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# Interpreting the Standards:

Design Professionals & Historicized Design

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May 2012

## SIGNATURES

## INTERPRETING THE STANDARDS: DESIGN PROFESSIONALS & HISTORICIZED DESIGN

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Dean of SAAHP: \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen White, AIA date

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Daniel & Debra Skerry, who have offered me unconditional love and support throughout the entirety of my education.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

From the formative stages of this thesis, to the final draft, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Jeremy Wells. His sound advice and careful guidance were invaluable during this process. I would also like to thank my reader, Professor Arnold Robinson, for his insightful criticisms and patient encouragement that aided in the writing of this thesis.

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Research Question:** This thesis intends to discover how and why architects make design decisions for projects in historic districts. Subquestions are based on the methods of architects; differing opinions between preservation and architectural professionals; and the inconsistent interpretation of standards and guidelines.

**Results:** The researcher was able to analyze each informant and position them on a self-defined design spectrum. A visual representation of this spectrum can be found in Appendix D.

**Practical Implications:** The results of this study show a conflict that prevents Standard 9 from both allowing the progression of contemporary architectural theory in historic areas, and requiring a distinction between contemporary and historic architectural fabric, which essentially alters the Standard's intended purpose. The two solutions given to communities are:

1. Acceptance of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as the Sole Guideline
2. Creation of Supplementary Guidelines

Based on the analysis of the data, the researcher recommends that the most "appropriate" approach to new additions and infill construction in historic districts is one that unites both a contemporary architecture of its time and takes cues from surrounding historic fabric and context.

## CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

*“As an architect you design for the present, with  
an awareness of the past, for a future which is  
essentially unknown.”*

-Norman Foster, Munich 2007

### 1.1 Introduction

In post World War II America, new additions and infill construction in historic districts were likely to be designed in the same architectural style as the surrounding neighborhood. This made the disruption of the existing context a rare issue (Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, p.1, 2007). But with the uprising of the Modernist movement in the twentieth century, came a significant debate in preservation of defining the appropriateness of new construction in historic districts. Many preservationists and architects accepted modernist ideals, especially as a way of distinguishing between new and historic fabric, “which has been a preservation goal since John Ruskin called for it in the nineteenth century” (ibid.). Others however, saw Modernism—a style that is often defined as the conscious rejection of past historical precedents—as an inappropriate solution that ignores, and can subsequently destroy, historic context. Since this time, preservationists and architects have debated how to manage the relationships that exist between historic fabric and Modern, contrasting new additions in these areas.

Some of the issues being addressed within this thesis include differences in the method and practice of architects, differing views and values between preservation and architectural professionals, and a lack of consistency while interpreting standards and guidelines. These issues will be considered through the analysis of new additions and

infill construction in historic districts that have been designed by registered architects, architect's experiences with historic district design review, and architects' familiarity and interpretation of adopted preservation doctrine—specifically focusing on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (NPS, 1995). The literature reviewed for this thesis addresses three areas of research that are related to the values of architects concerning Modernist and historicized designs. In the first section, research related to design theory and its wide spectrum of beliefs is discussed. In the second section, research related to preservation doctrine and how it is interpreted is explored. Finally, the third section will discuss literature related to the historic design review process.

Through this exploration, it will become evident that architectural professionals often interpret the Secretary of the Interior's Standards differently, not only from preservation professionals, but also from one another. This idea will be examined through two contrasting views of design: Modernism and historicized design.

Historically, Modernism has been an architecture based on function that rejected all past architectural forms, styles, and ornament as seen in the work of Modernist architects such as Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier in the beginning of the twentieth century. Because of its lack of classical unities and restrictions, the Modernist movement is non-restrictive in nature and strives to create new ideas by purposefully rejecting historical design movements and standards (Weeks, 1996; Huxtable, 1997). Historicized design is a more classically based design theory that interprets and intentionally borrows historical references in order to create new designs. The historicized design theory is based on an idea that uses reliable architectural precedents to create appropriate design in historic areas. Historicized design and Modernism are being studied to



discover how and why design professionals choose to differentiate old and new building fabric, in order for the reader to understand why the interpretation of preservation doctrine, specifically item 9 in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation is important.

Preservation doctrine has historically been created and enacted in order to protect historic fabric from inappropriate changes over time. These doctrines recognize that once a historic resource has been lost, it can never be fully recovered. Since their creation, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation have been the dominant doctrine referenced in the United States (PAGP, 2007). Utilized by architects, historic design review commissions, and preservation professionals, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, or a form of them, are often employed during the historic design review process. Although often seen as restrictive by some designers, these standards contain nonspecific and often vague language that can be left to interpretation by historic preservation commissions and designers alike, often leading to disputes with reference to the appropriateness of the proposed designs. In this study, the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 will be explored in depth. Standard 9 states:

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment (NPS, 1995).

Standard 9 is regularly disputed and interpreted in conflicting ways by preservation and architectural professionals alike (Semes, 2009; PAGP, 2007; Weeks, 1996). This thesis strives to understand the decision making process and values of architects that employ

either Modern or historicized design principles to meet this standard during their design process and how their decisions were made.

The examination of historic design review as a way of influencing “appropriate design” in historic districts and the review’s impact on the designs of architects in historic districts is explored through published literature, but also through interviews with designers of projects concerning their experiences and design decisions. Historic design review commissions and their interpretations of preservation doctrine are seen by some modern designers as constraints in the design process, while others believe that these systems aid in producing appropriate design for historic districts. Through a literature review and interviews with architecture professionals, the benefits and shortcomings of the often debated historic design review process will be brought to light.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The problem being addressed is the lack of consensus concerning the Secretary of the Interior’s Standard 9. Because of the absence of explanation of how a designer should appropriately differentiate the new from the old, this standard can be interpreted a number of different ways. This varying understanding often becomes problematic when historic design review commissions have a difference in interpretation with the project designer.

This thesis analyzes and reveals the reasoning behind the design practices of architects that utilize Modernism, historicized design, or a mix of the two theories while working on projects in historic districts. Many preservationists and architectural designers believe that the only appropriate method of designing infill construction or an addition to a building in a historic district is one that utilizes historicized design, a design

that literally and directly borrows the architectural styling, detailing and massing from the surrounding buildings to create a new design that faithfully mirrors the style of the original building (Semmes, 2009; Mouzon, 2004). Others believe that a more Modernist approach should be taken, rejecting the past style but mirroring massing and scale in order to allow the new fabric to be distinguished from the historic fabric. Many designers who utilize a Modern approach are often faced with requests to change their designs to make them “less modern” in order to better fit into the context of the area, while designers that use Historicized Designs are often faced with the complication of not being able to differentiate their new design from the historic fabric of the area.

A product of new ideas and the synthesis of past preservation doctrines, the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards were created in 1977 by National Park Service employees W. Brown Morton III, Gary Hume, Kay Weeks, and Charles Fisher. The Standards were written in response to the Tax Reform Act of 1976, which included the first preservation tax credit (NPS, 1995). Although intended to create more consistency in some projects, the wide interpretation of the Standards have created a larger disconnect between preservationists and designers when it comes to appropriate new design in historic districts, allowing for both a historicized or Modernist approach. The interpretation of Standard 9 is often debated among architects and preservation professionals, creating an inconsistency between what is acceptable and appropriate design in historic districts, and what is not.

Although the Standards were intended to present an objective way of analyzing whether or not a building was preserved after rehabilitation (in order for property owners to be fairly awarded tax credits), municipalities have often enacted historic districts as a

response to unfavorable past decisions made concerning what is “appropriate design” in historic districts. Preservation commissions use the Standards as a way to reach conclusions about what styles and designs are appropriate and should be allowed in these districts. Unfortunately, the ambiguous description of what is and is not appropriate frequently leads to verdicts based on the personal opinions of committee or commission members. This inadvertently can lead to inconsistent decisions within commissions themselves.

### **1.3 Background & Need**

This thesis attempts to discover the reasoning for different design theories, interpretations or rejection of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standard 9 by architects that are directly involved in projects concerning new or infill construction in historic districts. A topic that is often debated among preservation professionals and members of historic review commissions, it is unclear how architects with differing views and design values utilize the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards to come to conclusions concerning the appropriateness of new design and the need to draw a distinction between their designs and the existing historic fabric.

The inconstancies between decisions made by historic district commissions can often lead to a feeling of invalidity and distrust within a community. This lack of agreement can lead to commissions being held in a negative light. Not only could architects become discouraged from designing in these communities; but community members themselves may be wary of submitting project proposals to commissions. This could lead to community members making changes to their homes without seeking

approval from the commission, for fear that their project proposal would be rejected or drastically changed.

If decisions by commissions became more consistent and dependable, there could be less outrage from a community for proposed new projects because they will know exactly what the regulations allow and designers can possess a greater understanding of what is acceptable and can be approved. If this ambiguity is corrected, communities are apt to take their commissions more seriously and architects will know what exactly is expected of them within these communities.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to allow for a greater understanding of what can be considered an appropriate new design in a historic district. By possessing a better awareness of how the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 is being interpreted by architects, reviewers can be enabled to identify with the intentions of the architect and the limitations they are faced with during the design process. By having a greater understanding of each other, designers can become more familiar with what is required by commissions while designing without the feeling of limitation.

Since the requirement of design review in historic districts has been established in many historic districts in the United States, reviewers, preservation professionals, and architects have often engaged in disagreements of what should be considered appropriate new design and infill construction in these areas. A considerable amount of literature discusses the varying views of preservationists and historic commissions but there remains a lack of published sources explaining how architects that take on these

types of design projects employ their unique design philosophies in order to solve design problems.

In order to understand the participants' perspectives of design philosophy and their views of preservation standards and guidelines, the researcher conducted seven interviews with architects that have been involved with at least three new or infill construction projects in historic districts in the United States.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

This study explored the following five questions:

1. What are the general philosophies of design held by architects that design in historic districts?
2. Do these philosophies of design utilize Modernism, historicized design, or a mix between the two?
3. How do architects differentiate their designs from existing fabric?
4. What positive or negative experiences have architects had with historic review?
5. Do these architects see the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as beneficial or as a constraint?

### **1.6 Significance to the Field**

This study has both positive and significant benefits for the participants and for the field of Historic Preservation. Too often the disciplines of Architecture and Preservation are perceived as conflicting, with dissimilar goals and ideals. This thesis strives to create a greater understanding of the goals and values of each specialty and to create a continuing dialogue between these two fields, concerning the ideas of new

design in historic districts. Specifically, this thesis will make suggestions concerning the reexamination of historic district commission design review in local communities. These suggestions will aid communities in their investigation of interpretation of acceptable design and allow for these manifested ideas to be incorporated into a comprehensive document.

## **1.7 Definitions**

Historicized Design: Design that seeks to resurrect architectural styles from the past by either replicating historic buildings or by using historic architectural detailing in contemporary architectural design.

Historicism: The idea that architectural designs must distinguish themselves stylistically from each other by making new design look different than historic design; the “idea that art and architecture express, or ought to express, the spirit of the age” (Semmes, 2007).

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation #9: “New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment” (NPS, 1995).

Historic Design Review: A process for ensuring the protection of the character of historic buildings, usually designated or located within in a local historic district. The historic design review process is often carried out by a government appointed commission that usually has the power to review, approve, conditionally approve,

disapprove or even postpone applications for projects concerning new construction, additions, exterior alterations or demolition.

Modern Architecture: An architectural movement that began in the early twentieth century that is characterized by simplistic forms and the lack of traditional ornament. The term is usually used to describe a concept that rejects past historical precedents and strives to create something new and functional, utilizing contemporary methods and materials.

### **1.8 Limitations**

Interviews were conducted with architecture professionals until a saturation of data was achieved. However, only design professionals within reasonable traveling distance from the researcher were contacted because of the time and monetary constraints of the study. This allowed the researcher to obtain only regional meanings, which could differ across the United States. Because this study is qualitative, the results cannot be generalized to the larger population of architects, but the meanings may be transferrable to similar situations.

### **1.9 Ethical Considerations**

Roger Williams University requires that all studies that undertake human subject research must be approved by the Human Subject Review Board (RWU Human Subjects Review Board Policy Manual, 2003). Because of the requirement of human subjects for interview purposes in this study, it was required for the researcher to submit an Individual Research Project Proposal that included a description of the study and the methods in which data would be collected to the RWU Human Subject Review Board.



The researcher strived to protect any participants from harm and outlined all procedures to participants and to the review board. This proposal was approved by the board on January 12, 2012 (Appendix A).

The researcher anticipated that no more than minimal harm would come to the participants and provided an informed consent form (Appendix B), which was reviewed and signed by all participants and the researcher. This consent form elaborated on what was required of the participant including procedures, risks, benefits, and confidentiality while restating that participation in this study is completely voluntary and they could choose to opt out at any time. While the participants were informed that they could choose to use a pseudonym in the study, all chose to use their real names.

## **CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This literature review will serve to make important connections to themes concerning historicized design in order to discuss the issue of differentiating new architectural design from existing fabric. The themes of design theory, preservation doctrine, and design review will be explored in this chapter. The literature reviewed addresses these three themes and their relationship to the values of practicing architects in the United States in order to discuss their varying philosophies.

This literature review will address each theme as it relates to historicized design and the related beliefs of design professionals. In the first section, design theory and its wide spectrum of beliefs is explored. The second section will discuss preservation doctrine and how it is interpreted. Finally, literature related to the design review process and the interrelationship of this process with design is discussed.

### **2.2 Design Theory**

In the past, the idea that a building should be designed in the current style, using the newest materials, technologies, and ornament and the idea that a building needs to fit into its surrounding and historic contexts was one in the same (Huxtable, 1997). From the Modernist movement to the present, there has been a definite tension between these two ideas. Self-defined as two polar ends of a design spectrum are the concepts of Modernism and of historicized design.

