science can be beneficial and illuminating. Fay believes that a decline in faith in positivism and the methods of natural science because of the way science was abused during the twentieth century has opened the door for new approaches to social science to gain wider acceptance. At the same time, one of the main purposes of his book is to define and examine perspectivism, and its more extreme relation relativism, and demonstrate how they both fail to explain social science. While he believes that including a more multicultural approach to social science is valuable, Fay takes a position between positivism and relativism, much like Sayer, and argues that neither is adequate to explain social science.

According to Fay, the central point of the book is that “the basic question of philosophy of social science today ought not to be whether social inquiry is scientific; rather, it ought to be whether understanding others—particularly others who are different—is possible, and if so, what such understanding involves” (Fay 1996, 5). In effect, he wants to move beyond positivism by stating that social science is not scientific in the quantitative sense, but stops short of relativism by investigating how we can understand people who are different than us. Despite the fact that Fay is attempting to show that relativism does not work, he does admit that it provides an important contribution in the
context of multiculturalism. Because each individual viewpoint is no more or less valid than any other, relativism prevents ethnocentrism, which is the process of measuring and evaluating other cultures against your own. Thus, relativism encourages us to at least consider the views of others, even if it argues that we might not necessarily be able to understand others. While this may be the case, however, he is critical of the overall stance of relativism, which essentially dictates that every group or culture must be its own social scientist, since no outside group can truly understand them.

For Fay, one of the most important aspects of gaining and interpreting knowledge is the difference between “knowing” and “being”. In other words, we have experiences, yet do not always remember them accurately and cannot recall their exact details and meaning. Another important discussion centers on the relationship between the “self” (meaning each individual) and “other” (meaning society as a whole) and how the two relate to each other. Fay also stresses that it is actually difficult to achieve self-understanding. He is attempting to illustrate how we relate to each other and ourselves, and thereby show that being open to the viewpoints of others can enhance our knowledge of social science, without falling down the slippery slope of relativism. Furthering his critique of relativism, Fay chooses a holistic rather than atomistic view of individuals, whereby individuals are part of and influenced by society, rather than being islands unto themselves.

As Fay explains, “The interpretation of the meanings of actions, practices, and cultural objects is an extremely difficult and complicated enterprise” (Fay 1996, 115). He believes that the root of the multicultural experience is the questioning of the meaning
behind cultural expression. This is one way that social scientists can be distinguished from natural scientists—the fact that they need to interpret the meaning behind the data that is collected for the study, as opposed to simply compiling it and letting it speak for itself. Fay even argues that meaning is not even present without an attempt to interpret it and that interpretation itself is a “process of translation” (Fay 1996, 145). The two dimensions of meaning that the researcher must interpret are intentionalism, which is meaning in terms of past intentions, and Gadamerian hermeneutics, which is meaning in terms of present significance (Ellis 2010d).

By utilizing the philosophies espoused by both Sayer and Fay, it is possible to find a solid middle ground between positivism and relativism and arrive at a more sound interpretation of cultural materials that cannot be explained by the scientific method nor by the potential lack of an independent test that characterizes relativism. Unfortunately, both positivism and relativism continue to be employed in the evaluation of our built environment, leading to potentially erroneous interpretations. A good example of how positivism and relativism are applicable to the contemporary historic preservation movement is the controversy surrounding the Orange County Government Center in Goshen, New York.

From a positivistic stance, it satisfies many of the criteria to be considered historic—construction began in 1963 (although it was not completed for nearly 10 years), making it nearly 50 years old, it represents a good example of Brutalism, an architectural style popular in the 1960s (and thus an accurate architectural record of its time), and it was designed by Paul Rudolph, a well-known architect (Kemnitz 2011, 6). From a
relativistic standpoint, the push to preserve the building is led largely by architects and preservationists—in other words, people who have been trained specifically to analyze and interpret the significance of buildings. While many people are indifferent or even outright hostile to the building, the Orange County Government Center is a candidate for preservation because it is important and significant to a relatively small number of people who feel that their perspective on the situation is the correct one.

Despite these examples of positivism and relativism, it is still possible to utilize the philosophies and methods that Sayer and Fay have written about in order to distinguish a more accurate, robust, and truthful interpretation of the cultural materials that make up the study of historic preservation and architecture. What this would avoid is the two extremes of positivism and relativism—where the significance of buildings is only evaluated based on scientific criteria, such as age, or where nearly every building ever built is classified as “historic” simply because we are unable to use independent criteria to distinguish between the ordinary and the extraordinary. While elements of both philosophies may ultimately be useful in evaluating the significance of historic buildings, by themselves they cannot achieve an accurate interpretation. The hermeneutics, or interpretation and understanding of what buildings are significant and worth preserving, must rely on a solid philosophical base in order to be sound.

While both Fay and Sayer advocate for a middle ground between positivism and relativism, constructing a philosophy that enables the best interpretation of cultural materials while avoiding the traps of the other philosophies requires a more complete explanation of theory. The Critical Realism that Sayer advocates and the multicultural
approach to social research that Fay favors both enable the researcher to construct a better interpretation of cultural materials than either positivism or relativism on their own. Part of Sayer’s philosophy includes “critical theory,” which he explains as the function of social science research to critique society, advance social change, and reduce illusion (Ellis 2010b). In this sense, social science research goes beyond a mere understanding of the world from a positivistic standpoint to achieve an evaluation and critique of society that can have beneficial effects.

For this dissertation research specifically, several types of data, including documents, interviews and field observations, will be examined, analyzed and interpreted. Through the research design and methodology, the study will construct an accurate description of the case study, as well as a persuasive interpretation of the preservation status of the three buildings (the old Charleston County Library building, the Rivers Federal Building, and the Gaillard Auditorium) that are included in the case study. Several techniques will be employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the project, as well as to make it convincing to other scholars and researchers that may read it in the future.

Pursuing hermeneutics, or the interpretation of the meaning of the preservation treatment of the three buildings in Charleston, for this dissertation research involves choosing a philosophy and method that will enable the best interpretation of this aspect of cultural material. The tradition of positivism from natural science cannot be utilized, since the objects do not explain themselves and the interpretation of the meaning of the objects is the key to understanding more about them. At the other extreme, relativism
does not aid in arriving at an interpretation, since it espouses that each interpretation is as
good as any other. Theorists like Sayer and Fay, who have advanced the philosophies of
Critical Realism and multicultural approaches to social science, have provided a path for
researchers working in the social sciences to arrive at a better interpretation of cultural
materials than either positivism or relativism can support.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION BACKGROUND

Historic preservation has existed as an exercise, if not a formalized discipline, for
as long as there has been a built environment. The Romans were constantly restoring the
temples and monuments associated with their history and using _spolia_, salvaged material
from existing buildings, in their new structures. Referring to the architecture of the past
and continuing the architectural tradition has always been an important activity for
architects and designers, although the philosophy and treatment of historic buildings has
changed dramatically over time. Historic preservation did not exist as a formal discipline
until the mid to late twentieth century, but until the Modern movement, historic buildings
had always been influential and relevant in contemporary design.

From its humble beginnings as an endeavor pursued by private individuals, the
field of historic preservation has grown to become a formal discipline with its own
educational programs and a myriad of public, private, and non-profit organizations
overseeing its activities. The progress of historic preservation in the United States has
been marked by a series of legislative victories, as well as an increasing awareness of the
value of our historic built environment and its relationship to more sustainable
development. Since the rich and varied history of historic preservation is too complex to explain and study completely, this research is focusing on the policies and theories that form the basis for contemporary preservation practice.

While various approaches to historic buildings were taken throughout history, the major schools of thought concerning their treatment did not begin until the nineteenth century. Two leading philosophies developed, one headed by the French architect Viollet-le-Duc and sponsored by the Federal government, and the other headed by the English writer John Ruskin and sponsored by private individuals and organizations. Viollet-le-Duc believed in the scientific “restoration” of buildings, often finishing incomplete designs or removing later additions to highlight the original period of construction. He advocated restoring buildings to “a finished state which may in fact never have existed at any given time” (Semes 2009b, 117). Ruskin, on the other hand, felt that maintenance was the only acceptable building intervention and that buildings should be left as is to age gracefully. It was these two philosophies that were to exert the most influence on the historic preservation movement in the United States.

Historic preservation activities are certainly not restricted to the United States. Most of the world has a far more historic built environment and there have been many international preservation conferences to determine philosophy and policy. ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, was founded in 1965 to oversee international preservation efforts. This organization grew out of the Athens Charter in 1931 and the Venice Charter of 1964, two documents promulgating preservation philosophy that were extremely influential on preservation policies in the United States.
Both documents specified a more modern approach to preservation, including using contemporary technology and materials as a way to distinguish new from existing fabric.

The first example of the preservation of a significant structure in the United States occurred in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1816. Despite the fact that the United States had gained its independence only 30 years before, one of its major symbols, Independence Hall, was already threatened with demolition. A group of concerned citizens banded together and were able to save the building and prevent it from being torn down and the land subdivided for development. This episode marks the beginning of the first phase of the historic preservation movement—saving nationally significant buildings from demolition or neglect and turning them into museums. Unlike modern preservation, buildings were not saved for their architectural or design significance; it was only buildings with national importance where historically significant events had occurred that were saved (Tyler 2009, 30).

The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union was founded in 1853 to save Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, Revolutionary War hero and the first President of the United States. The group is the first example of a nationwide preservation organization in the United States and the preservation of Mount Vernon is also notable because the federal government did not play a role in the project. In addition to turning down a chance to purchase Mount Vernon, the United States federal government did not take an active role in historic preservation throughout most of the rest of the nineteenth century. While there were other examples of citizens taking an active interest in the preservation of their heritage, the saving of Mount Vernon as a museum
open to the public set the precedent for preservation activities in the nineteenth century (Murtagh 1988, 30). When considering the early efforts of historic preservation in the United States, one of the most important factors to consider is who was involved in these efforts—and who was not involved. All of the early examples of historic preservation were spearheaded by private citizens with no support from their local, state, or federal government. These entities did not become significantly involved until the early twentieth century. While historic preservation today is often associated with rules and regulations overseen by governmental entities, it was in fact private citizens who were initially responsible for saving important historic buildings.

The other interesting aspect of early preservation is that it was most often women who were leading the way. In fact, noted preservation economics expert Donovan Rypkema, in his address to the National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference in 2009 called for the next NTHP president to be a woman, to reflect that aspect of history (Rypkema 2010, 11). This ended up happening earlier rather than later, when Stephanie Meeks was appointed President and Chief Executive Officer of the NTHP in 2010. At a time when women could not even vote, Ann Cunningham, who founded the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union, led the first preservation organization. It is these characteristics, of momentum and support from outside the mainstream, which gave historic preservation its reputation as a grassroots movement before it achieved legitimacy as a separate discipline.

By the time the federal government did get involved with historic preservation, it was less concerned with actual structures and more concerned with sites of natural,
archeological, and military significance. Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872 and the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park was established in 1890. The National Antiquities Act of 1906 established National Monuments with the intent of saving sensitive archeological sites, particularly in the western half of the country. The first National Monument was the Devil’s Tower in Wyoming, designated in 1906. It is interesting to note that while many of the significant buildings in the United States were located in the eastern half of the country (because the original English colonies were located there), the first efforts of the federal government were centered elsewhere (Tyler 2009, 28-33).

As the federal government finally began to get involved in historic preservation in the early twentieth century, private preservation efforts began to increase as well. The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now known as Historic New England) was formed in Boston in 1910 around the efforts to save the 1798 Harrison Gray Otis House. It was the first organization that recognized architectural significance, starting with the first Otis House, designed by Charles Bulfinch, architect of the Massachusetts State Capitol building and several other state capitols. In Charleston, Susan Pringle Frost, concerned with the loss and alteration of old buildings in her hometown, organized the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings (now known as the Preservation Society of Charleston) in 1920 (Weyeneth 2004, 266).

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, private individuals with means were beginning to get involved with the historic preservation movement as well. In 1927, the Rockefeller family began the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia.
Ironically, as Rockefeller was reconstructing Williamsburg, his Standard Oil Company was one of the villains of the preservation movement in Charleston. At a time when gas stations began to become a building type, Standard Oil was tearing down old buildings in Charleston to build more of them (Weyeneth 2004, 259). Also in 1927, Henry Ford began disassembling buildings and transporting them to his new museum, Greenfield Village, in Dearborn, Michigan. Ford assembled important buildings, like the courthouse where Abraham Lincoln practiced law, to more humble buildings, like frontier homesteads, that reflected our common heritage (Tyler 2009, 38).

In response to what were seen as negative changes to the built environment beginning in the early twentieth century, many cities began to establish local historic districts in order to protect their historic buildings. In 1925, the Vieux Carré Commission was established in New Orleans to protect the French Quarter. Although it is recognized as the first local historic district in the country, it did not receive full legal power until 1936. In 1931, the city of Charleston enacted a zoning ordinance that included a historic preservation section and established Charleston’s Old and Historic District. At the same time, the Board of Architectural Review was created to review changes in the historic district of the city (Weyeneth 2004, 271).

The BAR originally played merely an advisory role, rather than having the full weight of the law behind it, and operated as an “architectural clinic” (Weyeneth 2004, 272). Additionally, the purview of the BAR was only the exterior portions of buildings visible from a public way and located in the historic district. Interestingly, while owners were limited in exterior alterations, they could demolish buildings anywhere in the city,
since the BAR did not receive the power to delay demolitions until 1959 and the power to stop demolitions until 1966 (Weyeneth 2004, 273) While the district has been enlarged many times over the years to include more of the city, the Board of Architectural Review, operating with more power and structure, still oversees new construction, alteration, and proposed demolition projects within the boundaries.

The federal government began to get more involved in historic preservation during the 1930s. As a reaction to the Great Depression, when many architects were unemployed, the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) was created in 1933 in order to document historic buildings across the United States (Tyler 2009, 40). The Historic Sites Act, which created the National Landmarks Program to recognize sites of national significance, was passed in 1935 (Tyler 2009, 61). While the preservation movement was starting to gain momentum, aside from the two local historic districts (New Orleans and Charleston), there was very little actual legal protection for historic buildings at this time. One of the issues for historic preservation, which is still an important concern today, is the strong legal precedence for the rights of private property owners to use their property as they see fit without government interference.

Because private and governmental preservation activities at the midpoint of the twentieth century were largely separate, one of the most important developments of the historic preservation movement in the United States was the formation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1949. The NTHP was a quasi-public organization that sought to unify historic preservation efforts by combining the public and private functions of historic preservation (Tyler 2009, 42). The NTHP fulfills several roles,
including owning and administering house museums, raising awareness of historic preservation issues, and advocating for preservation-related laws and activities. While it once received government funds, it is now a completely private, membership-based organization, although it continues to be an important player in the historic preservation scene at the national level.

One of the most important events in the development of historic preservation in the United States was the passing of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. This law accomplished several major goals: the National Register of Historic Places was established, a state historic preservation office (SHPO) was established in each state, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation was created, among other things. The NHPA created a measure of protection designed for properties listed on the National Register and also for historic properties that could be affected by a project using federal funds or permits (such as a new highway project, for example), although listing on the National Register is largely honorific. One of the other important impacts of the NHPA was to establish 50 years as the amount of time that needs to pass before a property can be considered historic, a benchmark that is still used.

The legal basis for historic preservation has continued to evolve, mostly in support of the field. Historic preservation legislation has regularly been held up by the courts, despite continuing legal challenges. Perhaps the most important legal precedent that affects historic preservation was prompted by the demolition of Pennsylvania Station, designed by the noted firm McKim, Mead and White, in New York in 1964 (Semes 2009b, 132). While public support for the building was strong, there was simply
no legal recourse to prevent the owners from demolishing the beloved city landmark. This galvanized the preservation movement and led to later legislation that helped to preserve other landmarks, including Grand Central Station in New York, which was slated for a Marcel Breuer skyscraper addition that would have ruined its character.

One of the most cited benefits of historic preservation is the economic impacts it can have on a city. Today, several states offer residential tax credits for restoring a private home that is listed on or eligible for the National Register, as long as it follows the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and is approved by the SHPO in that state. The federal government also offers reinvestment tax credits, through the National Park Service, for projects involving income-producing properties. Historic preservation has also gotten involved in the current sustainability movement, touting the environmental impacts of restoring and reusing an existing building versus constructing a new one. As Marianne Cusato points out, “… the most sustainable building of all is one that people love and don’t want to tear down” (Cusato, et al. 2011, 12).

Today, the field of historic preservation is largely stratified by practice at the federal, state, local, and private levels. Interestingly, it is a decentralized process, with much of the actual power concentrated at the local level, where cities appoint boards of architectural review to regulate changes and ensure that new construction is compatible with existing historic districts. Private citizens continue to be very active in historic preservation, as the number of local, non-profit preservation organizations attests. Charleston, for example, continues to be a hub of historic preservation activity and is
home to several educational programs, private local organizations such as the Historic Charleston Foundation and the Preservation Society of Charleston, very active neighborhood associations, and an influential Board of Architectural Review. While Charleston looks to the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office in Columbia for guidance, the city is a good example of how preservation functions mostly at the local level.

While local involvement and all of these events are important markers in the development of historic preservation as a separate discipline, one of the most critical steps was the establishment of historic preservation as a separate field of study at the university level. In 1964, Columbia University in New York City established the first graduate level course in historic preservation, followed closely by the University of Virginia. Before these two programs, however, the only training available to preservationists was a joint NTHP and Colonial Williamsburg program called the Seminar for Historical Administrators, launched in 1959 (Murtagh 1988, 13). From those first courses, historic preservation as an academic discipline has seen exponential growth. According to the National Council for Preservation Education’s website, there are now 12 undergraduate programs that offer a degree, certificate, or concentration in historic preservation and 45 programs at the graduate level. Many of these programs are housed in architecture schools, but many are in planning or their own departments, attempting to further legitimize historic preservation as a completely separate discipline from architecture (NCPE, 2010).
The curricula offered by these programs are telling in regard to what type of skills preservationists are expected to have. Some of the courses include American architectural history, preservation law, preservation economics, documentation of historic buildings, historic preservation technology, and preservation planning studios, among others. These courses largely mirror the curricula offered in similar disciplines, including architecture, architectural history, engineering, and law. While many of these related disciplines require a license or similar credentialing process in order to practice, historic preservation has no such requirement as of this writing. One of the issues that has been raised is that while historic preservationists take similar courses to these other disciplines, there is no system in place (other than holding a degree) to ensure that they are, in fact, ready to practice. To provide a comparison, according to the National Architectural Accreditation Board, in 2010 there were 120 accredited schools of architecture in the United States (NAAB, 2010). This means that the field of historic preservation has diverged so dramatically from the field of architecture that it now has nearly half of the number of academic programs. Since the field of historic preservation is closely tied to related disciplines, especially architecture, the question of exactly why it is a separate discipline is a legitimate one.

One of the answers to this question can be found in the history of architectural practice, beginning in the early twentieth century. The first school of architecture in the United States was founded at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shortly after the Civil War (Davis 1999, 123). Before schools of architecture were commonplace in the United States, architects either were trained as apprentices with practicing architects or
learned at European schools of architecture, such as the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The Ecole, for example, stressed the continuation of Classical architecture, from Greece, to Rome, through the Renaissance, and up through the twentieth century.

The rise of Modern architecture in the late nineteenth century sought to divorce design from historical precedents. As architecture itself began to be recognized as a separate discipline and receive university recognition, programs were based on existing programs (such as the Ecole) that respected the past as part of contemporary practice. Starting with the University of Oregon shortly after World War I, architecture programs in the United States began to abandon the continuity of traditional architecture and instead focus on Modern architecture (Davis 1999, 124). In turn, this led to a lack of appreciation for historic buildings. As the academy converted from a traditional to a Modern philosophy, this was reflected in the practice of urban design, planning, and architecture. Historic buildings suffered, as evidenced by the urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 1960s, for example.

Because of this schism in the architectural field, historic preservation became a separate discipline, complete with its own philosophy and educational system that reinforced the idea that new architecture and working with existing historic architecture are two separate things. Despite a perceived lack of knowledge and expertise, many projects now include a trained historic preservation professional. These preservationists frequently interact with other professionals, to varying degrees, during the design and construction process, including architects, landscape architects, planners, construction managers, and real estate professionals. In fact, historic preservationists draw upon
knowledge from all of those disciplines, while not necessarily being an expert in any of them.

This interaction generally takes place in two types of projects—restoration or renovation projects that involve a historic building or district, or new construction that may have an effect on a historic building or district. When either of these situations exists, the project is generally subject to review by a preservation organization at the local, state, or national level, depending on the scope of the project. A preservation consultant is often hired by the proponents of the project to assess the effect of the project on historic buildings or to guide it through the preservation approval process. While the preservation professional may not be the most accomplished part of the team, he or she is often one of the most influential, since projects cannot proceed without the necessary approvals.

The philosophy and practice of historic preservation has changed significantly in the United States over the last 200 years. While at first narrowly focused on saving sites of national significance for museums, it has grown to encompass a broader view of history and become an important factor in development and architecture. Historic preservation has been extremely influential in raising awareness of the importance of historic buildings. There is no telling how many buildings have been saved and projects altered to respect historic buildings due to the influence of historic preservation.

Despite its many successes, however, there are some contemporary issues associated with historic preservation. There have been claims that historic preservation has inhibited innovative design in historic districts. In addition, now that the 50-year rule
includes building from the 1950s and 1960s, there is significant controversy over how to deal with the “Recent Past.” Perhaps the most important issue is the possibility that while historic preservation has increased awareness about the past, its current philosophy, policy, and practices may not offer a method for the current generation to contribute to our shared history, nor a way to continue our long architectural tradition.

This current issue in historic preservation has its roots in the Modern movement of architecture, which began in the early part of the twentieth century. Modernist architects encouraged a break with the tradition of the past and advocated for a design philosophy that looked forward to the future and was based on the new technologies of the time (automobiles, airplanes, etc.). Their idea, in other words, was that architecture should embody the *zeitgeist*, or the “spirit of the times” (Watkin 1984, xx). There was no need to look back to the past for inspiration because all of the new technology and ideas were going to lead to a new tradition. This movement was exemplified by the Bauhaus, a German design school founded in the 1920s. As Germany moved towards World War II, many of the faculty of the school, including Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Marcel Breuer, fled to the United States and brought their ideas with them (Moffett et al. 2003, 520-521). As previously mentioned, American architecture schools began to move from a Beaux Arts curriculum based on Classical architecture to one based on the Modern architecture of the Bauhaus.

Interestingly, the movement of historic preservation gained momentum as a reaction to Modernism and its rejection of the tradition of architecture. As architectural traditions began to change and architecture schools in the United States began to move
towards a more Modernist curriculum, buildings from the past became less valued and studied. As a result of this process whereby architects seemed to forget about or ignore the history of their field, the historic preservation movement stepped in to save these buildings and raise awareness of their importance. However, despite the fact that historic preservation is very much interested in saving historic buildings, the overall philosophy is in agreement with the Modernist principles that led to the rise of the movement in the first place.

Several international conferences in the mid-twentieth century, and the documents that resulted from them, helped to establish the ideas that now frame historic preservation policy in the United States. The first one was the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments that resulted from the meeting of the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in Athens in 1931 (ICOMOS 1996). This document set forth seven principles for historic preservation, including the ideas that monuments deserve protection at the national level, modern techniques and methods are permissible in preservation projects, and historic sites need strict protection. All of these ideas would later be incorporated into preservation legislation and policy at the federal level in the United States.

The Modernist architect Le Corbusier authored another Athens Charter, not to be confused with the ICOMOS version, as a result of the 4th meeting of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne—better known as CIAM—in 1933 (Gold 1998, 225). The members of CIAM were interested in both architecture and town planning and how the principles of Modernism could be applied to those fields. The charter advocated
for adoption of the elements of Corbusier’s vision of the future of architecture—tall
apartment buildings replacing traditional, low-scale architecture, emphasis on the role of
the car over the pedestrian, etc. Both the organization and the charter furthered the cause
of Modernism and by the 1950s it had come to completely dominate traditional
architecture. These were the principles that guided the urban renewal movement in the
United States in the 1950s and 1960s and, ironically, provided the fledgling historic
preservation movement ammunition when wholesale clearing of historic urban cores
began.

Building on the ideas from the Athens meeting in 1931, the Venice Charter was
written in 1964 and resulted from the Second International Congress of Architects and
Technicians of Historic Monuments (ICOMOS 1996). The meeting and charter sought to
raise awareness of the importance of historic buildings and sites and led to the formation
of ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites. The charter also
provided specific instructions for the treatment of historic buildings, several of which
have proven problematic. For example, Article 6 states:

*The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale.*

*Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition
or modification which would alter the relations of mass and color must be allowed.*

Article 9 states, in part, that: “… any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct
from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp.” Article 11
states, in part, that: “The valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument
must be respected ….. “ and Article 13 states that:
Additions cannot be allowed except in so far as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings.

The Venice Charter was particularly influential on the historic preservation movement in the United States, since the National Historic Preservation Act was passed in 1966, and the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties were written and adopted in the next decade.

The Modernist philosophy that resulted from these conferences and documents has been codified in both the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Preservation Briefs, which are produced by the National Park Service to aid and advise preservationists in their work (USNPS 2010). While the Standards only apply specifically to projects under Federal review and were originally written to apply only to grant and tax credit projects, they are often used as the default set of guidelines for historic preservation review boards in the United States, thus perpetuating the Modernist principles that inspired them and stifling the continuity of traditional architecture. The Standards provide guidelines for four separate treatment strategies—preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction.

While the specific Standards vary slightly for each approach, most apply to all of the different approaches. For example, standard #4 reads: “Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved,” while standard #9 reads:
New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Therefore, according to these two standards, any addition to a building made in the past is historically important and needs to be preserved and protected. However, any addition made today needs to be “differentiated” from the older sections and must be deferential to the historic and, according to the Standards, more significant portions of the building.

Thus, this new addition will always be thought of as an addition and will not be allowed to make a contribution to the history of the building. The philosophy behind these policies is Modernist in nature, in the sense that new additions must break from the tradition of what already exists and identify themselves as clearly new and different. Many, if not the vast majority, of the world’s most significant buildings were built over long periods of time and had frequent additions and changes. Are we to believe that the changes that created Castel San Angelo from Hadrian’s Mausoleum are less significant now because they were an addition to an existing structure?

This preservation philosophy is also reflected in the Preservation Briefs, which are written to give architects, homeowners, and contractors guidance when working on historic buildings or with historic materials and to protect buildings eligible for the National Register. One brief in particular, Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings, reflects this philosophy most visibly. According to this brief, one of the conditions to make a new addition acceptable is if it “protects the historical
significance by making a visual distinction between old and new.” The overall guiding principle is that the new addition must be “subordinate” to the existing historic building (USNPS 2010). These statements, clearly drawn from and inspired by the Venice Charter, show how the implementation of the policies of historic preservation interrupt the way architecture has been traditionally practiced.

A good example of this idea in practice is the addition of a steeple to the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Charleston. The historic church was largely completed in 1907, but the congregation lacked the funds to build the steeple (which was part of the original design) at that time (Behre 2010b). When the funds were finally raised, nearly 100 years after the building was initially built, the Board of Architectural Review in Charleston stipulated that the new steeple design must be differentiated from the historic building. While no one disputes that the new steeple is an elegant addition to Charleston’s modest skyline, the fact that the original design could not be built reflects the Modernist philosophy of historic preservation that separates the new construction from the existing historic fabric.

Due to the flaws in its ideological background, historic preservation is attempting to further separate contemporary practice from architectural tradition. While tradition is a living thing that changes and adapts over time, historic preservation seeks to capture a moment in time rather than perpetuating the tradition that created that moment in the first place. An important consideration in historic preservation is the value placed on criteria and the evaluation of those criteria. Thus, it is more important to save a building as an example of a period in history rather than as a useful building. What good is it to save a
building from the past if there is no contemporary use for it, regardless of how well it
exemplifies a certain period in history?

There is already a split in the field of architecture between those architects who
focus on rehabilitating historic buildings and those who primarily design new buildings.
Historic preservation, as a separately recognized discipline, is allowing this schism to
continue. In fact, it may even be encouraging it, since according to preservation policies,
new construction and preservation work are so different that they require completely
separate skills and knowledge. Many architecture programs now have a related
preservation certificate available to their students, thus highlighting the fact that the skill
set required to work on historic buildings built with traditional materials and methods is
different than for the construction of new buildings with contemporary materials and
methods.

This splintering of skills can be seen clearly in projects requiring new
construction on historic buildings. In the example cited above, the new steeple for
Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, the architect selected for the design is known primarily
for his preservation work. Although the steeple was new and the design differentiated
from the historic church, the architect was chosen specifically for his experience with
historic preservation projects. While the condition of requiring different practices for
historic buildings as opposed to new construction persists, the ideology of architecture as
a constantly evolving tradition will be negatively affected.

As evidenced by the background and current policy, the theory and philosophy of
historic preservation is inspired by and based on Modernism, despite the fact that it
initially developed as a reaction to the Modern movement itself. The current policies of historic preservation discourage the continuation of the traditions of the associated disciplines that have been developed over a period of centuries. If there is no method for the current generation to contribute to our shared history, nor a way to continue our long architectural tradition, what will preservationists have to preserve in the future?

This is having, and will have in the future, major effects on the field of historic preservation. In his keynote address at the 2009 National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, Donovan Rypkema was asked to comment on what historic preservation needed to do to continue to be relevant in the next 50 years. Rypkema responded that:

\textit{Think about the natural landscape—it inherently changes over time. The conservation of the natural landscape means to manage its evolution over time, not its preservation at a fixed point in time. To be relevant that's how we should approach our cities-to manage their change over time, not fix them at a point in time (Rypkema 2010, 17-18).}

It is indisputable that the emergence of historic preservation as a separate discipline has had a significant effect on how our built environment is constructed, managed, and thought of. Hopefully, the discipline of historic preservation can adapt and continue to make valuable contributions to the tradition that is our built environment.
CHARLESTON PRESERVATION BACKGROUND

Charleston has always been at the forefront of the historic preservation movement in the United States. In 1931, the city enacted the first zoning ordinance that included a historic preservation section and established Charleston’s Old and Historic District and the Board of Architectural Review to review changes in the historic district of the city (Weyeneth 2004, 271). This groundbreaking legislation was followed shortly by efforts to undertake architectural surveys of the city, to better understand the historic resources that the zoning ordinance was meant to protect. This survey was undertaken by the Carolina Art Association, an organization that had been mostly concerned with the decorative and fine arts until the 1930s and 40s when it began to get more involved in historic preservation, which eventually led to the founding of the Historic Charleston Foundation in 1947 (Weyeneth 2004, 23).

The survey, which was undertaken in 1941, exhibited at the Gibbes Art Gallery in 1942, and eventually published as *This is Charleston* in 1944, grew out of a report by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. He visited Charleston in 1940 and wrote a set of recommendations for the city to implement at the municipal level, as well as other ideas that the Carolina Art Association could implement. In his report, Olmsted recommended that the committee “analyze Charleston street by street, house by house, and find out where houses can be put in so we can see where the houses should be saved.” While Charleston was certainly a well-documented city informally, the comprehensive architectural survey of the city would allow the information to be used in
a more systematic planning fashion that would influence the future direction of the city (Weyeneth 2000, 25-29).

The results of the survey were impressive and resulted in a powerful tool for planning purposes. Nearly 1,400 properties were surveyed, including buildings, structures, and landscape features and the majority of these were outside of the Old and Historic Charleston District that the zoning ordinance created in 1931. This in and of itself was impressive, since it expanded the scope of buildings that were considered worthy of preservation beyond just the largest residential buildings and most significant civic buildings—a concept that took much longer to catch on in other places. Cards were prepared for each property that included at least one photograph, comments on the condition of the building, its current use, history, and a bibliography. The nearly 1,200 actual buildings in the survey were then rated according to different levels, including “nationally important,” “valuable to the city,” “valuable,” “notable,” and “worthy of mention.” This is Charleston, the book that accompanied the exhibit of the survey, served as the definitive catalog of Charleston buildings for many years and is still available in local bookstores. Until the city commissioned another planning report in 1974, the book was used by many as a guide to evaluate the architecture of Charleston (Weyeneth 2000, 29-30).

Charleston’s professionally prepared Historic Preservation Plan of 1974 recognized the value of the survey done by the Carolina Art Association, recommending that the city: “Give official recognition to the historic architecture inventory by adoption of an ordinance which requires that any addition, alteration, demolition or moving of any
property on the inventory be reviewed and approved by the Board of Architectural Review” (City of Charleston Historic Preservation Plan 1974, I). The Plan was prompted by an agreement with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in 1971 to conduct a survey of Charleston’s architecture south of Route 17 and the survey of the existing buildings was a necessary and important component of the plan.

It acknowledged how important the results of the survey would be to the success of the overall preservation plan and that This is Charleston was reviewed by the consultants before beginning the survey. The survey used four categories to denote historic buildings: Exceptional, Excellent, Significant, and Contributory and also noted where further research might result in an upgrade and buildings that needed to be restored due to adverse changes. Interestingly, the majority of interiors of the buildings were surveyed as well, making the 1974 survey a comprehensive repository of knowledge about the condition of Charleston buildings at that time. The survey also contained numerous maps showing where the rated buildings were located, as well as color-coded maps showing where the greatest concentrations of listed buildings were (City of Charleston Historic Preservation Plan 1974, 1-9).

The Plan notes ample evidence of the distinct “Charleston Style” throughout the city, with significant but still historic exceptions such as the Nathaniel Russell House and Ashley Hall noted as well. A possible mention of buildings that might be from the Modern era is: “Throughout the peninsula, there are examples of newer buildings which are completely out of character with their historic surroundings. Glaring examples of incompatible architecture can be found in the Mazyck-Wraggborough neighborhood,
where “cinder block buildings are set in the midst of architecturally valuable buildings” (City of Charleston Historic Preservation Plan 1974, 19).

The Plan divided the city into ‘Preservation A’ and ‘Preservation B’ categories, where buildings in the former category must be preserved at “all costs” and buildings in the latter category “should be preserved unless they are to be replaced by something of a much higher quality.” One of the subcategories in Category B was “Properties which contribute in a positive way to the character and environment of historic Charleston. While such properties may not be rated as examples of a particular architectural style, they are representative of early- to mid-twentieth century construction” (City of Charleston Historic Preservation Plan 1974, 28). This is the only positive comment on architecture that could be considered Modern in the plan.

The city of Charleston updated its preservation plan in 2007 and it differed from the 1974 plan by not specifying exactly which buildings to preserve. It sought to be “… a broadly focused policy road map that outlines how the city can continue to protect and add to its layers of built history for new generations” (City of Charleston Historic Preservation Plan 2007, 4) Part of this direction includes a renewed focus on historic resource surveys and their usefulness as tools for comprehensive planning. While acknowledging that an appropriate architectural style for Charleston is a difficult question, and without mentioning specific buildings in particular, the preservation plan does recommend that buildings that do not fit in with Charleston are the most important to assess.
The fact that none of Charleston’s Modern buildings were mentioned specifically in the 2007 Historic Preservation Plan, and that they only merited a passing mention as a group, highlights the challenges that impede efforts to recognize, rehabilitate, and save buildings from the Recent Past. There are many reasons that Modern buildings are facing these challenges, including changing aesthetic preferences, the fact that they utilized cutting-edge and often experimental materials and construction techniques that have failed over time, and, in many cases, were not thought of by their designers as long-term buildings, since they were designing only for the present (Purkerson 2007, 9).

