

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
September 23, 2014 Meeting**

5. **CAR No. 14-096** (Evolve Acquisitions LLC) **807 North 23rd Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct new duplex**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval to construct a new duplex on a vacant lot located in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. The proposed building is a two-story building with a shed roof that replicates the Italianate buildings style found throughout the district.

The building is situated between a parking lot and two vacant lots. However, this applicant received permission in January 2014 to construct two attached duplexes on the vacant lots to the south of this site at 805-805 ½ N. 23rd Street. This proposed design will match identically the design, setback, and materials of that project. The building height is 23'-6 ¾", which will match that of the approved attached duplexes to the south of the site. The dwelling will have 5'-9" side yard setbacks and a 15' front yard setback, which would align with the approved new duplexes to the south. Both this proposed duplex and the approved duplexes will be situated higher than the existing building at 801 N. 23rd Street, as the lots are higher and set further back from the street. The building will have a one-story front porch, and a two-story rear porch. The applicant proposes smooth cement board siding with 7" reveal, parged foundation, black membrane main roof, black EPDM porch roofs, fiberglass doric columns, fiber cement fascia boards, wood corbels, fiberglass doors with 4-lite transoms above, and white vinyl windows.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the Standards for New Construction on pages 44 and 45 and the Standards for Site Improvements on pages 66 and 67 of the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* and the resulting comments follow.

Staff Findings based on Commission of Architectural Review Guidelines

STANDARDS FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

New construction should be compatible with the historic features that characterize its setting and context. To protect the significance of the historic context, the new work should reference the historic materials, features, size, scale, proportions, and massing of its setting. However, new construction should

be clearly discernible from the old to protect the authenticity of the historic district.

SITING

1. *Additions should be subordinate in size to the main structure and as inconspicuous as possible. Locating them at the rear or least visible side of the structure is preferred.*

This standard is not applicable.

2. *New infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns of the surrounding block. The minimal setbacks evident in most districts reinforce the traditional street wall.*

The proposed 5'-9" side yard setbacks will reflect the typical pattern along the block. The 15' front yard setback will match that of the approved, new duplexes to the south of the property.

3. *New structures should face the most prominent street bordering the site.*

The proposed dwelling will face North 23rd Street, the most prominent street bordering the site.

FORM

1. *New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the immediate area. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections, and roof shapes that lend identity to a structure. Building form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.*

The form of the building is typical of two-story Italianate buildings located in the Union Hill Old and Historic District.

SCALE

1. *New construction should maintain the existing human scale of historic residential and commercial neighborhoods. The inappropriate use of monumentally-scaled buildings that overwhelm pedestrians at the street level is discouraged.*

The proposed building maintains the existing human scale of the neighborhood.

2. *New additions and infill structures should incorporate human-scale elements such as storefronts and porches into their design.*

The proposed design calls for a front porch that has a form that is comparable to other porches in the area.

HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION, & MASSING

1. *New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding houses and commercial structures.*

The proposed structure will be 23'-6 ¾" tall at the ridge of the roof. The context rendering supplied by the applicant indicates that the height of the proposed building is identical to the height of the approved duplexes just to the south.

2. *New construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of commercial and residential properties in historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing of more than 30 feet should be broken up by bays.*

The design respects the typical vertical orientation of two-story residences in the district.

3. *Typical massing patterns throughout city historic districts are simple and block-like; therefore, new structures should avoid the use of staggered setbacks, towers, or elaborate balconies.*

The proposed massing is generally simple and block-like.

MATERIALS, COLORS, & DETAILS

1. *New construction should not cover or destroy original architectural elements.*

This standard is not applicable.

2. *Missing building elements should be replaced with new elements compatible in size, scale, and material to the original elements without creating a false historical appearance.*

This standard is not applicable.

3. *Materials used in new construction should be compatible with original materials used throughout the surrounding neighborhood.*

The applicant proposes smooth cement board siding with 7" reveal, parged foundation, fiberglass front columns, black membrane main roof, black EPDM porch roofs, fiber cement fascia boards, wood corbels, fiberglass doors, and white vinyl windows. Staff would recommend the use of wood or aluminum-clad wood windows with true or simulated divided lites in place of the proposed vinyl windows.

4. *Paint colors for new additions should complement those of the primary structure. Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors found in the immediate neighborhood and throughout the larger district.*

The applicant proposes painting the structure “Woodland Cream,” which is a color similar to that found on the color palette developed by the Commission to help staff approve paint colors. All trim will be painted white.

5. *Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted for use in City Old and Historic Districts. Other synthetic siding materials with a smooth, untextured finish may be allowed in limited cases, but approval by the Commission is always required.*

The application calls for smooth fiber cement siding for the dwelling. The siding should have a smooth finish (and not a faux grain), in accordance with the Commission’s guidelines for synthetic materials.

6. *Vinyl windows are strongly discouraged and rarely permitted.*

The application specifies the installation of white vinyl windows. Staff recommends the use of wood or aluminum-clad wood windows with true or simulated divided lites. Staff is supportive of the two-over-two grid pattern which is typical of window designs throughout the District.

Staff recommends approval of the project with a condition. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines*. Staff recommends that approval be conditioned with the substitution of wood or aluminum-clad wood windows with true or simulated divided lites, in place of the proposed white vinyl windows.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the condition above, the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outline in Section 114.930.7 (c) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of code.