### **2.2.1 Modernism**

The idea of a design without restriction and with complete artistic freedom is currently a popular concept in architectural design. There is a prevailing belief that all new architectural compositions should be a contemporary representation of the present time and take full advantage of modern technologies, materials and belief systems to create unique and interesting design solutions. This freedom of design often considers the rejection of the past, one of the core values of the Modernist era, in order to move forward and make way for new ideas. Arguments for Modernism over historicized design practices are often described in terms of economics, truth to design, flexibility to explore creativity, testing limits of design, and continuing the succession of architectural styles.

The Modernist movement was an architecture of reason and function that became the prime expression of the twentieth century. This movement was instituted around 1900 with works by architects like Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier and is often referred to as an “autonomous architecture” (Tournikiotis, 1999, p.27). Modern architecture is often characterized by simplistic forms and the lack of traditional ornament. The term “Modern architecture” is usually used to describe an architectural movement that rejects past historical precedents and strives to create something new and functional, utilizing modern methods and materials (Hitchcock and Johnson, 1951; Colquhoun, 2002). For many progressive architects of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it was vital to create a new unified architectural style that reflected the spirit of the age, as past architectural styles had done, which “meant the rejection of an academic tradition that had degenerated into eclecticism, imprisoned in a history that

had come to an end and whose forms could be only endlessly recycled” (Colquhoun, 2002, p.16).

Tournikiotis (1999) discusses the description of Modern architecture by the noted architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner. Pevsner’s ideas of Modern architecture are catalogued by a study of forms and elements that are rarely related to construction or techniques. Tournikiotis describes Pevsner’s text as:

Illustrated quite generously with photographs of exterior elevations and interior views of buildings , but there are no floor plans or sections. [Modern architecture] consists of intersecting vertical and horizontal lines, plane and unbroken surfaces, the systematic discarding of ornamentation, simple, geometrical shapes (such as rectangles, squares, pure cubes, cylinders, spheres and cones), flat roofs, bay windows, and horizontal windows with large undivided panes. The structure of the building is clearly visible on its facade, and transparent glass, steel, and strong colors have their parts to play in the aesthetics of the modern movement. (p. 33)

Architecture that Pevsner denounces is limited. This unfavorable architecture consists of the study of forms that are opposite of those previously listed and also include: arbitrary surfaces such as curves, the ornamentation of surfaces that do not consist of rationalistic or representational decoration, the continuation of the tradition of the classical organization of space, and primarily “useless symmetry” are disregarded with contempt (Tournikiotis, 1999, p. 33). This unfavorable view of traditional and historicized design can be seen as a method for discovering new forms and representation of modern time, but also as a way to halt limitations of creativity by disregarding or breaking classical law.

This negative, polemical attitude towards the past often leads to “radical contradictions between historicism and the Modern movement or between heteronomous and autonomous architecture” (ibid., p.32). This desire to create new

forms and concepts in the field of architecture that could characterize the modern age led to an outright rejection of many historical ideas, forms and precedents, where classical building traditions were referred to as a “needless constraint on creativity” (Cramer, Breitling, 2007, p.21). Instead of a focus on tradition, Modernist designs demand “fundamental renewal and assert[s] the right to innovate” (Ibid.).

Historicist attitudes towards design that influenced Modernist compositions are still impacting contemporary architectural designs. According to Steven Semes (2009), “Historicism defines ‘contemporary’ architecture largely in terms of opposition to architectural practice: just as each period has its unique concerns and formal language, so contemporary architects seek a characteristic style that expresses our time and vividly projects the ‘difference’ between their work and whatever has been produced in the past” (p.153). The “difference” Semes discusses refers to the exploration of a conscious rejection of past precedents. This infers however, that without historical reference, there could be no rejection of it.

According to Colquhoun (2002), many Modernists were of the opinion that they were not rejecting tradition, but were attempting to return to “true tradition” in which it was believed that a “harmonious organic unity had existed between all cultural phenomena of each age” (p.10). Modernism embraced the idea that the new age of design would exhibit a totality of characteristics from all true historical periods. Colquhoun points out that those who believed this idea never realized what separated the present from the past may just be the very absence of this “inferred organic unity” (Ibid.). According to this theoretical model, an architect’s primary task was to

discover and create unique forms of the present age (ibid., p.11). This often led to the rejection of past models.

The search for a unique and new style often led to political, social, moral and artistic explorations that involved the study of the community at large, rather than the individual. Tournikiotis (1999) writes:

Modern architecture is original, independent of tradition, liberated from imitation of the styles of the past, opposed to the convictions of the nineteenth century. Thus it is in complete rift with the past and with tradition. Everything is brand new: modern architecture of something that has never existed before, a new spirit composing forms without precedent. (p. 34)

If the architect is exploring anything else, Tournikiotis writes, the purpose is purely reactionary (p. 35). Exploring this traditional architecture and its intentions in contemporary architectural practices is up to the present, either still seen as “reactionary” or as a different breed of architecture, one that utilizes historicized design practices.

There is an ongoing conflict between Modernist design practices and historicized design. Many designers that work within either design philosophy accept that architecture will often represent the time that it is constructed in, but many architects continuing in the Modernist tradition believe that in doing so, historical reference must be completely rejected in order for time, place, and truth to be appropriately represented.

### 2.2.2 Historicized Design

Historicized design is defined as the liberal borrowing from styles that have been used in the past for contemporary architectural design. Using preservation doctrine as a guide, historicized design is utilized when exploring ideas of appropriateness in creating additions to historic buildings and designing infill in historic districts. Designers that practice historicized design methods often view history as the greatest (and sometimes the only appropriate) design tool. This tool, it is argued, helps to promote good design principals that have been proven to be successful throughout history in both function and aesthetic quality (Dostrovsky, 2008; Harris, 2008; Semes, 2009). The idea that design has evolved in a Darwinian-like process over time and that only the finest patterns and techniques have survived, is exemplified in Christopher Alexander's *The Timeless Way of Building* (1979). Alexander proposes a theory of design that relies on the comprehension and organization of specific design patterns that contain a "quality without a name". This "quality" delivers superior architectural results and provides for an increased quality of life. Alexander believes that because these design principals have stood the test of time, they have been proven to be successful. These design elements can, in theory, be repeated an endless number of times and remain successful.

Historical reference of a successful design is believed to be, by advocates of historicized design, a guarantee of a successful contemporary design. Steven Semes (2009) writes: "Tradition is a way of making successful outcomes more likely by establishing a common frame of reference and a common set of tools that are then used by individual designers to propose specific projects exhibiting a broad variety of

different characters” (p.78). By adapting these traditions by pairing them with successful contemporary designs, materials, and construction methods, new, yet appropriate designs can be forged, as Semes (2009) reinforces: “The main components of any architectural tradition are a collection of models representing the best examples of the accumulated experience of the tradition and a set of methods of analysis and systems of composition that allow those models to be adapted and readapted to make new works” (p.78). These new works display the dynamic and active stylistic progression of architecture through historicized design methods, rather than the static and finite nature of the process of design that is usually perceived.

Architects may choose to utilize historicized design methods for a variety of reasons. A central argument against Modernism is that the general public does not understand, connect with, or generally like Modernist design (Mouzon, 2004). Many advocates of historicized design methods see contemporary architecture as an expression of our age, but one that only highlights negative aspects of society such as “disjointness, separation, confusion, and despair” (ibid., p.3). Mouzon (2004) even goes as far as to describe Modern architectural style as having “slid so far down this treacherous slope that a legion of newly minted architects aspire to do nothing greater than produce buildings that look like they have been damaged in a windstorm” (p.2). This extreme view, although not held by the majority of designers that utilize historical design precedents, does exist. Connecting with historical reference on the other hand, is easy for many members of the public to engage with, as this design displays eternal elements that evoke positive emotions of memory and nostalgia (Semes, 2009; Mouzon, 2004; Huxtable, 1997).



The literature reviewed reveals a tension between Modern and historicized design practices. Modernism often rejects all historical reference, materials and details in order to create a new, contemporary architecture of the age. This idea often clashes with the values associated to historicized design, a practice that is based on the recycling of reliable architectural designs and tools in order to create a new design based on a collage of historic details. While many architects prefer to utilize one practice or the other, many create designs that lie somewhere in the middle of this spectrum.

### **2.3 Preservation Doctrine**

Modern preservation practices have evolved over time from small-scale initiatives, to the creation of national legislation, to the development of international doctrines. With this expansion, opinions and guidance provided by organizations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has become more resolute. UNESCO continues to being guided by a number of international conventions and recommendations, where there is often debate of “a number of issues that are significant for the formulation of principals and philosophy for safeguarding heritage resources as well as reviving a new interest in preservation conservation-restoration theory” (Jokilehto, 2006, p.1). Jokilehto discusses the need for a distinction between the ethics and principals of preservation on one hand, and the relevant theories behind these principals within preservation doctrine:

International doctrinal documents, such as the Venice Charter or the Nara Document on Authenticity, offer principals, which are often referred to in debates. The US Secretary of the Interior’s Standards of Preservation and the Australian Burra Charter have comparable sets of principals. However, the theory of

restoration or preservation means something different, and should be understood as the description of the methodology of approach to the critical survey and assessment of a heritage, and the step by step decisions for its treatment and maintenance. (p.3)

The contrasting beliefs between architects that design in historic districts and the processes used to protect and enact their design theories are often based upon preservation doctrine. Preservation doctrines and literature examining these doctrines explore the central ideas in which architects are accepting and interpreting, rejecting or ignoring, as they choose their preferred design methods. The five doctrines that will be discussed all relate to the ideas of authenticity, a rejection of historicized design, and a respect for the past. Included in this discussion are the Athens Charter (Congress in Athens, 1931), the Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964), the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (NPS, 1995), the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 1999), and the Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS, 1994). They have been reviewed chronologically in order to display how each doctrine was influenced by previous principles. The Venice Charter and the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation are particularly relevant to this discussion.

### **2.3.1 The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments**

In a meeting held in Athens in 1931, the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments created the Athens Charter. The Athens charter set out to promote the popular "integrative" restoration methods that had become popularized by works by designers such as Viollet-le-Duc as well as his contemporaries (Hardy, 2008, xv). The creation of the Athens Charter marked, for the first time, the desire to develop an extensive international movement for preservation and strived to

define international standards for this (ibid.). At the Congress in Athens the following seven main resolutions were established and called "Carta del Restauro":

1. International organizations for Restoration on operational and advisory levels are to be established.
  2. Proposed Restoration projects are to be subjected to knowledgeable criticism to prevent mistakes which will cause loss of character and historical values to the structures.
  3. Problems of preservation of historic sites are to be solved by legislation at national level for all countries.
  4. Excavated sites which are not subject to immediate restoration should be reburied for protection.
  5. Modern techniques and materials may be used in restoration work.
  6. Historical sites are to be given strict custodial protection.
  7. Attention should be given to the protection of areas surrounding historic sites.
- (Congress in Athens, 1931)

This approach viewed historical buildings not as static structures, but as documents of history that should be studied and admired, but never copied for a fear of “falsifying history” (Hardy, 2008, xv). In this sense, the Athens Charter relates the idea of historicism, or the idea that architectural designs must distinguish themselves stylistically from each other by making new design look different than a historic design. The Athens Charter also allows the use of modern materials and methods, but neither requires or advises against using them.

This doctrine neither discourages or requires an interpretation of Modernism, but could encourage new, contemporary design constructed with contemporary methods and materials. A historicized design approach is also feasible under the Athens Charter as long as a buildings design is not copied. This Charter advises that these designs should be “subjected to knowledgeable criticism” in order to avoid the “loss of character and historical value” (Congress in Athens, 1931), leaving the final design choices and interpretation of the Charter up to a historic design review commission.

### **2.3.2 The Venice Charter : International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites**

The Venice Charter is seen as one of the first major steps of internationally defining “better conservation” of traditional buildings and places. Jokiletho (2006) describes the significance of this document, and its legacy of inspiring later doctrines: “In terms of theory, the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter) in 1964, started a compendium of international doctrine, which gradually expanded the thinking process” (p.1). By March 2005, the Venice Charter had been “ratified by 181 states—nearly all the countries of the world” (ibid.). The Venice Charter emphasizes that each country is responsible for applying the principles within the framework of its own culture and traditions, in “the full richness of their authenticity” (Hardy, xv). Article 9 of the charter is the most relevant to the discussion of authenticity and the prevention of historicized design:

ARTICLE 9. The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration in any case must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument. (ICOMOS, 1964)

Article 12 also discusses the importance of distinguishing original fabric from that of new materials so as to not “falsify the artistic or historic evidence”:

ARTICLE 12. Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence (ICOMOS, 1964)

The Venice charter is a landmark document that has been a precedent for other preservation doctrine in the areas of authenticity and historicism. Article 9 of the Venice Charter has clearly influenced the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitations Standard 9. This document however, has been also viewed as highly controversial.

The International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism (INTBAU) is an international and educational charity, whose mission is to promote traditional architecture, urbanism and crafts. The INTBAU is also one of the largest opponents to the Venice Charter as it was originally written. The Prince of Wales relates about the Venice Charter: "It was forty-four years ago that the Venice Charter declared that unavoidable additions to historic monuments must 'bear a contemporary stamp', and be 'distinct'. Like Shakespeare's Achilles, who wished to 'make distinct the breach from where the spirit flew'—in his case the spirit of the enemy—the Venice Charter, by requiring us to make distinct the breach between past and present, has likewise often caused the spirit to fly from old buildings and old places" (qtd. in Hardy, 2008, p.xiii). INTBAU believes that since its inception, particular clauses of the Venice Charter have been used to "justify and to require Modernist interventions in traditional buildings and places". The group claims it is not seeking to replace the Venice Charter, but wants to supplement the document.