Additionally, the preservation of Modern architecture is hindered because many of the building types, such as airports and shopping malls, were unknown before the twentieth century. Many of them were designed and built for specific uses, making adaptive reuse, a common solution for saving historic buildings, very difficult without radically changing them.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the literature review is to assist the researcher in formulating better research questions (Yin 1994, 9). The real issue that is at stake in the debate between historic preservationists and architects of varying ideologies is the concept of time. As early preservationist William Murtagh, the first keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, noted in his book *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Historic Preservation in America*, time is the most important concept in historic preservation. Fifty years is the established age for a building to be considered historic and eligible for the National Register, while buildings are evaluated on their adherence to a period of significance and how much historic fabric can be dated to that period. Meanwhile, much architectural theory and debate centers on the *zeitgeist* or “spirit of the times,” and whether or not current projects reflect that, or if they are simply copying the architecture of earlier times, or being “historicist.”

Author David Lowenthal, a professor emeritus of geography at University College in London, explains in *The Past is a Foreign Country* that the concept of time is a particularly twentieth century issue, since the past and the present were not explicitly differentiated from each other throughout much of history. For several reasons that he explains, including the increasingly rapid rise of technology and the emphasis on originality, the past has become increasingly more foreign to modern civilization. Speaking about architecture, he states “The purpose of imitation was to assimilate the
past for the benefit of the present . . . .” (Lowenthal 1999, 79). Therefore, Renaissance imitation went beyond simply copying the past and was able to utilize the lessons from the past to create a new present.

However, Lowenthal argues that architectural innovation has traditionally included reusing the past and that that idea should continue. As he notes, “Preservation has deepened our knowledge of the past but dampened creative use of it” (Lowenthal 1999, xvii). In practice, this break translates to appreciating and protecting historic buildings, rather than using them as examples for new construction. Another consequence of this interest in the past is dissatisfaction with the present and fear of the future. In architectural terms, this practice has led to deterioration in the quality of the built environment, for fear of competing with the past.

The issue of the past is important in all phases of architectural projects, whether it be determining if a building is worthy of preservation, how new additions should relate to existing buildings, or the design of new construction, especially in already-designated historic districts. At issue is whether the new construction should match its context, be complementary but different from it, or be in complete opposition. The official stance, from the National Park Service through the Secretary of the Interior Standards and the Preservation Briefs, states that new construction must be “differentiated” from the existing fabric, yet also find a way to be “compatible” so as not to cause “confusion” between what is new and what is historic. Understandably, this guidance is extremely subjective and can be interpreted differently by different people, depending on the project, and this is amply reflected in the literature. The issue is so complex that entire
conferences have been held to talk about it, including “The Challenge of Compatibility,” held at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland in 2002.

The literature on the subject can be broadly divided into two distinct categories: historic preservationists trying to clarify what the policies are trying to accomplish and how best to do that and traditional architects advocating for design based on historic precedents. Included in the preservation literature are sections on preservation of the Recent Past, additions to historic buildings, and new additions in historic contexts. Each of the categories, which cover different perspectives on the issues, will be described and discussed below with the purpose being to create a dialogue between the two sides.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION LITERATURE**

Many preservationists are starting to ask the overall question about what is being preserved and how it is being done. This question has many implications for the issue of new construction as well as for preservation. Richard Longstreth, director of the graduate program in Historic Preservation at George Washington University, feels that preservation relies too much on the concept of “style” and that buildings cannot always be pigeonholed into one period because they and their significance often evolve over time. He is critical of preservation criteria that are “in danger of narrowing rather than expanding our perspective on the past” (Longstreth 1999, 330) and could potentially lead to a more fractured scholarship on the existing built environment.

Donovan Rypkema is noted for his knowledge of preservation economics, but also writes about other preservation issues. In the keynote address to the National Trust
for Historic Preservation conference in Nashville, Tennessee in 2009, he advocated changing the overall philosophy of preservation to that of conservation and notes that the concept of authenticity restricts a building’s ability to change over time. Rather than stopping a building in a specific time period, Rypkema argues that this change should be managed over time, since buildings are inevitably going to change (Rypkema 2010).

This idea of treating buildings more as artifacts can be traced in part back to James Marston Fitch’s seminal 1982 book *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World*. Fitch is credited with helping to create the first academic program in historic preservation in 1964 at Columbia University, where he taught for over 20 years. While he states that buildings should not be treated as static objects, this is exactly what can occur when a museum-like curatorial approach is taken to the management of the built environment. This potentially leads to buildings being frozen in time and unable to evolve in the future. As author Edward Hollis reminds us in the *Secret Lives of Buildings*, even our most beloved historic landmarks, such as the Parthenon and Notre Dame, have been changed numerous times throughout history and look radically different now than when they were first built (Hollis 2009).

Bradford McKee, a journalist particularly interested in design issues and editor-in-chief of *Landscape Architecture* magazine, also questions preservation’s focus by looking at the present and future activities of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He wonders if we really want to landmark suburban sprawl, once it is eligible, as part of the larger question of whether or not we will actually want to eventually preserve anything that we are currently building (McKee 2010). Architectural historian Mitchell
Schwarzer questions the exclusive focus on buildings that have been designated, which leaves out many other buildings which are not eligible for designation, for various reasons (Schwarzer 1994).

An important aspect of this debate is how the various historic preservation professionals charged with these issues are educated. Michael Tomlan, head of the graduate Historic Preservation Program at Cornell University, examines the state of preservation education and notes that there is little overlap between architectural and preservation education. This leads to the conclusion that preserving and designing the built environment are two completely different things, which was previously illustrated by comparing the number of preservation programs to architecture programs—despite the fact that both disciplines subscribe to a Modernist point of view (Tomlan 1994).

Using the city of New Orleans as an example, Melinda Milligan, a professor of sociology at Sonoma State University, questions the motivations of the historic preservation movement and claims that it seeks to preserve as much as possible “for the continued expansion of the movement’s purview and to ensure its ongoing existence” (Milligan 2007, 105). She continues by discussing how preservation is related to collective memory of a place and that “plurality” is currently important, where a vast range of buildings—and more than ever before—are considered preservation-worthy. The goal of her research project was to analyze the process of historic preservation and how it highlights tensions between the competing interests of the built environment. Milligan is also critical of the National Register of Historic Places and its criterion for listing, commenting “Thus, more or less, all of the historic built environment could arguably be
labeled as significant under Criterion C” (Milligan 2007, 115). Milligan claims that preservation has received very little attention from social scientists and that this is an area that deserves more research.

Catesby Leigh, an architectural critic and co-founder and emeritus chair of the National Civic Art Society, is also critical of current historic preservation theory and practice. He believes that preservation is straying from its roots to save great buildings and is unable to separate the “wheat from the chaff” (Leigh 2001, 41). He asserts that the basis for preservation philosophy has shifted from idealism to relativism, thereby making many more properties eligible for preservation. While he credits early preservation efforts for saving innumerable historic and important buildings, the current broader interpretation serves mainly to create more preservation jobs. He is equally critical of the role that preservation plays in new design, stating “But when it comes to the ongoing dearth of satisfying new architecture, the preservation movement is part of the problem rather than the solution” (Leigh 2001, 43).

David Brussat is the architectural critic for the Providence Journal and also feels that contemporary historic preservation is off-target, noting that “… the attention of many professional preservationists has strayed, focusing on how to preserve buildings few people care about” (Brussat 2012). He is very critical of the Providence Preservation Society’s efforts to save the Fogarty Center, a Brutalist building in Providence, Rhode Island that he thinks would best be preserved with documentation and demolition. He asserts that the efforts to save Modern buildings jeopardizes preservation’s previous accomplishments and works against the revival of traditional architecture and the creation
of future places people will love. As he puts it, “… preservationists at the national level have crawled into bed with modern architecture to ensure that the rules still tilt against tradition” (Brussat 2012).

This relativistic focus is further explored by author David Lowenthal, who explains that the contradiction of heritage is that, while it provides a link to the positive aspects of the past, it also maintains a link to the negative. Additionally, in the rush to recognize everything as heritage, “Nothing seems too recent or trifling to commemorate” (Lowenthal 2004, 21). The explanation offered is that new technology has initiated such rapid change that people are increasingly trying to cling to the past. He cautions about a glut in material heritage and asserts that the most important heritage for future generations may be knowledge rather than relics.

To summarize, while the official policies of historic preservation in the United States, such as the Secretary of the Interior Standards, continue to promote a Modernist treatment of historic buildings, the profession of historic preservation seems to be at a crossroads. Significant debate exists on how preservation is being practiced, preservation curricula, and how best to educate future preservationists, and what exactly the goals of historic preservation really are. However, as Milligan points out, historic preservation remains a field that would benefit from further research and additional examination of its philosophical underpinnings.
PRESERVATION OF THE RECENT PAST LITERATURE

The basic argument that the authors of articles about the Recent Past are putting forward is that not enough time has passed to evaluate the architectural and social significance of buildings that have not yet reached or have just barely reached the 50 year-old mark for being considered historic. Because these buildings in many cases have not been designated as historic, and therefore given some level of protection, they are in more danger of being demolished or altered than our more recognized historic buildings. Various solutions to the issue that have been proposed include lowering the age restriction for buildings to be considered historic, creating different guidelines for Modern buildings, and thinking differently about the importance of original fabric. The Recent Past Preservation Network has even devoted an entire website to the issue—www.recentpast.org.

Jeanne Lambin argues in the National Trust publication Preserving Resources from the Recent Past that “Resources from the recent past face many of the same problems that condemned the buildings that came before—lack of public appreciation, perceived obsolescence, demolition, development pressure, and insensitive alterations and additions” (Lambin 2007, 1). She reiterates that many people feel that the Recent Past is too recent to evaluate yet, so resources from that era need to be given enough time to be judged. Although some of the buildings that resulted from the architectural and technological changes after World War II regrettably replaced historic buildings, she recommends challenging the National Register’s 50 year-old eligibility rule. Echoing the
philosophy of the Venice Charter, she advocates keeping inappropriate additions to historic buildings to reflect that era of history.

Christine Madrid French was the director of the National Trust’s Modernism and Recent Past program until early 2012 and has written extensively on the preservation issues surrounding the Recent Past. In the introduction to the 4th Forum Journal regarding the Recent Past, published in 2010, she states that there needs to be more attention and scholarship focused on the issue and believes “In theory, saving modern and recent past resources should be no different than preserving architecture from an older era, but persistent challenges exist” (French 2010, 5). She is critical of guidelines that rely on temporal issues and feels that people’s dislike of Modern buildings overrides objective analysis of their historic value.

In another article, written with Julie Ann Murphy, French notes that the first conference regarding the Recent Past occurred in 1995 in Chicago, so that intensive study of the issue only started less than 20 years ago. The authors believe that the Recent Past needs to be preserved for future generations and that the 50-year rule for eligibility for the National Register needs to be changed. As they note, “Application of this guideline over the last half century has skewed the reliability of the National Register, which at this point doesn’t accurately reflect the range of architectural expression in our country” (French and Murphy 2010, 4). The questions for preservation that they raise include determining when a building should be considered “historic”, why post-WWII buildings get singled out, and whether the evaluation of significance and preservation standards need to be changed.
Alan Hess is an architect and advocate for twentieth century preservation who feels that including resources from the 1960s will encourage diversity in preservation. He claims that buildings from this era are being demolished because they are out of fashion and that “The question of style must always be a part of the conversation about architecture and preservation” (Hess 2010, 28). He feels that preservation must not only work to preserve individual buildings from the Recent Past, but also larger scale urban settings, like business parks and college campuses. Unfortunately, as Hess notes, these buildings present issues for preservationists because they do not necessarily agree with traditional notions of historic significance.

Thomas Jester is an architectural historian with the National Park Service and has co-authored several of the Preservation Briefs that help guide preservation and restoration projects in the United States. He believes that there is a dearth of scholarship on the Recent Past and notes the formation of DOCOMOMO, the international organization founded to preserve Modern architecture all over the world. Jester states that preservation of the Recent Past needs to be dealt with on an international scale, especially in countries older than the United States. He believes that the Recent Past presents evaluation challenges for the field that could lead to different criteria. In terms of temporal criteria and material conservation, he reports that at least 25 years must pass to begin to evaluate properties for historic significance and that the same conservation principles should be used for both modern and traditional materials (Jester 1995, 29).

One of the reasons that the Recent Past does present such a challenge for historic preservation is that not only is the scale of the buildings unprecedented, but also that
there are many new building types, like airports, shopping malls, highways, and curtain wall skyscrapers. Because of these factors, author and preservationist H. Ward Jandl believes that the evaluation of the twentieth century built environment is the greatest challenge for historic preservation. The new technology and new materials that created the buildings will also be a challenge. As Jandl notes “Building systems are no longer simple masonry bearing wall construction or wood balloon frame but curtain wall or post-tension concrete” (Jandl 1995, 5).

Journalist Zoe Tillman refers to Modern buildings as “endangered” in her article about the Recent Past (Tillman 2007). She estimates that up to 60% of buildings built in the mid-twentieth century were influenced by Modernism, but that they have to wage a battle against negative public perception. Another reason that these buildings are difficult to appreciate is that, since many of them were built for a specific purpose, they are difficult to reuse, like many older buildings have been in the past. Tillman weakens her case somewhat by using Mies van der Rohe’s MLK Library in Washington D.C. as an example, a building that architects and scholars appreciate, but one that users often criticize due to its materials and a design that destroys library resources and creates an uncomfortable interior environment.

Architectural critic Paul Goldberger agrees that the new technology and materials of the Recent Past present unique issues that preservation has not faced before. Commenting on people’s perception of the Recent Past, Goldberger states “I think we are not particularly inclined to value things created in our own time—we remember the world without them, and we don’t easily believe that these buildings can possibly possess
the depth and resonance of ‘true’ history” (Goldberger 2008, 2). Despite this impediment, he believes that preservation will increasingly value Modern architecture in the near future and that the field must stay on the cutting edge and accept it as historic. He does acknowledge that there are many more resources than can be designated and that, beyond icons like the Farnsworth House and the Glass House, one of the debates will center on exactly how much Recent Past to save. While analysis of the Recent Past does take time, Goldberger urges preservation to act quickly, before more resources are lost forever.

Jennifer Emerson and Martin Newman, former board members of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, feel that the Recent Past is one of the most “provoking” preservation topics and that preservationists have always been focused on buildings from the recent past, since they are the most threatened and the issue of the “past” is so fluid (Emerson and Newman 2005). They note that many resources are demolished or altered before they reach 50 years old, but also wonder if the Recent Past should be held to a higher standard because buildings from the last 50 years are so numerous. They also bring up a contradictory point—whether or not the physical evidence of the Recent Past should be preserved without endorsing its cultural legacy.

Chester Liebs is the founder and former director of the graduate Historic Preservation Program at the University of Vermont. He agrees with Emerson and Newman that preservationists have always been dealing with the recent past, especially with Victorian architecture when preservation was just beginning. Buildings from the most recent Recent Past hold a special danger, however, since Liebs feels that supporting the preservation of Modern buildings might jeopardize the broad public support that
preservation has accumulated. While this generation comes to grips with the Recent Past, future generations will have to grapple with the issue of landmarking sprawl, making the future of preservation sound bleak (Liebs 2005).

According to George Dodds, a professor of architecture at the University of Tennessee, the most pressing challenge for buildings from the Recent Past is to last long enough to become eligible for preservation, given the 50 year limit currently in effect. He claims that most buildings in the United States approximately thirty years old are particularly vulnerable to demolition or façade makeovers because they are too young to be considered historic yet, but not new enough to be considered cutting-edge (Dodds 2007). In a similar vein, journalist Margaret Loftus questions what it is about Modern architecture that is worth saving and why. She notes that, in many cases, residential buildings have fared better than public buildings when it comes to success stories for buildings from the Recent Past. While her article describes preservation in a positive light, she does not draw a conclusion about the validity of preserving Modern architecture (Loftus 2000).

Preservationist Elaine Stiles also questions the 50-year rule and states that, since preservation resources do not apply to the Recent Past, this leads to the loss of important sites. She also believes that a barrier between preservation professionals and the general public is starting to fall, because the profession “…increasingly seeks to help people protect the places that matter to them, rather than those that matter to scholars and critics” (Stiles 2010, 15). Now that the 50-year rule is approaching its own 50th birthday, it seems like an appropriate time to reevaluate it, although Stiles also notes that the passage of
time allows us to properly evaluate resources. The main issue, as she sees it, is that preservationists see the 50-year benchmark as the separation of quality from inferior resources, although she also acknowledges that the amount of review could be overwhelming, due to the amount of resources, and that there could be a loss of credibility with the public.

Julie Ernstein, Anthea Hartig, and Luis G. Hoyos tackle the issue of holding resources from the Recent Past to a higher standard. They write that because many of these buildings have been built so recently, our perception of them is wrapped up with our recent memory of them. Despite this, they do not believe that there should be different standards for resources from the Recent Past, noting that the “… higher-standard argument is inconsistent and elitist …” (Ernstein, et al. 2005, 28). According to the authors, the four issues involved that could support a higher standard are the sheer volume of Recent Past resources, workload issues for SHPO employees (at a time when many offices are losing funding and staff), the potential loss of public support, and the importance of preserving original design features. Overall, their position can be summarized thusly: “There is clear consensus that the recent past is worth saving insofar as it merits the same attention, study, review, and consideration as other sorts of cultural resources” (Ernstein, et al. 2005, 29).

Conversely, architect and author Theodore Prudon argues that Modern architecture requires different preservation practices. Because Modern buildings were built with less durable materials, they are a more vulnerable collection of resources and require quicker intervention, although this also raises the issue of whether or not they
should be preserved at all. Prudon believes that the current generation needs to make preservation decisions about Modern buildings and not leave them for future generations. He broaches the subject of material conservation and argues that it is the cultural authenticity that is important, not the original fabric (contradicting much of earlier American preservation theory)—similar to preservation philosophy in other countries such as Japan. As he states, “The issue is not change, but rather concerns the rate of change. Deterioration measured over 500 years is called aging, while deterioration of a more recent building in a matter of decades would be described as failure” (Prudon 2010, 11). The combination of shorter lifespans for buildings and longer lifespans for people will require quicker decisions about the Recent Past in the future.

Bradley Carmichael is an engineer interested in preservation issues who is also concerned about the physical fabric of Modern buildings. He asserts that, although Modernism and preservation began around the same time, they make strange bedfellows, but the two fields are growing closer together as Modern buildings become old enough to be considered historic. There are numerous issues, however, with the preservation of Modern buildings, such as the fact that they made a conscious break with tradition, they were built from non-durable materials, and there are a large number of buildings potentially eligible for designation. As Carmichael says “The challenge, then, is sorting through the scores of Modern buildings and selecting works of sufficient value for conservation” (Carmichael 2012, 42).

Carmichael states that since the social and cultural impact of Modern buildings is more important than their actual fabric, that current preservation philosophy and
techniques need to be modified when considering Modern buildings. Additionally, because they were not built with sustainability or energy conservation in mind, reusing Modern buildings or improving their performance is difficult. In fact, the materials that many Modern buildings were built with present even more difficult issues. As Carmichael notes, “… while conservation techniques for traditional natural materials like brick, stone and wood are well-established, there are difficulties and possible health concerns with preserving materials like asbestos, fiberglass and plywood” (Carmichael 2012, 42).

Winslow Hastie, Director of Preservation and Museums for the Historic Charleston Foundation, wrote about saving a specific piece of the Recent Past in “Seeing the Rivers Building in a New Light,” as part of the Hot Issues section of the HCF website. Hastie is urging the public to reconsider saving the L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building not only because of misconceptions about the asbestos situation, but also because of its social and architectural significance. He states that the building is significant because of its association with the “Great Society,” a cluster of federal programs under President Lyndon Johnson that saw an increase in the number of federal buildings constructed. These buildings were meant to not only embody contemporary architecture, but also take into account local traditions and materials. Hastie urges the reader to consider the Rivers Building as simply another chapter in Charleston’s long architectural legacy, despite the fact that it may not fit into the preconceived notion of what that architecture is supposed to look like (Hastie 2010).
One of the most important inventories of Modern buildings is that of the General Services Administration, which began examining their own buildings in 2000 to determine proper treatments for them going forward. According to their assessment, 38% of their building inventory was built between 1950 and 1979 and includes 80 million square feet of office space (GSA’s Center for Historic Buildings 2005, 40). Many of these buildings were built with a typical 25-30 year lifecycle and require maintenance and updates to continue being useful buildings. In terms of preserving the original fabric of these buildings, the article comments: “For those that lack architectural distinction and have failing curtain wall facades, a solution that radically changes the appearance of a building is often welcomed by the tenants and by a community eager to see an eyesore transformed” (GSA’s Center for Historic Buildings 2005, 40).

Journalist Ted Bowen states that there is outright hostility towards architecture from this period that inhibits it from becoming part of the preservation discussion. In his view, this extends beyond simply a misunderstanding or ignorance of post-World War II architecture. Much of this hostility is associated with negative events that people still remember, such as unpopular urban renewal ideas that leveled historic city centers and the demolition of much-loved historic buildings. He cites the controversy of the 50-year age limit and mentions Boston’s Blue Cross/Blue Shield Building and Cleveland’s Cleveland Trust Tower as examples of modern buildings facing demolition due to a lack of appreciation for Modern architecture (Bowen 2007).

Architectural historian William Curtis urges a reexamination of Modern architecture, claiming that it is the most recent revolution in architecture and has not yet
been replaced by another one. He likens some of Modern architecture’s most recognizable icons to historic buildings, saying that “The heroic forms (of the Unité d’habitation) in naked concrete lend the ensemble an ancient feeling as if it had stood there for centuries” (Curtis 2008, 38). Although many works of Modern architecture are older than 50 years and therefore eligible for historic designation, Curtis claims that many of them are still fresh and new and inform current architectural designs.

Not all preservationists, however, are in favor of the emphasis on the Recent Past. Donovan Rypkema is critical of preservation’s new-found emphasis on the Recent Past, commenting that “The vast majority of what has been built in America in the last 50 years is crap” (Rypkema 2005, 15). This new focus on the Recent Past has lowered preservation standards and Rypkema questions why buildings are being designated that are antithetical to what “good buildings are all about” (Rypkema 2005, 17). Because designating resources from the Recent Past requires lowering the current 50-year rule, Rypkema argues that designating these resources would result in an overall lowering of our preservation standards.

The issues surrounding the preservation of the Recent Past are increasingly being researched by academics as well. Carrie Purkerson completed a master’s thesis for the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Florida in 2007 that examined the complexities of preserving Modern architecture. According to her, there are numerous reasons that Modern buildings are underappreciated, “…including changing aesthetic preferences, the fact that they utilized cutting-edge and often experimental materials and construction techniques that have failed over time, and, in many cases, were not thought
of by their designers as long-term buildings, since they were designing only for the present” (Purkerson 2007, 9). Because Modern architects did not consider how their buildings would fare over time and it is difficult to save buildings that were never appreciated when they were built, Purkerson believes that preservation of the Recent Past is an important issue that deserves further study.

To summarize, preservation of the Recent Past is arguably the most important issue facing the historic preservation movement today. The three buildings in Charleston that are the focus of this research fall into this category of being from a potentially underappreciated era of architectural history, although the old Charleston County Library has reached the cutoff and the Federal Building and the Gaillard Auditorium will reach the 50-year cutoff to be officially considered historic in the next several years. While most preservationists are urging a closer look at these resources, there are a few dissenting opinions that argue that the vast majority of what has been built after World War II is not worth saving. Not only is the preservation of architecture from the Recent Past important from a built environment perspective, since there are so many buildings from this period, but also from a credibility point of view, since generally speaking the public does not consider the majority of these buildings to be historic.

Preservationists also seem to be focusing on changing the rules for resources from the Recent Past, although they do not necessarily agree on what those changes should be. Whether the 50-year time limit needs to be shortened or eliminated is one of the most vigorous discussions. Other potential changes include instituting different standards for Modern buildings and the argument over whether it is the actual fabric or the idea of the
building that needs to be preserved. Whether any changes are made or not, simply raising the issues demonstrates how difficult the issue of the Recent Past has been for the field of historic preservation.

**ADDITIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS LITERATURE**

The concepts advanced by the Secretary of the Interior Standards and the Preservation Briefs are echoed in several other pieces written by preservationists and architects. Additions to historic buildings are increasingly becoming an issue, as the rise of sustainability has led to more buildings being adaptively reused and added on to, rather than torn down. Interestingly, the issue involves buildings of all periods, since the Standards call for differentiation, no matter what the period of significance of the building actually is. While a significant addition to the building is happening in the case of the Gaillard Auditorium, preservationists seemed determined not to let that be one of the possible solutions for the Federal Building.

Architect and attorney Paul Byard was perhaps the sharpest critic of traditional architecture as an appropriate design for an addition to a historic building or district. He was against imitation and spoke to how the meaning of a building is affected by an addition by examining numerous examples from all over the world. He is complimentary of the work of Modernist architects Carlo Scarpa and Norman Foster, describing the Carree d’Art in Nimes, France as “a replacement object derived with great sensitivity and intelligence from the Maison Carree” (Byard 1998, 57). He is critical of projects that use a sympathetic architectural style, like the Custom House Tower in Boston, where
Peabody & Stearns added a complementary tower to an existing building. Byard feels that the best approaches to an addition to a building are abstraction, derivation, or transformation. Perhaps his position can best be summarized by his thoughts on a contemporary rooftop addition to a historic building in Vienna designed by Coop Himmelblau, in which “… a sketch provoked by a poem …. provided the parti for a rooftop assembly of sticks and glass that spills over the parapet of an old building as if to threaten the street below” (Byard 1998, 48).

Byard continued his dialogue regarding the appropriateness of new additions to historic buildings in an article in Architectural Record in 2000. He is again critical of traditional architecture, cautioning architects about the “pervasive fear of creativity displayed by postmodern conservatism, its prejudice against change, and its preference for papering over reality with saleable fake sameness and pastiche” (Byard 2000, 23). He uses the examples of three recent projects—Norman Foster’s addition to the Reichstag in Berlin, Renzo Piano’s Debis building in Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, and the proposal for a new Pennsylvania Station—to reiterate his ideas that additions must be clearly distinct from existing historic fabric and make a contemporary statement. In complimenting Foster’s project, Byard places it in the Modern canon, which “required us to embrace the present, to find strength and beauty in the realities of our time, not the dead residues of bygone styles” (Byard 2000, 23). Continuing his assault on traditional architecture, Byard accuses the first proposal for the Potsdamer Platz of trying “to make the city look as if it were old again, as if we could reduce the impact of what had intervened by pretending it all hadn’t really happened” (Byard 2000, 23).
Journalist Kim O’Connell writes that additions should “honor” a historic building, although preservation and traditional architecture are not always in agreement about how this should be done. History should be referenced, but the addition should still be distinct. As O’Connell puts it: “Compatibility, as opposed to imitation, ensures that a false sense of the building’s history is not created” (O’Connell 1999, 13). Architect Eleanor Esser Gorski and historian Dijana Cuvalo use real-life examples from Chicago to make similar points—namely, that infill in historic districts needs to be compatible without replicating the details of the surrounding historic buildings (Gorski and Cuvalo 2009).

Architect Pamela Whitney Hawkes agrees that Scarpa’s work at the Castelvecchio, as well as Joze Plecnik’s work at Prague Castle, which also blends new, modern work with significant existing historic fabric, is an appropriate solution for a contemporary addition. She feels that the function of historic preservation is to not only preserve existing historic fabric, but also to promote contemporary architecture that is clearly distinct. In her opinion, preservation is one of the main culprits in the current period of architectural stagnation, so in this sense, she feels that preservation is at odds with Modernism (Hawkes 2009).

Architect Murray Miller looks at the issue of putting additions on to historic buildings from a United Kingdom perspective. He notes that there is a growing interest in “sense of place” there and new construction in the UK is encouraged to preserve or enhance historic districts. Miller, however, is in favor of contemporary design in historic districts and thinks that it should be both compatible with and distinguishable from the
surrounding historic buildings. He discusses it in the context of twentieth century preservation charters as well as the Secretary of the Interior Standards (Miller 2008).

To summarize, the preservation standards used in the United States are clear about how additions to existing buildings should relate to the original construction. The concept of “compatible but differentiated” is receiving increased scrutiny, however, as architects try and balance those two opposing concepts. While some architects feel that preservation is holding architectural innovation back, others feel that additions to historic buildings are opportunities to stretch design possibilities. As more Modern buildings are considered historic and additions to them proposed, it remains to be seen what the reaction to their design will be from the preservation community. The proposed Classically-inspired changes to the Gaillard Auditorium, for example, conflict with current preservation policies, given that the renovation would give the building a completely different sense of when it was built.

NEW DESIGNS IN HISTORIC CONTEXTS LITERATURE

Sustainability has greatly influenced the role of infill architecture. With an increased emphasis on density, formerly vacant urban parcels are being redeveloped, instead of finding an empty greenfield site on the urban fringe. The issue that arises with this development is how the new construction should relate to what has already been built around it, especially in historic cities like Charleston. That is one of the issues with the old Charleston County Library site—if the building is in fact going to be demolished, what should the building that replaces it look like? Although the lawsuit has been settled
and the project is set to proceed, there will no doubt continue to be a lively public debate about it, much like there was when the current building was built.

Caroline Alderson of the Center for Historic Buildings at the GSA Office of Chief Architects draws heavily from Byard’s book for her own article concerning the addition of new buildings to existing contexts. She argues that, as a result of the maturation of preservation as a profession, there is an ongoing shift in how preservation standards are used in assessing the appropriateness of new buildings. Alderson states that “integrity of historic structures is better maintained through visual distinction and with standards flexible enough to encourage meaningful new architectural contributions” (Alderson 2006, 22). She also reiterates the view of the Venice Charter concerning the importance of authenticity in assessing the value of a historic building, while at the same time confirming that the Charter creates a “paradox” in the Secretary of the Interior Standards.

Numerous projects are cited in the article, including Alvaro Siza’s Museum of Contemporary Galician Art, which she describes as “an amiable, if distinctly different newcomer, rather than as an aggressive intruder” (Alderson 2006, 26). While she states that “Preservation standards provide a framework within which new projects respond to historic contexts with varying degrees of imagination to meet client requirements, pass regulatory hurdles, and, on occasion, secure financial incentives” (Alderson 2006, 31), nowhere in the article does she mention the idea of the new building actually enriching and enhancing the historic context.

David Woodcock, a former professor of architecture at Texas A&M University, comments on the Design Excellence and Preservation Standards symposium that was
held as part of the Association for Preservation Technology’s annual conference in Galveston, Texas in 2004. He begins by explaining the opposing philosophies of Viollet-le-Duc, a French architect who felt that buildings should be complete, even if that means adding elements that never existed or removing historic elements, and John Ruskin, an English essayist who felt that the beauty of buildings was in their decay. In reviewing some of the comments from the symposium, Woodcock quotes Francis Golding, author of the CABE publication *Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas*, as saying “In a diverse context a contemporary building may be less visually intrusive than one making a failed attempt to follow historic precedents” (Woodcock 2006, 45). This seems to summarize the attitude of contemporary architects, who feel that it is impossible to do good traditional architecture in the twenty-first century. Therefore, the only possible choice is to design new buildings that abstract the qualities of the historic context in order to fit in and not detract from the historic buildings.

As preservation consultant and architectural historian Kate Lemos points out, historic preservation has frequently been criticized for stifling design creativity in historic districts. She feels that preservation can be at the forefront of encouraging contemporary architecture that makes a distinction from architecture of the past. To illustrate her point, she looks at Manhattan and the type of work that gets approved there by the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission and concludes that designs that do not reflect the obvious visual cues of the historic district do not get approved by the commission. However, she feels that these visual clues can be more than just the cornice level, architectural details, materials, etc. that are typically thought of as cues to relate to. Other
cues can reflect a deeper meaning that is not immediately evident when looking at the building. According to Lemos, the historic districts of New York would be enhanced by the addition of contemporary architecture, such as the designs of Aldo Rossi and Jean Nouvel, which reference these cues in an abstract manner (Lemos 2009).

One of the major concerns of architects who support contemporary designs in historic districts is that traditional design promotes a false history and the “confusion” that preservation is determined to prevent. Such is the concern of San Francisco architect William Leddy, who feels that preservationists want to freeze buildings in time and stop architectural innovation in historic districts. According to Leddy, the rise of historic preservation has led to fear of change; therefore, contemporary design is seen as “change” in historic districts and discouraged. He is critical of the overall goals of historic preservation, wondering why the tools of preservation are not applied as often to Modernist buildings and why the National Register does not have different levels of significance. Because he feels that we can no longer create historic styles, we are obligated to create an architecture of our own time that utilizes all of the new technology that is available, but which still honors historic architecture. Leddy feels that preservation attempts to create a false architectural homogeneity and says that “the historicist objective of replicating old architectural styles cannot be easily achieved within current economic models and construction capabilities” (Leddy 2002, 23), again seeming to imply that proper traditional architecture cannot be built today.

de Teel Patterson Tiller, former Deputy Associate Director for Cultural Resources at the National Park Service, agrees that creating an architecture of our own time is
extremely important. As he puts it (Tiller 2007, 7) “Why, then, are we so intent on denying the architectural exemplars of our own times to generations yet to come?” Tiller feels that, in most cases in the United States, new additions are bland and vaguely historicist, satisfying neither contemporary nor traditional architects. Contemporary design should be the first option explored as a solution and he is critical of architectural education in the United States, where he feels that contextualism is not taught. Tiller states that it is the common understanding from preservation’s twentieth century charters that historicized additions are wrong and that new architecture should be contemporary and in keeping with its time. He feels that the work of many contemporary architects working today, such as Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, and Rem Koolhaus, actually enriches our built environment, rather than detracting from it. Tiller refers to the city of Venice as a “museum piece,” apparently because it contains little evidence of contemporary design.

Architect and land-use attorney Steven Day is less critical of preservation, but makes similar points about the appropriateness of Modern architecture in historic districts, saying that “Increasingly, the Secretary's standards are interpreted in a way that encourages the use of modernism as an expression of our time in the history of architecture, while respecting the architecture of the past” (Day 2003, 1). While advocating for more contemporary design, he does admit that some Modernist additions have ruined the historic context around them by being applied in a less than skillful manner by contemporary architects unfamiliar with traditional architecture.

He is equally critical of additions done in a traditional manner, however, saying that inferior materials and poor design detract from the historic context as well.
According to Day, a new addition can relate to its context in one of three ways—deference, reference, or by obliterating it. He admits that the Secretary of the Interior Standards leave significant room for interpretation when designing an addition to an existing historic building. While praising such projects as Carlo Scarpa’s Castelvecchio and Norman Foster’s Carree d’Art, projects that introduced modern elements into very sensitive historic environments, Day clarifies his position by stating that “many of these recent projects involve architecture that is undeniably modern but that respects and attempts to shed light on the old, without nostalgic references or mimicry” (Day 2003, 1).

Architect and preservationist Peyton Hall looks at reconsidering design guidelines in historic districts and, while he feels that historic districts should retain character, they should be allowed to richly evolve over time. These additions, however, should reflect our own time, as otherwise they devalue the historic resource (Hall 2009). Alison Hoagland, a professor at Michigan Technological University, is not only in favor of contemporary design in historic districts, but has a very specific solution. She writes that the period of architecture after Modernism, known as Post-modernism, provides the best solution. Post-modernism is known for reacting against Modern architecture with the reintroduction of Classical details, albeit it in an ironic manner and, as Hoagland states, it is compatible with historic buildings without exactly matching historic details or contrasting too much. According to her, “… Postmodernism often provided the most apt solutions to the difficult problem of new additions to old buildings, or new construction in historic districts” (Hoagland 2009, 133).
Journalist Lawrence Biemiller examines the issue of new buildings on historic college campuses and explains that Thomas Jefferson’s design for the University of Virginia set the standard. Because this campus, and others such as Princeton University and Bryn Mawr College, were designed and built in a different era, the Georgian/Gothic standards that they set are impossible to live up to in the twenty-first century. Even attempting to compete with them is futile, as Biemiller explains: “Try as you might, if you put up a building today that’s meant to look like it was built 75 or 100 years ago, the best you’re likely to do is put up something satisfactory and forgettable” (Biemiller 2010, 2). He seems to be missing the point, since making a building look like it was built “75 or 100 years ago” is not the goal of traditional architecture. Interestingly, he supports historic preservation and even lives in a historic building, but feels that we can no longer afford traditional buildings or even find a competent contractor or craftsman who can build them. Continuing on the academic theme, he states that architecture needs to be honest and keep up with scholarship like other fields. While he admires the work of architects from the past, he asks “… isn’t imitating the work of a dead architect akin to plagiarism?” (Biemiller 2010, 6).