INTBAU is an example of a group that believes in a strict interpretation of historicized design theory, often encouraging architectural design that is almost indistinguishable from neighboring historic buildings. This group is concerned that the Venice Charter accepts aspects of Modernism and its approaches, ultimately leading to

insensitive and inappropriate Modernist designs that could destroy historic context and sense of place. Although the Venice Charter does require all necessary work to be “distinct from the architectural composition” and to “bear a contemporary stamp” (ICOMOS, 1964), the document does not explain the manner in which work must be “distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence” (ibid.). It is not clear whether this “stamp” must be obvious or visible to the public, perhaps utilizing a Modern design, or a more subtle approach such as including a plaque on a historicized design that includes a date of construction.

### **2.3.3 The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation**

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards have been the central Preservation Doctrine in the United States since their development in the 1970s. These standards are often the guiding doctrine for a preservation commission’s design review process, aiding to determine whether the historic character of a building is preserved after a rehabilitation. The National Park Service’s (NPS) guidelines recommend what the department considers to be responsible methods and approaches to preservation. The NPS also provides lists of inappropriate treatments that should be avoided during projects that are historic in nature, so as to not damage irreplaceable historic fabric.

According to the National Park Service, the intent of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation is to “assist the long-term preservation of a property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features” (NPS, 1995). Section 9 of the Standards is directly influenced by article 9 in the Venice charter. Article 9 in the Secretary of the Interior states:

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment. (NPS, 1995)

The Standards pertain to historic buildings of “all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and interior of the buildings. They also encompass related landscape features and the building's site and environment, as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction” (NPS, 1995). To be certified for federal tax purposes, a rehabilitation project must be determined to be “consistent with the historic character of the structure(s), and where applicable, the district in which it is located” (Ibid.).

Like the Venice Charter, the varying interpretations of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards are often debated. While also vaguely requiring that “the new work shall be differentiated from the old” (NPS, 1995), the Secretary of the Interior's Standards go a step further, declaring that the new work's “massing, size, scale, and architectural features” (ibid.) must be compatible with the surrounding historic context. Although still ambiguous, this statement can allow for Modernist designs in historic districts that have compatibility in these areas. Because of this ambiguity, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards allow both Modern and historicized designs to be incorporated into historic districts. Whether or not this occurs is dependent upon the values and preferences of a historic design review commission and the community. Even with this inconsistency, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards are continuously acting as a guide to review of Modern and historicized architectural designs across the United States.

### **2.3.4 The Burra Charter**

The Burra Charter was first adopted in 1979 at the historic South Australian mining town of Burra on the basis that irreplaceable places of cultural significance have defined the Australian landscape and its communities. The Burra Charter generally provides guidance for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance. The goal of the charter is to preserve culturally significant places for the present and future generations “advocate[ing] a cautious approach to change: do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained” (Australia ICOMOS, 1999). Three sections of the Burra charter that are particularly relevant to this discussion include ideas about conservation, reconstruction, and new additions.

3.1 Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.

3.2 Changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture. (Australia ICOMOS, 1999)

This section aids in elaborating the objective that “traces of additions, alterations and earlier treatments to the fabric of a place are evidence of its history and uses which may be part of its significance. Conservation action should assist and not impede their understanding” (Australia ICOMOS, 1999).

Section nineteen of the Burra Charter deals with the idea of the reconstruction of historic fabric. This section states:



19. Reconstruction is limited to the reproduction of fabric, the form of which is known from physical and/or documentary evidence. It should be identifiable on close inspection as being new work. (Australia ICOMOS, 1999)

This section of the Burra Charter clearly indicates that it is acceptable to reproduce, or copy historic fabric as long as there is some kind of physical or documentary evidence to prevent conjecture. This section of the Burra Charter undoubtedly discourages any kind of Modernist reconstruction projects in the place of missing historic fabric, but it also suggests that the new completed historicized design would only have to be identified as such upon “close inspection” (ibid.). Even though this could result in the misreading of the new building as a historic one, section nineteen calls for a strict interpretations of historicized design and the rejection of Modernism.

Sections 22.1 and 22.2 of the Burra Charter discuss additions to historic buildings:

22.1 New work such as additions to the place may be acceptable where it does not distort or obscure the cultural significance of the place, or detract from its interpretation and appreciation.

22.2 New work should be readily identifiable as such. (ibid.)

These sections further depict the concept of appropriateness as it relates to “sympathetic” additions to historic buildings. Australia ICOMOS defines new work as sympathetic “if its siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material are similar to the existing fabric, but imitation should be avoided” (ibid.). Although replicating historic fabric is discouraged and creating a Modern design is possible, the requirements of similar “siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material [s] [that] are similar to the existing fabric” (ibid.) are more likely to inspire a historicized design.

### **2.3.5 The Nara Document on Authenticity**

The Nara Document on Authenticity builds on and extends the Venice Charter in response to the expanding concerns related to cultural heritage in contemporary times (ICOMOS, 1994). The Nara Document was completed after additional contributions by two rapporteurs, Raymond Lemaire and Herb Stovel. It is important to note that “Lemaire had also been rapporteur of the drafting group that produced the Venice Charter in 1964” (Jokilehto, 2006, p.2). In this new document, Lemaire emphasized “material authenticity and the spirit of this charter. Stovel, on the other hand, represented a younger generation and gave importance to cultural diversity and the continuity of traditions” (ibid.).

The Nara Document discusses how the judgment of heritage values may differ across cultures and also emphasizes the importance of the verification of the credibility of information sources. “The concept of authenticity thus emerges as a notion related to the credibility and truthfulness of sources of information, which may include a great number of parameters depending on the character and values of the heritage concerned” (ibid.). The sections of the Nara Document that are especially relevant to this discussion include:

9. Conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms and historical periods is rooted in the values attributed to the heritage. Our ability to understand these values depends, in part, on the degree to which information sources about these values may be understood as credible or truthful. Knowledge and understanding of these sources of information, in relation to original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, and their meaning, is a requisite basis for assessing all aspects of authenticity.

13. Depending on the nature of the cultural heritage, its cultural context, and its evolution through time, authenticity judgements may be linked to the worth of a great variety of sources of information. Aspects of the sources may include form

and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors. The use of these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined. (ICOMOS, 1994)

This document clearly takes direct influence from the Venice charter in its ideas of context, time and place, and authenticity but also acknowledges that these principals could be contrary to the values held by the local people who use and inhabit the place in question. Cultural differences can allow a community to value a place or a building that an outsider might not see as significant, and vice versa. So while the Nara Document confirms the directive from the Venice Charter to differentiate the old from the new, it also acknowledges that this very value could be contrary to the values of the community.

## **2.4 Design Review**

Architectural designs that are being introduced into local historic districts are usually subject to a design review process. This process is considered to be both an effective and hindering tool during the architectural design stages. The public and preservation professionals often have the notion that architects attempting to present a more Modern design, rather than a historicized one, blame design review regulations for their inability to adapt and solve a design problem. In a survey asking readers of Architectural Record if design review in historic districts restricted creativity, 79% of readers answered “No”. One reader commented: “No: The question increased my pulse rate. As a preservation professional, I’ve seen far too many architects and developers blame the review process for their own mediocre designs. It is not the review process itself you’re really questioning, but the guidelines” (Architectural Record,

1997). Modernists often argue that if no controls or restrictions existed, better design would be produced. Designers utilizing historical design precedents often fear that if restrictions disappear, so will historic context and fabric.

The historic design review process is often enacted in order for communities to protect their historic landscapes, environmental contexts and historically significant architecture for a variety of different reasons. Alice Meriwether Bowsher (1985) suggests that some of these reasons include: “to safeguard a historical or architectural legacy, to enrich the cultural identity of an area, to stabilize and strengthen property values, to attract businesses, residents and tourists who value the area’s special qualities or simply to maintain a sense of place and character” (p. 9). The standard mechanism for protecting these buildings, landscapes, and valued settings has been for local municipalities to designate local historic districts and to require that any changes must be approved by a government appointed commission. This commission usually has the power to review, approve, conditionally approve, disapprove or even postpone applications for projects concerning new construction, additions, exterior alterations or demolition. In places where this review is required, approval from the commission is often mandatory prior to the start of work or issuance of permits.

Government appointed design review boards that deal with the approval of projects within historic districts are often made up of citizens with a variety of backgrounds, values, and ideas; creating different approaches to review. Author Lowe (1998) categorizes and describes four different approaches to design review:

The theoretical or philosophical approach accepts change in historic areas and therefore sees their incorporation of contemporary architecture as part of their continuing evolution. The design approach is interested in methods of successfully inserting new buildings in historic areas and of developing some

related body of theory which goes beyond stylistic issues; that the legislation has a role to play that is hinted at, rather than made explicit. The legalistic approach accepts that laws have a role in ensuring that the right buildings are built, and that the state must ensure that these laws and the way in which they are implemented are effective. Closely related is the institutional approach which suggests that it is the interplay of a number of participants combining the legal instruments with other elements which affects the results. (p. 9)

Although often following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, or a similar preservation doctrine or guideline, historic district commissions often have varying opinions based on members' education, profession, and experience among other factors. It is suggested that the main focus of historic district reviews are the architectural elements, mainly buildings, and that "many review boards also monitor changes around the buildings, including fences and walls, parking lots, landscaping and exterior lighting" (Bowsher, 1995, p. 9). Community interest and involvement also plays a substantial role in the concerns brought to the commission and ultimately many decisions being made.

Contemporary Modern designs, according to these approaches, can be candidates for buildings that are approved by commissions and inserted into historic districts. Oftentimes, however, the argument of aesthetics and beauty is introduced to discourage these types of outcomes, as Brenda Case Scheer (1994) reinforces: "Design review is reluctant to acknowledge that there are no rules to create beauty. Architecture today admits of no reference standards, no abstract principals, no Vitruvius or Alberti or even Le Corbusier to dictate property. Principals of good design, for today's architects, are not universal, they are specific to the problem, place-centered, expressive of time and culture" (p.2). These principals for good design cannot be standardized, which makes it difficult for a design reviewer to decide what is "right and

what is wrong (p.7). Aesthetic arguments make this determination even more ambiguous, leading to the recommendation that perhaps “design review could simply drop the idea of beauty, since it is too slippery to be legal, and instead focus instead on ‘shared values’” (Ibid.). In this sense, design review can be extremely subjective.

There is often the perception that design review is an essential tool in correcting past mistakes and to keep further mistakes, in the form of Modern designs in historic contexts, from happening. It is evident that historically, design review is often promptly introduced into cities that have had negative experiences with new development in historic areas (Bowsher, 1985). As in the case of Charlestown, South Carolina, a literal reading of standards and doctrine influence the historic district commission to be extremely conservative when allowing Modern designs within the borders of the historic district (Hare, 2009). The notion that the primary purpose of design review is to “maintain existing district character based on considerations of architectural history, architecture and design” (Bowsher, 1985, p.10) is a common idea among communities with recent architectural tragedies such as South Carolina.

In today’s society many believe that the “physical structure of our environment can be managed, and that controlling it is the key to amelioration of numerous problems confronting society today” (Scheer, 1994, p.vii). The goal of these boards is usually to encourage “appropriate design” that fits into an existing, historic area without destroying a sense of place or any historic context, and with varying opinions of different boards or different members on the same board, decisions are sometimes inconsistent and the term “appropriate design” can be disagreed upon. Many times cities and towns seeking to bolster the character of their older and historic neighborhoods have used

preservation districts under design review control to fight “inappropriate development” (Krelying, 2006; Nasar 2007). Many design review professionals ask if it is possible to suggest a criterion for a good design and if “good” design ever be achieved. It seems as if many design review professionals believe that “the best design possible” can be attained with design review (Bowsher, 1985; Kreyling, 2006) but disagree whether a literal reading of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation Standard 9 is imperative for this to occur.

Many Modernist designers believe that the restrictive nature of design review often limits creativity in design while discordance is often seen as inevitable between a Modern design and a historic area. In this sense, a “conflict between the increasing objectivity of design review guidelines and the very nature of postmodern architectural thought is inevitable” (Scheer, 1994, p7). Backlash from communities is common but many believe this is a baseless claim (Hare, 2009). Many architects consciously steer away from projects that are historic in nature and often “find the very suggestion that their design should be informed by what already exists so restrictive that they feel impossibly constrained in their creative liberty. This irrational fear is reinforced when the structure in question is a listed building” (Cramer and Breitling, 2007, p.9).

In the United States of America many historic district commissions reference the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards in order to make appropriate decisions (Hare, 2009). Review boards often have contrasting ideas of how to differentiate the new from the old. Some believe that a historicized design that utilizes some contemporary materials or that has a date of construction stamped on it is appropriate, while on the other side of the spectrum some think only a Modern or contemporary design that has

no reference to history is acceptable. Most professionals fall somewhere in between, but this issue is debated among preservation and architecture professionals alike.

Many believe that design review encourages “good” design practices while protecting the character of existing built heritage. Others believe that it simply hinders the creative process, and limits their ability to create effective design that can be enjoyed by the general public. Many preservation professionals agree that it is important to assess the strengths and weaknesses of this process so that it remains an effective way to protect, rather than harm, the architectural character of the historic buildings and districts that it intends to protect (Huxtable, 1997 p.43).

## **2.5 Summary**

The literature reviewed assists in making important connections between the three themes discussed: design theory, preservation doctrine, and design review. These three areas specifically relate to the topic of historicized design and the chosen design methods and practices used by contemporary design professionals.

The theme of design theory was discussed by defining the dichotomy between Modernism and historicized design. Modernism, which rejects historical reference, materials and design in order to create a new architecture of the contemporary time often clashes with the values instated by historicized design, a practice that is based on the use of reliable and familiar architectural tools and designs throughout history.

Preservation doctrine has an important part to play in the discussion of historicized design in contemporary architecture. The Athens Charter, the Venice Charter, The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, the Burra Charter, and the Nara Document on Authenticity all reference and provide philosophical direction



on the issue of historicized design, and emphasize the importance of the ability to distinguish the old from the new. These documents continue to influence design review and many architectural designs today, whether designers are choosing to follow, intentionally dismiss, or ignore them all together.

The standard system for protecting historic fabric and controlling new construction in historic districts has been historic design review. Many Modernist architects see design review as an obstruction to the creative process that only allows for replicas of the surrounding period architecture. Others see design review as an imperative tool for the protection of irreplaceable history. Although many design review commissions in the United States follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards or a similar doctrine or guideline, decisions made are often inconsistent within the commission and other review bodies.

## **CHAPTER 3 : METHODS**

This thesis intends to discover how and why architects make design decisions for projects in historic districts. Some of the questions being researched within this thesis are based on the methods of architects; differing opinions between preservation and architectural professionals; and the inconsistent interpretation of standards and guidelines by architects, preservationists, and design review commissions. This chapter looks at the methods used to gather data and describes the setting, sample and participants, research design, and data collection and procedures.

This thesis used a qualitative, rather than a quantitative method of research because qualitative research is exploratory in nature, while quantitative research is more conclusive. Qualitative research is used to further define, have a better understanding of, and develop an approach to the problem when outcomes are unknown (Creswell, 2009). This thesis will explore the theories and opinions held by architects who design in historic districts in order to discover their individual processes of design. This allowed the researcher to collect these meanings in the form of an interview narrative. This narrative was then analyzed for the collection of repeating themes and meanings, in order to draw conclusions that were used in answering research questions.

Data was gathered using an interview methodology. This methodology is multidisciplinary and can be helpful when there is a time constraint to a study. The interview process is often successful at revealing personal meanings and values and allows for the identification of themes and patterns of this information. The interview process however, can be seen as a potential source of bias or misinformation if the

interviewer does not frame the questions properly (Holstein, 2002, p. 3). This problem can be solved a number of ways. One of these ways is having an open-ended topic that the interviewee is asked to discuss; the participant can then guide the discussion, rather than be influenced by the researcher's specific and narrow questions. This type of interview will be utilized for this data collection process.

### **3.1 Setting**

The research was conducted in a place of the interviewees' choice, based on convenience to the participant and the researcher. The locations were as follows:

Beehive Cafe  
10 Franklin Street  
Bristol, RI 02809

The Beehive Cafe is a cafe & restaurant located in the heart of downtown Bristol, RI. The Cafe houses a small, two-story space with indoor and outdoor seating. The interview with Lombard Pozzi was conducted within the second floor indoor seating space.

Couture Design Associates Inc.  
12 Arnold Street  
Providence, RI 02906

Couture Design Associates Inc. is located in the College Hill Neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island in a Colonial Revival residence built in around 1850. The interview with J.P. Couture was conducted in the front parlor of the home that is currently undergoing renovations.

Faculty Offices  
RWU School of Architecture, Art, and Historic Preservation  
1 Old Ferry Road  
Bristol, RI, 02809

Two interviews were conducted in the faculty offices in the School of Architecture Art and Historic Preservation in Bristol, Rhode Island. Interviews with Greg Laramie and Gary Graham were conducted in their personal office spaces.

Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects  
111 Chestnut Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects is located within the Jewelry District of Providence, Rhode Island. This firm shares office space with other businesses and is located on the upper floors. The interview with Martha Werenfels was conducted in a conference room within the office.

Ann Beha Architects  
33 Kingston Street  
Boston, MA 02111

Ann Beha Architects is located in the heart of downtown Boston, Massachusetts. The interview with Pamela Hawkes was conducted throughout their first three floors of office space in order to view projects displayed throughout the studio. The researcher also briefly spoke to two interns and one other Principal, Catherine Truman, during the main interview.

### **3.2 Sample & Participants**

The sampling procedure used by the researcher was convenience sampling. The participants were restricted to those in a reasonable traveling distance for the researcher and the participant's willingness to participate in the study. Participants of this research study included seven licensed architects that represented six different architectural firms. All architects interviewed are currently working as an architect and/or are a professor of architecture and have been associated with at least three projects that involve infill construction or additions to buildings in historic districts. These architects were interviewed about their relationship to preservation during their design process and also if they considered the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 in their design.

All participants (four males and three females) interviewed were between the ages of 35-70 and were Caucasian. The participants interviewed were:

- Greg Laramie: Assistant Dean, RWU SAAHP
- Gary Graham: GMI Architects; Professor of Architecture RWU SAAHP
- Lombard Pozzi
- J.P. Couture: Couture Design Associates Inc.
- Pamela Hawkes: Ann Beha Architects
- Catherine Truman: Ann Beha Architects
- Martha Werenfels: Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects

### **3.3 Research Design**

The participants were contacted through architecture faculty recommendations and through online research of firms that were involved in creating new infill construction or additions or buildings in historic districts. Over twenty firms were contacted by email and phone requesting an interview for this study. Of these twenty, ten firms responded with interest and because of time and monetary constraints, the seven interviews above were conducted.

Based on the participants' schedules, the researcher met each participant at a location of their choosing (listed above) to conduct an interview. The participants were asked to describe topics such as their general philosophies of design, their experience with design review, and any additional information they perceived as relevant. The interviews were recorded by written notes and a "Voice Memos" audio recording application on an iPhone. These audio recordings were later transcribed into iWork Pages documents and coded by the researcher to extract similar themes and meanings for analysis.

### **3.4 Data Collection / Procedures**

The interviews were conducted in non-manipulative settings that were convenient for the participant. In each interview, which lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, a participant was asked to give examples of buildings in a historic district that exemplified contemporary "appropriate design" in historic districts, or that illustrated their design approaches, but examples were not required. Participants Pamela Hawkes, Catherine Truman, and Martha Werenfels referenced photo images, while Lombard Pozzi sketched ideas during the interview. There were some thematic questions asked by the

researcher that aided in leading the discussion with the professional, but the architects were encouraged to speak freely in order to gain a non-biased understanding about what is involved in the design process as it relates to historic preservation. Some of these questions included but were not limited to:

- What is your general approach to design?
- What kind of materials do you use?
- Have you had positive or negative experiences with design review?
- How do you differentiate the new construction from the historic fabric?
- Do you think the Secretary of the Interior's Standards are a design catalyst or a constraint?

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Analysis of interviews required the summary of data collected, the systematic grouping of information of similar data, and the creation of a framework in which to place these findings that allowed for the explanation and analysis of the data (Holstein, 2002) in order to come to a conclusion that would provide a framework for interpreting Standard 9 of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The collected data was transcribed and analyzed in terms of emergent themes. A coding method was used to organize the interview data into these themes in order to better respond to the research questions. Some of these major themes were then categorized in order to answer the research question. Applicable quotations were then selected from the transcripts to better illustrate the relation to themes and to provide the architect's personal answers to varying research questions. The grouping of similar meanings

provided the researcher with results needed to draw conclusions and answer research questions.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This qualitative research design provided data discussing how and why architects make design decisions for projects in historic districts. Some of the questions being researched within this thesis include the discussion of methods, opinions, and interpretations. The open ended interviews provided the researcher with non-biased information that includes data the informant perceives as important to the topic of discussion. This information was then analyzed in order for the researcher to come to a greater understanding and provide conclusions in order to answer the research question.



## **CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS**

The interviews provided a wealth of knowledge with regards to the design practices of architects that are creating new additions and infill construction in historic districts. During each interview, the researcher asked the participants to describe their personal philosophies of design and their approach to projects. The discussions were then left purposefully unstructured to allow the participants to speak freely and openly. Three significant patterns of response emerged from the interviews: theoretical approach, methods, and how the informants interpreted the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9.

### **4.1 Theoretical Approach**

The participants were asked if they could describe their personal design philosophies and the decisions they make in their theoretical approaches to design. All participants were able to verbalize their approaches as they related to Modernist and historicized designs—or a combination of the two—in designing both additions and infill construction in historic districts. Many participants gave examples of projects that displayed their theoretical approaches.

Out of the participants that were interviewed, there were not any architects that stood out as designing strictly Modernist designs, but there was evidence of a participant that was more inclined to create strictly historicized designs while designing historic districts. One participant, Lombard Pozzi, described how he felt more comfortable utilizing “more traditional” styles and design elements that relate to surrounding historic context with both new additions and infill construction. Pozzi believes if a building he is designing an addition to has existed through many periods of

architectural style, it is appropriate to utilize architectural details from any of these periods. When Pozzi discusses his own home he says: “I use anything that’s basically been done, or was in vogue up until 1949-1950 when the house was built. If I’m doing a Colonial Revival arch or something, I say ok ‘well they had this back in 1949 so I can use it,’ and I kind of document what’s been done even though somebody who might be looking at it can’t tell if it’s 1949 or 1987 work.” Pozzi believes that an onlooker shouldn’t necessarily have to be able to distinguish the difference between new and historic fabric just by looking. He says that his main objective is really an aesthetic one: “It has to look good and be something you want to keep for five years, ten years, fifty years from now—I guess that’s really my bottom line—aesthetics. You’re not going to know the history of the building just by looking at it, so you are going to have to read a plaque on the building or go on a tour...or go digging in the library.”

Participant JP Couture has a similar philosophy about additions to existing buildings. He says that “Work we do to add onto an existing building is meant to look as though it belongs there—not necessarily that it doesn’t look updated or slightly simpler or there is something to separate it in a way from the existing building—but it’s really meant to join to it rather than a glass box added onto an old building.” Couture often subtly and simply differentiates new construction from historic fabric, not necessarily because he feels it is required, but because it makes for a visually interesting and dynamic project. He says: “I think there is something nice about distinguishing between work done originally and new additions.” Although Couture’s projects usually utilized many historic references, he also has had experiences with creating Modern designs in historic districts.

Architect Gary Graham often employs historicized designs and details but in a more contemporary way. During the interview, Graham described a hospital infill project, Arbour Hospital (Appendix C, fig. 1) in Jamaica Plain, where the community was worried about the disruption of the city's historic fabric. Through a series of community charettes and meetings, Graham and his firm were able to choose and apply architectural details from the area that the community desired and felt comfortable with. Graham stated: "We were comfortable with taking elements and applying them in a contemporary way. We picked out some gables and we picked out a turret and we picked out some kind of scale giving. Here we were more interpretive of historicism, but it was helpful in that the community understood that we were trying to make something that was compatible and more in keeping with their neighborhood's character." In fact, a few of the other participants also described "picking out" historic looking architectural elements and applying them to a contemporary building.

Participant Greg Laramie describes an infill project in Mystic, Connecticut (Appendix C, fig. 12) that was being designed to replace a building that had succumb to fire:

We proportioned the windows and actually used mullions that were pretty consistent to what had been there historically, and even used clapboard like material that was going to be painted, and a nod to the historic material by using similar width moldings and that sort of thing. However, on the back side of the building historically there had been a series of sheds and it was definitely, you know, the back of the building, so we were much looser with what happened on the back and it became a series of decks. The building became much more porous with indentations and pieces that came out. The river becomes more fluid: there wasn't a hardened urban edge. It had a lot more glass that would have been typical because of the fantastic view up the river. That was our attitude about how to approach the project.

Although Laramie was creating a new, contemporary design for Mystic, he was able to incorporate scale and materials that took cues from not only the adjacent buildings, but

also to the building that historically stood on the site. During his interview, Laramie mentioned that he always tries to keep the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in mind while making decisions, "so there is always a sense of scale elements and proportion that is consistent or compatible with the neighborhood, but also meaning to be of the time rather than a historical reference. That's been the general philosophy. So in terms of scale, proportion, even the use of materials—has been sympathetic but not necessarily replicating—has been the attitude."

When asked what her philosophies of design were, architect Martha Werenfels said that her tendency was to create a design that was "contemporary but compatible". She said that

In some cases it is appropriate to look completely Modern and in some cases it is appropriate to have subtle distinctions so someone who looks carefully can say 'oh yeah that's a new addition' and you aren't fooling anybody that it's historic, but at the same time, it's compatible and it blends in. I think in some cases you don't want it to be completely Modern addition.

Werenfels gave examples of projects that she felt encapsulated this idea of compatible additions that also displayed the wide range of design solutions that her firm utilizes during the design phase of a project: Washington Mills, the Moran Shipping Agency, and the Pearl Street Lofts in Providence, Rhode Island. Washington Mills (Appendix C, fig. 4) is a historic Mill complex in Lawrence, Massachusetts that was being redeveloped for residential use. The clearly Modern, yet small scale, intervention in this project involved the addition to distinguish a secondary entrance as the new main entryway on a very large scale brick mill building. Werenfels described the mill as "an enormous building that is very repetitive across its length, so it was important to announce where the new entrance was going to be on the backside of this building. So

here is a new addition that is obviously clearly contemporary. It was determined to fall within the Standards because it's contemporary, it's reversible, it doesn't detract from the overall historic character of the building because it's a dramatic intervention, but it's a pretty small one given the scale of the building."

The Moran Shipping Agency (Appendix C, fig. 2) is another small, Modern addition to a historic building. The addition, an egress stair, is largely composed of glass that forms a "pop-out" that is clearly visible on the front and side of the building. Werenfels described the addition as being "fairly prominent because it's on the end of the building and you can see that we made it compatible in terms of lining up belt courses and in terms of the brick that we use but you can see that it's Modern in the fact that it has a big glazed area and it's very light. On the back side of it that faces the parking lot, it's all glass. So it's small, it's contemporary, but I think it also fits in well with the existing building." A larger intervention is the Pearl Street Lofts in Providence, Rhode Island (Appendix C, fig. 3). This corrugated metal addition replaces a deteriorated loading dock and is clearly a Modern intervention. Although in a historic district, this project was approved because, as Werenfels describes, "it has the scale and the massing of the existing mill complex."