Garth Rockcastle, an architect and former dean of the University of Maryland School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, is critical of new construction overall, noting that it frequently leads to waste and disruption, and seems to suggest that adaptively reusing our existing buildings may be a better course of action. He wonders if we want the buildings that we are currently constructing to be our legacy to future generations, implying that that would be a weak legacy. Rockcastle strongly feels that the
disciplines of the built environment need to do a much better job of stewardship and wonders what the city of Rome would look like today if the policies of the Secretary of the Interior Standards had been in effect there (Rockcastle 2008).

To summarize, the major issues for new designs in existing contexts from the preservationist point of view is the potential confusion of historic buildings with new construction and the concern about architects and builders who cannot competently produce good traditional architecture. The thought seems to be that more contemporary architecture, even if it conflicts with the existing context, is preferable to poorly executed traditional design. This concept is reflected in the case of the old Charleston County Library building, where there is significant opposition to the traditionally-designed replacement building that is proposed for the site. Additionally, a point of contention seems to be the concepts of “traditional” versus “historic,” terms seemingly used interchangeably by preservationists. Whereas “traditional” refers to a manner of design, building techniques, and materials, “historic” relates to the age of a building. A building can be both, neither, or one or the other, but one does not always necessarily follow the other. A good example is the Villa Savoye outside of Paris, designed by Le Corbusier in 1929. While the building is undeniably historic at this point, no one would say that it is a traditional building.
TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE LITERATURE

One of the most prolific supporters of traditional architecture is Steven Semes, a professor of architecture at the University of Notre Dame, who has written numerous articles and books on the subject. As a former preservation architect for the National Park Service, he is also very aware of the philosophy of the Secretary of the Interior Standards, the Preservation Briefs, and other relevant legislation. In his most recent book, the *Future of the Past*, Semes writes that the first rule of additions in historic districts should follow the Hippocratic Oath of the medical profession and “first, do no harm” (Semes 2009b, 36). He feels that architecture is a living tradition and adding to that tradition should be the first goal of architecture. He promotes a conservation ethic, much like Aldo Leopold proposed for the environment, and feels that the *zeitgeist* can be whatever we as a society choose, not simply what contemporary architects who advocate a complete break from the past specify.

With regard to the addition of new construction into historic districts, which should both support and enhance the existing fabric, Semes feels that there are four approaches that can be taken: intentional opposition, undertaken by many Modernists; abstraction; invention within a style; and literal replication, which is strongly discouraged by National Park Service guidelines, despite its proven success throughout history by notable architects like Michelangelo. He writes that the ideas of differentiation and compatibility promoted by the NPS are contradictory and that the policy of differentiation forces historic districts to change differently than they have naturally evolved over time. According to Semes, the architecture of “place” is more important than the architecture of
“time” and he is critical of some preservation restrictions, saying “unfortunately, some preservation authorities continue to resist the very approach (invention within a style) most likely to yield the results called for by the charters and standards they are charged with applying” (Semes 2009b, 20).

Semes devotes an entire article to what he sees as the contradiction between differentiation and compatibility. He notes that the public often is opposed to Modernist additions, citing the building of the Ara Pacis in Rome by Richard Meier as a primary example. One of the problems that he sees is that current preservation policies were developed during a completely different architectural culture. The guidelines are ambiguous and meant to prevent uninformed and sloppy traditional architecture. However, the preservation standards have not kept up with the recent interest and increase in knowledge of traditional architecture. Semes believes that compatibility is more important than differentiation, which can lead to an erosion of character over time and what preservation is expressly trying to prevent. He supports updating and changing preservation standards to be more specific about the promotion of sustaining the character-defining features of a historic district, rather than promoting differentiation (Semes 2009a).

With regards to the argument about the practice of contemporary architecture, Semes writes that the disconnect between traditional and Modernist architectural practice relegates historic buildings to a place of mere artifact and historical curiosity. He feels that there should be more continuity between the traditional and the contemporary practice of architecture. Because Modernism views the past as being “over,” preservation
policy follows suit and makes a very important distinction between what is “old” and what is “new,” even though what is “new” now will eventually be “old.” This disconnect leads to the preservation of buildings as artifacts, rather than the preservation of the architectural culture and tradition that produced them in the first place.

Semes was also one of the authors of a response and clarification of the Venice Charter (originally written in 1964) in 2007—the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism (INTBAU) Venice Declaration on the Conservation of Monuments and Sites in the 21st Century. While acknowledging the contributions of the Venice Charter to preservation theory, the authors asserted that there were contradictions either contained within it or in a too literal interpretation of it. They sought to clarify it and update it within the context of a different architectural culture, considering that nearly fifty years have passed since it was originally written.

Responding to the Charter’s ideas about authenticity, the authors state: “Hence the goal of authenticity must not be interpreted to require an absolute state of preservation of pre-categorized moments in time. Rather it must reflect the complex pattern of change and recurrence across the ages, including the present” (INTBAU 2007). Other statements particularly relevant to preservation include the idea that compatible new construction does not create false history, as long as the changes can be distinguished by experts or interpretive materials, and allowing for the “contemporary stamp” to be applied in other ways besides distinct new construction.

Writing 30 years before Semes, architect and writer Brent Brolin also defended traditional architecture as a valid method for additions to an existing context, although he
warned that there is not a single solution that will be successful in all cases. He felt that there are many possible solutions to a design problem, with the caveat that is must be “skillfully done.” As Brolin amusingly put it, “Contemporary architects who would not be caught dead wearing polka-dot ties with striped shirts and checkered suits think nothing of dotting our cities with the architectural equivalents of such surprising sartorial combinations” (Brolin 1980, 5).

Brolin urged readers to relate to new and existing designs the way people did before the advent of Modernism. Towards this end, the book is illustrated with many successful examples of relating new and existing designs, such as the Sacristies at San Lorenzo in Florence and various streetscapes in Delft, Savannah, Vienna, and Bruges. There are also numerous examples of unsuccessful new buildings that ignored their context, such as the Carpenter Center and Gund Hall at Harvard University, the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University, and the Philip Johnson addition to the Boston Public Library. Brolin was particularly critical of new additions that are directly connected to old buildings with “links,” a strategy that he feels is simply a design crutch—and he feels that skillful architects should be able to relate new buildings to existing buildings without relying on it.

Jean Francois Gabriel, a professor emeritus of architecture at Syracuse University, has written a book called Classical Architecture for the Twenty-first Century (2004). He argues that not only is Classical architecture still relevant, but that it should have a prominent place in the present and future practice of architecture. He discusses ten timeless canons and fifteen things to know about Classical architecture, which helps
everyone to understand how this design tradition (not a historic “style”) can still be relevant. The book also includes richly illustrated examples of both student projects and buildings that have actually been built in order to demonstrate his points. While many Modernist architects would argue that knowledge of traditional architecture is no longer useful, there are numerous practitioners and a significant body of literature that suggest otherwise.

Architect Robert Adam argues that architecture is part of what makes up society, not simply a piece of technology that needs to change with each generation. Rather, architecture is a vital part of community tradition that must be upheld. He explains that history, custom, and tradition have been excluded from modern society because they are not considered authentic, since they are not technologically cutting-edge. However, Adam cites several examples, such as the size of railroad gauge and keyboard layouts, that are useful traditional technology because they are still the best method. Speaking to the idea of who Modern architecture is designed for, Adam states “Ordinary people, on the other hand, always sensible, see no contradiction between new technology and historic design” (Adam 2008, 121).

Other authors have also written about this disconnect between Modernism and traditional architecture and the negative effects it has had on our built environment. In his book *The Culture of Building* (1999), architect Howard Davis writes that traditional architecture exists as part of a dynamic process that is not “over,” as the Modernists would have us believe, but that is very much alive and in continuous evolution. Like
Semes, he feels that it is the building culture that is important to preserve for the future and that most contemporary buildings do not contribute to the health of our culture.

Structural engineer Malcolm Millais paints a very bleak picture of Modern architecture, its philosophical underpinnings and origins, and the effects that its ideas have had on our built environment. He wonders how the Modernists and their ideas about ignoring history and tradition in architecture, the precursor to our debates about preservation and the appropriateness of new construction, ever achieved popularity or acceptance in the first place. As he says, “It is entirely unclear why this small group of mostly unqualified people decided that buildings should not have historical continuity nor be decorated, after all they always had been” (Millais 2009, 39).

Carroll William Westfall is professor of architecture at the University of Notre Dame and questions what the goals of historic preservation really are. He states that, while traditional architecture and preservation share a common enemy in Modernism, that preservation is at odds with traditional architecture. This is because he feels that preservation is actually a Modernist endeavor because of its positivist approach to categorizing buildings, as well as its call for new buildings to be differentiated from old buildings (Westfall 2004). Architectural historian David Watkin weighed in on the relationship between traditional architecture versus Modern architecture that supposedly expresses the zeitgeist. He argued that appropriate architecture does not have a relationship with a specific time and place, therefore traditional architecture is still a valid expression of our twenty-first century culture (Watkin 1984).
In another article, Westfall promotes the idea of returning the Classical orders to architectural education as the basis for all design in the twenty-first century. “Modernist styles have made new buildings increasingly alien to outsiders. But traditional architecture’s familiar forms invite conversation among laypeople and architects who can reason together to come up with beautiful buildings that serve their needs” (Westfall 2008, 97). He argues that the founders of Modernism knew the orders and were well-versed in Classical design, so increased knowledge of the orders would not just aid traditional designs. As he states, “While Modernist training has shown itself to be inadequate for producing good traditional buildings, the reverse is not the case: training in producing good traditional buildings assists in producing good Modernism” (Westfall 2008, 106).

Sociologist Nathan Glazer is a defender of traditional architecture versus newer Modern architecture, especially on the urban scale, stating “… indeed, anything old today bears a presumption that it is better than anything that might replace it” (Glazer 2007, 27). He asserts that there is a battle going on between the designers of the built environment and what the majority of people actually want. While Modernism eventually won out in public architecture, residential design has continued to be dominated by traditional architecture (albeit of drastically lower material and design quality). Due to the poor quality of our contemporary built environment, future generations will not be interested in preserving what is being built currently, regardless of the impact that some of these buildings make today. The reason that ornament is not seen in buildings today, according to Glazer, is because “Not only would it embarrass architects to design
decorative detail or call for it; they wouldn’t know how to do it, and there would be no craftsmen to provide it” (Glazer 2008, 38).

Architect Léon Krier mentions the double standard of Modern architects who live in traditional neighborhoods, yet continue to design the kind of buildings and spaces that are antithetical to what even they prefer. Krier believes that people have begun to fear new construction, saying that “Nowadays, building sites are commonly perceived as a threat rather than as a promise of things to come” (Krier 2011, 19). He strongly disagrees that contemporary architecture should express the zeitgeist, stating “Authentic architecture is not the incarnation of the spirit of the age but of the spirit, full stop” (Krier 2011, 73). He believes that Modern architecture and technology have failed to live up to their promises and that Classical architecture is preferable because it has always been based on human proportions and forms. Krier asserts that, similar to human beings, there is an infinite variety of design possibilities inherent in the Classical tradition.

One of the classic debates in architectural theory is that of aesthetics. Is the design of buildings a personal preference or is there a scientifically identifiable form that is inherently preferred by human beings? Many authors have weighed in on this question over the years, with Nikos Salingaros, a mathematics professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio, one of the most recent. He argues that traditional architecture is simply better for human beings and that they prefer it over contemporary architecture. Therefore, the issue of aesthetics is not subjective and can be proven quantitatively. He proposes a set of structural laws for architecture, based on order and scales derived from mathematics, that clearly show the superiority of traditional architecture. He argues that
Modern architecture violates these laws and produces buildings that are at odds with human comfort, needs and expectations. As Salingaros puts it: “Architects in the 20th created a visual condition similar to the environments experienced by brain-damaged patients …” (Salingaros 2007, 103).

In another article written jointly with Mark Signorelli, Salingaros writes about how completely the Modern aesthetic has taken over artistic culture in the twenty-first century, which they refer to as the “tyranny of artistic modernism.” This aesthetic is described as “a hostility and defiance towards all traditional standards of excellence, discovered over millennia of craftsmanship and reflection; a notion of the artist’s freedom as absolute, and entirely divorced from the ends of his art” (Signorelli and Salingaros 2012, 1). The authors argue that traditional sources of inspiration are ignored by contemporary artists and that Modernism, the movement that sought to reject all tradition, is now a tradition in and of itself. Because an overwhelming number of people do not like it, Modernism requires a “vast institutional structure” to maintain it to avoid submitting to the traditional tastes of people in general.

Whereas traditional architecture brings pleasure to the person experiencing it, the authors argue that Modern buildings serve only to nauseate or disturb: “The level of stylistic violence implicit in modernist architecture is extraordinary: overhangs without obvious supports, leaning buildings, extremely sharp edges sticking out to threaten us, glass floors over heights leading to vertigo, tilted interiors walls also leading to vertigo and nausea” (Signorelli and Salingaros 2012, 4). They claim that “…so-called ‘starchitects’ continue to emulate the rules embodied by those failed examples [from the
Bauhaus]” (Signorelli and Salingaros 2012, 5). While Modern art and architecture are now more about financial gain than artistic vision, Signorelli and Salingaros argue that we need to use our accumulated artistic knowledge to move forward and we must reject Modernism in order to return sanity to civilization.

Architect Jonathan Hale argues that architecture “lost” something in the period after 1830, although this is at least 50 years before most architectural historians would argue that the Modern movement began. He asserts that architecture changed for the worse at this point in history and uses diagrams of historic buildings to show how they were much more harmonious before 1830. Builders and architects were able to subconsciously achieve pleasing patterns on the façades of their buildings that Hale highlights by drawing connecting lines on them. Most buildings constructed after that date, as Hale also demonstrates, do not show that same harmony. Thus, he concludes that architecture is not subjective and concludes that there is a quality that historic buildings possess that is lacking in Modern architecture (Hale 1995).

Peter Smith is a former Vice President of the Royal Institute of British Architects and a professor at Sheffield Hallam University. His book predates that of Salingaros, but asserts many of the same points. As Smith states, “The central theme throughout the book is that the underpinning principle behind aesthetic experience is that of complexity giving way to orderliness” (Smith 2003, 10). Similar to Semes’ four strategies for designing new buildings in an existing context, Smith proposes that there are three possible interventions—submergence, rhyme, and fracture (Smith 2003, 48). He argues that
ornament evolved as a way to ease the junction of different materials and to relieve large blank surfaces and is a necessary component of architecture.

Mark Foster Gage, a professor at the Yale University School of Architecture, has assembled a series of essays, written by a diverse group of authors, on the issue of aesthetic theory (Gage 2011). The authors range from the historic, including the philosophers Plato and Aristotle and architects such as Vitruvius and Alberti, through the contemporary, like Elaine Scarry. The collection of essays attempts to establish a theoretical framework to understand the role that aesthetics plays in the design process. While Gage does not attempt to answer the question of aesthetics, like some of the previous authors, the collection of essays simply demonstrates how important the question is in the field of architecture.

While not specifically an advocate for traditional architecture, John Silber has written an interesting critique of the current state of architecture. Silber, the former president of Boston University and a professor of philosophy and law, learned about architecture from his father, a Beaux Arts-style architect. In his early academic career at the University of Texas, Silber participated in an intellectual salon and proposed to his colleagues that, unlike other artistic disciplines, there would never be an architecture of the absurd. As Silber says, “But after seeing what has happened to architecture in the past few decades, all I can say is: How could I have been so wrong?” (Silber 2007, 22). The book continues with a discussion of various examples of the architecture of the absurd, including I.M. Pei’s Pyramid at the Louvre and the Hancock Building in Boston, which Silber argues is absurd because of all of the design and engineering flaws that could have
been prevented. He is also critical of other Modern and Deconstructivist landmarks, such as Philip Johnson’s AT&T Building, Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum, Frank Gehry’s Stata Center and a number of Josep Lluís Sert’s buildings at Boston and Harvard universities. Silber traces the architecture of the absurd and what he calls “genius worship” to the book *Space, Time and Architecture* by Sigfried Giedion and first published in 1941. He asserts that clients are the ones who need to rein in architects, since they are the ones paying for these buildings. As Silber says “Theoryspeak, celebrity, and self-proclaimed Genius cannot cover the naked absurdity of much contemporary architecture” (Silber 2007, 91).

Author James Kunstler is a well-known critic of Modern architecture and contemporary urbanism. He claims that the Modern age, which is now over 100 years old, is over and that allows contemporary architecture to be something else. As he puts it, “Surely even educated people are tired of pretending to be on the cutting edge all the time, untethered from history or precedent, and weary of advocating that excellence exists only as a point of view” (Kunstler 2001, 190). He advocates for the return of Classicism, respect for the public realm, and a hierarchy of scale—all of which will require a revolution in our architecture schools and educational system. Kunstler believes that preservation exists because of our lack of confidence in the future and fear of what will be built: “So many twentieth-century buildings are failures in one way or another—looks, relation to the public realm, attitude toward the pedestrian, quality of workmanship—that we assume any new building is liable to be at least unrewarding and at worst another horror” (Kunstler 2001, 214).
SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

In terms of traditional architecture, current preservation philosophy and policy echo that of Modernism—that architecture based on examples from the past is not a valid solution to design issues. However, much current thought and writing is centered on a return to traditional architecture and this position is strengthened by the perception of many that current architectural practice is so far out of touch with what people prefer. With a recent emphasis on sustainability and increased scientific study of preferred aesthetics, the benefits of traditional architecture are even more apparent. The challenge for historic preservation is clear. While the movement has been enormously successful in preserving buildings and places that everyone can agree on, how can it continue to be opposed to the very ideas that led to its creation in the first place? Additionally, it does not seem to support the design and construction of buildings and settings that people will care about and want to preserve in the future.

A literature review provides valuable information for the preliminary stages of a research project. There is a great deal of information available regarding the contemporary versus traditional architecture debate as well as thoughts on the changing role of historic preservation, all of which were helpful in formulating the research questions. The literature to date is an interesting mix, with Modernists and traditionalists in direct opposition and with each side critical of historic preservation policies for not being sympathetic to the current built environment, as well as not being consistent with architectural theory.
The Modernists generally support the preservation of historic buildings, but feel that preservationists stifle contemporary design. At the same time, proponents of traditional architecture feel that preservation supports Modern design because the policies desire differentiation in new construction. Meanwhile, preservationists seem to be entrenched in the middle ground, since they do not approve of contemporary buildings because they are not compatible with historic architecture, but are also against traditional architecture because it “confuses” the issue of what is actually historic.

Additionally, many preservationists feel that the lack of knowledge in designing and skill in building traditional architecture detracts from its appropriateness. Perhaps this quote from noted architectural historian Vincent Scully sums it up the best: “…. Whenever we see a building being demolished, we automatically expect it will be replaced by something worse” (Millais 2009, 161). What that “worse” actually is, and whether or not you wanted to see the building demolished in the first place, depends on your position in the debate.

This debate has been noted in James Hare’s paper about the design review process in Charleston, the city where the first preservation-related zoning ordinance was passed in 1931 (Hare 2009, 44). Hare notes that Charleston’s Board of Architectural Review has been accused by the general public of preferring Modernist design, while architects working in the city claim that the BAR promotes traditional design nearly exclusively. Meanwhile, preservation professionals in the city focus on secondary details while ignoring the larger issues of scale, mass, etc. As Hare explains, “It also appears, based on the cases examined here, that both preservationists and members of the public who have
not had academic training in architecture or design issues lack the ability to adequately articulate the opinions they have about primary architectural features …. “ (Hare 2009, 55).

Based on the literature review and background information, this study highlights these contradictions in historic preservation practice and policy and demonstrates how they resulted in the different preservation treatments in the cases of the old Charleston County Library building, the Rivers Federal Building, and the Gaillard Auditorium. The fates of the three buildings at the moment seem to embody the conflict that has been discussed in the literature review—namely, that the preservationists are contradicting themselves by fighting to keep the historic appearance of the Rivers Federal Building, while at the same time, the Gaillard Auditorium is undergoing a dramatic renovation complete with Classical details and the old Charleston County Library building has been approved for demolition.

Meanwhile, preservationists are blocking the new hotel proposed for the library site because of the zoning, its size—actually smaller than the historic Francis Marion Hotel located across King Street—and on design, based very much on Charleston precedents. All of this evidence leads to confusing and contradictory conclusions. Are Charleston preservationists in favor of saving buildings from the 1960s, against new designs based on tradition, neither, both, or a mixture, depending on the case? Do the current national preservation policies and theories provide enough of a framework to make consistent decisions or is every building evaluated on an individual basis?
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

The decision about which type of research design to use is based on the type of research questions being asked, the extent of the researcher’s control over events, and whether the focus is on contemporary or historic events. Because this study attempts to answer a how/why question, there is no control over the events being studied and as the events are contemporary, a case study strategy is the most appropriate (Yin 1994, 4-5). The case study design, defined as “research [that] involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system,” is the strongest strategy for this research study (Creswell 2007, 73). Case studies allow researchers to employ a variety of data sources to explore a phenomenon within its context that allows for “multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood” (Baxter and Jack 2008, 544).

As with all research designs, there are strengths and weaknesses associated with case studies. As Merriam notes, the case study “offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences” (Merriam 2009, 51). Case studies can also promote deeper understanding of a field, and thereby improve its practice. The issue of generalizability is often cited as a weakness of case study methodology, but much knowledge can be gleaned from a single case. Weaknesses of the case study methodology include limitations in time or resources of the researcher that inhibit a rich description of the case and bias on the part of the researcher.
Using a case study methodology will enable this qualitative case study to share the “… search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive” (Merriam 2009, 39) with other qualitative studies. Specifically, the research will result in an explanatory case study, which explores “a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin 1994, 1). The explanatory case study is used when the researcher is “seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies” (Baxter and Jack 2008, 547). While there were some disadvantages to the case study research design for this research, including researcher bias, the difficulty in generalizing back to theory, and its time-consuming nature, it was still the best strategy to answer the research questions posed in this study. The researcher must also ensure that the research questions are not too broad to be answered effectively by the study.

The case study followed theoretical propositions as the general analytic strategy, since the object of the case study was to answer a how/why question about preservation theory and practice with regards to the group of buildings in Charleston. Qualitative data, including interviews, meeting minutes and other documents, and archival material, were gathered and analyzed as the basis for the study. The choice of the case study strategy is further validated by the different types of sources to be used. As Yin states: “… the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, artifacts, interview, and observations—beyond what might be available in the conventional historical study” (Yin 1994, 8). A Type 3 design, or multiple case, holistic...
design, was used for this case study (Yin, 1994, 39). This type of design involves using multiple cases (the 3 different buildings) as well as a single unit of analysis. The unit of analysis in the study is the framework of historic preservation, made up of preservation theories and policies, as they are applied specifically in Charleston. Because case studies should relate their findings back to theory, the results of the case study will relate back to preservation theories, not specifically back to Charleston or the three buildings.

**METHODOLOGY**

The case study is not designed to interpret or analyze data to describe the characteristics of a large population. Rather, the unit of analysis was restricted to the preservation and architecture community in Charleston—in other words, the people who are most likely to be knowledgeable about the buildings, as well as the preservation theories that apply to them and their professional activities. The list of possible sources that can be used for case studies includes documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts (Yin 1994, 78). For this particular study, content analysis from interviews, meeting minutes and other documents, and archival material were the three sources of data that were utilized.

In order to maintain both the external and internal validity of the study, several steps must be undertaken in the case study. These include utilizing multiple sources of evidence, maintaining a case study database, and creating a chain of evidence (Yin 1994, 80). By making the researcher’s notes and other material available to future researchers, maintaining a case study database increases the reliability of the study and the chances
for a later researcher to replicate the study. Another step that increases the reliability is establishing a chain of evidence, which “follows the derivation of evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions” (Yin 1994, 98) and ensures that the data collection is being done according to the protocol that was set up for the case study. The data obtained from the research sources were triangulated against each other, thereby assuring that the information was accurate and reliable.

RESEARCH SOURCES

Several sources of evidence were used, in order to corroborate the findings of the case study. As Yin states, “… a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (Yin 1994, 91). Content analysis, derived from both Board of Architectural Review minutes and agendas and archival records, including newspaper articles, maps, photographs, and published preservation organization opinions, for example, was critical to the case study. Interviews with BAR members, members of Charleston’s preservation organizations, and other knowledgeable individuals were also critical.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archival sources were the first source explored and documented during the case study because they were valuable sources for background information on the buildings themselves as well as their appearances before the Board of Architectural Review. One of the most important archival sources utilized was that of the Margaretta Childs Archive at
the Historic Charleston Foundation. This archive was particularly useful in illuminating the histories of the three buildings and the buildings that they replaced, especially since HCF was very involved in the Ansonborough neighborhood. Information obtained from this source included maps, newspaper articles, drawings, photographs, reports by previous researchers, and other documents related to the histories of the three buildings. This information was also vital in establishing the preservation process that the original buildings on the sites went through before they were torn down and replaced with the buildings that are the participants of the case study. The archive also included material produced by employees of the Historic Charleston Foundation that was particularly helpful in researching the histories of the buildings.

Another important source of archival information was the files of the Post and Courier, as it is currently known, and its previous iterations. The Post and Courier is Charleston’s daily newspaper and the oldest daily newspaper in the South. Items of preservation and architectural note typically gather a great deal of interest in Charleston, so there was ample press coverage on the three buildings, their history, and their futures. Conveniently, the archives maintained files on each of the three buildings, with hardcopies of articles as well as microfiche. Items utilized in the research not only included factual pieces, but also editorials written by preservation organizations, interested individuals, and the newspaper staff itself. These articles were valuable in the sense that they provided insight to how the community was feeling about the buildings at any given point in time. The Post and Courier was also a valuable repository for images, especially historic images and aerial views of Charleston.
Additional local media sources consulted included the *Charleston City Paper* and television station WCSC. The Charleston area is rich in archival sources, and additional sources consulted included the Charleston County Library, the Charleston Museum, college and university archives, such as the Addlestone Library at the College of Charleston, the University of South Carolina, Charleston Southern University, and The Citadel, and larger collections such as the Library of Congress. This information was obtained by both visiting the sources in person and obtaining hardcopies, as well as using online resources.

While archival sources are important sources of information, it was also vital to access the BAR minutes from meetings where one or more of the three buildings appeared on the agenda. It was necessary for the researcher to file a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain this information from the city of Charleston. Access to this source provided an opportunity for textual interpretation and analysis of a primary source, which was a transcribed document for some BAR meetings and a raw audio recording for others. Each of the three buildings have appeared on numerous occasions before the various committees and review boards that every project must undergo in Charleston.

The materials held by the Department of Design, Development and Preservation at the city of Charleston municipal offices were particularly helpful in gathering information on both present and past applications before the Board of Architectural Review and other city agencies. The hardcopy and electronic information included the applications filed with the city and supporting material filed with the application,
including drawings, maps, and photographs. It was critical to complete the background and archival research on the three buildings before moving into the interview phase of the project, since the information gathered directly influenced the questions that were posed to the participants.

INTERVIEWS

The primary data collection instrument used in the case study was the focused one-on-one interview with preservation and architectural professionals. Generally, with a case study research design, the interviews are conducted in an open-ended format using semi-structured questions, to give the respondents the freedom to elaborate on the issue at hand (Yin 1994, 84) and this proved to be a valuable addition to the interview questions. All three of the buildings that are part of the case study have elicited strong opinions from preservationists, architects, and members of the community, so the data from the interviews was wide-ranging and interesting.

As part of the interview process, each of the participants was given a timeline of the background research that included only factual information about the buildings before the interview took place. The document included graphics, such as maps, drawings and photographs, and served to get the participants in this study further acquainted with the buildings and their histories. While the document was not included in the actual interviews, it was hoped that the visual stimulation beforehand would not only assist the participants in recalling more about the buildings, but would also reduce misunderstandings between the participants and the interviewer. Because each of the
participants are experienced professionals in the Charleston preservation community, they could also potentially provide some important feedback on the background research timeline.

The IRB-approved research questionnaire that was used for the interviews was specifically designed to utilize open-ended questions that would allow the participants to expand on any points that they thought were particularly interesting or relevant. It also allowed the researcher to utilize follow-up questions that were created on the spot, as a result of something the participant said, in order to elicit further information. While this made each of the interviews slightly different, more specific data could be gathered. Beyond asking each of the participants about their backgrounds and professional experiences, the questions were evenly divided between questions specifically related to the three buildings and questions regarding historic preservation philosophy and policies in general.

Because of the time-consuming nature of the open-ended questions, the number of participants included in the study was limited to 11. While this is a relatively small number, each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and provided in-depth answers to each question and reflected the qualitative, rather than quantitative, nature of the research project. The interviews were recorded and each resulted in a transcribed document that ranged between 15 and 23 pages. As opposed to other survey methods, such as questionnaires, that are designed to gather a small amount of data from a large number of participants, the goal was to gather a large amount of data from a small number of interviews. Since each of the participants was selected for their knowledge of
and experience in Charleston’s preservation community, the thought was that the extensive data gathered through a small number of interviews would provide an accurate cross-section of opinions.

The participants in the interviews were a diverse pool of people with vast direct or indirect knowledge of the three buildings, as well as preservation and architectural experience in Charleston. They were culled, with input from the dissertation committee, from an initial list of approximately 50 people put together by the researcher based on personal knowledge of the participant’s background and experience. The list included the developer of the Federal Building, a daughter of L. Mendel Rivers, whom the Federal Building was named for, architects who worked on the various schemes for the buildings, current and former members of the Board of Architectural Review, current and former staff of the City of Charleston, current and former staff of the Historic Charleston Foundation, the Preservation Society of Charleston, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Charleston office, and current and former faculty and students of the three colleges in Charleston that offer preservation education—the College of Charleston, Clemson University, and the American College of the Building Arts.

Each potential participant was ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, based on their estimated viewpoint, with 1 being the most Modern and 5 being the most traditional (in terms of architecture). The potential participants were also ranked according to how desirable they were for the study, with 10 participants noted as first choice, 5 as second choice, and 5 as third choice. Nine of the 10 first choice participants were interviewed, as well as 2 of the second choice participants. A conscious effort was made to include as
diverse a group of participants as possible, within such a small sample. The participant included six men and five women, ranging in age from 25 to approximately 60. In addition to historic preservation, other related fields represented by the participants included architecture, law, journalism, real estate, academia, and urban design. The participants are employed by non-profit organizations, private businesses, and governmental organizations. The research was meant to gather information from both participants who have a direct interest and influence in the outcomes of the three buildings, such as members of the Board of Architectural Review and architectural firms working on one of the buildings, as well as participants who have only an indirect interest in, but a keen knowledge of, the outcomes.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves examining the data compiled during the study in order to answer the research questions. The general strategy for analyzing the data involved following theoretical propositions, since the objectives and design for the project were based on this in the first place and generated the research questions and literature review (Yin 1994, 103). This strategy enabled the researcher to answer the “how/why” research questions and define causal relationships. As Yin states: “Theoretical propositions about causal relations—answers to “how” and “why” questions—can be very useful in guiding case study analysis ….” (Yin 1994, 104). For case studies compiling qualitative data, four types of analysis can be utilized: pattern-matching, explanation-building, a time-series analysis, or program logic models (Yin 1994, 102). Because it is mainly relevant to
explanatory studies, the explanation-building technique of data analysis was used for this study, where the phenomenon is “explained” by creating a series of causal links (Yin, 1994, 110).

While the causal links can be difficult to measure, establishing them can help to explain the events of the case study. The analysis took a narrative form which will reflect some propositions that are theoretically significant, namely, critical insight into historic preservation theories and policies. It is important to note that the explanation-building technique relies on a series of iterations based on the original research questions and the evidence gathered. As the evidence is gathered and examined, theoretical positions may change and adapt to it. The final explanation is not fully known by the researcher at the beginning of the case study, therefore the iterative process of explanation-building results in the gradual construction of a final explanation. Because this study involves multiple cases, the data analysis phase of the research also resulted in a cross-case analysis. While the iterative nature of explanation-building can be interesting, there is also a danger involved for the researcher, in the sense that the original topic of interest may begin to drift away as evidence leads the study in unexpected directions. Setting up the case study protocol, case study database, and following the chain of evidence can help to alleviate this problem. In addition, review of the study by peers can ensure that it remains true to its original focus.
**THREATS TO CONSTRUCT VALIDITY**

Construct validity is threatened when it is unclear if the case study is actually measuring what it originally set out to measure. For case studies, there are 3 ways to increase construct validity: using more than one source of evidence, utilizing a chain of evidence, and having experts in the field review a draft of the case study report. This case study utilized several different sources of information in order to triangulate the data and reduce the threat to construct validity. The results of the interviews were compared with the results of the content analysis of the documents, archival research, and BAR minutes in order to verify that the information was accurate. The case study was fully documented using a chain of evidence to provide later researchers with access to the same information. Lastly, it was reviewed by the dissertation committee, which consists of experts in architecture, historic preservation, city planning, and real estate development, in order to increase its construct validity and ensure that the study is measuring what it set out to.

**THREATS TO INTERNAL VALIDITY**

Because this case study is explanatory in nature, internal validity is a concern. Generally, internal validity attempts to demonstrate that a causal relationship exists between Charleston’s preservation policies and theories and the decisions regarding the three cases in the case study. In order to maintain internal validity, the case study will have to show that there was a causal relationship between the two. One of the methods of analysis used in the case study, explanation-building, will help to ensure the internal
validity of the study and that there is a causal relationship between the unit of analysis in the study and the preservation treatments being applied to the three buildings. By documenting the histories of the buildings through archival research, analysis of BAR minutes, and interviews with experts, the link between the preservation policies and theories as they are applied in Charleston and the preservation treatments of the three buildings can be established. Internal validity will also be maintained by minimizing researcher bias as much as possible, by entertaining rival explanations and presenting alternative viewpoints on the issues.

**THREATS TO EXTERNAL VALIDITY**

External validity attempts to demonstrate that the findings of a study can be applied to other study groups; in other words, it determines whether or not the findings can be used to generalize about a larger population. For case studies, external validity is an issue, since they are more appropriate for abstracting back out to a theory rather than making generalizations about other populations. For multiple-case studies like this one, replication logic can be used to eliminate threats to external validity. The results of the case study can also be abstracted back to theory in the sense that the issues that are happening in Charleston’s preservation community can form a theory to explain the preservation treatments of buildings in other cities. This is the most important aspect of the case study. Preservation of the recent past is a very current issue in historic preservation and the results of this case study can be used to formulate theories about this issue and how it possibly relates to buildings in other places.
THREATS TO RELIABILITY

Validity and reliability are related in the sense that validity ensures reliability, but not vice versa. Reliability attempts to confirm that the study has been performed without bias and with minimal errors by the researcher. Maintaining reliability and validity in the research study will also contribute to an accurate description and a persuasive interpretation of the preservation status of the three buildings. As far as the best way to assure accuracy in a qualitative study, Lyn Richards feels: “… the best way to assure that your work is reliable is to have well-validated procedures in all that you do, so people can see that you always ‘deliver the goods’” (Richards 2005, 141). Another researcher should be able to arrive at the same conclusions, by using the same methodology and the same data as the original researcher. In order to achieve this goal, it is important to fully document the case study and provide a trail for the later researcher. Reliability for this study has been achieved by maintaining a case study database and a chain of evidence available to other researchers. Reliability is also ensured by entertaining rival interpretations of the data. When one data set, such as the interviews, suggested one explanation, it was triangulated with the other data to ensure that it was accurate.