Ann Beha Architects (ABA) is a firm that often explores the continuation of historic patterns when designing in historic districts. Principal Pamela Hawkes often described an analysis of historic proportion and rhythm as key elements in their designs, even when creating a "very contemporary design". Hawkes described the Wheeler School Project in Providence (Appendix C, fig. 5) as "a very contemporary design, but one where we picked up on some of the strong lines at the ground floor level

[of the adjacent historic building]. We used the proportions of different kinds of glass to create a sense of massing.” Hawkes claims that it is the simple massing that allows the new building to be inserted seamlessly, without disrupting the historic integrity of the two adjacent historic buildings. Additions designed by Ann Beha Architects often follow the same approach, many times including a kind of Modern “connector” addition that visibly links new and old in a contemporary, yet simple way.

When discussing ABA’s infill project at 161 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, Massachusetts (Appendix C, fig. 6), Senior Associate Catherine Truman discussed how the firm was able to speak within the language of historicism, “but not imitate too much.” She described the project as “picking up on the existing language and context but keeping within the 21st century’s crisper aesthetic.” She recounted the public’s reaction as being surprised when the scaffolding came down with some people asking: “Has that always been there?” Truman described this reaction as “exactly what we were going for.”

The interviews showed that all of the participants fell somewhere on the design spectrum in-between the poles of Modern and historicized design. Some architects related more to the use of historicized design like Lombard Pozzi, while ABA tends to design Modern interventions with cues to the surrounding historic context.

## **4.2 Methods**

The informants were asked if they could describe their methods of understanding in the design process. All participants were able to discuss their varying approaches as they related to their methods in designing both additions and infill construction in historic districts and how their personal values informed these methods. Many participants

gave examples of projects that displayed their approaches including exploring the surrounding contemporary and historic context, considering client and community expectations, and understanding applicable standards and guidelines.

#### **4.2.1 Explore Context**

Context was a clear and repeating theme when the participants were asked what they consider when designing in historic districts. Architect Martha Werenfels stated: “I think everyone is very conscious about working in a context. Whether it’s a new building or an addition to an existing building, if it’s in a historic district you are never designing it just on a piece of paper in a vacuum. You are always thinking about what it’s surrounded by, what is the street-scape like, and what are the neighboring properties like.” Other participants also cited context as something they look at for every project, not just ones in historic districts. While all participants described working in contemporary contexts including analyzing local and neighboring designs, some participants also discussed the idea of exploring historical contexts.

##### **4.2.1.1 Contemporary Context**

The way that a new design fits into a site, city street or overall composition is often the first thought of an architect. JP Couture recalled: “Taking cues from what we were surrounded by was always part of the work whether it was in a historic district or not. I think my work has always been affected by its surroundings and its context.” On a smaller scale, context can be taken into consideration in specific details. While designing a dormitory/dining facility for the New England Conservatory in Boston, MA (Appendix C, fig. 7), Architect Pamela Hawkes discussed how a proposed new addition

picks up on the cornice line of the existing Jordan Hall (Appendix C, fig. 8), a National Historic Landmark:

I can see a couple of things. One is that this is the height of the facade of Jordan Hall, which is the more public avenue of the arts...is built up almost slightly above the cornice line. I can see where the cornice line has been picked up from Jordan Hall and where the three-story cornice line has been picked up from the historic building [on St. Botolph Street]. Jordan hall is right here, so the cornice line also relates to that.

Ann Beha Architects is also working on a design of a new academic building for the University of Chicago campus (Appendix C, fig. 9). This project is an addition to a former seminary building to create space for the Department of Economics. This project takes cues from the existing seminary building and much of the surrounding context of the historic campus and neighborhood, including the scale of the nearby Robie House by Frank Lloyd Wright. Across the street are two historic buildings that currently function as a nursery school. Hawkes indicated that the new addition to the seminary building will connect to these “two existing wood frame houses to keep the scale of the street-scape adjacent to the Robie House consistent, and to keep the neighbors happy.” Massing also has an important part to play in Architect Greg Laramie’s Mystic Connecticut project. Because it was new infill construction, he wanted imitate the massing of the previous structure on the site that had been lost to fire. Laramie said: “The massing was almost identical to what had been there originally, so we felt that that was an acceptable approach.”

Some participants referred to architectural studies as an important first step in understanding surrounding context. Reoccurring examples include detail analysis, material mock-ups, and research of historic architectural designs and methods. Some participants, especially concerning an addition to existing historic buildings, discussed



the importance of analysis and program, existing and new approaches, and proportions prior to the initial design process. Architect Pamela Hawkes described studies ABA completed for both the additions to the University of Chicago (Appendix C, fig. 9) and the Music Building at the University of Pennsylvania (Appendix C, fig. 10): “We did a similar kind of study as we did at Chicago that looked at a program that was essentially twice as big as the existing building. We had to figure out what program should fit comfortably in the historic building and what really wanted to go in the new building.” This study allowed ABA to insert program into the historic building that was non-invasive while designing a new addition that included amenities required of the music program, such as an acoustic canted ceiling.

During the ongoing design of 161 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, Massachusetts (Appendix C, fig. 6), ABA has completed a series of architectural studies in order to understand and ultimately incorporate the proportions, architectural details, and materials of the neighborhood into their new design. In these studies, Truman described that ABA completed an “analysis of window proportions and also a whole series of analyses that discovered a regularity of cornices and bases [in the neighborhood], but not necessarily a uniformity.” These studies informed ABA’s choice of materials and fenestration patterns, which they feel acknowledge, but do not necessarily copy, neighboring historic residences. ABA took the process a step further by doing a series of scale mock-ups that included proposed materials and fenestration patterns, as Truman relates:

We are using Indiana Limestone and we actually went out and saw the quarries in Indiana and talked about quality control—how they manufactured it and what we were really looking for. We actually built a scale mock up with a mason that’s about 10” x 10”. We used the actual windows and a variety of different pieces. ...

We really worked on joint profiles, the architectural details, and the window details. Looking at how everything was going to be applied was really useful. We went out about 15-20 times to see things on the mock up.

Viewing these mock-ups on site allowed a more tangible representation of not only what the final product would look like, but also how the new construction would relate to its historic surroundings.

#### **4.2.1.2 Historical Context**

Another approach to understanding and incorporating context into a new design involves completing architectural studies that combine both an existing prior knowledge and in-depth research of historic architectural precedents. Architect Lombard Pozzi demonstrated a vast knowledge of not only the general and architectural history of the geographical areas he designs in, but also of historic materials, finishes, and building methods. While discussing an infill project which he calls the Peaberry Building, in historic downtown Bristol, Rhode Island (Appendix C, fig. 11), Pozzi described how his knowledge of local and architectural history, gained through experience and research, led him to choose historic design elements from three different nearby sources:

The [Peaberry Building] has a traditional facade in the Greek Revival style and is copied from three buildings in Bristol. Having lived in Bristol all my life and knowing the history, I kind of know where to go to look for what—so the [facade] is basically a copy of the building that used to be on the site; a colonial, pre-revolutionary era building that was saved, moved across the street, and raised up a story that burned around 1931; and a third building that is at 66 Franklin Street which has the key details and the pilasters, which I like. It's possibly a Russell Warren house, but I can't prove it.

Pozzi described how working in an area where his familiarity with local and architectural history has allowed his projects to complement, rather than detract from the surrounding historic fabric and which really bring his designs full circle. While working on a garage for the aforementioned 66 Franklin Street in Bristol, Rhode Island, Pozzi was looking for

a cornice design precedent that would be more affordable than copying the existing cornice from the main house. Pozzi recalled that the owners “liked round dentals and detailing. I told them that I used a nice dental detailing on the Peaberry building and I sent them down to look at it. They liked it so we just copied [the cornice]. It’s funny because I went to 66 Franklin to get the detailing for Peaberry, and twenty-five years later I’m doing just the opposite and going back to something that was done in the 1980’s.”

When designing additions to buildings in historic districts, some participants recognize the discovery of previous architect’s design intentions an immense benefit. These intentions often lead to an alteration or the justification of a proposed new design. Architect JP Couture recollected working on a historic home called Fairlawn in Newport, Rhode Island. The firm discovered that after its initial construction by builder Seth Bradford, Fairlawn continued to be added onto by different architects such as Richard Morris Hunt; McKim, Mead and White; and Peabody and Sterns. Each architect’s design can be seen as a reflection of their respectable moment in time as “no one ever really wiped out the work of the person that had come before them,” as Couture explained. Couture described how their Modern addition to Fairlawn was a continuation of these ideas:

We came along in maybe 1996 so our designs were very light: glass connectors and infill pieces that kept everything else intact. We added some necessary additions that clearly looked like 1996 work, but that were in proportion to the rest of the building. Because the building had a history of that, it made sense to continue with the tradition of adding on something that was of the moment, as opposed to trying to copy something that was there.

By studying this tradition of subtly layering contemporary styles, and discovering that this idea was carried on throughout the existence of the property, Couture felt that a

Modern addition to Fairlawn was the most appropriate design solution to fit into and complement the historic context.

When designing new infill construction in historic districts, some participants studied the methods or design intentions of architects from history. Some examples of specific architects that designed historic precedents nearby or used similar methods were named, while the methods of unnamed vernacular architects were also cited as inspiration. Catherine Truman cited McKim, Mead and White's buildings down the street from 161 Commonwealth Avenue as inspiration for that project because they "have a really simple facade where proportion is everything and a really tight kind of detail." This basic idea of creating a simple, proportioned facade while utilizing "crisp" detail allowed ABA to design a building that they feel picks up on the historic language and fits within the historic context of the neighborhood while keeping within a twenty-first century "crisp aesthetic". In a similar sense Couture worked on a project in Newport, Rhode Island creating architectural follies within a historic landscape featuring a main house designed by Ogden Codman that "was inspired by, or borrowed, pieces of actual colonial architecture in designing the main house." This inspired Couture to return to those same sources and borrow details from the same historic buildings. In the same sense, Lombard Pozzi often enjoys thinking "about the way the old timers would have done it." He discussed his difficulties with an addition to a historic home and his solution:

So I drew it out. It looked awful. I kept thinking about it, what's the solution? So I said to [the owners] 'why don't we let the house be more vernacular? Let the house tell us.' I think about the way the old timers would have done it. So we field measured where all the rafters were in the attic, and I said 'they never would have just cut through the middle of a rafter, they would moved the window over.' So we

moved the windows over and the spaces became asymmetrical. It looks like it has always been that way.

By studying historic building methods and vernacular examples, Pozzi is able to provide solutions to design problems while creating an aesthetically pleasing result that appears as if it has always been a part of the existing context.

The participants also referred to varying forms of archival research were also referred to by the participants during the interview process. While discussing his process of designing an addition to the Bristol County Courthouse in Bristol, Rhode Island, Lombard Pozzi mentioned the original specifications of the courthouse that he had discovered in a transcript he found in the state archives. This document influenced his design decisions on that project. JP Couture divulged that it was the uncovering of historic photographs that provided evidence against the belief that every home in a historic neighborhood had a garage on only the rear of the building which led him to design a garage on the front of his project. When the researcher asked Catherine Truman if 161 Commonwealth Avenue was the last empty lot on the street, she said: “Yes, there had been a building before in this location in the late 19th-early 20th century. I’m assuming it burned at some point between 1914 and the 1930’s. It was there on the Sanborn Maps at one point and then gone.”

#### **4.2.2 Consider Client / Community Expectations**

All of the participants cited understanding the needs and desires of the client and/or the community as a crucial part of the design process. During Ann Beha Architect’s design process for the addition to the former seminary building, the client wanted to add an extremely large amount of square footage in the form of a new

addition. Because of the historic nature of the building, ABA was able to work with the client from the beginning to come to a solution that met their needs and retained the building's historic character, as an ABA intern related:

So it's a pretty challenging project in that we have a very limited site footprint. A lot of the work that we are doing is below ground, especially in terms of systems improvements because it's a non conditioned building from the 1920s. We really used every available piece of square footage below ground to get all of the necessary mechanical systems into the project, while maintaining the historic character of the building, which is what the client wanted.

By moving modern amenities such as an oversized classroom and mechanical systems below ground, ABA provided a solution to the needs of the client without compromising the historic structure or the design of the new addition.

Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects (DBVW) is also a firm that takes clients' needs into consideration from the onset of the project. They are currently designing an addition to a historic theater that takes the client's request of drawing attention to the building into consideration, which Martha Werenfels described: "With a theater group like this, they want a splashy new addition that really makes a statement in the community and draws people towards the building. ...So it has to do with the client too and what you think the clients desires are for the project." When asked what the first things he considers about each project, informant Greg Laramie described his exploration of circulation and space use as it relates to the needs of the client: "We always focus on the use of the building in such a way that the client or the tenant's daily lives are satisfied, even to the extent to where they may not have identified the need for something specific, but we may point out. Some of the basic things we look at with clients are paths of every day life, not just circulation, but how spaces are used."

Although most participants cited having no major conflict of interest with the wish of their clients, participant Lombard Pozzi, however, explained that he often has a slightly different vision than what is expected of him by the client. Often looking for designs that resemble historic architectural styles or contain historic architectural detailing, Pozzi's clients sometimes make suggestions that he is not comfortable designing and that he feels, are "not in the best interest of the client. Pozzi stated: "I enjoy working on projects where you can spend more money on detail and quality so I am totally not suited for big big McMansions and I'm always fighting with clients. Why do you want a twenty-foot ceiling? It's inefficient, it's using up resources." Pozzi said he can usually have influence over his clients, demonstrating to them why his designs are more successful than some of their wishes. He described that compromise happens often. Architect Martha Werenfels on the other hand, stated that because of the intense interview process and the prior knowledge that potential clients have of their work, conflict with the client is rarely an issue.

Community input and suggestions was important to all of the participants. While discussing his design for the Arbour Hospital (Appendix C, fig. 1) in Jamaica Plain, Gary Graham described how the design came to fruition through a series of community meetings and workshops:

Community process is a big part of my approach to architecture. We wanted the public to like the building and in developing and designing this building we asked them. We had workshops where we talked about design and in the course of the workshops they cited some historic older buildings that they liked, which became our design precedents.

The importance of creating a master plan for a site was important to ABA when working on a number of projects including the addition on the University of Chicago campus

(Appendix C, fig. 9) and the new infill Wheeler School in Providence, Rhode Island (Appendix C, fig. 5). These master plans were based upon the school community's needs for the design. Pamela Hawkes describes that in order to understand the entire site "we did a master plan for the site that looked at how to accommodate a variety of different activities that [the community] needed. One of the key things was a place for safe drop-off for kids, a place that kids could wait for parents, and also classrooms and a kind of expansion of their dining room space."

#### **4.2.3 Understand Applicable Standards & Guidelines**

Gaining knowledge of all applicable standards and guidelines was mentioned as an important step in the design process by many of the participants. Martha Werenfels emphasized that Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects (DBVW) is

not an office that has one or two people who know the Standards or has one or two people that do preservation work. It's kind of engrained in our office. Everybody is aware of the restrictions. If you walked into our studio right now and said to somebody 'talk to me about Standard number 9' they probably wouldn't be able to say 'Standard number 9 is the one that has to do with new additions' but anybody out there in the studio designing new additions knows what they need to consider. So it's not something that's layered on during the process, it's something we are thinking about from the very beginning.

Greg Laramie also cited the Standards when describing his general design philosophies: "I have always tried to follow the Secretary of the Interiors Standards so there is always a sense of scale elements, proportion, that is consistent or compatible with the neighborhood but also meaning to be of the time rather than a historical reference. That's been the general philosophy." Participants cited personal experience on a regulatory board or office, receiving guidance from an outside party, and reviewing



pervious precedents of how guidelines were applied by a historic review board as ways they have become familiar with standards.

Informants Lombard Pozzi, Martha Werenfels, JP Couture, and Gary Graham all said that they were, in the past or currently, serving on a regulatory body that completed a historic design review process while utilizing the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. After these participants described their involvement and experiences with their respective regulatory bodies, the researcher concluded that from the information given, there appears to be a relationship for some participants between serving on a design review commission and their interpretation of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, depending on their level of involvement. Werenfels, although trained as an architect, spent the first five years of her professional career working in the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Werenfels describes the impact her position at the SHPO had on her architectural designs:

So I was doing review of projects for tax credits using the Standards so I was still on the regulatory side even though I was trained as an architect. So after five years of that I went into private practice. So then I was on the other side of the equation, using the Standards and designing projects that had to adhere to the Standards.

Werenfels described her experiences at the SHPO as positive learning experiences that informed her decisions when designing new additions and infill construction in historic districts. Architects JP Couture and Lombard Pozzi both discussed serving on a local historic district commission during their interviews. Both Couture and Pozzi stated that they worked with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards while on this board but the extent of their knowledge prior to their appointment is unknown.

Only two participants brought up receiving assistance from an outside source as a way to learn more about the Standards or how they are utilized by a specific regulatory body. Martha Werenfels said: “I think we are really lucky in Rhode Island because the SHPO is completely accessible. You can go to them at the beginning of the project and say ‘here is what the project is going to include, here is what we’re thinking, do you think there will be any problems?’ and they continue to be involved throughout the design process if you want them to be.” Pamela Hawkes discussed ABA’s connection to many local and state review bodies throughout the design process for various reasons. When talking about an addition to Philips Andover Academy Hawkes stated that the project “was reviewed by the local historical commission as well as the Massachusetts historical commission, mostly because we wanted their help with getting some ADA variances.” Although not specifying that he had done this, Gary Graham said: “I think if you are dealing with a historic district, for someone like me who doesn’t have a great familiarity with every regulation, I would want to get a consultant. Someone that actually knows the stuff and can help in the design process.”

Three participants specifically mentioned that they made it a point to gain knowledge of how a regulatory body uses the standards before their project goes up for review. When talking about his Mystic, Connecticut project (Appendix C, fig. 12), Greg Laramie said: “We had their standards and we had some heads-up and knowledge of the historic district commissions previous rulings and attitudes.” This “heads-up” went onto influence initial designs for the project. While describing a difficult review one of his designs went through, JP Couture stated: “Of course we went in there knowing what their standards are—we designed to those.” Martha Werenfels has an extensive

experience with the review of projects by the SHPO and generally, what they expect and do not allow in the design of projects in historic districts. Werenfels believes that a good architect should create a good project regardless of the presence of standards: “If it’s a good architect that has come up with a thoughtful answer to the challenge then the Standards aren’t important. Sometimes they are important because there are tax credits or a historic district but I think if you are really careful about the way you approach the project then it should fit within the Standards.”

#### **4.2.4 Ways of Addressing Conflicting Values**

Most of the participants discussed both positive and frustrating experiences with the design review process. Most of the negative and stressful experiences derived from differing interpretations of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards between the architect and a design review commission. Architect Martha Werenfels shared a project that she was very passionate about, and believed met the Standards. Werenfels believed she knew what was required of the project ahead of time, as she used to work in the office that was completing the review. She described:

It’s the office that I have been working with ever since, in terms of getting a project approved, and I designed an addition and I presented it to them and they said no, it’s too big. They didn’t like the height of it and they didn’t like the way it attached to the existing house. I really felt like the suggestions they were making were not good ones. It was really hard because I had a client, a couple that wanted to retire to this place and wanted to spend the rest of their lives at this house, and the regulatory agency was sort of saying how it should be designed. It was really hard and I spent a lot of time trying to revise my designs to reflect their concerns, without going with the design that they were pushing for. At the end of the day I think it came out fine, but there was a point at which I thought they were making recommendations that were not at the best interest of the project or the client and I felt were going beyond what they needed to do for the standards. That doesn’t happen that often but when it does and you have a client that you really like and that you really want to do a great project for, it’s hard.

Werenfels described how in order to make the project work for her client, be approved by the SHPO and for it to be a design she was proud of, she needed to go through a series of compromises with the regulatory body. This was made easier by the Rhode Island SHPO's accessibility: "I think it would have been a lot harder if it were a regulatory agency that wasn't very accessible and that we couldn't have multiple meetings with and share ideas with."

One informant described how taking legal action when he and his firm disagreed with the decisions made by a design review commission, was the only reasonable solution at the time. JP Couture recounted how he was forced to hire a lawyer and work with town administration because he believed a commission was not understanding or adhering to the Standards:

The first meeting for me was really a shock after years of going to these things, to see commissioners who were emotional and combative and rude—and it was just a very bizarre experience. That [experience] was bad enough that we ultimately decided to engage a lawyer and work with the town administrator, councilmen, building inspector, and all the people who were involved in the management of the town to figure out how we could then work with the commission to get this thing approved. It took a lot of effort on everyone's part to get people to understand what was acceptable and what wasn't.

Couture also discussed his experiences as a commission member during the review of a school building project that in the rest of the commission's opinion was not well designed, but that he believed met the Standards. The owner of the property was encouraged to alter the design and returned at least three times for review. Couture said that: "I think that's a situation where the owner, if they wanted to, could have brought an attorney and said 'look, what standards are you rejecting this based on? It's new construction. You don't like the color of the stone? You don't have any privy over the color. Let's take color off the table'."

### **4.3 How Informants Interpret Standard 9**

Although only one participant mentioned Standard 9 specifically, all participants discussed their opinions of compatibility and their methods of distinguishing new design from historic fabric. Some participants described a Modern, yet compatible design as the proper interpretation of Standard 9 while others described their historicized designs as the most suitable way to meet the Standard. Some participants said that a design that meets a specific commission's interpretation of the Standards is not necessarily appropriate, but relevant.

#### **4.3.1 Modern & Compatible Design**

Many of the participants described their idea of appropriate new design in historic districts as Modern or contemporary, but compatible with historic contexts. Participant Martha Werenfels cited the importance of Standard 9 and described her interpretation of the standard:

I think the Standard is clear in that [the design] is not supposed to look historic, and I think that's appropriate. ... Some people interpret [Standard 9] really strictly: some people interpret it really broadly. The Standard says that new additions should be clearly differentiated, but how do you define clearly differentiated? Does it have to look completely Modern or can it be subtly differentiated? I am of the mindset that either one is appropriate. In some cases it is appropriate to look completely Modern and in some cases it is appropriate to have subtle distinctions so someone who looks carefully can say 'oh yeah, that's a new addition', and you aren't fooling anybody that it's historic, but at the same time [the design is] compatible and it blends in.

Werenfels described that her "general tendency is to design something that is contemporary but compatible." She displayed this philosophy in the examples of her firm's work on the Washington Mills, Moran Shipping Agency, and Pearl Street Loft additions. Werenfels described the addition to Washington Mills (Appendix C, fig. 4),

Werenfels described as “obviously clearly contemporary, but it was determined to fall within the Standards because it’s contemporary; it’s reversible; it doesn’t detract from the overall historic character of the building.” Participant JP Couture also described how a more Modern, yet compatible approach can be appropriate, although many of his designs are more historicized: “[This addition is] meant to really join to [the existing building] rather than a glass box added onto an old building, but I think that there are a lot of places where that is appropriate.” Couture did say, however, that he believes new construction should not appear as if has always been there and sometimes the Standards can encourage this kind of design. When the researcher asked him how he felt about the general public not being able to distinguish a new building from a historic one, Couture said:

You know that is a problem...this house, for example is 1850; that one is 1792. Styles have changed an awful lot. Perhaps someone in this neighborhood thought that this house was an abomination at the time because it is so different, but we love it now and I think most people would drive by and think ‘what a nice old neighborhood’ and not distinguish the different periods. I think we are a little too close to it when we are looking to things that are being done now, and I try to keep that in mind myself.

Architect Greg Laramie also had an issue with the public perceiving a new building as historic, and even mentioned that one of his projects was “more historic fooling than I am normally comfortable with.” Laramie stated that he believed a building should be a product of its time, rather than a copying of a historic building or design.

Laramie mentioned the Standards when describing his general design philosophies stating that: “I have always tried to follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, so there is always a sense of scale elements and proportion that is consistent or compatible with the neighborhood, but also meaning to be of the time

rather than a historical reference. That's been the general philosophy. Being sympathetic, but not necessarily replicating has been the attitude." Similarly, Pamela Hawkes also mentioned utilizing historic reference to scale and proportion as well as materials, detailing, rhythm and color as a way to meet the Standards. She described an appropriate method of connecting a new addition to the adjacent historic context, stating: "So this is actually an infill piece between two historic buildings that you can see. ... [It's] a very contemporary [design], but one where we picked up on some of the strong lines at the ground floor level [of the adjacent historic building]. We used the proportions of different kinds of glass to create a sense of massing."

A common way of distinguishing a new addition on a historic building in order to meet Standard 9 is by joining the new addition and the historic fabric with a literal "connector". This connector is a new addition that literally and visually connects the new and historic buildings. Ann Beha Architects often employs this technique, like in the addition to the Music Building at the University of Pennsylvania (Appendix C, fig. 10). Pamela Hawkes describes this connector as an appropriate approach to the integration of new construction with the historic building: "You can see in the interior shot how the entrance of the building is now in the space between the two buildings. You can come in and feel the historic building on one side and the new piece on the other. That kind of sets the mood."

Picking up on and interpreting the language of historic buildings in the area to create a new contemporary design that did not appear "too historic" was especially important to ABA and DBVW. Catherine Truman from ABA said that they "didn't want to

be historicist, we kind of wanted to speak within that language but not imitate too much.”

Similarly, Martha Werenfels from DBVW explained:

I think that probably the easiest way to meet Standard 9 is to make a new addition look somewhat historic. That’s kind of the easy out right? If you are designing an addition to a historic house and you have the same kind of clapboard, and the same kind of windows, and the same kind of roof lines and massing, that’s a pretty easy way to get approval but I don’t think it always results in the best project, particularly when it comes to a new building in a historic district. I think the easiest thing to do is to make a building that looks like the other ones. And that’s the easiest thing to get approved but I don’t think it always represents the best architecture. So I think you get a lot of those easy way out buildings.

Werrenfels believes that the most appropriate design solutions are one that take historic architecture and design into consideration and creates a contemporary yet compatible intervention.

#### **4.3.2 Historicized Design**

Many participants felt that the standards promoted historicized new designs in historic districts. Participants who were inclined to create these types of designs believed that they resulted in the most compatible and sensitive design solutions.

Participant Lombard Pozzi specifically stated: “In general I feel more comfortable with traditional design or design that reflects the period of the buildings, the period that the building was originally erected in. ... I kind of document what’s been done even though somebody who might be looking at it can’t tell if it’s 1949 or 1987 work.”

Many participants that created historicized design solutions in historic areas cited the use of historic materials, massing, and design details as ways of creating compatibility. When discussing his work on the Peaberry building, Pozzi described how subtle historic details can be identified as new work if closely examined, saying: “I’m hoping that will tell people it’s a new building and not an old building”, but also stating:



“You’re not going to know the history of the building just by looking at it, so you are going to have to read a plaque on the building or go on a tour...or go digging in the library.” Pozzi enjoys copying historic style and detailing from buildings he likes in order to create a new design that he feels is both aesthetic and appropriate to the area. He feels that his more subtle distinctions meet Standard 9.