Simply ensuring the validity and reliability of a case study does not mean that the researcher has produced an “exemplary” research project. Yin defines five characteristics that make an exemplary case study: its significance, completeness, inclusion of alternative perspectives, sufficient evidence, and an engaging composition. The significance is defined as using unusual individual cases that would appeal to the general public and/or exploring nationally-important issues. This research meets both criteria,
since all three buildings and preservation in general are of interest to the general public and the issue of preservation of the Recent Past is important on a national and international scope. Completeness is demonstrated by the amount of the relevant evidence collected by the researcher, encompassing several different data sources. Alternative perspectives were consulted and included in the research, in order to ensure that rival interpretations of the data were included. Sufficient evidence was presented for the reader of the report to independently judge how effective the analysis of the data was. Lastly, the report was written in a clear and straightforward manner, to capture and keep the interest of the reader (Yin 1994, 147-152).
Figure 1: 2012 aerial map of Charleston showing the location of the old Charleston County Library (in blue), the Federal Building (in red), and the Gaillard Auditorium (in yellow). Marion Square is located slightly off center to the left in the photo. (Source: Google Maps)
OLD CHARLESTON COUNTY LIBRARY, 404 KING STREET

The history of 404 King Street begins with the incorporation of the city of Charleston on August 13th, 1783. At that time, land just outside of the original boundary of the city and bounded by King, Hutson, Meeting, and Boundary streets (the current site of Marion Square) was given to the city. Six years later, on August 18th, 1789 the northern portion of the site, consisting of 1.5 acres and bounded by King, Hutson, Meeting, and Tobacco streets, was deeded to the Commissioners of Tobacco Inspection for the State of South Carolina to build a brick warehouse for their use. This building was located directly on King Street. In 1822, an aborted slave uprising prompted the establishment of a city guard house where the tobacco inspection building was located. In 1829, a fortress known as The Citadel was completed by architect Frederick Wesner on the north side of Marion Square, which still stands today (Attard et al. 2002, 3).

![Figure 2: 1865 photo of The Citadel building, 4 years before the original west wing burned down and 22 years before the new police station was built on the west edge of the property. (Source: Margaretta Childs Archive, Historic Charleston Foundation)](image)
In 1842, the government of South Carolina decided that education was to become a component of the activities at The Citadel. At this point, the South Carolina Military Academy was established, known today as The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina. When the school was initially founded, cadets spent their freshman year in Columbia and their final three years at The Citadel building on Marion Square. The main building continued to evolve significantly over time, with a third story added to the main building in 1850 and construction of the east and west wings in 1854. Stables owned by the U.S. Government, which replaced the guardhouse built in 1822 on the site of the tobacco warehouse, continued to occupy the King Street frontage. The west wing burned down in 1869 while occupied by Federal troops after the Civil War and was rebuilt in 1889 after the Earthquake of 1886 in Charleston. In 1887, the city of Charleston built a new police station on the King Street frontage of the site, to replace the building at Broad and Meeting streets that was destroyed by the earthquake (Attard, et al. 2002, 4).

Figure 3: 1872 bird’s-eye map of Charleston, showing The Citadel with the east wing intact, but missing the west wing that burned in 1869. The stables are located at the corner of Hutson and King streets. Note also the other buildings on Marion Square, before it was formalized by 1902. (Source: Library of Congress)
Figure 4: 1888 Sanborn map, showing the original Citadel building in the center, the east wing added in 1854, and the new police station on the west end of the block built in 1887. (Source: University of South Carolina Library digital collections)

Figure 5: 1902 Sanborn map, showing the original Citadel building in the center, the east wing added in 1854, the new police station on the west end of the block built in 1887, and the rebuilt west wing from 1889. (Source: Charleston County Public Library digital collections)
By 1909, the activities occurring at the police station were deemed to be incompatible with the educational activities at The Citadel and the building was purchased by the state for use by the school and became known as Court Hall. In 1922, The Citadel abandoned its property on Marion Square and moved to a new campus in the newly-built Hampton Park neighborhood of the city where, presumably, there was more land on which to expand. The wings of the original building would continue to be utilized as officer’s quarters by the school even while the main campus had moved, while the main section would be utilized by the County of Charleston for offices and other uses. The entire complex was deeded to the County on November 8th, 1957, with portions torn down in 1959 for the new library building (Attard, et al. 2002, 4-5). The main section of the building was rehabilitated and opened as an Embassy Suites hotel in the mid-1990s.

Figure 6: 1909 photo of The Citadel building, as the former police station was being adapted for use as Court Hall and 13 years before the school would abandon their Marion Square campus for a new campus on the Ashley River. (Source: Library of Congress)
Figure 7: 1934 aerial photo of Charleston with Marion Square at the center showing The Citadel building at its most complete. (Source: Margareta Childs Archive, Historic Charleston Foundation)

Charleston is certainly no stranger to architectural controversies, as epitomized by the fight over the new Charleston Place development in the mid-1980s. Very few other projects, however, have reached the intensity of the fight over the location of the new Charleston County Library in the late 1950s. The controversy was especially interesting, considering that the purview of the Board of Architectural Review did not even reach this section of the city at this point in time. Before the property was even deeded to the county, speculation swirled that the new facility would be located at the Old Citadel. On April 20th, 1957, the News and Courier published an editorial agreeing with the site for the new library, but arguing that the current building should be preserved. They believed that it represented a central location, accessible for all citizens, and made their position about the building very clear: “Tear down the Old Citadel? No, a thousand times no!” (News and Courier 1957a).
A later article in the *Evening Post* from June 2\textsuperscript{nd} brought up the same issue of reuse or demolition, but seemed to begin to accept the inevitable when it commented that it hoped the new building would reflect Charleston’s architectural atmosphere. It commented that the west wing of the building was still being used as faculty quarters and the old police station was now county and public offices and that both sections were being discussed as a site for the new library. A 1947 structural report had found that it was not economically feasible to repair the building and architect C.T. Cummings—ironically, the architect later given the commission for the new library building—was quoted as saying that the buildings could be converted to library that “would have been considered adequate 100 years ago.” In terms of historic preservation activity, the Preservation Society of Charleston went on record as having no stance at this point (*Evening Post* 1957a).

When the County acquired the property in 1957, it paid $115,000 for it and as of June of that year, the decision whether to tear down or reuse the property had not been made yet. The County had actually attempted to purchase the property in 1954, but it was unavailable at that time (*News and Courier* 1957b). By August of 1957, the decision to tear down the west wing of the Old Citadel and the police station had been made by the library committee, based on the recommendations of architect C.T. Cummings. His issues with reusing the building included: questions about its structural integrity, the fact that its floor area was insufficient for the new facility, the mechanical systems were out of date, the overall shape and window placements of the existing buildings were incompatible with the new use, and the existing windows would only be able to provide 20\% of the
necessary daylight for the facility. Based on these objections, Cummings was instructed by the committee to draw up plans for a new building (Evening Post 1957b).

Other objections included the opinion that the buildings were located too close to King Street for pedestrians, as well as too close to Hutson Street for vehicular traffic. Cummings clearly preferred a new building, stating “In my opinion, it would be more economical to tear the building down completely and start anew. Then you can start a new building and you’re not confined. You can’t plan well if you’re confined” (News and Courier 1957c). By January of 1958, the contract to demolish the buildings had been awarded to the Chitwood House Moving Company of Charleston, who was paid $9,477 to clear the site within 180 days (News and Courier 1958a).

The plans and elevations prepared by the local Charleston firm of Halsey and Cummings were approved by the County Council on February 5th 1958 and they were instructed to begin preparing details and specifications. The new building was to be built of steel, concrete, and masonry and use the curtain wall type of construction. It was to be 2 floors and 24 feet high and contain 26,116 square feet of space on the first floor and 20,498 square feet of space on the second floor, a dramatic increase from the former house on Rutledge Avenue that the library had been previously housed in. There was to be no parking on the site for employees or the public and the construction schedule specified that bids were due on June 1st and construction was to begin on July 1st. This meeting of the County Council was the first time that the plans were made available to the public—and the outcry was fierce and immediate (Perry 1958).
Figure 8: Map of Charleston’s Old and Historic District, with the original 1931 boundaries in brown and the 1966 extension in yellow. The BAR also gained the power to stop demolitions in 1966 (Tung 2004, 28). Note that none of the three buildings included in the study (1. Old Charleston County Library 2. Federal Building 3. Gaillard Auditorium) were in the area reviewed by the BAR during their construction. (Source: Historiccharleston.org)

The day after the plans for the new building were revealed to the public, the Preservation Society of Charleston immediately stated their opposition to the new design, stating “The Preservation Society of Charleston feels that the proposed design of the County Library would definitely be out of keeping with the architectural pattern of the city” (News and Courier 1958b). The PSC and others opposed to the design were in a weak position, since the purview of the Board of Architectural Review did not extend this far north; therefore, the project was not subject to review. In order to prevent the construction of the new building, South Carolina State Representative John Horlbeck introduced a bill that would require city or county-financed buildings to be approved by
the BAR, even if they were not located in the Old and Historic District. Horlbeck felt that
the city of Charleston needed to maintain their historic buildings for the benefit of the
tourist industry. Although the bill was never enacted into law, it represents how far some
citizens were willing to go to maintain the authenticity of their city (Chapman 1958a).

Within a week of the public being made aware of the plans, editorials began to
appear in the Charleston newspapers both for and against the new design. Anthony
Harrigan wondered in the News and Courier “Must public buildings be glass and steel
bird cages?” and “What’s so good, after all, about modernistic design that reduces home
and factory, church and school, office and library to the same pattern: a flat roof,
unrelieved masses of concrete, and strip windows?” He stated that economy was not a
good argument for the new building, since Charleston had always built beautiful
warehouses and other utilitarian structures. While he acknowledged the need for a new
library building, his opinion was that new buildings in Charleston should be modern on
the interior and traditional on the exterior (Harrigan 1958).

On the other hand, John Jeffries from Clemson College questioned reusing the
Old Citadel building and advocated for a modern design, even though he had not even
seen the proposed design. He felt that designing new buildings in old styles devalues the
existing historic architecture and that the historic and modern provide a contrast that
highlights each of them. In an argument that sounds like it could apply as equally to the
current controversy in Charleston regarding Clemson’s proposed new architecture
building, Jeffries (1958) commented “Why should we pass up the opportunity to be the
20th century and return to one that can never return?” John Applegate approved of the
building, referring to it as “beautiful,” claimed that it offered an abundance of natural light on the interior and good views from within (Applegate 1958). Echoing another familiar argument, Demetrios Liollio advocated for an “architecture of our time” and stated that if Representative Horlbeck’s BAR bill had been introduced 5,000 years ago, no historical periods would have happened and man would still be living in caves (Liollio 1958).

Figure 9: The March, 1958 issue of the Preservation Society of Charleston’s newsletter, Preservation Progress, showing the public reaction to the design of the new County Library building. (Source: Proposed New County Library Building. 1958. Preservation Progress 3, no. 2 (March): 1.)
Other editorials against the proposed design stated that functionalism was a poor excuse for the bad taste of the design. In fact, it argued that the location itself was the opposite of functional, given that it was not centrally located, there was no parking, and the library was sure to lose patrons because of the neighborhood where it was located. One writer felt that an outcry from the public might be able to change the design—and that is what the Preservation Society of Charleston and the Historic Charleston Foundation attempted to do once the design was shown to the public. The March, 1958 issue of *Preservation Progress*, the PSC newsletter, depicted an “astonished” member of the public greeting the design—one that even Mayor Morrison of Charleston was both personally and professionally opposed to. PSC and HCF asked for another public hearing on the design in order to gauge public opinion on it (*Preservation Progress* 1958).

The County Council agreed to a meeting where the design of the new library could be debated by the public in an open forum and this took place in March of 1958. While there was a brisk debate on the design of the new library, there was surprisingly little regret expressed over the loss of the portions of the Old Citadel building. Despite a 3-hour debate on the new design, no change to it was made by the County Council. This decision, however, did not prevent citizens from continuing to express their opinions on the design. Editorials continued to appear in the Charleston newspapers up until the time when construction actually started. Additionally, there was no lack of alternative designs proposed by the architects selected for the job, as well as others.

One editorial in the *News and Courier* did not object to the demolition of the wings of the Old Citadel, but felt strongly that Marion Square was the best example of an
American urban parade ground and needed to be preserved. It was the overall “flavor” of the space that was important and that it was critical that new buildings on the site blend in with the existing ones (News and Courier 1958d). News and Courier columnist Ashley Cooper was against the design and suggested building the “modernist box” in a non-historic part of the city. He cited evidence from a recent project in Moscow that was aborted because it did not fit in with the character of the Kremlin and suggested that Charleston should do the same (Cooper 1958).

Figure 10: The approved library design and other options offered by the architect. (Source: Evening Post (Charleston, SC) 1958. March 31.)
Other writers wondered how long it would take for Charleston to realize that it had made a mistake in building the Modern design. An editorial in the *News and Courier* was worried that the new building would spoil the look of Marion Square and sought to stop construction before the city built “a landmark that we are confident will be a source of regret to Charlestonians in years to come” (*News and Courier* 1958e). Another editorial, entitled “House of Glass,” from the following day noted a retrospective of the Old Citadel published fifty years earlier that had said about the building: “It is a relic of the time when men went slowly, but accomplished lasting results.” The same editorial wondered how long it would take for the new library building to be looked at as a mistake—1 year or 50 (*News and Courier* 1958f). Others called for the building to have a modern interior, but a traditional exterior. One writer compared Charleston to San Francisco and opined that what is good for large cities is not necessarily true for smaller, more compact cities like Charleston. He wondered about the fate of the new library over the next 50 years and asked: “Why follow the fashion of the moment and deface Marion Square with a building that is so totally out of keeping with the spirit of the square?” (Logan 1958).

The Preservation Society of Charleston again expressed a strong opinion in October of 1958, refuting the comments from the County Council that:

- no other plans for the new library had been submitted;
- the architectural atmosphere of Charleston could not be accurately defined;
- public opinion did not support the PSC’s position; and
- a new, traditional design would not work for the library’s program.
The PSC did not feel that the County Council was expressing the will of the citizens of Charleston in building the new, modernistic library design and disagreed again with the County Council’s points (*News and Courier* 1958g). Their position seemed to be supported by a straw poll conducted by the Evening Post in November of 1958 that found that of 2,099 votes casts, 1,787 (85%) were against the Modern design. The County Council responded that changing the design at this stage would be costly and unfeasible (*Evening Post* 1958c).

Although actual construction of the new building was scheduled to begin on June 29th, 1959 and Curry Builders Inc. of Charleston was selected as the general contractor, no ceremony was planned to mark the occasion. While Curry did not submit the lowest bid, the County Council felt that that would be offset by the fact that they were a local firm and would be paying local taxes. The contract called for the building to be completed within 300 days with a budget of $480,240. After the bids were submitted, a design change was allowed to replace some of the glass with pink-grey marble, while the non-public sides would be brick with strip windows (Moye 1959).

The building was scheduled to open on August 1st, 1960, but by June, 1960 the design had been changed again to accommodate a possible third floor in the future and the cost had ballooned to $703,159 (*Evening Post* 1960a). The library building finally opened to the public on November 26th, 1960 with 75,000 books and a modern mechanical system that would keep the building warm in the winter and cool in the summer (White 1960). A *News and Courier* editorial from a few months later noted that the County Council rejected all of the objections to the new design and worried about the
mixing of races, stating: “Indeed the building eventually may be used, at least in some
departments, predominantly or exclusively by Negroes” (News and Courier 1961).

By the mid-1980s, the library system was determined to be inadequate for the
county and a $15.75M referendum was passed by the voters to build new library
buildings. Initially, the plan was to add the additional floor to the existing library building
at 404 King Street, but CMA Construction of Columbia determined that the building
could not survive an earthquake with the additional third floor. Mayor Joseph Riley of
Charleston suggested that land be purchased on Calhoun Street for a new library,
construction of which was to begin in the fall of 1994 and last 2 years. Interestingly, the
new site was under the purview of the BAR, which turned down the design for the new
library building twice before finally approving it. The fate of 404 King Street at this time
was to be sold to a private developer and demolished. It was also noted that the debate
over the design of the building back in the 1950s was one of Charleston’s biggest
controversies (Porter 1994).

That sale occurred on March 15, 1995, when the library building at 404 King
Street was sold to Library Associates, LLC (aka the Bennett Hofford Construction
Company) for $3.6M. The library use continued to occupy the site until February 8th,
Calhoun Street was scheduled to open in April of 1998 and, once 404 King Street was
closed, the site was mentioned as a possible location for retail shopping space connected
to the Old Citadel building (now the Embassy Suites hotel). Whether the old building was
going to be demolished or adapted for the new use was not made clear (Kropf 1998).
While referred to as “undistinguished” by some, the new library building at 68 Calhoun Street was hailed by one critic as the “… grandest public building built downtown this decade” when it opened in 1998 and its grandeur could more easily be seen by comparing it to the old building. Commenting on the old building, the same critic noted: “Widely loathed, the old library’s most luxurious feature—pink marble siding—became obscured by a black ooze seeping from the aluminum window frames. It looks like the Blob is working away on the inside” (Behre 1998b). Other publications from the same time mentioned how disliked 404 King Street had become, such as this comment: “It was a boxy, pink marble and plate glass structure that was regarded by most to be an eyesore as a public institution and reflected not one whit of the literary tastes or heritage of the city” (Brenner and Brenner 2002, unnumbered).
Articles discussing the future of Marion Square treated 404 King Street as if it were already a foregone conclusion that the building would be demolished. A conceptual project in 2003 sponsored by the Committee to Save the City, who advocated a return to Classical architecture that was more appropriate for Charleston, showed a series of new buildings around Marion Square. One of these new buildings, based on the architecture of the Old Citadel and including a 10-story-tower, replaced the library building. The Committee to Save the City wanted to raise the issue of how much the city should look to the past for new architecture and also cited an informal study that they had done that found 99% of the general public surveyed preferred traditional architecture (Behre 2003).

The first actual plan to demolish the building was put forward by the owners, Bennett Hofford Construction, also the owners of the nearby Hampton Inn and Embassy Suites, in early 2004. Their plans called for the demolition of the existing building and construction of a new, 8-story, $35M hotel that would contain 185 rooms. The plan received unanimous approval from the Board of Zoning Appeals and widespread approval from the community, although there was some concern expressed at the number of rooms. The local architectural firm of Goff-D’Antonio was chosen to design the new building. Bennett Hofford announced their intention to demolish the old Charleston County Library building by 2005 and open the new hotel by 2006 (Ferrell 2004).

After zoning approval, the next step for the project was to bring it before the Board of Architectural Review for conceptual approval. Approval of the new design would also necessitate the BAR approving the demolition of the existing library building. Despite the criticism from preservationists, including the Preservation Society of...
Charleston and the Historic Charleston Foundation, that the new building was too tall, the hotel proposal was given BAR conceptual approval based on the height, scale and mass of the new building on December 14th, 2005. The vote on this issue was 5-2 and was preceded by a 6-1 vote giving approval to the demolition of the existing building. The next step for the project would to be getting a height variance although, at 104’, the new building would still be shorter than the Federal Building at 113’, the Francis Marion Hotel at 165’ and the steeple of St. Matthew’s at 297’ (Behre 2005a).

Figure 12: Rendering of proposed new building at 404 King Street to replace the old County library. (Source: Fairfaxandsammons.com)
The preservationist’s concern was that the proposed building was too tall and that the prosperity and popularity of the city was creating too many new, large projects that could potentially alter the look and feel of the historic city. They were also concerned that the increased amount of traffic would overwhelm Charleston’s nineteenth century street pattern (Behre 2005b). Cynthia Jenkins, executive director of the Preservation Society of Charleston, worried about the pace of new hotel development and wrote that economic needs have to be balanced against the effect on the historic district (Jenkins 2007).

Richard Salmons and Kitty Robinson of the Historic Charleston Foundation referred to the redevelopment of the site as the most important issue in Charleston at the time. They argued that the height needed to lowered, but that they supported the hotel project and felt that the site needed a signature, high-quality building (Salmons and Robinson 2007).
To some degree, the hotel proposal brought out many of the same issues that the design of the library did 50 years previously. Citizens were concerned that the construction of such a large building in historic downtown Charleston would ruin the historic character and set a dangerous precedent. Many felt that the height of the building was out of place in Charleston. While none of the letters to the BAR from the public mentioned saving the old library building, one mentioned the “pink marble monstrosity” in particular and commented that “Now, at last, a half-century later we have an opportunity to eliminate this eyesore, and we are bombarded with an even worse one!” (Thompson 2005).

Interestingly, there seems to be no evidence to show that anyone was particularly interested in preserving the old Charleston County Library building at this point, despite the fact that it was nearing the 50-year cutoff to be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. As a 2010 editorial stated: “It’s unlikely that many people want the derelict former Charleston County Library building to stay at 404 King Street. And it appears that most do not object to a hotel taking its place” (Post and Courier 2010d). The Preservation Society of Charleston even went so far as to suggest alternatives to the hotel’s design, again without mentioning the potential preservation of the library building.
Figure 14: Original hotel design for 404 King Street by Goff-D’Antonio Associates. (*Source: Preservation Society of Charleston*)

Figure 15: Proposed alternative #1 to the original design (*Source: Preservation Society of Charleston*)

Figure 16: Proposed alternative #2 to the original design (*Source: Preservation Society of Charleston*)
On February 20th, 2008 the Board of Architectural Review granted preliminary approval to the project by a 5-1 vote. The approval was based on further studying architectural details, such as the Hutson Street façade, whether shutters should be used on the whole building, including a copper roof, including more stone and less stucco, and getting rid of faux windows (Behre 2008a). At that point, the demolition of the old library building and construction of the new hotel was being delayed by lawsuits regarding the zoning approvals that were given to the project. Although the Charleston Planning Commission, the Board of Architectural Review and the Charleston City Council had all approved zoning variances, the Preservation Society of Charleston and the Historic Charleston Foundation sued the city, claiming that the parcel was illegally spot-zoned. Reversing a lower court decision, the SC State Supreme Court issued a ruling on October 17th, 2012 allowing the hotel project to proceed (Johnson 2012).

Aside from being used temporarily as a haunted house in the late 1990s, the old Charleston County Library building has been vacant for at least 10 years. The first mention of any interest in preserving the building came from the Preservation Society of Charleston, which announced their 2nd annual “Seven to Save” list on May 10th, 2012. The list is intended as “… an annual outreach program designed to raise awareness and support for seven key preservation projects, representative of seven broader issues in Charleston and the region.” The 2nd item on the list was Mid-century Modern Architecture, which was described as “controversial and misunderstood.” The old library building was one of the specific examples of this period mentioned as deserving of
recognition and protection to “protect the full spectrum of styles and periods”
(Preservation Society of Charleston 2012).

A recent editorial by Betsy Kirkland Cahill, who is on the board of directors of
the Preservation Society of Charleston, asserted that not only was the old library building
worth saving, but also agreed with a proposed use for it. Responding to an earlier
editorial that asked if anyone in Charleston actually loved the library, she responded that
she did and related what a pleasurable experience she had as a child coming to the
library. She recalled thinking how beautiful the pink marble panels were, how the
library’s “curtain walls were distinct from the stately 18th and 19th century houses of my
neighborhood” (Cahill 2013), and that the library being different signified that it was a
special building. She goes on to opine that mid-century Modern architecture may be
difficult to like and understand, but that it was an important chapter in Charleston’s
architectural history and deserves to be preserved. She agreed with the executive director
of the PSC that the building would make an ideal home for the Clemson Architectural
Center, since the school was so involved in the Modern movement in South Carolina. It
remains to be seen whether or not this proposal is accepted and if it is, what that means
for Clemson’s proposed Spaulding-Paolozzi Center on Meeting Street that received
preliminary approval from the BAR in the fall of 2012.
Figure 17: An undated historic photo of 404 King Street, showing the library building as-built. (Source: Charleston Museum)

Figure 18: 2012 photo of 404 King Street in its current condition. (Source: photo by the author)
L. MENDEL RIVERS FEDERAL BUILDING, 334 MEETING STREET

The land that is currently occupied by the L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building—the west edge of the block bordered by Meeting, Henrietta, Charlotte and Elizabeth streets—has the address of 334 Meeting Street, but this parcel was originally 3 parcels—332, 334, and 340 Meeting Street. This land was originally granted to Richard Cole, the carpenter on the Carolina, the ship that brought the initial settlers to the Charleston area in 1670. After Cole’s death, the Wragg family acquired the property by 1715 and sold part of it in 1819 to Joseph Weyman, who built a house at 340 Meeting Street in 1822. Nicknamed by the owner himself as “Weyman’s Folly”, the house was reputedly designed by noted architect William Jay. Weyman lost the house relatively quickly due to financial difficulties and it subsequently passed through a series of owners (News and Courier 1948).

By 1849, the land on which the house stood was included within the boundaries of the city of Charleston. In 1919, the building was purchased by the Salvation Army and used as the Argonne Hotel during World War I. It was also used as the Soldiers and Sailors Club, the Twildo Inn, Osceola Hotel, and Charlotte Hotel before the Salvation Army sold it in 1938 (News and Courier 1948). After private owners held it again briefly, the property was condemned and purchased by the U.S. Government in February of 1941, along with the rest of the land fronting on Meeting between Henrietta and Charlotte streets (Kollar 2007, 4). The government’s intention was to demolish the building, but this was delayed by the outbreak of World War II.
Figure 19: 1888 Sanborn map showing structures at 332, 334 and 340 Meeting Street (Weyman’s Folly) Note the dense residential character of the block where the Federal Building would eventually be located. (Source: University of South Carolina digital collections)

Figure 20: 1944 Sanborn map showing the U.S. Government occupancy of 340 Meeting Street. Besides a few outbuildings, there is very little change on the future site of the Federal Building between the 1888 and 1944 maps. (Source: Charleston County Public Library digital collections)
Figure 21: Undated image of Weyman’s Folly, 340 Meeting Street. The house was built in 1822 and demolished by 1951. (Source: Margareta Childs Archive, Historic Charleston Foundation)

Figure 22: Rendering of the proposed post office on the site of the future Federal Building. Note that the design fronts Meeting Street directly and is much more in keeping with the traditional design of historic Charleston. (Source: Margareta Childs Archive, Historic Charleston Foundation)
On November 8th, 1948, the federal government announced plans to finally demolish Weyman’s Folly and the rest of the buildings on the Meeting Street edge of the block in order to build a new post office on the site (News and Courier 1948). By 1955, the existing buildings had been demolished, but no progress had been made in building a new building and the site was being used as a parking lot. One of South Carolina’s Congressional members, Representative L. Mendel Rivers (who the building that eventually occupied the site would be named after) tried to get Washington to commit to building a new structure in Charleston. Citizens were concerned that without a new building, federal operations would be moved to Columbia due to lack of space (Nielsen 1955).

Figure 23: 1951 Sanborn map showing 332 and 340 Meeting Street demolished, leaving only 334 Meeting Street on the future site of the Federal Building. (Source: Charleston County Public Library digital collections)
By 1960, the focus had shifted from a new post office building to a new office building in order to consolidate federal office space in Charleston. It was decided that the existing post office, at the corner of Broad and Meeting streets, would continue to function as the post office for the city. The General Services Administration asked for $3,798,000 for the new building. Interestingly, the new plan to consolidate office space called for the demolition of the historic Custom House, a grand Greek Revival structure located on East Bay Street, but this was halted after local resistance. An article in the newspaper that was published on June 29th, 1960 referenced the recent library controversy when it opined: “We hope that if the proposed project is approved by Congress the government will not follow the example which was set locally in building the new country library, rather, that it will respect Charleston’s architectural heritage. It
can demonstrate the requirements of efficiency can be met without sacrificing beauty and distinction” *(Evening Post 1960b)*.

When the contract for the new building was awarded in December of 1960, the total cost for the building had been reduced to $2.8M and the total square footage had been reduced from the initial estimate of 144,000 down to 120,000. The architects for the project, given a $106,000 contract, were the Columbia, South Carolina firm of Lyles, Bisett, Carlisle and Wolff, with assistance from the local Charleston firm of Cummings and McCrady—the same architects who had designed the new County library building that had opened only one month before. They were charged with completing architectural drawings for the new building by November of 1961 *(News and Courier 1960)*.

The construction bidding for the new building began in January of 1964 and by that time, the budget had been further reduced to $2.1M with a construction schedule of 540 days. To make up the $800,000 difference from the larger budget, the architects cut out minor architectural details. The new building was designed to have office space for all of the federal agencies in Charleston, except for the Customs Bureau and Post Office. Holder Construction of Atlanta was chosen as the general contractor. Interestingly, an article at the time construction was beginning noted other construction activity in the vicinity, including the demolition of part of the east wing of the Old Citadel building *(Hamilton 1964)*.
Figure 25: Federal Building under construction. *Source:* the Charleston Museum

Figure 26: Charleston architectural influences used in the Federal Building by architect John Califf. *Source: News and Courier, March 3rd, 1965*
As compared to the controversy that surrounded the design of the new County library building just a few years earlier, there is virtually no mention of any issues with the design of the new Federal Building. There was no opposition to the demolition of the old houses on the site although, as previously mentioned, that occurred many years before the building was actually built. One of the vocal critics of the library building, *News and Courier* columnist Ashley Cooper, supported the new Federal Building, commenting that “… the new Federal building on the east side of Marion Square blends splendidly with our local architecture.” Architect John Califf, perhaps noting the recent library design controversy, was “… anxious to create a contemporary building which would blend in to the Charleston background.” To achieve this, he incorporated elements from traditional Charleston buildings, including the arches from 70 Ashley Avenue, the façade from (the now-demolished) 213 King Street, and window masking from 21 Legare Street (Cooper 1965).

By the time the building opened for use in 1965, it was hailed by the GSA as the “most modern in Charleston.” The GSA also felt that: “The seven-story structure is of an architectural style ‘which is in harmony with the most attractive structures in Charleston, presenting a spacious but functional appearance’.” The building on its 1.25 acre site housed 344 employees, albeit with limited parking, and actually opened before the target date. The floor plan was the same on each floor, but could be customized by the federal agency on each floor for their particular needs (Hobbes 1965). The final construction cost was $2.9M and the new Federal Building was dedicated in November of 1965 (Waring 1965). By April of 1970, however, the building had already reached capacity (*News and
*Courier* 1970). Also in 1970, a retrospective of architecture in South Carolina celebrating the 300th anniversary of the founding of the colony featured the new Federal Building (Harlan and Hodges 1970, 146).

Barely 30 years after the building was completed, *Post and Courier* columnist Robert Behre asked: “Might the L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building have a date with the wrecking ball? No date has been scheduled so far, but don’t count on the six-story office building lasting as long as other Charleston federal landmarks, such as the U.S. Custom House.” Commenting on the GSA statement from the dedication that the building was “a structure that reflects pride in the past and great hope for the future,” Behre noted “…even in a city that treasures historic buildings, that view has not lasted very long.”
The building was full of asbestos, which made its reuse and renovation more difficult, and this was one of the reasons that the GSA was considering razing the building and starting over. A prominent preservationist—Jonathan Poston of the Historic Charleston Foundation—commented on its preservation status, saying “At the time, it was well-intended, and its materials are of very high quality. But it’s not a building—even of its period—that is of the utmost important to preserve. It’s always been extraordinarily tall for that area of Charleston” (Behre 1996). Interestingly, when Poston’s landmark book *The Buildings of Charleston* was published one year later, the Federal Building was not included in the exhaustive survey, although both the old Charleston County Library and the Gaillard Auditorium were included.

The potential preservation of the Federal Building suffered another blow in November of 1998 when architectural critic Paul Goldberger appeared at an architectural forum sponsored by the Historic Charleston Foundation. At that event, he stated that he feels, in many cases, that people preserve existing buildings mainly because they are afraid of replacement buildings. In condemning examples in Charleston that do not match with the city, including the Federal Building, Goldberger commented: “I think that should be the goal when you build a new building in this city—to create a passionate interlude” (Behre 1997). Only a few months later, in April of 1998, the Federal Building was scheduled to be closed and all tenants were required to move out by the end of 2000.

When the building was scheduled to close, it was to be removed from the GSA inventory of federal buildings and other office space leased for the agencies that used it. The asbestos issue was mentioned again and the site was mentioned as a possibility for a
new hotel, since it had a “limited future.” Consultants working for the city of Charleston recommended that the city’s accommodations zone be extended above Calhoun Street to include the site. Robert Behre summarized the feelings of preservationists at this point by saying: “Despite the use of marble and brick in its construction, preservationists have said the building is too boxy and too tall, and not worth saving” (Behre 1998a). When future South Carolina governor Mark Sanford moved his office from the Federal Building to North Charleston in 1999, the building was “supposed to be demolished” sometime in the next few years, although no firm demolition date had been set (Kropf 1999).

In September of 1999, the Federal Building was heavily damaged when Hurricane Floyd passed through Charleston. The most important issue was the dangerous asbestos that was released by water damage from the storm. Immediately after the hurricane, spokeswoman Judy Brent of the GSA said: “This building will not reopen. And there will not be another federal building constructed.” She also mentioned the possibility that the building would be demolished and the site redeveloped, but did not give further details (Menchaca 1999). The last tenants in the Federal Building moved out in December of 1999 and, at that point, the federal government was “no longer interested in the property” and the fate of the building and site was unclear. While reuse or demolition were each possible at this point, the city of Charleston’s downtown plan mentioned the site as ideal for a public building, such as a symphony hall, or a hotel with retail on the ground floor (Behre 1999b).

With the fate of the site unclear, a developer quickly stepped forward with a proposal for the site. In May of 2000, Columbia developer Tom Moore proposed to
demolish the existing Federal Building and build a new one nearby, at the corner of Elizabeth and Calhoun streets. Despite the GSA’s comments about not building a new building, by law, federal agencies must remain in the central business district of a city, if possible. Moore’s proposal for the site of the Federal Building included 3 separate condominium buildings fronting Meeting Street, including a potential art gallery on the ground floor, and 4 single family houses on the site of the former parking lot. The deal would require a complex land swap between the developer, city and federal government and, due to the zoning requirements of the site, Moore was considering applying for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) (Menchaca 2000).

This proposal did not come to fruition and within a year, the city of Charleston began to make plans for the “…empty, asbestos-riddled building some have lamented as a modernist horror …” The proposal was similar to Moore’s, with the demolished building being replaced by an office building fronting Meeting Street and housing behind on the former parking lot. Mayor Joseph Riley was interested in helping Marion Square by building a better building closer to the street. He said: “We have a chance to create something that is infinitely more handsome than what we have.” The asbestos issue with the building was mentioned as a major reason why renovation was not feasible (Hardin 2001).

The same project to improve Marion Square that proposed to replace the old Charleston County Library building had the same idea for the Federal Building and both existing buildings were characterized as “disliked by many.” The proposal to renovate the Square was partly based on the fact that it was “bordered by some of the city’s least
popular buildings” and the importance of getting residents’ input before the project started was noted (Hardin 2003). At this time, Cynthia Jenkins, executive director of the Preservation Society of Charleston, commented about the Federal Building: “It’s not one of my favorite buildings, so it’s hard to get passionate about it. On the other hand, it is there. Is there a way to use it? One hundred years from now, will people go, ‘I can’t believe they didn’t save one of the few examples from that period?’,” indicating that the preservation of the Federal Building was not yet an important topic (Behre 2003). An editorial from early 2004 written by Edward Gilbreth referred to the buildings as an “uninspiring hodgepodge” and commented: “The former county library, the old federal building and several other structures surrounding Marion Square were born ugly and should be razed the same way regardless of what certain BAR members have to say about them Let’s not blow it—unless its with a fuse” (Gilbreth 2004). Interestingly, Gilbreth is the son of columnist Ashley Cooper, who had nothing but positive things to say about the Federal Building when it opened in 1965.