Architect Gary Graham feels that a design that appears to be more historic in nature is appropriate in certain circumstances. When discussing an addition to a senior center in Massachusetts, Graham stated:

Our task was to keep intact the condition of the existing building and put an addition on that was compatible, sympathetic, and actually felt like it was part of the existing building. Most people feel that [the addition] is very compatible and of the same style and character. When you have opportunities like that I guess you can go in a couple different directions: you could do something contemporary and contrasting and pick up scale and things like that, but in this case we felt it was smarter and better to maintain some of the basic integrity of the existing building. ... And so the new building had quoins similar to the quoins on the existing building and some of the detailing in the frieze and the color and so forth were maintained.

Graham felt that a more historicized approach can be appropriate when dealing with additions to historic buildings but also with infill construction. In the design of the Arbour Hospital (Appendix C, fig. 1) in Jamaica Plain, Graham described how his firm went to the public for suggestions after a previous architect designed a building the community disliked: “The previous architect to us actually got involved and tired to put this kind of very Modern, non-compatible, obnoxious building to replace this Victorian building. So we came in after and decided to try and do something that was more in keeping and compatible with the neighborhood.” The public requested specific historic elements they wanted to see incorporated into the design and these elements were used as design precedents.

### 4.3.3 Commission Expectations

Three participants noted that their interpretations of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and their resulting design product directly correlated with the views of a design review commission of some kind. Because of Nantucket's reputation for having a strict interpretation of the Standards in order to promote historicized design, JP Couture attempted to create an appropriate design solution that would meet their needs:

In the case of the project in Nantucket, I just had a meeting there on Tuesday night, and it was the first meeting for a new house. I expected several meetings at least to get this passed. We had a lot of positive comments and they said they were appreciative of the massing and the scale of the house and that [the design was] sensitive to the environment.

Lombard Pozzi also described his work on the Newport Casino as being influenced by outside factors. Because he was receiving state preservation grant money for the project, he was required to differentiate his new work from historic fabric: "Because we are getting state preservation grant money, you have to follow what [the state] says so you can't make [the differentiation between new construction and historic fabric] so it's totally invisible, but you do it in such a subtle way so that people look at it and say 'oh yeah, there is something going on there'." This is unlike his typical approach of creating something new that appears historic.

Architect Greg Laramie also mentioned varying from his normal approach because of the wishes of a historic district commission: "That project that I just described actually is probably much more historic fooling than I'm normally comfortable with. We had [the HDC's] standards and we had some heads up and knowledge of the historic district commissions previous rulings and attitudes...so I guess to a certain extent I feel as though I was violating my own standards that way." Because of

pressures from a design review commission, these architects decided to deviate from their customary design procedures and edit their original design proposals in order to conform to not only the commission's interpretation of the Standards, but their personal wishes.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

From the information provided in the interview process, the researcher was able to collect meanings provided by each informant and group these meanings into three significant patterns of response: theoretical approach, methods, and how the informants interpret the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9. These meanings all proved to be a crucial part of an interconnected design process.

Based on the participants' accounts, descriptions, and characterizations of both the presented projects, and the personal perceptions of their own theoretical approaches, the researcher was able to analyze each informant and position them on a self-defined design spectrum. While some of the informants related more to the use of historicized design like Lombard Pozzi, some participants like ABA described more Modern interventions with cues to the surrounding historic context. By studying the responses of the informants, who all fell at places in-between the polar ends of Modernism and historicized design, the researcher was able to discover the now revealed, underlying approaches of the participants. A visual representation of this spectrum can be found in Appendix D.

The participants' methods of understanding the surrounding contemporary and historic context, client and community expectations, applicable standards and guidelines and conflicting values in the design process were articulated through both verbal and

visual illustrations provided during the interviews. Architects that designed both more Modernist, and more historicized designs were able to provide examples of how they explore both contemporary and historic contexts by utilizing studies and research; ascertain expectations by holding community charettes, client meetings, and public workshops; gain an understanding of both local and national guidelines by communicating with review commissions and seeking out assistance from reputable sources; and compromising and resisting the change of project proposals where they deem appropriate. The distinct dichotomies that surfaced within each of these methods between the informants further expanded on and confirmed the researcher's understanding of the participants' individual placement on the design spectrum.

The verification of how and if each participant considered and interpreted the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 was essential in, not only understanding the informants' motivations behind their chosen design philosophies, but also in visually communicating these interpretations into their tangible designs. All of the informants discussed their opinions of compatibility, appropriateness, and their methods of distinguishing new design from historic fabric. With each participant describing either more Modern or historicized design solutions and their individual methods for creating appropriate responses to historic context, the researcher was able to illustrate how these major themes were informed by the participants's interpretation of the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 and conversely, how each participant perceives their individualized approaches to meet the Standards.

## CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

Architects that design infill construction and new additions to buildings in historic districts often have varying approaches to design. This dialogue, which includes an architect's theoretical approach, methods, and interpretation of the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9, typically results in designs that are appropriate, yet dissimilar.

Various literature, which discusses the important issue of differentiating new designs from historic fabric, has been explored concerning the themes of design theory, preservation doctrine, and design review. The exploration of these themes, coupled with interviews from architects who design infill and new additions in historic districts, has led to a discourse on what factors influence architects to determine which approach achieves an appropriate design.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide a greater understanding of what can be considered an appropriate new design in a historic district. By possessing a better awareness of how the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 is being interpreted by architects, design review commissions can be enabled to identify with the intentions of the architect and the limitations these architects are often faced with during the design process. By having a greater understanding of each other's design philosophy, architects can become more familiar with what is required by commissions while designing without the feeling of limitation.

## **5.1 Discussion : Results**

### **5.1.1 Result 1: Identified a Spectrum of Theoretical Approaches**

The results suggest that each participant believes that the goal of every infill and new addition project in a historic district is to create a compatible, yet appropriate design that harmonizes well with the existing surrounding historic context. It was suggested that the most successful projects in historic districts will meet the programmatic and aesthetic needs of the client, while emphasizing the appealing significant characteristics of the community. This must occur without detracting or drawing attention away from the designated historic fabric. Some participants suggest that the best way to accomplish these goals while meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, is to create contemporary designs that take cues from the surrounding historic context. Others believe that a more literal interpretation of historic elements can produce superior results and is a more suitable approach for creating compatibility in historic contexts.

All participants were able to verbalize their general theoretical approaches to design while creating new infill construction or additions to buildings in historic districts. While all participants cited the use or reference of historicized design elements or styles in their own designs, the data collected suggests that each informant can be placed at a different position on the design spectrum between Modernism and historicized design. Based on the participant's responses, the researcher plotted their respective design approaches onto a visual scale where the polar ends represent an interpretation of Modernism that denies all historical references at one end, and historicized design in the form of copying specific historic buildings or styles at the other. Based on the

completed interviews, no participant falls at these self-defined polar ends of the spectrum, but at intermediate locations (Appendix D).

Some of the participants of this study utilized components such as historic scale, massing, and reinterpreted design elements in a contemporary way in order to create what one participant called “contemporary, yet compatible”. This approach tended to lead to more pronounced Modern designs than some of the other participants who were inclined to reference or copy specific historic design elements and materials for inclusion in their new designs. One participant described his use of historicized design details as so compatible, that onlookers often confuse his contemporary designs with historic buildings.

From the interviews provided, the researcher was surprised at the lack of greatly varying theoretical approaches described by the participants. Even though one participant’s designs were generally cited as being very close to the historicized design end of the scale, not all of his designs were on this polar end of the spectrum. It is possible that this could be a result of the sample of architects that were interviewed, but also could suggest a shift in ideas since the 1950-1970s, a time of more pronounced tension between historic contexts and Modernism.

### **5.1.2 Result 2 : Identified Design Approach Methods**

The interviews aided the researcher in identifying four reoccurring methods for preparing for the design process. The participants all cited exploring context, considering the client / community expectations, understanding and gaining knowledge of applicable standards and guidelines, and addressing conflicting values as important steps in the design of an addition or infill project in a historic district.

Contemporary and historical contexts were explored by both participants creating more Modern design, and participants utilizing historicized designs. Participants that created more historicized designs often described exploring surrounding contemporary context for historical detailing and massing inspiration. These same participants described a more comprehensive exploration of historical context, demonstrating a wide knowledge of local and architectural history in the geographical areas that they usually designed in. They cited a comprehensive use of archival research as important to the design process.

The participants that were inclined to create more modern designs often described a more comprehensive study of contemporary context that involves extensive architectural studies. These studies including material mock-ups, detail analysis, and massing explorations often aided the participants in creating a contemporary design that took cues from surrounding context. These same architects however, described their exploration of historic contexts to be minimal, utilizing historic documents and photographs only to give an overview of a site or to provide for inspiration for a more modernized design.

All participants cited meeting the needs of the client and the greater community as an important goal of their design projects, often holding multiple project client meetings or community design charrettes. It was noted by the researcher however, that participants who designed more historicized designs in historic districts tended to ask community members or clients for their specific style preferences in which to insert their programming needs, while participants who were inclined to create more modern designs cited that this wasn't necessary because of the clients familiarity with their work after the



extensive interview and hiring process. The more modern designers however, would focus on the client's programming needs and future use patterns in the designing process. From the information collected, the researcher concluded that the historicist designers tended to look more toward the community's values in determining overall design goals. While this was found to be important to the Modernist designers, these architects tended to focus more on the overall programming goals of the individual client.

Each participant discussed the importance of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in the design process. The researcher was surprised that every participant either stated or alluded to the fact that the Standards are referenced during the early stages or throughout the entire design process, rather than later. The participants that were more likely to create Modern designs tended to approach the Standards more dogmatically than historicist designers. The Modern designers discussed a critical reading of the Standards, where they would often ask for outside guidance or opinions on interpretation. Those architects who created historicized designs seemed to use the Standards as more of a reference point, only looking for outside aid in understanding the sources when trying to discover a common theme of specific decisions or suggestions made by a commission.

It was interesting to the researcher that those architects that created more historicized designs felt that the Standards reinforced their ideas, even when it was visually difficult to differentiate a new design from historic fabric. These designers described their understanding of Standard 9 as a way to create a harmony between the new and old, citing their historicized designs as the best solution to this idea. The architects that created more Modern designs on the other hand, believed this to be an

excuse for not meeting a design challenge. One participant cited the use of historic looking buildings as “a cop-out” and that it was an easy way to meet the Standards, but did not necessarily create the “best” architectural solution.

During the design process there are often issues of conflicting values or views between parties involved, especially between a design review commission and an architect. Every participant interviewed described moments when they have had both good and conflicting experiences with design review commissions. It was interesting to note that when commissions requested change to a more Modern design proposal, the architect described a long process of compromise. These architects discussed working with a commission to get their design passed with minimal changes, but still meeting some of the commission's wishes. A few of the architects that created more historicized designs on the other hand, mentioned extreme cases where they would either accept or reject all of the commission's wishes for the project in order to avoid conflict. One participant described hiring a lawyer and working with other parts of city government to change a commission's mind.

### **5.1.3 Result 3 : Interpretations of Standard 9**

All participants had an understanding of or attempted to interpret Standard 9 as it related to their project designs. Participants identified using Standard 9 to create designs that were either Modern and compatible or that utilized historicized design. Some participants also cited using known commission expectations and interpretations of the Standards to influence their designs.

Participants that created modern and compatible designs discussed how they believe Standard 9 supported their design decisions. One participant discussed how

she felt that Standard 9 was very straightforward, and that it clearly required a differentiation between new work and existing fabric. This differentiation she believes could be a Modern design. Some of the participants that created more Modern designs even went as far as calling new historicized designs in historic districts a more cautious approach that is often easier to get passed by a commission, but that doesn't always produce the best or most thoughtful design solutions. Participants that created more modern designs often employed methods such as a "connector", or a visibly new piece that connects a historic building an a new addition; a sampling of a historic detail, rhythm, material, color or massing in the surrounding historic context while reinterpreting in a modern way; or creating a completely modern design that doesn't take away from, or even enhances the aesthetic qualities of surrounding historic contexts.

Participants who utilized more historicized elements in their designs in historic districts also believed that they were meeting Standard 9 appropriately and with the highest quality results. Many participants that created more historicized designs felt that sampling historic features, context, or even copying elements resulted in the most compatible results for the area. These architects often utilized elements they knew the community would feel was appropriate, either through public meetings or by employing successful designs on their projects that already exist in their community. Some participants that used this design method hoped that the community would realize their designs were new construction, but also hinted that if they were mistaken for historic building that it would not necessarily be an unfavorable comment.

From the information gathered by the researcher during the interview process, a pattern emerged that suggested the participants that were creating more historicized designs often based or slightly altered their interpretations of the Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9, based on the interpretation of the Standard by the review board they would be associated with during the design process. Although some participants who created more Modern designs also had a prior knowledge of certain review commissions, it was because they had directly worked on or for them in the past. These participants seemed to be more likely to design with their own original intentions, and deal with the commission's comments later, rather than be exceedingly concerned with a commission's views ahead of time.

The researcher was surprised that all participants cited the Secretary of the Interior's Standard's to be an important guiding document for all new designs in historic districts. When there were constraints to the design process, the Standards were not cited as the source of strain, but the committees and review boards who interpreted them were often to blame. All participants referred to the varying views held by different members of commissions about Standard 9 to be the most inconsistent, often creating confusion for the design team, the client, and the commission as a whole. Two of the participants cited Standard 9 as a constraint or "too strict" when it came to only infill construction, stating that there should not be as much regulation for a brand new building in a historic context as there is an addition to an already existing building.

## **5.2 Limitations**

The limitations of this study include the small size of the sample of architects and architecture firms, the lack of extreme Modernist or historicized design values in this

sample, and the limited geographic location surveyed. Because of the time constraints of this study, the researcher only had time to contact and engage a limited number of architects in interviews. The researcher was also only able to travel to interview locations that were within a reasonable traveling distance both because of time and monetary constraints.