In February of 2004, the city of Charleston announced plans for a land swap, where the city would trade buildings on Broad Street for the Federal Building. Having the rights to the property on Broad Street would allow the federal government to locate offices there and keep a presence in downtown Charleston. In return, the city would obtain the redevelopment rights to 334 Meeting Street, where the initial plan was to put housing on the east side of the site and office, retail, and possibly a small inn on the west side. This redevelopment plan likely meant that the existing Federal Building would be demolished (Mcdermott 2004).
Later that year, Michael Maher of the Charleston Civic Design Center stepped forward and proposed that the Federal Building was worth preserving. He claimed that Modernism had been singled out as the most unpopular architectural style and that Charleston only had a few examples, including the old Charleston County Library building and the Federal Building. He was very critical of the preservation climate in Charleston and its apparent bias against certain periods, noting that: “In fact, in a community that prides itself on its activist historic preservation ethic, these two prominent public buildings have nobody clamoring for their preservation—the day they fall to the wrecking ball will likely be trumpeted as a day of progress in this historic city.” Maher claimed that the Federal Building was made of quality materials and that activating the ground floor and putting a rooftop addition on the building would revitalize it. Echoing the familiar bias against traditional architecture, he further advocated for preservation of the Federal Building by saying: “Or, will Charlestonians a generation from now wistfully lament the loss of a fine example of 20th century architecture as they gaze on a chunky early-twenty-first century quasi-traditional beige stucco block that stands in its place?” (Maher 2004).

Columnist Robert Behre of the Post and Courier thought that the potential preservation of the Federal Building was going to be a contentious debate. Taking the pulse of the city at the end of 2004, he commented that: “Many would like to see this boxy office building torn down and replaced with something that blends better with the surrounding historic neighborhood.” On the other hand, he notes that there were a growing number of preservationists who were interested in saving the building, since the
design was inspired by the existing historic architecture, it was constructed from quality materials, and it stepped back from the street to allow the view of the Citadel Baptist Church. While Behre noted that Charleston lamented past landmarks that had been torn down, like the Charleston Hotel and the Orphan’s House, he also thought it was a sad commentary on the state of architecture that the Federal Building could not be replaced with something better. Perhaps he summed up the situation best by saying: “Sometimes I find a subversive relationship between architecture and preservation: The less faith we have in our ability to build quality new buildings, the more passionate we get about saving the old ones” (Behre 2004).

Behre voiced similar concerns as Maher in a later column, where he acknowledged how tastes can change over 40 years. While the Federal Building was featured in a 1965 AIA publication that reviewed new architecture projects, it, along with other examples of Modern architecture, were now amongst Charleston’s least popular buildings. He stated that popular opinion of architecture, like many other things, goes through cycles and while many buildings are disliked in their “middle age,” they are rediscovered once they reach a greater age. He reminded readers that the minimum age for the National Register of Historic Places is 50 years and once a building in Charleston reaches 75 years (recently changed to 50 years), its demolition must be approved by the Board of Architectural Review (Behre 2007b).

While preservationists were beginning to get interested in the fate of the Federal Building, the federal government was preparing to dispose of it. Even though the building was a non-contributing building in the Charleston Old and Historic District, the GSA
proposed to place a covenant on the property to make sure that future changes on the site would conform to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office wanted to ensure that the surrounding historic district was not adversely affected by the GSA disposing of the building (Dobrasko 2007).

In April of 2007, a group of architects gathered to propose a new vision for Marion Square. While the renderings show a new building on the site of the Federal Building, architect Richard Sammons acknowledged that the existing steel skeleton of the building could possibly be reused. Commenting on the architectural merit of the Federal Building, Sammons noted: “We’ve become a culture where we’re actually not allowed to judge the quality of everything. We can judge the quality of things, and that’s off the shelf federal GSA stuff from the 1960s. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve seen that building, the same one over and over and over again. The same detailing, the same cast concrete panels. It’s not unique.” He also echoed Behre’s comments about preservation, saying that the movement did not begin to save every building and that it was now primarily motivated by the fear of what would replace a demolished building (Behre 2007c).

After determining that the federal government did not need the site on Broad Street for office space, the GSA backed out of the real estate swap with the city of Charleston that would have given control of the Federal Building to the city. Instead, the GSA decided to sell the building on the open market, in an online auction that was scheduled to begin in the summer of 2007. This meant that the city would have less
control over the redevelopment of the site and the plan was to rezone it so that the city would have more say in the future plans (Slade 2007d). To counter this issue, the city decided to try and buy the building before it was auctioned off—a move that would require approval of the City Council. Mayor Riley thought that the site could be utilized for city offices, but was determined to get the best possible design approved, then sell the site to a private developer. While not explicitly stated, the city’s plan appeared to be to demolish the building (Slade 2007e).

![Figure 28: Rendering of proposed Federal Building replacement by architects Fairfax and Sammons, based on the old Charleston Hotel that was located further south on Meeting Street and demolished in the mid-twentieth century. (Source: Fairfaxandsammons.com)](image)
This plan was dealt a blow when the proposed rezoning was not passed due to neighborhood opposition and concern about the traffic that could result from increased density (Slade 2007e). The city decided to offer the GSA $11.5M for the site, under the terms of a law that allowed local governments to purchase property that will be used for a public purpose before it is auctioned off. While the GSA wanted to get $15M for the site, the city of Charleston felt the lower bid was justified based on their appraisal and the fact that asbestos remediation and demolition of the building was expected to cost upwards of $2M. The GSA rejected the city’s offer and set the opening of the online auction for August 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2007, with a minimum bid of $12M (Slade 2007f).

Only 3 qualified bids were submitted and the Dewberry Capital Corporation from Atlanta won the auction with a bid of $15M. The principal of the company, John Dewberry was a part-time resident of Charleston, which may have piqued his interest in...
the project (Slade 2007i). While no plans for the building or site were announced immediately, the thought was that “Whatever is proposed, it almost certainly will stir up controversy.” While some residents of the city continued to argue that the aesthetics of the building and asbestos situation merited demolition, others countered that it needed to be preserved and reused as one of the city’s only examples of Modern architecture (Mcdermott 2008).

On January 16th, 2008, the Federal Building was officially conveyed with the preservation covenant attached from the GSA to Dewberry Capital (Entorf 2008). Like the city originally planned, Dewberry wanted the building included in the accommodations district to allow a hotel use for the site. At this point, Dewberry was still weighing the options and it was not clear if they intended to reuse or demolish the Federal Building (Stech 2009). Although the plans were not clear, preservationists were beginning to take more interest in the building, as a November, 2009 article in the Charleston City Paper noted: “Initially, many observers expected the building would be destroyed to advance broader development plans for the entire site, but the nonprofit Historic Charleston Foundation and other preservationists suggested potential developers and the city take a second look at its significance” (Hambrick 2009).

Shortly thereafter, HCF released a position statement written by Winslow Hastie, the organization’s Director of Preservation and Museums. Hastie stated that HCF is in favor of reusing the building rather than demolishing it. The asbestos issue, which many advocates of demolition cited, would be an issue no matter which option is chosen for the building, Hastie argued. Some of the reasons that the building is significant, according to
the statement, are that it was the first major federal office building built in South Carolina after World War II, it is sensitive to the local historic context, and it is a product of President Johnson’s “Great Society” and the 1962 Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, which called for the best in contemporary architecture to be combined with the local architectural traditions. He also cited the building’s position, stepped back from Meeting Street to allow views of the Citadel Baptist Church, but this point seems to violate basic urban design principles. The Federal Building should not be demolished at this point, because in order to properly evaluate buildings, Hastie argued that they must first be allowed to reach the 50 year mark (Hastie 2010).

While the initial thoughts seemed to suggest that the Federal Building was going to be demolished, Dewberry decided to renovate the building. The decision was also made to leave the exterior largely as-is in order to speed up the approvals process. On February 4th, 2010, the building received zoning approval to be included in the accommodations zone and the plan was for the hotel to open in early 2012 (Slade 2010b). Although the developer seemed sure of the plans for the building, the city was still debating its merits. As of March, 2010, “there’s a sharp division over whether the building’s current state is worth saving, whether its architecture contributes to the city.” Dewberry hired a local architectural firm, Gibson Thompson Guess Architects, to begin working on the project. Their design concept was to keep the middle floors intact, potentially change the window tinting, reimagine the first floor, and fill in the top floor, where the mechanical systems were kept. The relatively few changes were thought to be
more economically and environmentally friendly and there was even talk of applying for preservation Reinvestment Tax Credits (Behre 2010a).

Dewberry applied to the BAR for conceptual approval of the project and it was reviewed by the board on January 26\textsuperscript{th}, 2011. The board approved the demolition of a one-story mechanical room and an attached loading dock, the addition of a glass penthouse on the roof, as well as the majority of the conceptual scheme for the building. Board member Robert DeMarco was the lone dissenting vote, commenting that “If a building is bad architecture, I don’t care when it was built I don’t think we should keep it” (Kreitman 2011). The Preservation Society of Charleston and the Historic Charleston Foundation objected to the painting of the building and this was the lone point of the scheme that was rejected by the BAR (Slade 2011).

After the project had won conceptual approval with the initial 120-room count, Dewberry decided that it wanted to increase the number of rooms to 161. The neighbors were initially included in the plans, but were concerned how the increase in rooms was going to affect traffic, parking, and noise. An editorial in the Post and Courier called for more neighborhood input on future plans (\textit{Post and Courier} 2011). Despite the potential objections of the neighborhood, the Board of Zoning Appeals approved the increased number of rooms and the next step was preliminary approval by the BAR (Byrd 2011). Residents were still concerned about the change, however, as Mayor Riley had promised a “boutique” hotel, not one with 161 rooms. As a compromise, public spaces were moved to the front of building, away from neighborhood residents, deliveries to the hotel were
limited to business hours, and a proposed roof pool and spa were to close at 10 pm (Hambrick 2011).

The issue of painting the building reappeared on the BAR agenda again when the reuse project was considered for preliminary approval on November 9th, 2011. The project received preliminary approval, but the issue of painting the building was deferred for further study. In order to show the BAR what the proposed painting would look like, sample panels were painted on the building in late 2011. Before it returned to the BAR, Robert Behre wrote an article questioning whether or not it was appropriate to paint the building. His conclusion was that, since the paint is easily reversible, that the owner should be allowed to do it, especially since Dewberry had committed to preserving the building in the first place instead of demolishing it. Behre opined that preservationists often thought too narrowly about how strict preservation needs to be and said:

“Charleston’s buildings should be allowed to evolve as they change from offices or warehouses to hotels to apartments to restaurants. And as long as their changes don’t remove historic fabric or aren’t deemed too jarring then shouldn’t aesthetic ties be broken by the building’s owners?” (Behre 2012a).

The painting of the building was approved by the BAR at their February 22nd, 2012 meeting, with the stipulation that owner provide further details to staff. As of the summer of 2012, the project was scheduled to be completed in January, 2013 at a total cost of $21.5M and contain 155 hotel rooms. The architects are McMillan, Padzen, Smith of Charleston in association with Gibson Guess Architects and the engineer is Promus Inc. from Atlanta. Additions to the roof of the building include a spa, meeting room,
fitness area and pool. The plaza in front of the building and ground floor will be activated by the additions of a hotel “living room”, signature restaurant, bar, café, and a 1,500 square foot function space that includes some outdoor space. As of the fall of 2012, the project has completed the three levels of BAR approval and is moving forward. The architects have outfitted 3 rooms with sample furnishings and fixtures and the project was scheduled to go out to bid soon (Wingfield interview 2012).

Figure 30: Sample painting of the Federal Building done by the owner to show the BAR what the building would look like painted. (Source: photo by the author)
Figure 31: Rendering of the proposed entrance to the Hotel Dewberry.  
(Source: Charlestonbusiness.com)
Although the Gaillard Auditorium was the last of three buildings of this study to be completed, in 1968, the idea of building a large civic auditorium in Charleston had been considered since 1934. By 1955, the Greater Charleston Auditorium Planning Committee had been appointed to study the need for an auditorium and exactly where to build it. They decided that marshland that was in the process of being filled in near the extension of Lockwood Avenue was the best area for it. Specifically, the new auditorium was to be located on a 13-acre site near The Citadel’s Johnson Hagood Stadium, on the west side of the city and, at the time, the site of county fair buildings. The advantages of the site, as the committee saw it, was that there was plenty of room for parking and it was easy to get there by automobile. Despite the fact that it was not located in the city’s historic center, the site was chosen and it was decided that the new auditorium was to seat 5,000 people at the minimum (Charleston Evening Post 1955). 

The initial proposal called for tearing down the county fair buildings, which were built in the 1930s as part of a Works Progress Administration project. It was thought that by building on the same site, the project would be cheaper because by reusing some existing structural work, there would be less piling and sub-foundation work to be done. The $2.5M proposed auditorium would seat 5,000 for performances, include a banquet hall that could seat 1,200 for a single meal, and include parking for 3,600 cars. It was also proposed as a joint project between the city of Charleston and Charleston County (News and Courier 1956).
In 1958, 8 acres were purchased for the project, down from the initial estimate of 13 acres, for $200,000. The actual cost to construct the building was proposed to be financed by a bond issue (Charleston Evening Post 1958a). Architectural and engineering plans were drawn up by the Charleston firm of Cummings and McCrady (the same firm that would later design the library building) and called for a building 200’ wide and 400’ long with a lobby running the entire width of the building. To the left of the lobby would be a 5,000 seat auditorium for athletic and religious events that would also include offices and locker and shower rooms. To the right of the lobby, there would be a concert hall with 1,000 seats and an exhibition hall. Above the exhibition hall would be the banquet hall, with a capacity of 1,200. The building was to be built with a budget of $1.75M (Charleston Evening Post 1958b).

Figure 32: Proposed 1958 Charleston civic auditorium, located near Johnson Hagood Stadium. Note the traditional design of the building. (Source: Post and Courier, September 28th, 1958)
One of the reasons given that Charleston needed a new auditorium was simply that not having one was costing the taxpayers money, in terms of lost opportunities for conventions and other large events. After World War II, Charleston had seen a significant slump in the tourist and convention trade and it was thought that a new auditorium would help alleviate this, as well as help attract new industry to town. The bond issue to construct the building, which was limited to only 5 school districts in Charleston County, eventually failed and this scheme did not progress beyond the planning phase, despite the fact that there was no organized opposition to it (Farrow 2000). Interestingly, while the new County Library building would be unofficially desegregated just a few years later, segregation at the proposed auditorium was an issue. When the issue was raised during an interview with the Charleston Evening Post, the response was: “The commission will comply with South Carolina law on mixing of the races. Adequate separate facilities that are necessary will be set up for both races” (Risher 1958).

The idea of a new civic auditorium for Charleston would be raised again, 5 years later, with a different site proposed for the building. The dedication program of the new auditorium from 1968 summarized the history of the process that led to the new building. On December 16th, 1963, Mayor Palmer Gaillard appointed a committee to examine the issue of building a new auditorium. The committee included the father of future mayor Joseph P. Riley, who would be instrumental in guiding the renovations to the Gaillard Auditorium 50 years later. The committee was charged with determining the feasibility of building a new auditorium, as well as determining its size, scope, and site. The committee determined that the auditorium was both feasible and necessary, in order to attract larger
conventions and money to the city. As opposed to locating the building several miles
from downtown, as originally proposed, the new building should be located as close as
possible to King and Calhoun streets, where there were already numerous hotels (City of
Charleston, 1966).

The committee recommended that the proposed building include an auditorium to
seat 2,700 and a 10,000 square foot exhibition hall. The recommended site was where the
building eventually was built, just south of Calhoun Street between Anson and Middle
(now Alexander) streets. Not only would the new auditorium be a great benefit to the
city, it would also clear out the slums of the Middlesex neighborhood that currently
occupied the proposed site. It was also suggested that George Street be extended to East
Bay Street (eliminating Minority Street) to provide another direct link from the site to
King Street. It was thought that the urban renewal project would improve the surrounding
areas and coincide with the renewal of the Ansonborough neighborhood directly to the
south, which the Historic Charleston Foundation was instrumental in rehabilitating. On
May 28th, 1964 the report of the committee, which also included an architectural
competition to decide on the design, was approved by the Charleston City Council (City
of Charleston 1966).
Figures 33 & 34: 1888 Sanborn maps showing the dense residential make-up of the Middlesex neighborhood, bounded by East Bay, Laurens, Anson and Calhoun streets where the Gaillard Auditorium would eventually be located. (Source: University of South Carolina Library digital collections)
Despite the fact that the project would involve clearing out an entire neighborhood of existing buildings, both the Historic Charleston Foundation and the Preservation Society of Charleston approved of the proposed site. In fact, HCF president Ben Scott Whaley thought that the new auditorium building would accomplish 2 goals: “Also, by clearing two blocks of predominately substandard dwellings, it would be a significant step towards eradication of urban blight in the heart of our community.” Both organizations felt at least that the former tavern 85 Calhoun Street should be saved (it later was) to serve as an entry to the site. Perhaps recalling the recent controversy of the new library building and the traditional design of the originally proposed auditorium building, PSC president William Morrison commented: “We would hope that the final design will conform with the traditional architecture of Charleston” (News and Courier 1964a).

Figure 35: 1965 study sheet of the Middlesex neighborhood of Charleston produced by the Historic Charleston Foundation showing the impact of the proposed Gaillard Auditorium. (Source: Margaretta Childs Archive, Historic Charleston Foundation)
On August 15th, 1964, drawings from 6 architects were submitted as part of the competition to determine the design of the new building. Partners Frank Stubbs and Sidney Stubbs—both 1959 graduates of Clemson College’s architecture program—were chosen as the winners. They were awarded a $1,500 prize and their design was cited by the jury for an effective use of the site, the beauty of the façade on Calhoun Street, and their solution to the parking issue. As the Charleston Evening Post noted: “By coincidence, it appeared to also be the most economical solution.” Second place went to Cornelius Cummings of Cummings and McCrady, the architects of the original auditorium building (Charleston Evening Post 1964).
Part of the winning plan called for the parking to be located behind the building, and Stubbs noted that “We tried to place the building on the lot so the building could be seen—not the cars.” Stubbs also referred to the design, which departed radically from the original traditional design, not as a contemporary design, but “a building of today” (Robertson 1964). The building was eventually set back from Calhoun Street because the street used to be a creek and it was less costly to build the building on more solid ground (Behre 2010c). The partners had only been working together for 6 months when they won the competition and tried to be “as realistic as possible rather than idealistic.” Perhaps referring to the earlier controversy over the new library building, Stubbs also commented: “It’s a building of today and yet it’s completely in harmony with the tradition of Charleston. It has classic lines but it’s not a classical building” (News and Courier 1964b).

Reaction to the proposed design was mixed, but the News and Courier could not have been more pleased with it. In an editorial, it exclaimed: “While somewhere in the infinity of architectural creativity there must exist a concept which could more strikingly have linked the Charleston tradition with contemporary use, we see nothing incompatible with the winning design …. “ Because Charleston was such a historic city, the new auditorium should be both comfortable and architecturally charming, goals that the paper thought the architects met (News and Courier 1964c). The Historic Charleston Foundation also endorsed the design of the new building, seeing it as an asset for the tourist trade, while making no mention of the scores of buildings that would have to be demolished in order to construct it (News and Courier 1964d).
Predictably, there were critics of the proposed design. The Preservation Society of Charleston’s newsletter exclaimed: “Take a look at the proposed building building! (sic) One can hardly distinguish it from one of the recently built discount houses, or from one of the many super-market buildings, or from a first class automobile show room.” They questioned why the city was not subject to the same restrictions that governed privately-held buildings in Charleston (even though this site was not located in the district under the BAR’s purview at this time), wondering: “Now how can you expect individuals to maintain Charleston’s traditional old world atmosphere when the city itself goes ahead and violates the very rules they expect other citizens to comply with?” The article brought up a recent example in Germany where the city built a new building of high quality that respected and contributed to the existing architecture. The writer was in favor of a new auditorium, but not the proposed design, and felt that the original site near The Citadel was more advantageous. The article also included a racist-tinged rant that questioned the safety of auditorium patrons in that area (A Young Fogey 1965, 12-13). When the Gaillard Auditorium was completed, even Modern architect Philip Johnson was critical of it and thought that it violated “every thinkable canon of taste because its scale does not fit its site” (Weyeneth 2000, 66).
On November 4th, 1964 the plan was approved by voters and the project was allowed to proceed. On July 13th, 1966, a contract was signed with the McDevitt and Street Construction Company from Charlotte as general contractors for the project. A month later, a ground-breaking ceremony was held for the project on August 16th, 1966. The new building was designed to be 360’ long and 160’ wide. During excavation, two unexploded Civil War shells were found on the site and removed for further study. Interestingly, the renovation project in 2013 would be affected by the discovery of 37 colonial-era graves on the site. 85 Calhoun Street was retained and, in conjunction with the Historic Charleston Foundation, four buildings were moved from the site to new locations in Ansonborough (City of Charleston 1966). These four buildings were 82 Anson Street, 114 Anson Street, 116 Anson Street, and 15 Wall Street (Weyeneth 2000, 66).
While a project of this nature today would prompt “rioting in the streets,” citizens were split 50-50 on razing the Middlesex neighborhood (Farrow 2000). Reporters did visit the neighborhood and spoke to residents, one of whom commented: “They’re doing the wrong thing. It’s terrible. Some of these people have had houses passed down from generation to generation” (Robertson 1965). Newspaper articles from the time period generally focused on the dangerous nature of the neighborhood and the rundown buildings that made it up, seemingly to justify the wholesale demolition. Condemnations of 14 properties began in November of 1965 and, at that point, 58 additional properties had either been purchased or were in the process (News and Courier 1965).
All legal obstructions were cleared and the building was completed and opened for business in 1968. Within 10 years of the building being finished, however, it was already experiencing major issues. As the *News and Courier* noted: “Leaking walls and roofs have plagued the building since it first opened in June, 1968 for a conference of Southern governors …” (Flagler, 1977a). There were $1.8M worth of change orders during the construction process and other problems included very low water pressure inside the building, the fact that no as-built drawings of the building existed, and a major rerouting of the piping was necessary. Naturally, the architects blamed the contractor for the problems and Sidney Stubbs noted that the leaks were due to the fact that the exterior bricks were not installed according to the architect’s specifications. Tests showed that within 15 minutes of putting water on the upper walls, it was able to make its way to the

*Figure 39:* Mid-1960’s aerial photo of Charleston looking north showing the site of the future Gaillard Auditorium mostly cleared of buildings. *(Source: Margaretta Childs Archive, Historic Charleston Foundation)*
stage. Repairs to the leaking walls and roof, which had already destroyed ceiling and floor tiles and would require the addition of metal flashing, were estimated at $14,000 (Flagler 1977b).

Jonathan Poston described the building of the Gaillard Auditorium as the “consummate 1960s urban renewal project” in his 1997 book *The Buildings of Charleston*. He also noted that the Middlesex neighborhood was destroyed, George Street was realigned, Minority Street was eliminated, and Alexander Street was truncated, seemingly implying that the success of the project was already being reevaluated not even 30 years after the building was built (Poston 1997, 427). By 1999, discussions were already underway regarding the future of the building. At least one member of Charleston’s City Council, Larry Shirley, was critical of the building, commenting: “It’s outlived the way it was built. It’s going to need some major work to bring it up to standards.” In 1998, Mayor Riley suggested tearing down half of the building in order to construct a new arena for the College of Charleston, but this idea was rejected by the community. Councilman Shirley called for a cosmetic overhaul of the building, noting: “That building is architecturally ugly. If you were going to build that building right now, it wouldn’t get past the BAR or the zoning people or anybody.” At this point, the city decided to wait and see how the College of Charleston arena played out before deciding what to do about the Gaillard Auditorium (Behre 1999a).

The College of Charleston eventually built the TD Arena on Meeting Street and plans to renovate the Gaillard stalled for 10 years. In 2009, there was a proposal to radically renovate it, prompted by an anonymous $20M donation that specified that
David Schwarz would be the architect. According to the early reports, Schwarz, well-known for his Classically-inspired designs, could have begun the project as early as 2011. The project was strongly supported by the city, since a new concert hall was needed and the Gaillard was the best site for it. The project proposed to reduce the seating capacity from 2,700 to 1,700 and potentially base the neo-Classical exterior renovation on the design of the College of Charleston’s Randolph Hall (Parker 2009).

The $100M initial cost estimate of the project naturally elicited numerous comments from the public, who felt that that money was better spent on other public projects. One editorial noted that it was more than the entire payroll of the Atlanta Braves (Wooten 2009). Because of cost considerations, the scope of the project began to change to include the new construction of city offices adjacent to the building. The thought was that by doing both projects at the same time, it would save money and the city would also save money by consolidating offices that were scattered around the city in one place. In terms of the interior, the goal was a major upgrade, since “…the Gaillard’s fan-shaped hall, bad acoustics and stodgy architecture no longer match the high quality productions offered in Charleston …” (Parker 2009).

As opposed to 40 years previous, when the demolition of the Middlesex neighborhood seemed to happen relatively smoothly, the renovation of the Gaillard, as well as other projects in the neighborhood, already had residents up in arms. Residents were especially concerned about a potential increase in traffic and other negative impacts in their neighborhoods (Post and Courier 2009). Despite the opposition, Post and Courier architecture critic Robert Behre called the neo-Classical makeover scheme “A
work of contextual architecture worthy of the city around it.” Although his father was on the original committee for a civic auditorium, Mayor Joseph Riley felt that the Gaillard Auditorium was not contextual and never would be. Behre felt that the project demonstrated how much Charleston had changed, especially in the context of the other large projects occurring along East Bay and Calhoun streets. Because major events now tended to go to the TD Arena or to the North Charleston Coliseum, it was felt that Charleston needed to renovate the Gaillard (Behre 2010d).

By June of 2010, the scope and budget of the project had expanded considerably. The $142M budget was to come half from private donations and half from the city. $96M was allotted to renovate the performance hall, $23M would be used to renovate the exhibit hall, and the final $23M would be used for new offices and the exterior renovation. The original $20M anonymous donation was revealed to be from Martha Rivers Ingram of Spoleto, who was responsible for choosing Schwarz as the architect. Because of the poor economy, it was thought that it would be cheaper to do the project at the time and renovate the building, rather than completely replace it. While it was acknowledged that the Gaillard had played an important role in the city, it was also that it was “…by most accounts an unattractive building with poor acoustics, and it’s been a money pit for the city.” The scope now included renovating both the interior and exterior and wrapping the George Street and part of the Anson Street facades in new construction that would include office space for 120 workers. While the overall project budget was high, consolidating the city offices would save the city $750,000 annually in rent (Slade 2010c).
Critics agreed that the building needed a drastic renovation, but still encouraged the City Council to examine the project thoroughly before approving it. Even though it was the most expensive municipal project ever for Charleston, it would not require a tax increase (*Post and Courier* 2010a). Others were critical of the mayor urging quick action to approve the project and felt that taking more time and considering all of the options and possibilities was the best course of action (*Post and Courier* 2010b). Some were opposed to the project completely, mostly because they felt that the money could better be spent on more pressing projects, such as the periodic flooding of the Crosstown or the school system (*Post and Courier* 2010c).

On June 15th, 2010, the Charleston City Council unanimously approved the appropriation of $2.7M for architectural and engineering fees, in effect kick-starting the project. The council did add 2 conditions to the contracts—that the city be protected from potential cost overruns and that the involvement of women- and minority-owned businesses participating in the project be monitored. The project used Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) and the 2011 construction cost was estimated at $26M less than it would have cost in 2006. While support for the project was generally broad, some did again question the wisdom of spending so much money on the Gaillard when other issues, like roads and downtown flooding, could be perceived as more important (Parker 2010).
Figure 40: The George Street façade of the Gaillard Auditorium undergoing “renovations” in the spring of 2013. According to the Charleston City Paper, 32,000 tons of steel, brick and concrete have been removed from the building as “much” of the building is being demolished. (Source: Charleston City Paper, 24 October 2012, page 22; photo by the author)

Once the details of the project were made public, the project was scheduled for a special Board of Architectural Review meeting on December 16th, 2010 for conceptual approval. The Alexander Street façade, which was not proposed to be changed, led Evan Thompson, executive director of the Preservation Society of Charleston, to refer to it as “a three-sided building” and he felt that the overall project raised aesthetic concerns. David Schwarz agreed with the criticisms, but replied that it could be renovated in the future and there was no reason to spend money on it now, since there were budgetary and programmatic constraints. Other concerns included comments from neighbors who did not want Anson Street turned into a “service alley” (Behre 2010e).
Despite opposition from both the Preservation Society of Charleston and the Historic Charleston Foundation, the project received conceptual approval by a 6-1 vote. As stated at the special meeting, the goals for the project were to create a world-class performance hall; improve amenities for the audience; make the building code-compliant; comply with ADA standards; improve the banquet hall; consolidate office space; enhance the urbanism of Charleston; improve pedestrian access to the building; make the design of the building more compatible with Charleston’s historic architecture; and encourage sustainability by reusing as much of the building as possible (Behre 2010).

Even after conceptual approval from the BAR, the project continued to receive criticism. Ron Brinson of the Post and Courier asked: “Must the design theme of every new major public building in Charleston honor only the old, smacking of the Custom House columns, Greek Revival and Roman scrolls? Peninsular Charleston’s history and
architectural ensemble must be respected for sure, but at what point does glorious history release a community to embrace architecture that more clearly blends history and modernity? If now is not that time and The Gaillard not the building, then the answer to that question for Charleston may be never.” He felt that that original building was risky and modern, and that this should be reflected in the renovation and wondered: “Surely there’s an affordable architectural equation that would depict The Gaillard as an appropriate symbol of Old Charleston’s new modernity” (Brinson 2011).

Despite concerns about the cost and aesthetics of the project, it received preliminary approval from the BAR on August 24th, 2011 by a 4-1 vote. The new schedule called for the project to begin in July of 2012 and finish in late 2014. New elements of the project included entry pavilions and landscaping. Three speakers during the public comment period of the meeting called for a more contemporary design and referred to it as a bad case of “facadism.” Schwarz responded by saying that: “I’m concerned with the public’s view that if a building has columns, it’s not modern. That’s not true. Since World War II, we’ve been sold a bill of goods as to what modernism is.” He also claimed that Charleston has numerous ugly buildings because people associate “modern” buildings with glass and flat walls (Behre 2011a). Even as the project proceeded through the approvals process, members of the public continued to criticize the project, with one writer expressing concerns about the cost and suggested building a new performing arts center further east on Calhoun Street near the aquarium and using the Gaillard without renovations as an exhibit hall and office space (Watts 2011).
On June 13th, 2012, the Gaillard Auditorium renovation project appeared before the BAR for final design approval. It received approval (with final details to be submitted for staff approval) with a unanimous vote for both the building and the proposed changes to the grounds, despite the fact that nearly all of the exterior brick would be replaced. The next step was for City Council to approve the project and the proposed schedule called for site work to begin in August of 2012 and for the project to be completed in late 2014 (Kropf 2012). The BAR files kept at the city offices show a vast majority of letters being in support of the project, including the Historic Charleston Foundation, the Committee to Save the City, and the Preservation Society of Charleston, although they did not agree with the office component of the project (City of Charleston, BAR files, 77 Calhoun Street). The City Council unanimously approved the project on July 17th, 2012 and subsequently signed a $110M contract with Skanska Trident Construction (Behre 2012b).

In terms of the design of the project, Craig Williams of David Schwarz Architects, the lead architect of the project, noted that “…there was a great desire to have the building appear more in keeping with the historic traditions of Charleston than the mid-century or later modern that the original building was.” He also commented on the provenance of the design, stating “We did not specifically copy, ape, or imitate any existing architectural style in Charleston or elsewhere in the world even. The language, the grammar is classical. The vocabulary, the specific details is sort of our own invention.” At least one critic approved of the plans to drastically alter the appearance of the building, commenting “The colorful renderings of the proposed building show a
structure much more in line with historic Holy City architecture than the budget-conscious mid-century eyesore that currently stands in its place” (Cohen 2012b).

Figure 42: Additional rendering of the proposed Gaillard Auditorium’s Calhoun Street façade, submitted as part of the August 24th, 2011 BAR meeting where the scheme received preliminary approval. (Source: City of Charleston, BAR files, 77 Calhoun Street)

The original architects, Frank Lucas and Sidney Stubbs, were recently asked about their opinions of the new project. After winning the competition for the original Gaillard Auditorium, the classmates from Clemson University formed LS3P Associates, an architectural firm still operating in Charleston, and helped to significantly transform the appearance of the city. At the east end of Calhoun Street alone, the firm designed the TD Bank Building at 40 Calhoun Street, the Charleston County School Board headquarters (located adjacent to the Gaillard), and the RBC Centura Bank Building. The architects noted that the Gaillard was furnished with “barely adequate finishes and sound equipment and it was never renovated or updated …”, but also pointed out that the type
of performances at the building has changed dramatically over time. Lucas is glad that parts of the building will be reused and notes “Her age and wear are showing and she needs much more than paint to shine again. I think the new building is going to be great for the city and a showcase for the state” (Gaillard Foundation Latest News, 2012).

Figure 43: 2012 photo of the Calhoun Street façade of the Gaillard Auditorium, before the renovation project began. (Source: photo by the author)
CHAPTER FIVE

INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

There were nine substantive questions posed to participants in the interview portion of the research project. Since the interview questions were based heavily on the building background research and literature review, those portions of the research were completed first. The interviews were recorded for transcription, but the researcher also took notes while the interview was occurring, since with interviews, data collection and analysis takes place at the same time. The interview transcripts were then analyzed by the researcher, with the most relevant data to the research questions being extracted for further analysis. Once this process was completed, the data were synthesized and summarized to provide the following commentary and analysis of each of the interview questions separately.

Originally, the new building on the Federal Building site and Charleston’s new auditorium were proposed to be classically-inspired and fit in more with the character of Charleston. How does the fact that the buildings were contemporary when they were actually built speak to Charleston’s attitude towards architecture and preservation over time?

As the background research showed, both buildings were originally designed to be Classically-inspired, with the new post office on the Federal Building site appearing as a relatively high-style example, and the original Gaillard Auditorium more of a stripped-
down building with a simple pediment. There were also proposed drawings showing the
new library building with a Classical option, amongst several others. Despite these early
conceptual drawings, all three buildings could be characterized as Modern when they
were actually built. Because they were all built relatively close to one another and within
a period of ten years or so, the question was attempting to compare the architectural
climate of Charleston of the 1960s to the present day. Is Charleston more open to
contemporary architecture than it was in the 1960s, or is the reverse true?

The clear response from all of the participants was that Charleston is a fascinating
microcosm of architecture and preservation—and has been for most of the twentieth
century, since the preservation movement began in the 1920s. In other words, many of
the preservation issues and the contemporary architecture versus traditional architecture
debates that are occurring in the early twenty-first century are not new. It is this
“tension,” as one participant aptly described it, that defines Charleston and it creates a
healthy dialogue between people on both sides of the issue. This dialogue is so valuable,
in fact, that if one side or the other were to win out, and only traditional or contemporary
architecture were to be built in Charleston in the future, that would be characterized as a
“disaster” by one participant.

At the same time, there seems to be an unspoken pressure over time to conform to
the more traditional architecture of Charleston when designing new buildings in the city.
While some architects have taken risks and tried more avant-garde designs (like the three
buildings in the study), the most common design strategy seems to be building a
contextual building that respects the existing fabric, yet at the same time, striving to
create something contemporary that will not be confused for a historic building. While that may be the goal, due to the subjective nature of design, there is a great deal of latitude on whether or not these projects are successful. Regardless of the final result, however, it was felt that most architects working in Charleston approached the design with similar intentions. Unlike many cities, where extremely contrasting architecture is welcomed, the attitude in Charleston seems to be that there at least needs to be an attempt to fit in.

Speaking more to Charleston’s attitude in the past, and specifically about the three buildings that are part of the study, one participant noted that the 1960s were a time of urban renewal and a certain attitude towards new architecture across the entire country. So, while Charleston may have escaped the wholesale tearing down of city centers that afflicted other cities (other than the site of the Gaillard Auditorium), the three projects simply reflect what was going on in numerous other cities at that same time. Therefore, each of the projects was seen as “progress” and a timely opportunity to clear out “blighted sites” and start anew with fresh architecture. The three buildings were not necessarily contextual to Charleston, but more of a “reflection of their time,” as preservationists frequently characterize them—that of urban renewal and Modern architecture.

Other participants brought up the concept of time as well. Another component of that era in history that needs to be considered was the economic condition of Charleston at the time that the three buildings were designed and built, which was drastically different than it is today. Because the city was so depressed economically, the basic
thought was that building something was better than building nothing. If the federal government, in the case of the Federal Building, was willing to spend money on a new building, then the city was open to the project. At that time, economic development was more important than how the new buildings would fit into the existing context of Charleston.

The tendency towards traditional architecture in Charleston was mentioned several times by more than one participant. While it was thought to be important to have more modern designs in the city, it was felt that traditional architecture was more favored, especially through the Board of Architectural Review process. However, it was also mentioned that this Modern architecture, while announcing itself as new and different, still needed to fit in with the existing context of Charleston. This is what provides the “timestamp” that preservationists will be able to point to in the future and also why the three buildings in the study are so valuable from a preservation perspective—because they provide us with important information about architectural attitudes from the time they were built.

Along the same lines, participants mentioned that the concept of not creating a “gap” in Charleston’s architectural continuum was critical. Because successful buildings can be designed in a variety of ways, it was thought that welcoming contemporary design ideas was important. At the same time, however, Classical architecture was not considered a valid design inspiration by at least one participant—the old Charleston Hotel was specifically mentioned as a building that should not be recalled in new designs. The time period when the three buildings were built was described as “conflicted” and a point
in history where Charleston was progressive in terms of architecture, but showed a disregard for the city’s history, by wiping out an entire neighborhood (in the case of the Gaillard Auditorium project) and demolishing numerous historic buildings on the other sites.

It was mentioned that while the three buildings have quite a bit in common, that they are actually quite different stylistically and architecturally. Additionally, the period in which they were built was when Modern architecture was really beginning to take hold in South Carolina. Speaking to the emphasis on traditional architecture in Charleston, one participant noted that there was a contradiction in well-to-do citizens traveling to and appreciating other cities in the world where Modern architecture is flourishing, yet not wanting to see the same thing happen in their home city. The location, and, presumably the immediate context of new buildings, seemed to be important and it was mentioned that contemporary interiors in traditional buildings were more acceptable.

Although Charleston did have the first historic preservation ordinance in the United States in 1931, it is important to remember that the focus of it was a relatively small portion of the peninsula. Because the proposed buildings were not in neighborhoods like the French Quarter, South of Broad, or Harleston Village, another participant noted the likelihood of “progress over preservation.” In short, the thought was that “Certainly the receptiveness towards contemporary architecture was in part, I’m sure, embedded in the fact that the designs were not being proposed for what were considered to be parts of the historic district.” This reiterates the previously-mentioned argument about the value of economic development over preserving buildings, which were not
thought to be as important as buildings in older parts of the city anyway. It also highlights again the economic climate in Charleston during the 1960s, which was obviously very different than it is today, with Charleston being a top world-wide tourist destination.

One participant was actually “impressed” that architects were able to do contemporary architecture in the 1960s in Charleston, and wishes that it was a larger part of the architectural discussion in the city today. As a relative newcomer to Charleston, the assumption was that the city was hostile to contemporary architecture, especially in light of the power of the BAR. However, in response to a follow-up question about the intensity of this hostility, the participant actually noted that the BAR was much more receptive to contemporary architecture than previously expected—contradicting the tendency towards a preference for traditional architecture that other participants had noted.

The impact of the architecture program at Clemson University was also mentioned as a factor in the architectural climate and a possible reason why these buildings were able to be built in Charleston. As the only architecture program in the state of South Carolina, and one that adopted the tenets of Modernism, it makes sense that this influence would begin to be seen in the new buildings of this period in Charleston. In fact, both Frank Lucas and Sidney Stubbs—the design team of the Gaillard Auditorium—graduated from the same class at Clemson. Despite this, participants still seemed to feel that the architectural climate has changed and that the average citizen of Charleston wanted to see some traditional influence in new buildings built in the city.
The old Charleston County Library building received demolition approval in 2005, yet it was not until 2012 that the Preservation Society put it on its ‘Seven to Save’ list. Why is preservation interest in the building so recent?

When the old Charleston County Library building appeared before the Board of Architectural Review in 2005, the demolition permit was approved by the board, pending approval of the replacement building (which was the subject of a lawsuit until just recently). Reviewing the BAR minutes and press articles from that point in time revealed that there was no organized effort to save the building, although both the Historic Charleston Foundation and the Preservation Society of Charleston were opposed to its demolition. In 2011, the PSC began its annual Seven to Save program and the library building, along with the rest of mid-century Modern architecture in Charleston, was placed on the 2012 list. While there was some initial opposition in 2005, why is the building starting to receive more attention more than seven years after the demolition permit was approved?

Two reasons were cited generally by the participants to account for this lag in preservation interest in the building—the fact that more time has passed, and now the building (which opened in 1960) is now more than 50 years old, and fear about the scale and massing of the proposed replacement building (covered more extensively in a later question). The increase in the age of the building was equated to it becoming “cooler” and speaks to the survival of the fittest concept of the building environment—that buildings worthy of preservation must prove themselves by lasting a certain amount of time. The popular culture impact of television shows like Mad Men, which takes place in
the 1960s, was also cited for raising awareness and appreciation of buildings from this era. The issue of preserving a building as a tactic or tool for controlling what could be seen as inappropriate development, rather than preserving for its own merits, was also raised.

Other comments emphasized the opinion that the building simply was not worthy of preservation because it was not a good example of Modern architecture. Therefore, the correct decision was made in 2005 when the demolition of the building was approved by the BAR. On the other hand, while it was generally agreed that the library building does not fit in with the character of Charleston, its low, 2-story mass, position directly on King Street, and deference to the adjacent Citadel building made it at least inoffensive. The thought was that the building that was going to replace it could potentially be much worse, in terms of both architecture and urbanism. The issue of time was raised in another capacity, with the feeling being that we are too close to the building in terms of when it was built to be making judgments about its preservation this soon.

One of the participants did not understand why there was any preservation discussion about the library at all, commenting that it was a “classic example of terrible contemporary architecture.” Since the library was cutting-edge for its time in the 1960s, it now looks dated and out of fashion. Along these same lines, the thought expressed was that if Charleston continued its Classical tradition instead of trying to incorporate contemporary buildings, it would better stand the test of time. Speaking to another angle of the issue of time, this participant also felt that just because the library had stood for a certain amount of time did not mean that it should be preserved. If it was not a good
building when it was built, then it should not be preserved, no matter how long it has lasted.

One factor that is often cited for preserving mid-century Modern architecture, especially in Charleston, is the fact that Victorian era architecture was commonly disliked and torn down when the preservation movement was just beginning, since people did not have enough perspective to understand that it was important. Now, of course, Victorian architecture is considered valuable and there would be a pitched battle over tearing down any one of the buildings from that era. Participants mentioned a parallel between the attitude towards Victorian architecture then and mid-century Modern architecture now, with the point being that not enough time has elapsed for us to properly evaluate the significance of architecture from that period. Rather than making a mistake that future generations would rue, like tearing down the library, we should let more time pass and let them make that decision. The granting of the demolition permit for the library seemed to raise the issue of preserving mid-century Modern architecture and focus the attention of preservationists on it.

Another interesting perspective focused on the new designs that were proposed in Charleston between 2005 and 2012. Charleston has been a popular tourist destination for some time now, but seems to have achieved unprecedented attention in the last several years. Perhaps because of this, the development pressure, especially in the historic quarters of the city, has increased. One participant felt that the quality of these proposed new designs was poor, and resulted in a new appreciation for previously underappreciated existing buildings in the city. In other words, rather than building new
buildings with controversial designs, the city should be refocused on reusing underutilized existing buildings. This argument also has a sustainability component—as people pay more attention to being environmentally-sensitive, reusing old buildings rather than losing embodied energy in the process of tearing them down and building something new becomes more of a priority.

The preservation of mid-century Modern buildings presents preservationists with numerous challenges, including understanding the different materials and technologies that went into designing and building them. Because these buildings often do not acquire the patina that we associate with historic buildings, instead looking run-down or “dilapidated,” they get discriminated against—and the library is certainly a good example of this. Participants viewed this phenomenon as another facet as to why mid-century Modern buildings are so misunderstood. In addition to allowing enough time to pass to properly appreciate them, preservationists and the general public must understand that the new technology and materials that went into them is going to behave differently over time than what we expect from more traditional materials and assemblies. While we may not want to build this way again in the future, it may be important to preserve the building to understand how we were building at that point in time. On the other hand, because of this material issue, one participant noted the possibility of memorializing the building with something besides the actual built fabric.

Just as Charleston was following the lead of the rest of the United States in building Modern buildings in the 1960s, the growing interest in preservation of the these buildings could be attributed to national trends. The National Trust for Historic
Preservation, a leading national non-profit preservation advocacy organization, has created a “big push” for increased understanding and appreciation of the Recent Past. Additionally, Charleston’s local preservation organizations have undergone leadership changes since the demolition permit was issued for the library in 2005. Despite leading the charge to stop the library from being built in 1960, the Preservation Society of Charleston has evolved with new leadership and new ideas to become the biggest advocate for its preservation. Because the PSC is a membership organization, another factor is the opinion of the public. As that begins to change, the direction of the overall organization needs to change as well.

Many of the participants urged a more objective look at the building, rather than allowing individual aesthetic biases to cloud judgment. Part of this rationale is looking at the motivations of the historic preservation movement in general and clarifying that it is not just the “Georgian and Federal” buildings that are significant and worth preserving, but rather the full range of buildings that comprise our built environment. Buildings that have been built in the twentieth century can have just as much significance as buildings built in the eighteenth century, even if there is a vast difference in their ages. The other part is the “divorce of preference and recognition of significance,” as one participant put it. An individual’s particular aesthetic preference should not preclude them from understanding the significance of a particular building, and thus its rationale for being preserved.

While the intellectual argument for preserving the old Charleston County Library building can be made and understood, it is difficult to account for the unquantifiable
reaction that the building elicits that was mentioned by several of the participants. For some reason, citizens of Charleston have had a “visceral” reaction to the building and have disliked it since it was completed in 1960. Part of that reaction, according to one participant, may be due in part to the pink marble panels on the building that many people mistake for plastic, which leads to the potentially erroneous conclusion that the building is not well-built. This is the emotional component of historic preservation that came up repeatedly during the interview process—preservation of a building that preservationists consider significant may be hindered by simply having the majority of citizens inexplicably disliking a building.

_The three buildings are all receiving different treatments—the library has been approved for demolition, the Federal Building is being reused largely as-is, and the Gaillard is receiving a dramatic renovation. Given that all of these buildings are major public buildings built in the 1960s and located very close to one another, do you agree or disagree with the various treatments and do the three situations indicate that preservation theory or philosophy is evolving over time?_

Without being naïve or uninformed, one of the thoughts behind the research was that the three buildings had many characteristics in common—they were all built in the 1960s, all in a Modern style that arguably did not fit in with Charleston, all major civic buildings, and all located within a few blocks of each other in a section of the city that may not have been considered as historic as other neighborhoods when they were built. Despite their commonalities, all of the buildings are receiving different preservation treatments and there did not seem to be any discussion linking the buildings together as a
possible group for preservation efforts. What are the factors that are causing all of these buildings to be treated differently and does the fact that they do share some characteristics relevant to the discussion?

Opinions of the participants were fairly split on the decisions regarding the Gaillard Auditorium and the old Charleston County Library building, but were in general agreement about the Federal Building. Because it was originally built as an office building, the conversion to a hotel use will be fairly simple from a plan perspective and the exterior does not require significant changes, aside from upgrading the amenities for the hotel. Another factor in support of the reuse of the Federal Building was the perceived quality of materials and construction that went into it, regardless of the participant’s opinion of the appropriateness of the height and Modern design for Charleston. Because of the ease with which it can be reused, tearing down the building was seen as a waste of embodied energy, as part of the overall tone of sustainability that preservation has embraced. Other comments about the Federal Building focused on the cultural significance of the building, since it was a good example of the Great Society ideas of President Johnson. Interestingly, while at least one participant would not want to see a new building built to the same height, the mass of the existing Federal Building was seen as an asset.

Both the Gaillard Auditorium and the old Charleston County Library had two-part questions associated with their preservation. With the Gaillard, the question became whether or not the original building was worth preserving as-is versus the participant’s opinion of the proposed renovation. As the project progressed and it became clear that
much more of the building was being demolished than initially anticipated, part of the
discussion focused on the renovation versus demolition definition. Because the changes
to the building were designed in the Classical tradition and so radically altered the
appearance of the building, another question became one of destroying the character-
defining features of the original design. The proposed renovation would make the
building appear starkly different architecturally, so the appropriateness of executing
Classical designs in Charleston in the twenty-first century was also part of the discussion.

One of the most important factors in the debate over the Gaillard was the quality
of the interior spaces. Because the building contains exhibition and performance spaces,
they need to be updated as newer technology becomes available in order to ensure that
the building continues to attract top-notch performances and events (one of the original
goals of the building when it was completed in 1968). Therefore, the preservation of the
exterior design of the building could potentially be seen as secondary to the interior
program. As opposed to the reuse of the Federal Building, where the new program of the
building lent itself quite well to the original layout, the Gaillard required dramatic
changes in order to assimilate the new performance spaces proposed for the interior.
Several of the participants mentioned that one of the reasons that the project is supported
by the citizens of Charleston is that they are eager to attend high-quality performances
once the project is complete.

Because the project has basically become a demolition rather than a renovation, at
least one participant thought the entire building should have been demolished and a new
auditorium built that could have rectified the problems of the original and created a state
of the art performing arts facility. On the other hand, one of the participants more closely involved with the Gaillard project stated that a “significant” amount of original material was going to remain in the new building. Possible solutions for an entirely new building included placing it closer to Calhoun Street so it could function more as an urban building, rather than being set so far back from the street. Since the entire Middlesex neighborhood was destroyed and streets rerouted to complete the Gaillard, building an entirely new building would have also created an opportunity to reestablish part of the original street network.

Based on these factors, participants were split on whether or not the Gaillard was worth preserving as it was, before the renovations began, with several advocating preservation of the original building and several stating that they did not mind that the building was not going to be preserved. A few stated that they were in favor of the renovations in order to create a state of the art facility and also mentioned the negatives of the existing building—the way it sits on its site, the large expanses of blank walls, etc. Another potential solution mentioned was that the building could have been altered in a way that could have accomplished the programming goals, but also been more in line with the original design. On the other hand, since it was not “a good building to begin with,” other participants were comfortable with not only not preserving the original building, but actually tearing it down. Many also mentioned that they were surprised at how much of the building was being demolished, since it was originally presented as a renovation project.
As opposed to the overall preservation of the original building, most of the participants were against the proposed Classical design for the renovation of the Gaillard because of both the design itself and the fact that it was not going to be applied to all of the facades of the building. Only one participant thought it was going to be “a great Classical building.” Negative comments ranged from referring to the renovation as “terrible,” “plasticky,” and as a “barnacle” on the building, to describing it as “faux Classical,” although that participant was not even sure that the term “Classical” could be applied to the project. Another questioned the potential success of the project, since one participant asserted that it is difficult to build good Classical designs in the twenty-first century, due to budgets, codes, and other practical concerns. The strongest reaction, however, was that the project is making one participant’s “skin crawl” and how the “false historicism” evokes all of the things “we’re trained to not really care for.”

Because the library had been approved for demolition, the question became whether or not the building was worth preserving on its own merits, or whether the new hotel proposed for the site was clouding the issue of its preservation worthiness. Overall, participants seemed stuck between thinking that the library was not a great building worthy of preservation on its own, yet also preferring it to the new hotel building, which was mentioned by many as being too high and out of scale for Charleston. This, of course, is despite the fact that the Francis Marion Hotel is located nearly across the street from the site and, at 14 stories, is significantly taller than the proposed design of the new hotel, as one participant mentioned. It would have been interesting to gauge participant’s opinions about the existing building before the hotel was proposed for the site, since the
project did seem to strongly influence how they felt about the potential preservation of
the library.

As far as the arguments for preserving the library building for its own merits,
participants agreed that they were generally in favor of saving it, although these
comments were tepid at best. They ranged from “I don’t hate the building” to questioning
whether a reuse of the building is going to be “an uphill battle against the nature of the
building” in terms of materials and construction quality. Even the issue of the library
being an early desegregated building did not seem to factor in to the preservation debate,
since it was not specifically designed to be that way and the appearance of the building
does not hint at its social history (like other buildings in Charleston with separate white
and black entrances do). Overall, none of the participants claimed that the library was a
good example of mid-century Modern architecture, nor did they mention any particular
reason for preserving it, other than the fact that it was already there and that they were
opposed to the replacement building.

While the library may not have been considered a great example of architecture,
many of the participants did think that the height, scale, and mass were appropriate for
that part of King Street, especially fronting directly on Marion Square. The possibility of
reusing the building was mentioned by several participants, although due to structural
concerns and other factors, reusing the building might result in significant changes to it
and the alteration of its existing character-defining features—a result that preservationists
might not be eager to embrace. Opinions ranged from the library being a good candidate
for reuse, to the thought that since it was such a purpose-built building, that it would be
difficult to reuse without major alterations. The possibility of incorporating the building into the lobby of the new hotel was mentioned as well, but this was noted as potentially cost-prohibitive for the developer.

*Since the Marion Square area was not considered as “historic” as other parts of the city when these three buildings were built, they were not reviewed by the Board of Architectural Review, therefore the process to get the buildings built was different than it would be now. What does this say about our changing ideas about what is “historic” and how would you weigh the importance of preserving a building for its artistic merit versus preserving it as a representative sample of the past, or a “slice of history?”*

The purview of the Board of Architectural Review has increased steadily since the zoning ordinance of 1931 first included a historic preservation component. Now, much of the city south of Line Street is reviewed by the BAR for most projects, while the power to review at least demolition proposals extends all the way up the peninsula to Mount Pleasant Street, nearly to the city line with North Charleston. In the 1960s, however, the area that the BAR reviewed was much smaller and none of the three buildings in the study were reviewed before they were built—a process that would be much different today. Were the buildings put where they were specifically to place them out of what was then considered the historic district? What lessons can be learned from their stories as we contemplate building contemporary buildings in certain neighborhoods of the city today?

The relative success and focus of the BAR is a constant debate in Charleston, since some people feel that it stifles contemporary design, while others feel that it should keep out some designs that it allows. As one participant noted, the positive aspect of the
BAR’s expanding purview is that the city is recognizing more and more buildings as historic. Whereas it used to be just South of Broad and other exclusive parts of the city, it now recognizes most of the peninsula as historic and worth preserving, for various reasons. This mirrors the overall preservation movement that now recognizes vernacular and other architecture that it initially did not consider significant enough. The downside is that architects may feel that they need to be more selective about where contemporary buildings should go, if they feel that the BAR will not approve a contemporary design in the expanded historic district. So while the definition of what is historic is expanding, it comes with a level of review that may stifle contemporary architecture, which may rob the city of the equivalent of the early twenty-first century Federal Building or Gaillard Auditorium.

Other participants noted that Charleston and the BAR were not necessarily hostile to contemporary buildings, but an important consideration is where the new building is to be located and what its immediate context is. Part of the reason for this is that the size of new buildings tends to overwhelm the existing historic context. So rather than the design itself being inappropriate for the city, it is the size of historic buildings that really needs to be protected. One participant mentioned the example of The Citadel in particular, who abandoned their campus building on Marion Square in the 1920s when they needed more space. Rather than try and build a new campus downtown where it might be too big, it was located near Hampton Park, where there was enough room to suit the school’s requirements.
Thinking more about the style of proposed new buildings, one participant stated that new buildings should not have to “go sit in their own room.” The diversity of buildings in Charleston was mentioned and the fact that all historic buildings in Charleston are lumped together, whereas in reality, each new era brought new technology and different appearances to the buildings. In terms of new architecture, participants felt that the “style” was irrelevant as long as the building was “good.” What “good” meant seemed to vary from person to person, but participants generally agreed that responding to the surrounding context was an important goal for any new building in Charleston. This point then becomes an issue in the eventual preservation debate—how well did it respond to its context when it was built? While opinions differed regarding the success of the three buildings fitting into their context, one participant noted “I guess the failing of these three buildings is they don’t acknowledge their context at all. They really could be anywhere.”

Part of the argument about the importance of preserving mid-century Modern architecture is that as more time passes, we begin more and more to realize the value of it. On a larger scale, that is exactly what happened with the area around Marion Square—when these buildings were built in the 1960s, it was not considered as historic or important as other parts of the city. However, as time goes on and everything gets older, more and more buildings qualify as historic. This also allows us to see the architectural progression of Charleston over time, which preservationists feel is an important goal. Several of the participants spoke to this phenomenon and it how relates directly to the preservation of mid-century Modern buildings. On the other hand, one participant felt
that time passing does not enhance the qualities of bad buildings, commenting “Just because it’s been there a long time doesn’t mean it needs to continue to be there.”

As Charleston continues to develop and change, however, there are going to be new buildings built in the historic district and the question becomes how these new buildings should relate to the existing ones. One participant stated that while new buildings should express the twenty-first century somehow, they should also be deferential to the existing historic buildings. This is exactly what the Secretary of the Interior Standards specifies, with the “differentiated but compatible” language. While one could certainly argue that the library, at least size-wise, is deferential to the surrounding buildings, the Federal Building and the Gaillard Auditorium are not. This reflects an interesting point that several participants raised—that while they supported the preservation of the Federal Building, they would not approve of a new building of the same height if it were being built today. If the BAR is going to force new buildings to reflect the context, why would we want to preserve buildings that fail to accomplish the same goal?

Participant opinion was split on whether the preservation of a building needs to be based on its own merits, or whether it is important for Charleston to maintain an architectural continuum, regardless of the quality of the buildings, from any particular period. Speaking to the cases of the library and the Federal Building, one participant noted that neither was a great building, but the demolition of either one of them would make the other one more valuable and harder to tear down, supporting the idea that it is important to maintain at least one building from each period. Other participants noted that
it was not important to save every building from every time period, even the most significant periods, but that preserving the “slice of history” was more important than considering the merits of each individual building on its own. At the same time, this participant thought that it was difficult to divorce the two concepts because of the artistic expression of mid-century Modern buildings is unlike anything else from history, potentially supporting the idea that Modern buildings need to be evaluated differently from other historic buildings.

The definition of “slice of history” or who exactly was qualified to determine what the “slice” consisted of varied between participants, even among those who supported the idea over artistic merit. One participant felt that it was a valid preservation strategy “only if it was the last building” of a particular type or from a particular era. Thus, because Charleston does have several other buildings remaining from the 1960s, preservation of the three buildings was not necessarily important at this point from the “slice of history” perspective. Preserving buildings for their individual merit only struck one participant as “an argument that gets used by people who want to get rid of things.” By saying that none of the 1960s buildings in Charleston are good examples of mid-century Modern, for example, gives us implicit permission to demolish all of them, since the city would not be losing any quality buildings. Building on this argument, this participant felt that it was not even the job of preservationists to determine the quality of buildings, but rather to preserve certain buildings in order to maintain the “architectural continuum.”
Counters to the “slice of history” argument included the interesting perspective that while it is not a valid preservation strategy, it is a valid community strategy. So while preservationists must take the architectural value and possible reuses of a building into account, the community at large is able to argue for saving a building based on the fact that it is simply the last of its type. Other responses addressed the idea mentioned earlier that whether or not a building was “good” should determine whether or not it should be preserved, not considering it in the larger context of how many other similar buildings there were. At the same time, this participant admitted that determining which buildings were “good” was subjective and the argument could be used to rid the city of a particular type of architecture. Brutalism, for example, was singled out as a period of architecture that the participant would want to see expunged from Charleston.

Another participant suggested that the city’s architectural survey needed to be updated to include mid-century Modern architecture in order to better understand exactly what exists from that period in Charleston and what is worth preserving. Currently, the city uses a “nuanced” four-category rating system that lists historic buildings by importance, with Category One being the most important, but later buildings are not included. The implication is that these buildings are just as important as more traditional historic buildings and we need to pay more attention to their potential preservation. By using a separate but similar rating system, preservationists could better determine which buildings were important enough to preserve and begin to render the “slice of history” versus artistic merit argument moot.
There have been many buildings on each of these 3 sites over time, several that preservationists would no doubt fight very hard to preserve now. Do you agree with architectural historian Vincent Scully when he says: “…. Whenever we see a building being demolished, we automatically expect it will be replaced by something worse” (Millais 2009, 161) or critic James Kunstler when he says: “So many twentieth-century buildings are failures in one way or another—looks, relation to the public realm, attitude toward the pedestrian, quality of workmanship—that we assume any new building is liable to be at least unrewarding and at worst another horror” (Kunstler 2001, 214). If the potential preservation of these buildings is partially motivated by the fear that something even worse will replace them, what would you consider a “better” building on each of these sites and what role should preservation play in promoting a “better” outcome?

The preservation of a building is motivated by numerous factors, including its architectural, cultural, and/or historical significance. One of the many reasons that we are loathe to lose historic buildings is that, generally speaking, the construction quality tends to be higher than more contemporary buildings. Additionally, the building in question may be more compatible with the immediate context than its proposed replacement. Should a building whose preservation is debatable on its own merits be preserved specifically because the building proposed to replace it is “worse,” whether that means materials, design, size, or scale? Is it a valid preservation strategy to save a building just to prevent something else from being built in its place? What kind of commentary is this on the quality of our current architecture versus historic buildings?

Many of the participants agreed with the sentiments that Scully and Kunstler were expressing, namely that fear of the next building on the site was the most important factor
driving the preservation strategies behind some existing buildings. The larger issue than individual buildings or sites was fear of change in general. With the old Charleston County Library, for example, people may not love the building as it exists now, but at least it has some level of familiarity. Once the building is demolished, there will always be some uncertainty over how the new building will be perceived. The more relevant issue for preservationists is whether or not the new building is going to be sensitive to the context around it. So while it is inevitable that the built environment will change over time, preservationists want to make sure that they are involved in the process.

One participant acknowledged that fear is definitely an emotion that occurs when some buildings are demolished and a new one proposed, but stressed that preservationists have to be optimists. A somewhat depressing analogy was made with baseball, where if you get a hit only one third of the time, that is still considered a good batting average. The BAR process that new buildings undergo was also mentioned and if Charleston was in fact getting bad replacement buildings, that would indicate a breakdown in how the BAR operates and in the preservation advocacy system, which would result in a community-wide issue. On the other hand, several participants mentioned the poor quality of contemporary materials and construction, leading to the possible conclusion that even if replacement buildings were not generally liked, at least they would not necessarily be there for a long time.

Using dislike of the replacement building as a strategy for preserving an existing building was described as “not a very sophisticated” preservation strategy by one participant. This reinforces the notion that the preservation of buildings needs to be
considered on their own merits, rather than the merits of what is proposed to replace them. It was also noted that this was a very pessimistic way to look at the future of our built environment and that we have to have faith in architects, the BAR, and other professionals that future buildings will actually enhance our built environment, rather than detract from it. One participant agreed with the fear sentiment, but placed the blame on the clients who commission the buildings, rather than architects who design them. By demanding that projects be completed as quickly and cheaply as possible, they are really the ones who are contributing the most to the poor quality of contemporary construction. Regardless of whose fault it is, this also raises the issue of whether or not this approach is actually an abuse of preservation and what the purview of preservation actually is—evaluation and documenting important existing buildings or controlling future development.

To further separate the preservation issues of a building from its potential replacement building, one participant suggested having two Boards of Architectural Review—one to deal with proposed changes to historic buildings and one to deal exclusively with new construction. This would further distinguish architecture and preservation as fields that deal with separate issues, but this sentiment was reiterated by another participant responding to the issue of fear of new replacement buildings. While it was not felt to be a valid preservation strategy, it was thought to be a valid design strategy. So while fear of what may come next can be a factor in design decisions, the preservation-worthiness of buildings must be decided independent of what is going to replace them.
In terms of what participants thought was appropriate to replace the three buildings, if they were going to be demolished, the most important factor for the library site was a new building of a similar size to the existing building. Participants felt that the old Citadel and St. Matthew’s Church were the most important buildings in that immediate area and any new building should be subservient to them. They were comfortable with something slightly larger (3 or 4 stories), but the proposed hotel at 9 stories was thought to be much too big and tall for the area. Of course, relating well to the open space of Marion Square was also mentioned as a necessity and something that “complements” the streetscape, rather than “dominating” it was preferable. The new building could also be contemporary and reflect the twenty-first century, as long as it was respectful to its context. Speaking specifically about the library site, one participant opined that “a bad building of two stories is better than a good building that’s nine stories.”

Conversely, one participant would be accepting of a replacement building that was just as tall on the Federal Building site, even though it also borders Marion Square, albeit from across Meeting Street. Because the Federal Building has been there for so long, the thinking was that everyone has gotten used to its height and other new buildings around have responded to it (which seems like would also be the case with any new building, eventually). Whereas a taller building on the library site would directly affect Marion Square and the sunlight that reaches it, the Federal Building site is located just far enough away that a similarly-sized replacement building would be acceptable.
For the Gaillard Auditorium, participants felt that the way the building sits on its site would be one of the most important things to correct, if it were completely replaced with a new building. Currently, it is sited far back from Calhoun Street and while there have been later buildings added to the site since the Gaillard was built, participants thought that any additions or new construction on the building should have brought it up to Calhoun Street. Because the street network was radically altered to create a superblock in the 1960s when the Gaillard was built, participants also thought that a restoration of the network should be a priority with new construction on the site.

Interestingly, several participants mentioned the previous buildings on the sites of the three buildings in the study and how they would prefer to have them back instead of what was currently there. One mentioned Weyman's Folly on the Federal Building site and opined that we would probably rather have that house back (since it was thought to be designed by noted architect William Jay, even though it was in a severely deteriorated condition), as well as the other small-scale residential buildings that formerly existed on the site. While the preference would be to have those buildings back, we currently have “what we have” on the site, according to one participant, and have to make preservation decisions based on the validity of the Federal Building and not what used to be there. Another participant expressed the same preference, but since the Federal Building contributed to the “architectural continuum,” then it was appropriate to preserve it.

This, of course, raises the contradictory issue of fighting to save a building that the preservation community would not have approved of in the first place. If one would rather have what was on the site originally, why fight to save a building that some people
feel is too big for Charleston and one that would never be allowed to be built today? If the only reason to save the Federal Building, rather than restoring the site to its original use and building new buildings at a compatible scale, is to preserve a “slice of history,” why is that “slice” more important than any that existed previously? If the merits of the replacement building supersede those of the existing building (as opposed to the other way around), should that then be a valid rationale for building it? Preservationists fight so hard to keep existing buildings, and in many cases rightfully so, to stop bad replacement buildings, but it seems like there would be cases where the inverse would be true as well.

Authors like Nikos Saltingaros, Léon Krier and Christopher Alexander have argued that there are objective criteria for judging the quality, or “preservation worthiness” of buildings. Do you believe that this is possible?

In many cases, the argument about whether or not to preserve a building is a very emotional issue. While there are guidelines that help us determine a building’s significance, the subjective nature of architecture and preservation makes decisions difficult to make. The authors noted above have tried to remove some of the subjectivity out of the equation and make preservation a more objective pursuit, where decisions can be made based not on emotion, personal aesthetics, and individual opinions of buildings, but rather on criteria that can be generally agreed on. With many preservation decisions being made on a “case-by-case” basis, objective criteria would seemingly provide a more solid philosophical grounding. Is this actually possible, though? Furthermore, are
preservationists comfortable with the process being a little less scientific and allowing other, more subjective factors to be part of the discussion?

Participants generally felt that this was an admirable goal, if somewhat difficult to achieve. It was noted that the BAR in Charleston considers the merits of every case separately and while the board tries to be consistent, there is no “scientific scoring pattern” that is used, in the words of one participant. Interestingly, it was explained that this actually gives the citizens of Charleston a greater degree of control over what happens in their city, as opposed to a more scientific process that would take the decisions out of their hands. Instead of having an objective process, this participant claimed that Charleston was more comfortable with the process as it is, with buildings being evaluated individually, with all of the potential influences of politics, money, and emotions. So while each and every decision made by the board may not be perfect, the process was generally sound. This theory is backed up by reviewing the minutes from BAR meetings that reflect the testimony of numerous groups and individual citizens who make their opinions known on each agenda item.

Other participants focused on the practicality of initiating such criteria and thought it would be difficult, since the possibility of creating “can’t miss” criteria is remote. It also goes back to the idea of “good” architecture and if the merits of the building are subjective when the building is actually designed and built, then its preservation will also be subjective whenever the issue arises in the future. Another participant thought it would be difficult to achieve because of whose standards would win out as the “objective” criteria. If everyone has different ideas about which elements of
our built environment are the most significant and worth preserving, adopting certain criteria might leave a segment of the population out of the discussion. With preservation already being critiqued as an elitist endeavor, that might be a dangerous step.

Analogies were made with other professions, where similar situations preclude hard and fast criteria. The point was made that each law case is a little bit different, with varying details, even if the overall issue is the same. So, for example, one cannot apply the same criteria to each divorce case, because all of the circumstances will be different each time. While architecturally, each project should be evaluated on the subjective issues like how the building addresses the street, what the materials are, etc., it would be difficult to have rules that would lead to successful outcomes each and every time.

Conversely, one participant had a difficult time explaining to people why a certain building was or was not worth preserving, especially without letting personal bias get in the way. So while it was important to have objective criteria to guide the process, it was difficult to fully remove emotion from the process. The point was also made that that is what drove the preservation process in many early cases—people rallying around the potential demolition of a building because they did not want to lose that part of their community. It may not have been significant from a formal academic perspective, but it was significant to the community. Developments such as the formation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Secretary of the Interior Standards have marked attempts to make the process more objective, but it would be difficult to fully remove from the preservation process both the negative and positive emotion that architecture evokes.
Another participant reiterated that more objective, scientific criteria might overlook buildings that would not normally qualify for preservation, except for the emotional attachment that citizens of that community have to them. One specific example mentioned was the College Lodge on Calhoun Street in Charleston, another mid-century Modern building that may or may not even be a “good” example from that time period. However, where it was once the Downtowner Inn and functioned as a motel, it is now a dormitory for the College of Charleston and is a sought-after place to live by the students.

The comparison was also made between buildings and people—just like each person is an individual with their own background and story, buildings are the same way and cannot be lumped together—therefore, emotion should or could not be taken out of the preservation process.