Out of the participants that were included in this study, none of them had extreme views at one end of the design spectrum. No participant advocated or practiced Modernist or historicized designs exclusively, even if some were closer to one end of the scale than others. If the researcher were able to contact and include participants that had more extreme views, this could have further informed the study.

This study accurately presented meanings that were revealed through the interview process for this group of architects but cannot, however, be generalized to the greater population of architects in the United States. Because this study's results are expected to be transferable to a similar population, it is expected that equivalent results could be observed and recreated with a similar sample of architects, but is not meant to draw conclusive results.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

Because of the existing limitations to this study, it is suggested that further research should be completed and further conclusions be made on this topic. In future endeavors it is suggested that a larger sample of participants be identified that are willing to participate in interviews. These participants should, if possible, be located in varying geographic locations and have diverse views of design, ideally covering a large portion of the design spectrum previously identified.

While this sample included both men and women, it is also suggested that a future sample be more culturally diverse, as well as including more various age groups; perhaps even architectural firm employees that are not already licensed or interns. The research may also benefit from gathering information from more members of the same architectural practice or firm.

#### **5.4 Implications for Practice**

Architectural theory is constantly expanding because of the evolution of ideas through time. Preservation theory is inherently linked to architectural theory. The connection is based on preservation's dependence on maintaining the physical manifestations of the developments in architectural theory. The Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 is an essential part of a preservation doctrine that illustrates preservation theory as it relates to new construction and design in historic districts. Standard 9 is intentionally vague in nature because it is meant to allow ever changing architectural theories to become integrated appropriately into historic contexts, exhibiting change over time.

Since the creation of Standard 9, it has been knowingly and unknowingly abused and manipulated by some design review commissions in order to fulfill personal agendas or prohibit specific kinds of design based on personal preferences or aesthetic tastes (Scheer, 1994). The result is that this conflict prevents the Standard from both allowing the progression of contemporary architectural theory in historic areas and requiring a distinction between contemporary and historic architectural fabric, which essentially alters the Standard's intended purpose.

Like the architects that participated in this study, a commission has the ability to choose extreme Modernist design, historicized design, or a combination between these two design approaches for incorporation within their community. The Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 does not specify which is the most appropriate approach, so unless the community has incorporated another set of guidelines or standards, design review commissions cannot reject a design that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards based on the personal views or desires of the commission.

In order for architectural and preservation theory to remain in a functioning, symbiotic relationship, communities must determine which aspects of architecture and preservation they value. If a community is not willing to immediately approve every proposed architectural design that meets the criteria set by the Secretary of the Interior's Standard's, including Standard 9, these community members must be willing to articulate their exact design wishes and requirements.

Two options for design review commissions are outlined as:

1. Acceptance of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as the Sole Guideline
2. Creation of Supplementary Guidelines

#### **5.4.1 Acceptance of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as the Sole Guideline**

Total acceptance of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as the only guide to judging the appropriateness of new additions and infill construction in historic districts allows for the integration of contemporary designs that could fall at any place on the previously discussed design spectrum. This could attract many architects with differing architectural theories to a community for a proposed project, leading to different options

for a community to choose from for a specific project. This approach allows for the integration of contemporary design approaches and theory into a historic area, ultimately creating a dynamic continuation of this area's architectural story.

As long as these designs meet the vague requirements laid out by the Standards however, a commission has no right to reject a design based on personal preferences or ulterior motives. A commission should be referencing the Standards in all matters of deliberation, including their final motion, which currently does not consistently occur in all commission meetings. This could lead a community to only hire architects they are familiar with or accept designs that they do not necessarily like. This approach could, for better or worse, require a commission to step outside of its normal comfort zone.

#### **5.4.2 Creation of Supplementary Guidelines**

It is possible for a community to create separate or supplementary guidelines to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards to guarantee that a community can consistently accept or reject specific proposed aspects of design during the design review process. These materials can be as general or as detailed as possible, but should be consistently applied to all projects within historic districts.

Depending on the specificity of the proposed guidelines, architects with varying approaches could be attracted to or discouraged from designing in a certain community. Broad supplementary guidelines could guarantee that a community is able to enforce a few specific design elements or ideas that they view as important to maintaining the historic integrity of a historic district. Subjects not included however, would not be under the commission's jurisdiction. Strict or extensive guidelines could potentially condemn a historic area to become a static time capsule, with limited or indistinguishable growth.



A stricter guideline could, however, guarantee that the design is exactly what the community requested.

#### **5.4.3 Appropriateness of Modernism & Historicized Design**

Through research and the exploration of current practice, the researcher has obtained a greater understanding of the polar ends, Modernism and historicized design. Each informant, which fell between these two polar ends, discussed how their individual projects were “appropriate” additions to historic fabric. This appropriateness was based upon not only community and client satisfaction, but on the designers ability to create a unique and responsive project that is still able to conform to set standards and guidelines.

In this sense, the researcher has discovered the static nature of extreme Modernism and extreme historicized design. Both extreme Modernism, with the complete rejection and destruction of all past precedents; and extreme historicized design, with direct copying of entire buildings violate the Secretary of the Interior’s Standard 9 with the destruction of historic character and the inability to differentiate new construction from the historic fabric respectively.

It is the researcher’s opinion that, depending on community expectations, the most “appropriate” approach to new additions and infill construction in historic districts is one that unites both a contemporary architecture of its time and takes cues from surrounding historic fabric and context. This combination, if a community wishes, could be specified in local, supplementary guidelines or could be left up the vague nature of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards. This range of acceptable architecture allows

for a variety of appropriate architectural designs and the employment of architects with a wide range of design theories and practices.

## **5.5 Conclusions**

The fields of Architecture and Historic Preservation have remained in a close, symbiotic relationship that is constantly evolving. With the advancement of one field comes adaptation and reorganization in the other. As explored in chapter 2 of this study, the complex and transforming design theories that are held by architects are constantly inspiring the creation of varying preservation doctrines that then inform the design review process which was developed to shape and control these appropriate theories for application in historic districts.

As stated in the limitations section of this chapter, information could be skewed based on the small, similar views of the sample of architects interviewed. Based on the meanings collected from the participants and the literature reviewed for this study however, the researcher has noticed a pattern of change over time in the areas of design theory and design review, which has therefore lead to different needs for evolution or additions to preservation doctrine.

The researcher noted in the literature reviewed for this study that the self-defined polar ends of the design theory spectrum, Modernism and historicized design, are often approaches that are applied to new design in historic districts following the same item 9 in the Secretary of the Interior's Standard's. These two approaches were described as "in tension" with one another, often engaging conflicting values of design. Although the researcher believes these two extremes are still valued by some architects that design in historic districts today, no participants interviewed fell into the category of using

strictly Modernist or historicized designs to create new appropriate architectural additions or infill construction in historic districts. Each participant utilized a design theory that is a product of different formulas of these two extremes, placing their theories on the spectrum in between these polar ends. The researcher believes that this could suggest a shift in the idea of appropriateness when designing in historic districts over the last three decades. It seems that architects that design in historic districts are more often than not, using a hybrid, more flexible approach, utilizing both Modernist and historicized design approaches to create an appropriate design.

As discussed in chapter 2 of this study, architects that tended to create more Modernist designs often viewed design review as a hindering part of the design process that constrained creativity and production. Architects that created more historicized designs often cited the design review process as an essential and imperative tool for the protection of historic fabric and context. Because of the theoretical design shift, it appears that opinions have changed concerning the design review process. The architects who created both more Modern and historicized designs in historic districts described the design review process as important, yet flawed. This stems from the inconsistencies cited within and between review commissions.

Because of these changes in philosophy and attitudes towards the effectiveness and necessity of design review, the traditional or perhaps “intended” reading of applicable standards and guidelines require further interpretation and expansion. Throughout history, preservation doctrine has been newly created, added to, and countermanded based on positively and negatively perceived architectural movements in order to prevent permanent loss of historic fabric. Preservation doctrine is not

intended to hinder new creation, but to aesthetically and physically protect existing historic fabric. The Standards vague nature should not be manipulated in order to make judgments based on personal aesthetic discriminations or perceptions.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A : RWU HUMAN SUBJECT REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Individual Research Project Proposals  
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY  
HUMAN SUBJECT REVIEW BOARD  
COVER SHEET FOR NEW INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSALS

Name of Principal Investigator: Alexandra D. Skerry

Date of Submission: 5 January 2012

Department: Historic Preservation

School: School of Architecture, Art, and Historic Preservation

Names of Principal Investigators: Alexandra D. Skerry

Name of Faculty Advisor: Jeremy Wells, Ph.D.  
(required for students)

Title of Research Project:  
Interpreting the Standards: Design Professionals & Historicised Design

Grant funding supporting this research: N/A

Researcher code of ethics: I declare that I have read the Roger Williams University Statement of Researchers' Ethical Principles for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research and am familiar with my obligations thereunder. Furthermore, I agree to abide by that Statement of Ethical Principles adopted by Roger Williams University as part of the Human Subject Review Board Policy.

Alexandra D. Skerry  
Investigator's signature

Review status sought by principle investigator. Circle one using the guidelines published by the HSRB. Note that the HSRB may change the status of the review.

EXEMPT

**EXPEDITED**

FULL

For HSRB Board use only: Committee decision regarding review status:

EXEMPT

**EXPEDITED**

FULL

✓ Approved  
       Resubmit

[Signature]  
Signature of Chairperson

1/12/12  
Date

        
Signature of Chief Academic Officer

        
Date

## APPENDIX B : INFORMED CONSENT MATERIALS

### Informed Consent Form for M.S. Historic Preservation Thesis: Interpreting the Standards: Design Professionals and Historicized Design

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by M.S. Historic Preservation candidate Alexandra D. Skerry in the School of Architecture, Art, and Historic Preservation at Roger Williams University (RWU).

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to discover why some design professionals do not think it is important to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standard #9. It is anticipated that 10-15 design professionals will be interviewed in this process.

**PROCEDURE & PARTICIPATION:** You will be asked to participate in an interview. We expect your participation to take about 40-60 minutes. Questions may include, but are not limited to: discussing a brief background of yourself, describing your own architectural designs, and discussing personal opinions of photos of historic and new buildings. Notes will be taken and if the participant agrees, an audio recording will be made of the interview.

**RISKS & BENEFITS:** There are no anticipated risks associated with this study. We expect the project to benefit you by leading to a wider understanding of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation by creating a more comprehensive guideline to interpret the Secretary of the Interior's Standard nine. In addition, we expect this research to benefit the Historic Preservation community and its professionals by collaborating with architects.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** Please understand that participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect your current or future relationship with RWU or its faculty, students, or staff. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason, without penalty.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the investigator and her thesis advisor and reader will have access to your identity and to information that can be associated with you. In the event of publication, pseudonyms can be used. In order to preserve the confidentiality of your responses, all files will be stored in password protected files.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this research, please contact me at any time:

Alexandra D. Skerry  
[askerry718@g.rwu.edu](mailto:askerry718@g.rwu.edu)  
978-490-0187

You can also contact my thesis advisor at:

Jeremy Wells, Ph.D.  
[jwells@rwu.edu](mailto:jwells@rwu.edu)  
(401) 254-5338

I understand the above information and have had all of my questions about participation on this research project answered. I voluntarily consent to participate in this research.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

This is to certify that I have defined and explained this research study to the participant named above.

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX C : IMAGES



*Fig. C1- Arbour Hospital. Courtesy of Gary Graham.*



*Fig. C2- Moran Shipping Agency. Photo by Heidi Gumula.  
Courtesy of DBVW Architects.*



*Fig. C3- Pearl Street Lofts. Photo by Glenn Turner.  
Courtesy of DBVW Architects.*



*Fig. C4-Washington Mills. Photo by Glen Turner. Courtesy  
of DBVW Architects.*





*Fig. C5- Wheeler School. Courtesy of Ann Beha Architects.*



*Fig. C6- 161 Commonwealth Avenue. Courtesy of Ann Beha Architects.*





*Fig. C7- New England Conservatory. Courtesy of Ann Beha Architects*



*Fig. C8- Jordan Hall. Courtesy of Ann Beha Architects*





*Fig. C9- University of Chicago. Courtesy of Ann Beha Architects*



*Fig. C10- University of Pennsylvania: Music Building.  
Courtesy of Ann Beha Architects*



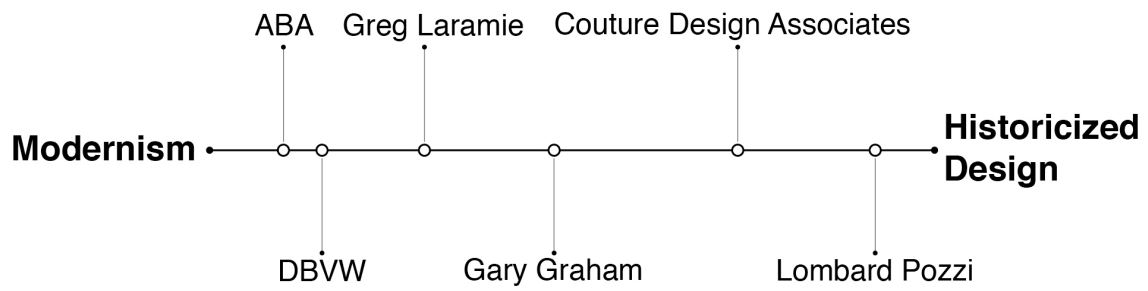


*Fig. C11- Peaberry Building. Courtesy of Lombard Pozzi.*



*Fig. C12- Mystic, CT Project. Courtesy of Greg Laramie.*

## APPENDIX D : VISUAL SPECTRUM OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES



*Image courtesy of Bryan Apito*