While emotion may be an integral part of the preservation process, one participant felt that where the objectivity needed to come from was the people making the preservation decisions. The makeup of the Board of Architectural Review was questioned, since it is not an elected position, but one appointed by the mayor and approved by city council. As long as that continues to be the case, we cannot be assured that the decisions made by the BAR are objective, since the motivations of the board members can be questioned. Along the same lines, local preservation organizations can be subject to the same situation, since they are either dependent on donations from the local community or input from their members. While this is not exactly the same as having an emotional reaction to a building, it does demonstrate that preservation decisions can potentially be driven by less than objective factors.
Using the Federal Building as an example, one participant thought there while there can be objective criteria, they are often applied in a subjective manner to suit the needs of whoever is making the decision. The argument made was that the Federal Building meets many of the objective criteria that preservation has set up to determine the significance of a building: it is a well-designed building that was built with the local Charleston context in mind, it is constructed of quality materials that blend in, and is significant as a good example of Great Society architecture. Yet, at the same time, people can take the same objective criteria for significance and argue that the Federal Building does not meet them: it is too big for Charleston, the design elements are not obviously derived from local precedents, and its step-back from the street makes it a bad urban building. By framing the argument to suit a certain agenda, emotion and subjectivity can find their way into what was set up as an objective decision.

The idea of utilizing guidelines instead of rules was mentioned by several of the participants, echoing the system that is used now by many preservation organizations. The Secretary of the Interior Standards, written and administered by the National Park Service, include guidelines as part of their recommendations for how to treat historic buildings. Words and phrases like “gentlest means possible,” “discouraged,”, and “mitigation measures” demonstrate that the Standards are not meant to be hard and fast rules, but serve as a set of best practice measures. While some review boards have adopted the Standards as rules, Charleston’s Board of Architectural Review continues to use them simply as guidelines to inform their decisions, according to one participant. Despite efforts to move towards a more objective process for determining which
buildings to preserve or not, participants felt that guidelines were more appropriate than rigid criteria.

Despite the work done by Salingaros and the others to demonstrate that certain types of architecture are preferred by people, which would allow us to move towards objective criteria for architecture, it is evident that preservation will always have an emotional component that makes it difficult to establish a formula for whether or not a building should be preserved. One participant noted that the preservation community is constantly trying to move towards more objective criteria, but allowed that people react to buildings both intellectually and emotionally. The estimate by this same participant was that while preservation was at least two thirds or three quarters objective, it continued to have a significant emotional component. A potentially interesting conclusion from these responses is that architecture and preservation continue to be two separate and distinct fields. While it is possible for us to objectively determine what the majority of people prefer in new buildings, demonstrated by the writings of Salingaros, Krier and Alexander, when it comes to the preservation of buildings, additional factors need to be taken into account.
Are current historic preservation procedures, like the National Register, the 50-year rule, and the role of material authenticity, able to incorporate buildings from the Recent Past, or do different standards need to be applied to them?

The break in architecture that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century was one of the reasons that historic preservation was founded in the first place, as people began to be concerned with the whole-scale loss of historic fabric and the introduction of Modern architecture. As preservation developed, it incorporated Modernist ideas about historic buildings from such documents as the Venice Charter of 1964, which later led to the Secretary of the Interior Standards. Interestingly, as time passed and early Modern buildings became eligible for historic designation, preservationists found themselves in the strange position of preserving some of the buildings that they initially opposed. Although the standards were written by Modernists, is the framework that was set up to preserve our pre-twentieth century buildings still appropriate as buildings from the 1960s and later begin to be considered historic? Does the break that occurred in architecture necessitate a corresponding break in historic preservation theory and policies to incorporate the different design, materials, and construction methods of buildings from the Recent Past?

As opposed to making legal or policy changes, one participant felt that the more important task for historic preservation was to raise awareness of the changes that are potentially happening to buildings before they reach the age to be considered historic. Buildings that are 30 or 40 years old are at that dangerous point where they are not new
enough to be considered cutting-edge, yet not quite old enough yet for protection as historic buildings. On the other hand, the same participant also stated that there is a “natural selection” working in the built environment, where buildings need to go out and “prove” that they can survive long enough to be considered historic. Surviving for a certain period of time gives a building a certain level of recognition that a “bureaucratic stamp” does not. This again calls into question the overall role of historic preservation. Is it to document what has happened, or get involved earlier than when buildings are considered historic and influence what buildings survive long enough to be designated?

In terms of raising awareness and building on one of the suggestions from another participant answering another question, one participant stated that one of the best strategies for Charleston to incorporate Modern buildings in their preservation planning was to update their survey and ranking system. Currently, buildings that are ranked in the city’s survey receive particular attention from the BAR, but the survey used has not been updated to include Modern buildings, which seems to carry the implication that they are not as important and thus not as preservation-worthy. The policies and procedures may or may not have to change, but gathering more information and giving Modern buildings the same level of recognition at least levels the playing field somewhat.

In terms of the amount of time that needs to pass before a building can be considered historic, the city of Charleston recently changed the purview of the BAR to include reviewing demolition permits for buildings 50 years old, instead of 75. Participants, however, were not sure that there were a defensible number of years that a building needed to exist before being eligible for historic designation. Fifty years, which
is what is used by the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places, seemed to be generally agreed upon as an appropriate time frame, although one participant did characterize that rule as “brilliant,” since it takes that long to have a real appreciation for a building. Like with many other preservation policies, however, that 50-year mark should be used as a guideline and not a “magic number,” where a 51 year-old building is not necessarily more significant that a 49 year-old building.

While acknowledging that all buildings are unique, one participant would support the idea of different criteria for buildings that were designed with a different philosophy and built with non-traditional materials and methods. Since they age and behave differently than traditional buildings, it would make sense to have different standards for Modern buildings. What this would mean, exactly, in terms of age to be considered historic and how the standards would have to change was not elaborated on. Another participant was not necessarily ready to say that different criteria are needed for Modern buildings, but went so far as to say that the “world does seem to be turning faster” and that buildings are built much differently now and less likely to have a long lifespan like historic buildings have. This highlights another interesting aspect of the time debate—the ability of cities to change over time. The idea is that cities evolving over time is a positive thing and being overly bureaucratic about designating properties as historic and then restricting changes to them could start to slow down construction and have a negative economic impact over time.

Responses against changing the standards for buildings from the Recent Past ranged from tepid disagreement to vehemently believing that they did not have to change.
One participant noted that since this was the framework that they had been taught and worked with over the years, that it seemed to be working fairly well. Going a bit further, the framework did not seem to be terribly “misfit” to the preservation cases that had been coming up in recent years. The response of another participant was more firm, stating that as long as the standards were effective, the style of the building being considered was irrelevant. By this measure, a 1760s building was no more significant than a 1960s building and that the standards used by historic preservation should reflect that.

One participant, however, noted that changing the criteria for buildings from the Recent Past would be “dangerous.” The implication in this comment was that the standards would be changed to make it easier for buildings from the Recent Past to be considered historic. In other words, the standards would be loosened and more recent buildings would have to meet lower thresholds than older and more historic buildings. The participant thought that this was a bad idea because then it would potentially discourage quality construction in the future, if buildings of substandard quality could still be considered historic. The thought was that buildings need to be of a certain quality and last for a certain amount of time before they are considered historic and honored with that designation. If the standards were changed and buildings of lesser quality began to get designated, it was a slippery slope and the credibility of historic preservation overall was at stake.

More likely than actually changing the criteria to reflect the differences between Modern and historic buildings was the idea of a periodic review of the policies and procedures to ensure that they are getting the desired results. This presents a more
common-sense approach between leaving the standards the same and refusing to review them and changing them based on a knee-jerk reaction to the challenges presented by buildings from the Recent Past. One suggestion in terms of how the standards could adapt was not having definitive numbers, such as the 50-year rule, to help determine historic significance, but rather making it more of a gray area instead of black and white. While this might make the subjective nature of preservation even more so, the participant who suggested it also noted that it was important to have conversations about these issues and that preservation never has an “easy answer.”

The role of material authenticity was more comprehensively covered in a later question, but participants did address that issue as part of the larger question of changing preservation policies and procedures. The distinction between traditional and Modern buildings is often made by their materials and participants noted how much construction practices have changed in the last 75 or so years, from individual craftsmanship to more of an industrial, mass-produced nature. Participants started to touch upon the issue of how much original material needed to remain in a building in order for it to be considered “historic,” and how that may vary depending on the materials used in any given building and how they perform over time. At least one participant, however, noted that it was important how much original material remained and not what that material actually was.
Since there is a perceived lack of support for preservation of Modern buildings by the public, is preservation interested in Modern buildings simply “for the continued expansion of the movement’s purview and to ensure its ongoing existence”? (Milligan 2007, 105).

One of the reasons that the movement of historic preservation began was concern about the loss of historic buildings in the early and mid-twentieth century, which in many cases were replaced with buildings that preservationists opposed. The building of Madison Square Garden after losing Penn Station in New York is a good example of this phenomenon. However, as time has passed, many of these Modern buildings are starting to reach 50 years of age, forcing preservationists to begin considering them for historic designation. Does now trying to preserve buildings that they initially opposed create a paradox for preservationists in the early twenty-first century? Additionally, the success of historic preservation has generated a significant amount of support from the general public, but as preservationists begin to consider the Recent Past, will they still have that support? Are preservationists interested in Modern buildings simply to continue the movement’s momentum?

Many of the participants noted that historic preservation has always been out ahead of the opinion of the general public and that their appreciation for and efforts on the behalf of the Recent Past is simply just another example of this. Because Modern architecture is so different from the traditional architecture that preservation has worked so hard to save in the past, it takes more education to understand why these buildings are potentially significant—even if they do not resemble what most people consider
“historic” buildings. Therefore, it was important for the preservation movement to educate the public about buildings from the Recent Past. One participant thought that preservationists were being “smart” by getting out ahead of public opinion and that 30 years from now, the general public will be thankful that these buildings have been saved. The implication here was that preservation has been behind the curve at certain times in the past, and this has led to irreparable losses of buildings and preservationists do not want this to happen again with buildings from the Recent Past.

Participants stated that Modern buildings and building from the Recent Past were “just as legitimate” and equally as worthy of protection as buildings constructed hundreds of years ago. Because there was such a radical change in architecture that created the Modern movement, one participant thought that it was going to take more than a few generations to understand this split, which is why the general public is behind the curve on appreciating the significance of these buildings. Basically, a building that was built 200 years ago has had a long time for people to understand and appreciate it, whereas a building built only 50 years ago may continue to be misunderstood and underappreciated—the issues being time and perception. The same participant estimated that if only 5% of the public had appreciated Modern architecture recently, that figure is closer to 8% today. Other participants noted that they were not interested in “championing” an underdog, but that architecture from the Recent Past was worth studying and preserving on its own merits.

At least in Charleston, participants felt that the preservation movement was not going to run out of things to do, since citizens are so “passionate” about architecture and
design in Charleston and everyone, not just the professionals and others with academic training, are preservationists. The importance of the architectural continuum in Charleston was also mentioned as a reason for the increase in appreciation for the Recent Past, with the thought being that we do not want to look back from some point in the future and realize that we did not save any buildings from a specific time period. The role of preservation was almost couched as being watchdogs, to prevent the loss of buildings that might interrupt the continuum or be rued by future generations, like the widespread loss of Victorian architecture when it was not as highly valued by either preservationists or the general public. Another important role of preservation was that of educating the public about the value of architecture from the Recent Past that may be seen as underappreciated.

The question provoked strong reactions from some participants, with one claiming that “we’re not just trying to keep ourselves relevant” and another noting that “I disagree with that quite strongly.” The question also came up as to whether or not preservation of the Recent Past was more of an academic conversation that the general public just was not part of, with the conversation restricted to people with architectural or preservation training. One participant felt that the importance of these buildings was mostly architectural, and since most of the public do not have degrees in architecture or architectural history, that it was not an easy concept for them to grasp. Another participant did not want to sound “snobby,” but simply felt that preservation was out ahead of the curve and that the general public would catch up eventually. The idea of the
general public not having as much “foresight” about what was important to preserve was also mentioned.

On the other hand, some participants thought that preservation was not that far out ahead of the curve and that in their experience, the general public was knowledgeable and appreciative of Modern architecture. The effort to preserve buildings from this era was seen as coming from grassroots sources and not only trained professionals, just like the original historic preservation movement. Pop culture and television shows like *Mad Men* were raising awareness of and demonstrating the benefits of some of this architecture, like its affordability, openness, cleanness, and the fact that it’s “hip.” This thought, from a participant who now works in another city, shows how different preservation attitudes can be from place to place and how what is important to someone in Phoenix, for example, may not be as important to someone else in Philadelphia. While Charleston may be struggling to incorporate buildings from the Recent Past, other cities without the long history, architectural inventory, and embedded preservation ethic may be embracing it.

Other participants, however, felt that there was validity to the idea that preservationists are only interested in the Recent Past to expand their purview and to provide the movement with work to do. One participant stated bluntly that the goal of preservationists was to preserve two things—buildings and themselves. However, this situation could be alleviated if preservationists were able to become more objective about what they were trying to preserve and not just become advocates for a certain style or taste. Additionally, the same participant thought that the tourist boom in Charleston, which was one of the original reasons that preservation started in the city, now keeps the
preservation movement going, because they now have to safeguard the city to ensure that it is not going to be “ruined” by the tourists. The irony that preservation was now trying to stop what it tried so hard to create in the first place was described by the same participant as “fairly amusing.”

One of the most interesting points brought up by the participants was the importance of being objective in making decisions about whether or not to preserve an individual building or a group of buildings from the same era. This means setting aside personal opinions about the building and judging its preservation worthiness simply from its significance, whether architectural or cultural. However, one participant noted that “mid-century architecture was never my favorite thing” and another stated that it “shouldn’t be overlooked just because we don’t like it.” Another thought that traditional buildings were more “comfortable” and “easier to grasp” and that people without architectural training tended to like traditional architecture more so than Modern architecture. These comments call into question our overall preservation motivation—why should we as a society be preserving buildings for future generations that we do not like? It seems like a contradictory idea: to keep buildings that we do not like, for various reasons, with the hope that future generations will feel differently and thank us for having the foresight and objectivity to overcome our instincts and preserve them.

This discussion also raised questions about what the role of historic preservation really is, whether that is more along the lines of saving a record of what has happened architecturally, or ensuring that only “good” buildings are saved. One participant noted that as long as architecture exists, preservation will also exist in order to decide what is
actually worth saving. Another stated that the role of the preservationist is to “deal with the built environment,” so as long as that continues to exist, there will always be a role for historic preservation. One participant discussed the continued increase in preservation programs in higher education, so that seems to indicate that the role of historic preservation is growing larger rather than diminishing. Whether they reacted emotionally or intellectually, a majority of the participants felt that Milligan’s assertion about the motivations of preservation for preserving buildings from the Recent Past was inaccurate.

Authenticity is a concept that is very important to historic preservation and includes factors such as age value, material fabric, and design intent. How would you weigh the relative importance of each of these factors, and potentially others, in assessing the value of a building from a preservation perspective?

Historic preservation has always placed a high value on “authenticity,” but struggled to adequately define exactly what that means. Is an authentic building simply an old one, one that retains a high percentage of its original fabric, or one that looks the same as it did when it was originally built? This question is particularly important as historic preservation begins to evaluate buildings from the Recent Past, buildings whose design intent, materials, and construction process is radically different than traditional architecture. If the authenticity of Modern buildings derives from something different than traditional buildings, will this require a shift in how the significance of historic buildings is determined? Additionally, will this require the philosophy, policies, and
procedures of historic preservation, as they have developed and been codified over time, to change?

Participants acknowledged that the shift in architecture from the traditional to Modern has necessitated a shift in how preservationists think about preserving these different types of buildings. From a material perspective, whereas traditional architecture emphasized tried and true methods and relied on individual craftsmanship, Modern architecture experimented with new materials, methods, and assemblies that relied on mass production and efficiency. Therefore, replacing the material in a historic building when it fails results in the loss of valuable fabric, but in Modern buildings, the material can be replaced with something similar and since it was not handcrafted, there is no similar loss of value. Additionally, the value of the fabric in traditional architecture is even more pronounced today, considering the lack of quality materials (old growth wood, large timbers, etc.) and skilled craftsmanship that is available in the early twenty-first century.

Overall, participants were split on what was the most important factor that contributed to a building’s authenticity. One participant emphasized that the “story” of the building was the most important factor and this could best be told through the preservation of its design intent and not necessarily its materials. The preservation of a building was still valid even if most of the original material was not present, as long as the story could still be discerned. The important thing was that the building retained its functionality and form, rather than the original doorknob, for example. This sentiment was echoed on a larger scale by another participant, who thought that the form of
Charleston was what was historic, and not necessarily all of the material. While the original material would certainly be kept in an ideal world, materials fail, there are changes in taste, as well as natural disasters that necessitate making changes and when these things do occur, it is the overall form that should be retained. At the same time, it was important to have compatible craftsmanship, but a building could still be considered authentic if it had a 50% material loss, for example.

Another participant noted that it was the “general feeling” of the building that was the most important part of its authenticity, which is really a combination of original fabric and design intent. Replacing original fabric with lesser materials or craftsmanship would diminish the authenticity of the building, but replacement materials and craftsmanship of similar quality, while not original, would not diminish it. On the other hand, using compatible materials and craftsmanship could still diminish the authenticity of the building if the original design intent was not legible after the changes were made. This reflects a holistic approach to authenticity, where it is determined by an entire range of factors rather than having one being more important than any other.

Speaking to a similar philosophy, one participant thought the authenticity of the building should be based on what was important to the original designer or why we value the building in the first place. So, for example, if the building is significant for the use of a particular material or aspect of craftsmanship, then it is the level of original fabric remaining that determines the authenticity of the building. This would also be the case for a building known for its historic significance—if none of the material from when George Washington slept in the building remains, then the authenticity of the building can be
questioned. However, as is many times the case with Modern buildings, the authenticity of buildings built with mass-produced materials primarily lies with the design intent. Materials and components can be replaced as necessary as long as the original design intent of the building is maintained, since Modern buildings have a completely different mindset than traditional ones.

Another participant emphasized using “common sense” and “flexibility” rather than rigid rules when assessing the authenticity of historic buildings and discussed how Charleston’s preservation ethic is based on utilizing the buildings rather than fixing them at a specific point in time as museum pieces. Therefore, while the design intent, age, and the percentage of original fabric is important, the most important factor is that the buildings are actually used. Basically, the thought is that it is better to have a slightly less authentic building that is part of a living, breathing city rather than a building that has a high level of authenticity, but no use. While one can debate the overall goal of preservation and what the most important factors are, the practical approach says that none of that matters if the buildings are not able to be utilized for a contemporary purpose.

Conversely, one participant cited the amount of original fabric remaining in the building as the primary factor in its authenticity, since the material of the building is what creates the design intent. Even when a building is being altered, as happens to many buildings over time, the material used is the key to understanding whether or not the building continues to retain its authenticity. If the new material and craftsmanship is compatible with what already exists, then the authenticity level remains high. This is
another angle to the holistic approach mentioned earlier, where one cannot separate materials from design intent, since they are both dependent on each other. The participant also mentioned that it was important to consider each building as an individual case when determining authenticity, since a treatment that is appropriate for one building may not be for another.

For several participants, the key to determining the authenticity of the building in question was reflected in the timeframe and spirit of when it was built. According to one participant “The inherent value in the materials is less the later you go,” meaning that the presence of original fabric is more important to traditional architecture than Modern architecture. Changing the windows on a 200 year-old building would mean a loss of authenticity, since that type of glass is not available now, whereas changing out the window system on the old Charleston County Library would not affect the authenticity, since the material would be the same, albeit newer, and likely of better quality. While the new windows would drastically alter the look of the historic building, it would not change the exterior appearance of the library. One of the keys to comprehending this viewpoint is understanding the nature of materials. While materials used typically in traditional buildings, like stone and wood, acquire a patina or change gradually over time, modern materials tend to fail over time, with replacement becoming the only option.

Overall, the concept that emerged most clearly from the participants was that there was a vast difference in how traditional buildings are constructed as opposed to Modern buildings and that meant that the authenticity of the building was based on how the buildings were originally constructed. As architecture moved from a handcrafted
tradition towards a more industrial, mass-produced model, the importance of retaining the
original material in a building decreases dramatically. Since the construction process is so
radically different, it forces preservationists to use different criteria for evaluating the
buildings produced with different traditions. Therefore, the building’s authenticity is
dependent on the tradition in which it was built—for traditional buildings, the
authenticity lies more in the materials that it was built out of. Conversely, for Modern
buildings, the design intent is the most important factor, since the materials can easily be
replaced without any loss of authenticity, reflecting the different mindset that created that
architecture in the first place.
OLD CHARLESTON COUNTY LIBRARY, 404 KING STREET

On December 14th, 2005, the Board of Architectural Review considered an application for final approval to demolish the old Charleston County Library building at 404 King Street. The legal counsel for the owner told the board that since the building did not meet current building codes and that there is nothing unique or remarkable about it, that they should be given permission to demolish it. The Historic Charleston Foundation, represented by Katherine Saunders, was concerned that the issuance of the demolition permit was just a “formality” and that the building was a good example of the architecture of its time. If, however, the demolition approval was given, HCF asked that the building not be demolished until its replacement had been approved. The Preservation Society of Charleston, represented by Robert Gurley, asked for the same consideration, while also mentioning that they felt that the building’s height, scale, and mass on Marion Square and King Street was successful.

Other public comment on the building was mixed, with some neighborhood associations and individual citizens supporting the demolition, while others were against it. One citizen noted that while he liked the building, he was afraid that publicly stating that would destroy his credibility. Comments on the building ranged from referring to it as an “eyesore,” to an “outstanding example of modern architecture.” Another representative from HCF, Jonathan Poston, noted that Charleston needed to start documenting its twentieth century resources and, more importantly, that the value of
these resources needed to be recognized. The staff recommended that the board approve the demolition, and stated that they did not feel that the library building was a good example of Modern architecture.

During the board discussion, Robert Stockton questioned whether or not the building was too recent for its preservation fate to be decided. He opined that judging its worthiness might better be left to a future generation. All of the other board members, however, disagreed with this assessment and made various comments about the lack of appeal that the building had. They did stress the importance of having a replacement building approved before the demolition could actually take place. That was made part of the motion for the demolition of the library building and the motion passed 6-1, with only Stockton voting nay.

While both of the city’s major preservation organizations spoke in favor of preserving the building, they seemed to accept the fact that many people felt that it was not worth saving and were content to assure that the building would not be demolished until a replacement building is approved. Since the building was not rated in the city’s architectural inventory and, at the time, had not yet met the 50-year cutoff to be considered historic, the preservation community did not advocate strenuously for saving the building. While a few citizens spoke in favor of it at the BAR meeting, HCF’s “underlying assumption” that the public would want to see the old Charleston County Library building demolished seemed to be correct. It also was a good example of the preservation of Modern architecture, with most of the public in favor of demolishing it,
but with preservationists and other trained professionals urging a closer look at the building before making any rash judgments.

**L. MENDEL RIVERS FEDERAL BUILDING, 334 MEETING STREET**

The Federal Building at 334 Meeting Street appeared before the Board of Architectural Review on January 26th, 2011 for conceptual approval for converting the building to a hotel use. According to the application, the goal of the project was to “…transform a federal office building into a hotel; to transform a cold, sterile building into one that is warm and inviting; to transform an empty, unresponsive space in the heart of Charleston into a beautiful place that visitors and residents will enjoy” (City of Charleston, BAR files, 334 Meeting Street). The first issue that the architects sought permission to do was to demolish the existing mechanical building associated with the Federal Building. In order to alleviate neighborhood concerns, the architects agreed that that could be done at the same time as the rest of the renovation work on the building. The architect for the project, Reggie Gibson, of Gibson Guess Architects, actually lives in the same neighborhood, so he would be directly impacted by his own project.

In his presentation to the board, Gibson argued that the architecture of the building does not resemble other buildings in Charleston, rather it more closely resembles Federal architecture from the 1960s. Despite the fact that it does not fit with Charleston, Gibson noted that the building was a good example of its period and style. The Federal Building works well as a backdrop for Marion Square, but Gibson argued that it would require some alterations to convert it to a hotel use and make it more welcoming. He
proposed to create these alterations at three different scales—that of the entire neighborhood, the building itself, and the human scale.

According to Gibson, the top of the building is the weakest part of its composition, therefore a glass element would be added to the roof in order to strengthen it. The windows would be pulled back into the building and a new landscaping plan would result in more plantings on the Meeting Street side of the building. These proposed steps would soften the building, make it more welcoming, and less imposing and “Federal.” Gibson also characterized the building as “disliked” by the majority of residents of Charleston and, in another move to soften the building’s appearance, proposed to limewash or paint the exterior, but was careful to note that the articulation of the Flemish brick bond would still be visible through the lighter coating.

During the public comment period, it was noted that the project should be deferred until the neighborhood’s role was more clearly defined. April Wood from the Historic Charleston Foundation spoke in favor of the building and its adaptive reuse, but also criticized the painting of the building and covering the base of the building with fig vine. Robert Gurley from the Preservation Society of Charleston also supported the overall project, but disagreed with the proposed painting as well. The staff of the city agreed with many of the criticisms, including the proposed awnings, fig vines, and painting, arguing that it would make the building appear more monolithic. It was agreed that the architect could paint a corner of the building, in order to let the board see what it would actually look like. The project received conceptual approval and approval to
demolish the mechanical room and loading dock, with only 1 BAR member voting against the proposal.

The Federal Building came back before the BAR on November 9th, 2011 for preliminary approval for the conversion of the building from an office to a hotel use. The architect, Reggie Gibson, downplayed the significance of the architecture of the building and stated that while it was a good example of its time, it was not an icon of Modern architecture. He noted that he was trying to change the elements of the building that were disliked by most people, turn the plaza into someplace special, and create an event space on the roof. As part of this process, Gibson reiterated his interest in painting the building, claiming that it would soften the building and make it less “Federal.” In an important preservation point, he stressed that even if people disagree with the painting, that it was reversible and could be removed in the future.

Representing the Historic Charleston Foundation, Chief Preservation Officer Winslow Hastie spoke in support of most of the changes to the building, but cautioned that judgments about buildings from the Recent Past are often made too quickly. He did not support the painting of the building and argued that the color contrast between the red brick and white marble panels is one of the character-defining features of the building. Robert Gurley from the Preservation Society of Charleston also disagreed with the painting of the building and stated that the building was contextual with Charleston and that changing its color was not necessary to reuse it as a hotel. The BAR members visited the building in order to view the sample section of the building that had been painted. While they applauded the architect for preserving many features of the building, they felt
that the paint needed to be less opaque. The reuse project received preliminary approval from the BAR, with the issue of the paint deferred to a later meeting.

The building appeared again before the BAR just over 3 months later, on February 22nd, 2012, for final approval of the reuse scheme. The owner and developer of the building, John Dewberry, appeared before the board to voice his support for the project. April Wood from the Historic Charleston Foundation expressed support for the project and stated that she is now more comfortable with the color change and agrees that the paint is reversible. Robert Gurley from the Preservation Society of Charleston agreed with HCF on the issue of changing the color of the building, although the staff of the city felt that the grey color was less successful than the white. Despite this, the BAR gave the project final approval, with the stipulation that the owner provide further details for the staff to approve.

Perhaps in an attempt to deemphasize the historic nature of the building and encourage the BAR to approve changes to it, Gibson characterized it as “not an iconic example of Modern architecture” and “disliked” by most of Charleston’s residents. Like the other two buildings, the Federal Building is not rated in the city’s architectural survey and therefore did not face the scrutiny of a building that was highly rated. Unlike the other two, however, the Federal Building is largely being preserved as-is, which is a major victory for preservationists. As such, the criticisms of the project focused exclusively on the details—mostly the painting of the building and other relatively minor points.
GAILLARD AUDITORIUM, 77 CALHOUN STREET

On December 16th, 2010, a special meeting of the Board of Architectural Review was convened to discuss the application for conceptual approval for the renovations to the Gaillard Auditorium, which is also not rated in the city’s architectural survey. Dennis Dowd, the City Architect and Preservation Officer for the City of Charleston, reminded the board that the purpose of this special meeting of the BAR was to discuss the height, scale, and mass of the proposed renovations to the Gaillard Auditorium. Mayor Joseph Riley spoke first in favor of the project, and noted that this was a once in-a-lifetime opportunity to reuse the building, save money, upgrade the performance spaces, and make the building more sympathetic to Charleston’s architectural tradition. The architect for the project, David Schwarz, spoke next and emphasized how the project will incorporate most of the existing building, create grand new performance spaces, and make the whole site more pedestrian-friendly.

The board asked about the materials being used and Schwarz replied that it would be a combination of stone and stucco over the entire building. The board noted that the design fit in with the history and architecture of Charleston and Schwarz responded that that was the goal, to create a contextual design that did not replicate any specific details from historic buildings. There were numerous public comments on the project, including several letters sent to the board, mostly in support of it, but with several important concerns. The Committee to Save the City was fully in support of the project, as was the Historic Charleston Foundation, but they did have some comments. Representing HCF, Winslow Hastie suggested that the architect take the whole site into account in order to
create an “exceptional” end product. On the other hand, the Preservation Society of Charleston, represented by Robert Gurley, felt that the scale and mass were inappropriate and urged the application to be denied. The other speakers were mostly in support of remodeling the building, although concerns ranged from the specific location of the loading dock to the overall design of the project.

In his rebuttal, Schwarz acknowledged that the design of the renovation was not perfect, but that it was constrained by several factors, including height by zoning, depth by the Army Corps of Engineers, and a limited budget. Additionally, working with an existing building is rarely as simple as building a new building from scratch. Because the renovation to the building and the addition of office space is so complex, there is bound to be some aspect of the project that someone disagrees with, but that the overall goals should be kept in mind. Mayor Riley spoke again and noted that the St. John’s Church, adjacent to the site, is in favor of the project and that every street affected by the project has been enhanced by it.

The staff comments stated that the project was a “very positive transformation of a dated building.” They agreed that the proposed Classical language and details were appropriate for a civic building. While they also stated that there were details that could be improved upon, the staff believed that the project meets the criteria for conceptual approval and recommended that the board do so. The board discussed the project and it centered on various details of the project; they generally agreed that it was a good start, but could certainly be improved. However, they also agreed that it met the requirements for height, scale, and mass and there was a motion for conceptual approval, with no
conditions. The project was passed by a 6-1 vote, with Fava voting nay based on his earlier comments during the discussion regarding the massing along Calhoun and George streets.

On August 24th, 2011, the renovation of the Gaillard Auditorium appeared again before the Board of Architectural Review for preliminary approval. Mayor Riley once again spoke in support of the project and architect David Schwarz presented the project and responded to concerns from the previous meeting. City-wide organizations, like the Committee to Save the City, continued to support the project and the Historic Charleston Foundation, represented by Winslow Hastie, agreed that the design had improved, the material palette was high-quality, and that the details had been worked out.

The comments from the public, however, took on a distinctly different tone. One speaker expressed the opinion that copying historic styles cheapens history and that the proposed renovation of the Gaillard “copies” architecture from the past, rather than moving forward. The point was also made that Charleston needs to find space in the city for Modern buildings and that the entire city cannot be based on historic architecture. Another speaker claimed that he is not aware of a single architect in Charleston who approves of the Classical design and that the “horse has left the barn” in terms of historic styles. In his rebuttal, Schwarz took advantage of what he referred to as a “teachable moment” and explained that just because a design is Classically-inspired does not mean that it is not a modern building. Board discussion centered on the idea that the design does not necessarily announce the building as a performing arts center and that buildings
designed in the Modern style do not stand the test of time. Despite the negative comments, the board approved the application for preliminary approval by a 4-1 vote.

The application for final approval for the renovations to the Gaillard Auditorium was heard by the BAR on June 13th, 2012. Schwarz explained that there had not been any substantive changes since the preliminary approval, so his presentation was relatively short. April Wood, representing HCF, took issue with the abstracted column capitals. Robert Gurley, representing the Preservation Society of Charleston, reiterated the concerns that the project was bad urban design, since it only covered 2 ½ facades and that the building is too large with the additions, and asked the board to deny the application. The city staff recommended final approval for the project, with final details to be approved at the staff level. This motion was made and passed unanimously by the board, meaning that the project had completed all 3 levels of BAR review successfully.

Most of the debate about the renovations to the Gaillard Auditorium centered on the details of the new components of the project, including the overall cost of the project and the appropriateness of the Classically-inspired design. The debate focused on a long-standing issue in Charleston regarding whether new construction needs to stand out or blend in with the existing context. There were very few comments from anyone, including members of the public, the BAR staff, or the historic preservation organizations regarding the preservation of the building as-built. Whether this was because the building is not yet 50 years old (the traditional cutoff for considering a building historic) or that no one particularly felt that the building was important enough to preserve was not clear from the comments at the meeting.
INTRODUCTION

While each of the three buildings experienced its own history and preservation process, by using a cross-case analysis and comparing the cases to each other, findings emerged to answer each of the research questions and highlight the contradictions in historic preservation theory and policy. As Merriam describes: “Findings can be in the form of organized descriptive accounts, themes, or categories that cut across the data or in the form of models and theories that explain the data” (Merriam 2009, 176). The initial data that were used to summarize and synthesize the interview questions was further reduced and clustered into themes to answer the research questions. These themes included architectural value, economics, sustainability, location, time, materials, and education.

Why are the three buildings being treated differently from a historic preservation perspective and what does that say about how Charleston relates to both contemporary and traditional architecture?

One of the reasons that the three buildings were chosen for the study was because they seemingly had a lot in common. They are all public buildings, built in the 1960s, located very close to one another in a part of the city that was not yet considered historic when the buildings were built, and all reflected the principles of Modern architecture that
broke with the tradition and appearance of Charleston. While there were obvious differences between them, such as their size and original use, they potentially represented several buildings that preservation could treat as a group.

The three buildings, however, are receiving very different treatments, as the Federal Building is being adaptively reused with very little exterior change, the old Charleston County Library building has been approved for demolition since 2005, and the Gaillard Auditorium is being radically renovated. The study has highlighted that, despite numerous commonalities between the buildings, each building is a distinctly separate case and it is difficult to apply any generalities to their treatments. The buildings are receiving different treatments for numerous reasons, including location, economics, and construction and feasibility of adaptive reuse.

To begin with, all of the buildings were originally built for different reasons and by different branches of the government. The library building was a Charleston County project driven by the County Council, with the architect chosen by the county. The Federal Building was commissioned by the General Services Administration and the architect was chosen by the Federal government. Lastly, the Gaillard Auditorium was a municipal project and the architect was chosen through a design competition (although the architects of all three buildings either had offices in Charleston or another connection to the city). Additionally, while all three of the buildings can be referred to as “Modern,” they are actually quite different architecturally, with only the Federal Building making any attempt to fit into the existing context of Charleston. There are also vast differences
between the buildings in terms of the methods, quality, and durability of their construction.

Despite the fact that they have both been abandoned and suffering from deferred maintenance for over 10 years, the Federal Building and the old Charleston County Library have fared differently over this period of time. The quality of the construction and the materials used in the Federal Building have allowed it to remain at least visually intact, whereas the library building is clearly deteriorating at a much faster rate and looks like an abandoned building. Black silicone caulk has begun oozing out from some of the joints in the building, giving it a dilapidated appearance that lends support to the thought that demolishing the building makes sense. Likewise, the poor construction quality of the Gaillard Auditorium has contributed to its radical treatment, with material failings and other construction flaws discovered during the renovation making a much more significant intervention necessary, even though the building has been in continuous use since it was completed in 1968.

In addition to the designs of the buildings, the materials used mark them as Modern buildings and create preservation questions that dictate different strategies. One of the biggest differences between modern and traditional materials is how they behave over time. While traditional materials tend to age and acquire a patina, modern materials tend to look similar to they did when they were installed, until they fail. Therefore, traditional buildings tend to look graceful and gain character as they age, whereas Modern buildings tend to simply look deteriorated or dilapidated once the materials fail. Even though the library was built only 53 years ago, the materials it was built with are
already failing, contributing to the dilapidated appearance of the building. Because the Federal Building was built with more traditional materials, like brick and marble, it has aged better than the other two buildings. While the Gaillard uses some traditional materials, such as brick, the library was built with more modern materials like aluminum and glass and the fact that it looks to be in such poor condition no doubt supports the case that demolishing it would not result in the loss of a significant historic building.

While the three buildings are located very close to one another, they are each associated with a different section of Charleston and it is this fine point that helps to further understand their different treatments. The Gaillard is associated more with the Ansonborough neighborhood, a residential area immediately to the south of the building that was restored by the city and the Historic Charleston Foundation in the 1970s. While Calhoun Street has subsequently developed as more of a commercial corridor with larger buildings since the building was built, the adjacent neighborhood continues to be a dense area of two- or three-story, mostly residential buildings. Changes to the building are taken within the context of the impacts to Ansonborough and the opinions of the people who live there.

The library building is located directly on Marion Square and is associated with upper King Street, a commercial district of mostly two- and three-story mixed use buildings. It is also directly adjacent to the four-story original Citadel building, an important factor in its potential reuse or demolition to make way for a new building. Although the Federal Building is directly across Marion Square from the library, it is located across Meeting Street from the square and thus does not front directly on it. It is
more associated with the Mazyck-Wraggborough neighborhood and the Meeting Street
corridor, an area that is currently experiencing intense development pressure, including
hotels and apartment buildings that more closely match the Federal Building in terms of
size.

The three buildings exhibit many other differences that help to explain why their
treatments are so different, including their usability. The Federal Building was built as an
office building, but for a variety of reasons it would not function competitively as an
office building in the twenty-first century. However, the location and layout of the
building makes it possible to adaptively reuse it as a hotel, and it is therefore a prime
candidate for preservation without greatly altering the appearance of the building. While
it is a Modern building, its conversion to a hotel is a very traditional preservation
solution, one that has saved countless buildings throughout history.

The library building was replaced by a new and much larger Charleston County
Library building in the mid-1990s and its reuse possibilities are limited by its size and
existing floor plates. Additionally, the footprint is so small and the land is so valuable
that for the developer to maximize the return on the property, something taller needs to be
built. Because the Gaillard is a performance space, it needs to be state of the art in order
to continue attracting top notch productions to Charleston. Therefore, the radical change
to that building is motivated by the demands of the interior program.

The architectural value of each of the three buildings is also a significant factor in
the treatments that they are receiving. Of the three buildings, the Federal Building is the
only one that was designed to fit in with the context of Charleston. While the success of
that attempt is debatable, depending on the viewer’s knowledge of Charleston and architecture in general, the building at least attempted to be contextual. The same cannot be said of either the library building or the Gaillard Auditorium, with both of them looking more generic and as if they could be located anywhere. One of the reasons for this is that both of the designs reflected national trends that tended to ignore the context of where buildings were being built. Neither one was cited as a particularly “good example” of that period of architecture, normally one of the main criterion preservationists use when deciding whether or not to save a building. With the architectural attitude in the 1960s being one of rejecting traditional architecture and trying to look different, however, the fact that the Federal Building was designed with Charleston in mind increases its architectural significance greatly. Therefore, the architectural value of the Federal Building is one of the factors that justify it receiving a much less invasive treatment than the other two buildings.

The preservation treatments of the three buildings are also being affected by their separate economic circumstances. The renovation of the Gaillard, including the selection of the architect and the overall architectural approach, is being funded by a wealthy donor in partnership with the city of Charleston. As one participant noted, the project could only be accomplished by a governmental entity—a private developer would not have taken it on. Additionally, the amount of money being spent on the project will result in a state of the art performance space that citizens and visitors alike will be excited to visit. Conversely, in the case of the library, the economic value of the land is not being maximized with a two-story building, so the developer wants to build a larger building on
the site, necessitating the demolition of the library. While the existing building could be incorporated into a new building, simply tearing it down is the cheapest option for the owner. The Federal Building is the easiest of the three to reuse as-is, and it makes sense economically for the owner of the building to redevelop it as a hotel rather than tear it down and start over.

Aside from more traditional preservation strategies, one of the reasons to preserve the buildings is to save the embodied energy in them and be more environmentally-sensitive. Along with the economic argument goes the concept of adaptive reuse, or retaining the building and changing its use. While that makes a lot of sense and has led to many buildings being saved, a building must have a use in order to be saved. While it would be a shame to lose the embodied energy in the three buildings, if an economically viable use cannot be found for any of them, then it makes sense to replace them with a more useful building. One of the reasons cited by the participants for the preservation success in Charleston is that the buildings are actually used and that helps to explain the different treatments that the three buildings are receiving. While the Federal Building is being reused as a hotel and the Gaillard’s use will be the same after the dramatic renovation, there are questions about the viability of the reuse of the library and, aside from the recently mentioned idea of relocating the Clemson Architectural Center there, there have not been any proposals to do so.

Emotion towards the buildings is a less quantifiable, but powerful, indicator of what treatment the buildings are going to receive. For example, the library building has been disparaged by many people in Charleston who feel that it is an eyesore and they will
not be convinced that it is worth saving, no matter how significant it is or what reuse possibilities exist. At the same time, people who have pleasant memories of the building can argue for its preservation, while overlooking structural or other deficiencies about the building. Simply how people feel about a building can make any preservation arguments moot and make the example of any individual building a complicated preservation issue.

As time has passed, the attitudes towards the preservation at least one of the three buildings has changed. While the library building was approved for demolition by the BAR in 2005, it has not been demolished yet and interest in saving the building seems to be increasing. Fifty years is currently the cutoff for buildings to be considered historic and while that is not an absolute number, buildings are not generally nominated to the National Register until that point unless there is something exceptional about them. The library passed that milestone in 2010 and at least one participant cited that as the reason why preservation interest in the building has increased, potentially changing the treatment that the building will receive. Therefore, one of the reasons that the library’s demolition was not opposed more vigorously in 2005 was that it had not reached the 50-year mark to be considered historic yet. The other two buildings have not yet reached the 50-year mark yet, but the projects scheduled for each of them should be completed by the time they do.

Charleston has had a complex attitude towards appropriate architecture for the city—whether it should be traditional and fit in with the context or if it should be more contemporary—and this is reflected in the preservation treatments that the three buildings are receiving as well as the factors behind their construction in the first place. The two major factors that affected their contemporary design in the 1960s was the economic
situation in Charleston and the state of preservation and the geographic purview of the BAR at that point in time. While difficult to imagine now, with Charleston recently being named the top tourist destination in the world by one magazine, the economic climate was much different in the 1960s. At that point, the economy was at a low point and the prospect of building in the city was welcome, no matter what the building looked like. As was noted by several of the people interviewed for this study, economic progress was considered more valuable than preservation of the buildings on the sites when the three buildings were built.

The parts of the city where the buildings were built were also not considered part of the historic district during that time period and therefore not subject to BAR review (see figure 8). While their designs were certainly scrutinized, there was no formal design review process where citizens could state their opinions and force changes in the design, like they could at the BAR if those buildings were being built now. The County Council did hold a hearing concerning the design of the library building, but no changes to the design resulted from it. One of the reasons mentioned for the designs of the buildings was the entities that were funding their construction. Because they were all government-financed projects, the architects were looking beyond the direct influence of the Charleston context to more national and international trends and the city welcomed them as a form of economic stimulus at a time when it was much needed. The expansion of the historic district, and therefore the purview of the BAR, and the vastly improved economic climate in Charleston are potentially two of the reasons why the architectural climate is so different early in the twenty-first century.
The treatments that the three buildings are receiving shed significant light on how Charleston relates to both traditional and contemporary architecture. The architectural climate in Charleston at this point in time seems to largely resemble that in other historic cities in the United States. Namely, that while traditional architecture is discouraged to prevent “confusion” about what is historic, contemporary architecture is discouraged as well, so as not to clash with the historic context. Despite this, participants mentioned that the “underlying thinking” in Charleston is that all new buildings need to be traditional and fit in with the city. They felt that with the expansion of the historic district, that preservation was becoming more important, but at the same time, the BAR was discouraging contemporary architecture and that it was difficult to get a contemporary building approved. Others thought that the BAR was not hostile to contemporary architecture and would approve more modern buildings, as long as they were not located in the midst of the most significant historic structures.

It is this “tension” between traditional and contemporary architecture that defines the architectural climate of the city early in the twenty-first century, with one participant feeling that this was a positive thing and that it would be detrimental if either side were to eventually win out. It was thought that the majority of projects in Charleston make an attempt to fit into the context, with architects at least recognizing how important the context is, although effort and degree of success vary depending on the individual architect and the nature of the project. At the same time, this balancing act that architects attempt with each project mirrors the same struggle that architects designing buildings in existing contexts face everywhere—namely, traditional architecture is discouraged, since
preservation wants to prevent confusion over what is historic, and truly contemporary architecture is also discouraged, since the new building should not be too oppositional to the existing buildings. This is what the Secretary of the Interior Standards call for—new architecture should be “compatible,” but also “differentiated” at the same time.

In Charleston, as the purview of the BAR expands and the preservation mindset envelops more of the city, it seems less and less possible to execute a project at either end of the traditional-contemporary spectrum, forcing architects and citizens to settle for the inoffensive middle ground. While the “tension” between the two ends of the spectrum was mentioned as a positive aspect of the architectural debate in Charleston, it seems to push all of the projects to the middle. Participants noted that while most architects working in Charleston would prefer to design in a more contemporary manner to reflect the architectural philosophy of expressing the zeitgeist, they felt that most of the residents of Charleston thought that new designs should be more reflective of the historic context. Concerning the three buildings in the study, one participant was surprised that an architect was ever allowed to execute a building that contemporary in Charleston.

As one participant noted, the three buildings in the study describe “the breadth of what the debates about mid-century Modern should be,” but they also provide a commentary about how Charleston feels about contemporary and traditional architecture and what is appropriate for the city. Multiple participants stated that they would rather have the original buildings on these sites back, such as Weyman’s Folly on the Federal Building site and the entire Middlesex neighborhood that was demolished for the Gaillard Auditorium, but that we have to consider what we actually have on the site instead of
once was there. While the preference stated was for traditional architecture, these same participants would be opposed to tearing down the three buildings in the study and replacing them with buildings of a type and size that formerly existed. This is another example of the contradiction of fighting to save a building that preservation would have been opposed to in the first place.

At the same time, most of the participants were opposed to the traditional components of the proposed replacement building for the library and the renovation of the Gaillard Auditorium. One participant noted that there would be opposition to recalling the Classical architecture of the demolished Charleston Hotel and another mentioned how the proposal for the Gaillard makes their “skin crawl” and that architects and preservationists are trained to oppose false historicism. Preservationists also oppose the Classically-inspired hotel that is proposed for the library site, although that opposition is based mainly on the height and size of the new building, despite the presence of the much larger Francis Marion Hotel, complete with Classical Revival details, located directly across the street. Many of the participants would like to see all three buildings preserved, although they understand why that is not possible in each case.
How does the treatment of this group of buildings reflect a change in preservation theory and philosophy over time, especially considering that each of the three replaced one or more historic buildings?

As previously stated, the most important issue in historic preservation is time—under the current framework, the age of a building or its components goes a long way towards determining its significance and treatment from a preservation perspective. The issue, however, is that preservation interprets time as a strictly linear, forward-moving concept. Before the current preservation movement, as mentioned by David Lowenthal in his book *The Past is a Foreign Country*, our concept of the past was much different and it was not explicitly differentiated from the present. This earlier concept allowed references from the past to influence how we designed buildings in the present and future.

However, the more modern concept of time, as interpreted by the preservation movement, restricted buildings and ideas to the point in time at which they were constructed and did not allow them to change and adapt over time or to serve as influences for later buildings. Therefore, once the “time” of a building is past, then it is reduced from an active role to a more passive role as a relic from a bygone era. This also restricts how a building can change over time, since additions or updates to the building might alter it to the point where it is difficult to tell in which architectural era it was built. How the three buildings in the study are being treated from a preservation perspective highlights the inadequacies with this thought process and demonstrates that a more fluid approach to the concept of time is more appropriate for our built environment.
This phenomenon is demonstrated by the case of the old Charleston County Library building and how it was perceived over time. While it was approved for demolition in 2005, the preservation community did not actively begin advocating for its preservation until it reached 50 years old. During that gap in time, the building was still abandoned and continued to deteriorate, which only made the argument for its preservation or adaptive reuse harder to make, since it would be more expensive to restore or reuse the longer it sat there unused. Yet, magically after it reached the 50 year mark, it was deemed potentially worthy of preservation and more attention was paid to the building. Had the potential replacement building been approved in 2005, the library would have been demolished before it reached 50 years of age. Are we supposed to believe that the building is now significant today (or when it turned 50 in 2010) when it was not significant enough to be saved in 2005?

Just as importantly as how we perceive buildings throughout time, the actual reasons for preserving buildings and what we value in the built environment have changed as well. Over time, different aspects of buildings and their stories have become more or less important. For instance, the preservation movement began in Charleston to preserve the ancestral history of the city and the prominent families who lived there. The focus was less on great works of architecture and more on the preferred social history of the city, which began to be threatened as buildings were torn down and interiors sold off to distant museums. As the focus of preservation has expanded during the twentieth century, more and more of the built environment is being considered historic, including those structures that were ignored when the preservation movement was just beginning.
While this is a positive development for the most part, it does raise some issues as to the overall intent of preservation—whether it is to save great buildings, or preserve a record of what has happened architecturally. Should a building be preserved if it represents a specific point in time, or does there need to be a more practical reason for saving it? Preservation’s emphasis on moving forward architecturally has made preserving the architectural continuum a priority, since once a period has passed, we are unable to return to it. This also gets to the issue of relativism, as preservation, to its credit, has become more inclusive over time, but as Catesby Leigh has suggested, it is now unable to “separate the wheat from the chaff” (Leigh 2001, 41). These questions become critically important as the debate over the significance of mid-century Modern architecture intensifies.

As Modern architecture reaches the point where it can be considered historic, it’s very nature and the philosophy behind it is forcing preservation to reexamine its own procedures and philosophy. One of the reasons that preservation became more widespread was that it was a reaction to Modernism and the destruction of historic buildings. Its philosophical underpinnings, however, are in agreement with Modernism: namely, that the past is over, new buildings have to look to the future rather than the past, and historic buildings need to be preserved as artifacts from an earlier time. The entire framework of historic preservation was set up to identify and protect traditional buildings, because those were the buildings that were historic and/or threatened when the movement began. Now, however, with buildings of a completely different mindset
starting to reach the cutoff to be considered historic, many of the philosophies and principles that guided the preservation movement are beginning to become problematic.

Architectural value and quality have been important components of historic preservation since the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities first focused on it. While much of the architectural value and quality of traditional architecture is not disputed, preservation has had a more difficult time assessing Modern architecture and the subjective nature of architecture has made it difficult to determine what exactly is “good.” The craftsmanship and quality of materials used in many traditional buildings have made them natural candidates for preservation, as they are durable, age well, and have long lives.

Modern architecture, on the other hand, utilizing a completely different mindset that emphasized the present and being exploratory, was generally built out of less permanent materials and used experimental methods and assemblies that have not always fared well over time. Additionally, many traditional materials can be repaired when damaged, whereas modern materials need to be completely replaced. Some modern materials, such as asbestos and fiberglass, are even potentially harmful when they need to be abated or replaced. The energy conservation of modern materials is another question that could inhibit the reuse of these buildings, since improving their performance ratings could require dramatically altering some of their character-defining features.

The shift from traditional architecture to Modern architecture has necessitated a shift in how a building’s significance is determined, especially from a material and authenticity perspective. The significance in traditionally hand-crafted buildings that used
time-tested materials and methods is generally defined in the amount of historic fabric that is still present in the building. If all of the windows have been replaced, the siding is new and the chimneys have been rebuilt in a nineteenth century house, for example, that building’s significance would presumably be compromised because many of the original materials are missing. The material in Modern buildings is much more interchangeable, with machine-made parts able to be replaced when they need to be, without a loss of significance.

In other words, the authenticity of traditional buildings lies primarily in the degree of material authenticity, while the legibility of original design intent is more important when assessing the authenticity of Modern buildings. Participants noted that the materials of the library building could be replaced without losing the design intent of the building and therefore preserving its significance. At the same time, many participants objected to the painting of the exterior brick on the Federal Building during its renovation, since the altering of the original material was seen as changing one of the character-defining features of the building, and therefore the design intent.

As time has gone on, not only has the range of buildings that preservation is interested in expanded, but so have the rationales for saving historic buildings. Preservation has embraced the emerging focus on the environment and sustainability in recent years. Even if a building is not considered a great example of its type or does not exhibit a high degree of social significance, the fact that it is already built and contains embodied energy that would be lost in a demolition makes it a potentially valuable building. Therefore, the argument to save a building gets much easier by utilizing the
sustainability angle, since the greenest building is the one that is already built and available for reuse. In the sense of a building needing a future reuse, preservation philosophy has made a shift from the ideological to the practical. This could also potentially create a shift on how buildings are built in the future, since traditional materials and methods have been shown to be so sustainable over time.

Whereas in the past, the three buildings in the study might have been torn down when other buildings were proposed for the sites, it is more difficult to imagine that happening now, with the impact to the environment being such an emphasis early in the twenty-first century. As one of the participants noted “And they’re looking at them as, they might not be beautiful, I don’t think any of these were ever loved upon buildings, but we’re looking at them ecologically, like why would we tear something down if you can reuse it?” While that may be true, the materials and construction techniques of the buildings are working against them, to some degree, from the sustainability angle. There is a point where the saved embodied energy from reusing the buildings still would not make that option worthwhile, as they may require drastic changes to convert them to a different use.

Along the same lines, preservation also places a high emphasis on the adaptive reuse of buildings. If there is no use available for a building, the argument for its preservation gets much weaker, since there is no reason to keep a building that does not have a viable use. Preservation’s recent focus on sustainability and reuse has created separation in the value of the three buildings, based on their reuse possibilities. Generally speaking traditional buildings are much easier to reuse, since Modern buildings were
often built with a very specific purpose in mind and they are more difficult to adapt to a different use or put an addition on to without radically altering their original appearance. One of the reasons that the Federal Building is being preserved, however, is that the original office layout of the building makes the change to a hotel use relatively seamless. While the architectural and social significance of the building is debatable, the fact that it can be reused so easily with relatively few exterior changes makes its preservation a more defensible position.

Conversely, the library building is harder to reuse since it was built specifically to be a library and that does not necessarily adapt well to other uses. When it was built, it was originally designed to support a third floor, but when that possibility was examined in the 1990s, it was discovered that the building did not meet current seismic requirements. Any adaptive reuse proposal would need to consider the structural integrity of the building, potentially making the reuse more expensive than tearing it down and starting over. The argument for saving the library has focused on the social history of the building, its place in the architectural continuum, and opposition to the building that is proposed to replace it. While a use could potentially be found for the library, its condition, materials, construction methods, and layout make it a much more difficult reuse possibility than the Federal Building. Ironically, the unsuitability of the west wing of the old Citadel building for adaptive reuse as a library was the reason that it was torn down and replaced with the current library building.

One of the reasons that the renovation of the Gaillard Auditorium was not more controversial is that it is commonly agreed on that the performance spaces had outlived
their usefulness and needed to be updated to in order for the building to remain competitive. While the Classically-inspired design for the project has certainly been criticized by preservationists and architects, the fact is that the Gaillard was due (and potentially overdue) for an update. Additionally, it was not considered an important building from a preservation standpoint and flaws discovered during the renovation necessitated the more radical treatment. If there had been opposition to the overall goal of the project, it would have raised the question of preserving a building that no longer has a viable use. Although some of the embodied energy in the building will be lost during its renovation, its obsolescence as a performance space made the building the least valuable from a reuse perspective.

Preservation philosophy and practice have been intimately tied to the concept of time, with 50 years designated as the cutoff for a building to be considered historic and one of the primary preservation rationales being that a building is a good example of its time. One of the arguments in support of the preservation of mid-century Modern architecture is that because it was built relatively recently, we have not had enough time to properly evaluate it. As more time passes, we will be able to see it as a reflection of the time during which it was built and not have knee-jerk reactions to it based on our own individual aesthetic judgments. By tying buildings to a certain point in time, however, preservation is perpetuating the pursuit of more and more architecture that is potentially in conflict with historic contexts like Charleston. Because preservation supports the idea that contemporary architecture must be “of its time” and not refer directly to buildings from the past, buildings built with that philosophy are therefore out of fashion at some
point. Additionally, if contemporary architecture is not allowed to reference any designs from the past, that will require architects to constantly invent new designs, rather than being able to refer to historic precedents, as they have consistently throughout history.

Preservationists generally agree that it is important to preserve a record of each architectural era rather than considering buildings on their own merits, which is contradictory to how traditional architecture treats buildings. Throughout most of urban history, if there was no use for a building or the community agreed that a better building could replace it, then it was considered valid to demolish the building. However, modern preservation policy argues that we should preserve certain buildings as a “slice of time,” or representative sample of their era. While the three buildings in the study are dissimilar in many ways, the fact that they were all built in the same era supports the notion that at least one of them should be saved to represent public buildings that were built during that architectural era in Charleston. This would seem to support a “built-in” preservation concept for buildings that preservationists in the future can point to. If the goal of preservation is to preserve buildings that represent “their time” and provide a “timestamp” for future generations to be able to refer to, then by default, at least some buildings from each era need to be saved in order to accomplish that goal. Rather than deciding if the building in question is “good” or has a valid use, some buildings will be guaranteed to be preserved to demonstrate how we were designing and building at any specific point in time, since it has to be different than how we were doing it at any other point in the past.
While preservation attempts to have some objective measures in order to evaluate the significance and preservation worthiness of buildings, the treatments of the three buildings in the study highlight the fact that preservation decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, often with a high degree of emotion involved. In terms of preservation philosophy, this makes it more difficult to have overarching theories to refer to, when each building presents its own circumstances. While the three buildings in the study have numerous factors in common, there are enough differences to highlight this phenomenon. While it may not be possible to have strictly quantitative methods for determining the preservation worthiness of buildings, the very nature of individual preservation decisions makes it difficult to develop theories that can be applied to more than one building.

The preservation treatments that the three buildings are receiving illustrate preservation theories that are tied more to the quality and usability of a building, rather than its age or whether or not it is a good example of a specific point in time. If a building has outlived its usefulness or a “better” building is proposed for the site, like in the case of the library building, society should not be afraid to admit that and demolish the building. If a building can be reused, like the Rivers Federal Building, then it should be preserved and used, even if it means changing some of the characteristics of the building. The fact also that many of the participants mentioned that they would prefer to have the previous buildings on the three sites back also illustrates the advantages of the quality versus time argument.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The case study of the three mid-century Modern buildings in Charleston has highlighted numerous contradictions within the fields of historic preservation and architecture. To begin with, the architectural climate is much different in the early twenty-first century than it was in the 1960s. At the time that the buildings were built, the economy in Charleston was weak and the progress that was thought to be tied to the construction of the buildings was more important than the preservation of the existing buildings. Now, however, Charleston is under a tremendous amount of development pressure and the city does not need to focus on new buildings, but more on the preservation of existing buildings. The buildings were built when Charleston was desperate for development to stimulate the economy in the city, but that does not necessarily mean that buildings built when the city was happy to have any construction happening are worth preserving now.

Not only has the economic climate in Charleston changed drastically, the architectural climate is much different as well. In the 1960s, Modernism was at its height and architects were eager to explore new materials and methods, while ignoring the time-honored and tested solutions that traditional architecture offered. The three buildings in the study are prime examples of ignoring the existing context and building to suit the immediate architectural fashion. In the intervening fifty years, traditional architecture has begun to make a comeback, partially as building more sustainably has become an important focus. Preservation cannot continue to work against the tradition that built the
buildings that the movement preserved in the first place and prevent the current
generation from constructing buildings that future generations will want to preserve—
unlike the vast majority of buildings that are being built early in the twenty-first century.
If one of the goals of preservation is to learn how to build, then preservation should be
promoting using existing buildings as precedents for new design, rather than consigning
them strictly to the past (Semes 2009b, 159).

Preservation’s focus on categorizing buildings by when they were constructed,
how old they are, and what “style” they are is proving to be extremely problematic,
especially when it comes to relating new designs to the existing urban fabric. No matter
what a building actually looks like, every building is a reflection of its time by virtue of
the technology used in its design and construction. Even if the building in question is
Classical in nature, if it is designed and built in the twenty-first century, chances are the
architects are using advanced computer software that was not available to earlier
generations, or even just a few years ago. Therefore, the exterior appearance of the
building does not need to look radically different, simply to express the fact that it was
built in the twenty-first century. Preservation’s insistence that each building bear a
contemporary “timestamp” and be a direct, visible reflection of its time is thinking much
too narrowly about how buildings express themselves and the era in which they were
built.

The problem with building to express the moment of construction is that as soon
as that moment is over, the building begins to appear dated. That is exactly what
happened with the three buildings in the study and the reason that their preservation or
demolition is in question. Once the “style” that produced them is considered passé, they are in danger of being demolished because they are not current any longer. Contradictorily, preservation promotes buildings going out of fashion by setting up guidelines that demand following the current architectural trends and insisting that every design be unprecedented, rather than relying on the tried-and-true solutions of traditional architecture.

The fact that the fates of the three buildings in the study are inexorably linked to the moment in time that they were created lends credence to the idea that the goal of any new architectural project should be to be timeless, in order to prevent the stylistic obsolescence that current preservation theory promotes. When the goal is to build in a certain “style” to represent a moment in time, the ever-present danger is that all of the buildings that represent that moment will eventually be demolished, leading to an irreversible loss of history. This also puts the future preservation fates of buildings that do not follow the current architectural trends in doubt, since they are not part of the preferred architectural continuum that preservation emphasizes. For example, how will future preservationists treat architect David Schwarz’s Schermerhorn Symphony Center in Nashville, Tennessee, completed in 2006? The Classically-inspired building clearly did not follow the architectural trends of the early twenty-first century, yet may be a likely candidate for historic designation in the future.

The current policies and procedures of historic preservation are linked very closely to the concept of time and having good examples of buildings from specific points in time. However, as time inevitably passes by, it gets compressed the further in
the past that it recedes. While preservationists may lament the loss of buildings from the
1960s, as time goes on, instead of being a short period of time, it becomes an entire
decade. Later, that becomes the third quarter of the twentieth century, then the second
half of the twentieth century, then just the twentieth century in general. As time recedes
into history, we are much less sensitive about buildings from such a brief period of time,
so that a building from 1750 is not as distinguishable from a building from 1780. In other
words, preservationists are focusing very narrowly on specific points in time when, in the
overall continuum, we do not need to be saving so many buildings to represent specific
time periods. While technology may be speeding up over time and architectural designs
may be evolving more quickly, the focus on representing specific points in time greatly
expands the amount of buildings that preservationists deem worthy of saving.

Another interesting contradiction revealed by the information analyzed about the
three buildings is the idea of preserving buildings that we do not “like.” Participants
repeatedly mentioned the concept that our aesthetic judgments should not get in the way
of determining whether or not the building in question was worth preserving. The
inherent danger with making judgments based on aesthetics, as the argument goes, is that
the current generation may make decisions based solely on their dislike of the building
that might be questioned by future generations. While it seems contradictory to preserve
buildings that we do not like, participants pointed to the example of Victorian
architecture that was not popular in the mid-twentieth century and was frequently torn
down for not being “historic” enough. Although mid-century Modern architecture was
worth preserving, participants also noted that it should not necessarily be informing
contemporary design, so while the library deserves to be preserved, Charleston certainly would not want a similar building built today. While certainly opinions can vary on the aesthetic appeal of traditional buildings, one of the reasons cited for their preservation is how much the community generally likes them.

Along with this idea about saving disliked architecture was the related contradictory concept that people needed to be “educated” about why mid-century Modern buildings should be preserved, rather than instinctively liking them on their own. As Nikos Salingaros wrote, “Our experience of traditional and vernacular buildings is instantaneous, and usually generates positive emotions. Nowadays, the reaction to many of our new buildings tends to be negative. We often face the contradiction of a building validated by formal design criteria, but which makes us feel uneasy” (Salingaros 2007, 72). Participants mentioned that the three buildings in the study were generally disliked, but also stressed that they were important buildings and fit the preservation criteria to be considered for preservation. Additionally, it was mentioned that preservationists would like to have the buildings that existed on the three sites before the current buildings back. This may indicate that academic preservation opinion and the opinion of the general public are starting to diverge somewhat. Since preservation has enjoyed broad public support in the past, this divergence may have a significant effect on the movement’s momentum in the future.

One of the other contradictions that the three buildings in the study have highlighted is the emotional component of historic preservation and how that inhibits being able to make objective decisions or developing a framework for preserving
buildings. The example of the BAR in Charleston and how decisions are made on a case-by-case basis was mentioned numerous times by the participants. While the board tries to be consistent in their decisions, the fact that each building has its own set of circumstances makes it difficult to formulate theories regarding which buildings are important to preserve. For example, the potential preservation of the library building seems to hinge more on the proposed replacement building for the site rather than the merits of the building itself. Because of the visceral reaction to the design and size of the proposed 9-story hotel building, preservation of the library building has become a much higher visibility project than it might have been if the proposed replacement was of a more suitable size. The details of the replacement building have affected people’s thoughts on the preservation of the library, making it a unique case that would be potentially difficult to relate to other cases without the same exact details.

One of the most important conclusions to be drawn from the study is how the cases of the old Charleston County Library building, the Federal Building, and the Gaillard Auditorium can help us make future architectural and preservation decisions. All three of the buildings replaced buildings that preservationists would fight very hard to save now and it is not a stretch to suggest that if they were proposed today, that none of them would actually get built (in their current form). This again speaks to the timelessness that we should be striving for in any new design. If we would not want or allow these buildings to be built today, why is it important to preserve them? The arguments that were made concerning the library building, in particular, in the late 1950s seem to echo the debates over a current project in Charleston, Clemson’s proposed
Spaulding-Paolozzi Center. Opponents charge that the building clashes with the historic context of Charleston—exactly what critics of the library were saying when that building was proposed. Whether or not the three buildings included in the study ultimately become part of Charleston’s cherished historic context, they offer numerous lessons for how we should think about architecture and preservation in the future.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

One of the strengths of the research study is also one of its limitations. Charleston is well-known across the United States as being the first city to pass a preservation ordinance and for its large collection of historic buildings. Therefore, attempting to draw conclusions about historic preservation using Charleston buildings as a case study has limitations in the sense that, while it is an ideal setting to study preservation, the results may not be generalizable to other settings. Interest in preservation has certainly expanded over time and most comparable cities have a preservation ordinance, but as was suggested by the research, Charleston’s preservation climate is unique in the United States. Therefore, what the case study of the three buildings reveal about how Charleston approaches mid-century Modern architecture may or may not be similar to other places.

Additionally, the buildings chosen for the case study may not be the best examples to demonstrate how preservation policies and theories are applied. They were chosen for their similarities—they are all public buildings built in the 1960s currently undergoing the preservation review process—as well as for their geographic proximity to Marion Square, one of the major public open spaces in Charleston. Conceivably, using
different buildings for the case study would lead to different outcomes, and although the
three buildings that are part of the study form a timely and convenient group, there are
certainly other buildings in Charleston from the same time period that are the subject of
preservation debates. For example, developers recently proposed demolishing the 1949
14-story Sergeant Jasper Apartment building, located near Colonial Lake, that has been
roundly criticized for being out of scale for Charleston (Kropf 2013). While it is from the
same time period as the buildings included in the study, it is located in a different
neighborhood of the city and is a residential building. Replacing one of the buildings in
the study or including the Sergeant Jasper building as an additional component could
have changed the conclusions drawn from the study.

The participants that were interviewed could be a limit to the research study as
well. While every effort was made to get a cross-section of opinions and a majority of the
first-choice participants agreed to be part of the research study, using different
participants may have led to a different outcome. Ideally, given more time, the scope of
the study could have been expanded and the number of participants could have been
increased beyond the eleven that were actually interviewed. Additionally, researcher bias
is a danger with case studies, with the researcher attempting (consciously or
unconsciously) to influence the conclusions based on their own feelings. While the
researcher attempted to remain as impartial as possible and allow the data to determine
the conclusions to the study, the subject has inescapable subjective elements that leave
room for each individual to draw their own conclusions. Nevertheless, by basing the
conclusions solidly on the data gathered and analyzed, that possibility can be minimized as much as possible.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

The research study has yielded numerous suggestions for future research projects that could further illuminate the issues that are facing historic preservation as Modern buildings begin to reach the point to be considered historic. While they were beyond the scope of this study, they will be important issues for the future of the profession. As previously mentioned, the architectural climate in the early twenty-first century is much different than it was when the buildings were built in the 1960s. There has been a recent revival in interest in traditional architecture and materials, as embodied by the American College of the Buildings Arts in Charleston, a 4-year school that combines liberal arts courses with instruction in the traditional trades in an effort to unite the splintered disciplines of the built environment and restore the role of the master craftsman in America. While the fields of architecture and preservation continue to emphasize technology and advances in the future over the lessons from the past, both fields would benefit from future research on how these philosophies could be mutually beneficial, rather than mutually exclusive.

As technology continues to progress and change the built environment, another area for future research could be how to preserve the knowledge gained from buildings without actually retaining the built form. Currently, the technology exists to make drawings, photographs, and computer models of existing buildings that can provide
future designers and researchers with information about buildings that may no longer exist. While this may not be the first choice of preservationists who would prefer that the physical building remain in place, the fact is that buildings can be demolished and replaced for numerous reasons, including economic progress, structural issues, or functional obsolescence. It is certainly important not to create a gap in our architectural record, but that is a different entity from our actual built environment. Future research could focus on how best to record the information from existing buildings that architects and preservationists in the future could utilize. This would let progress continue at the same time as preserving information for the future—allowing the knowledge of buildings to be saved, even if their physical fabric is not.

Perhaps the most important subject for future research is how the framework of preservation that has already been established needs to change. For example, the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places were originally written very broadly, in order to extend protection to as many buildings as possible. Now that widespread demolition of historic buildings is less of a threat, the criterion can be reexamined to reduce the effect of radical relativism in preservation. The field could also potentially benefit from shifting the focus of the movement from a time-based system to a more quality-based system. For example, one of the reasons cited for the surge in interest in the preservation of the library is that the building is now over 50 years old, as opposed to when the demolition order was issued in 2005. In the intervening 8 years, the building continued to deteriorate, yet from a condition standpoint, it made a much stronger candidate for preservation than it does now.
However, under the current time-based system, preservationists did not take an interest in the building until it reached that point. The current framework of preservation is based heavily on the Venice Charter of 1964, the National Preservation Act of 1966, and the Secretary of the Interior Standards, originally written in 1977, that were based on a Modernist perspective of historic buildings. Given that some of these documents are approaching 50 years old themselves, it would make sense to initiate a periodic review of them to suggest changes that would ensure preservation’s continuing relevance and positive impact on the built environment.

It has been suggested by some writers that one of the impediments to preserving buildings from the Recent Past is simply the overwhelming amount of resources that exist from this time period and the burden that it would place on SHPOs already facing budget and staff cuts. An important focus of future research could be further investigating Melinda Milligan’s assertion that the preservation movement is considering buildings from the Recent Past as a means to keep the movement relevant and provide future opportunities for preservationists and potentially other motivations. While the focus of this study was on Charleston, the preservation of Modern architecture is an issue with both national and international implications. As more and more mid-century Modern and later buildings become eligible to be considered historic, the controversies generated by their potential preservation are sure to provide fertile ground for future researchers.
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