

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
February 27, 2018 Meeting**

14. **COA-029720-2018** (C. Scott)

**6-8 North 31<sup>st</sup> Street  
St. John's Church Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:**

**Construct a new duplex.**

**Staff Contact:**

**M. Pitts**

**Proposal:** The applicant requests conceptual review and comment for the construction of two new attached single family homes on a vacant lot in the St. John's Church Old and Historic District. The applicant is proposing to construct two 3-story attached single family dwellings which will be 32' in height. The building will be setback 22' from North 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The structure is Italianate inspired with a shed roof and a bracketed cornice and will be clad in vinyl siding. The applicant is proposing a 6-bay composition for the structure and a full façade front porch with a hipped roof clad in dimensional shingles and decorative 4" columns. The applicant is proposing 2/2 windows of varying sizes on all elevations. On the rear elevation, the applicant is proposing three grouped windows on the upper stories and a pair of windows adjacent to a rear door which accesses the rear deck on the first story of each dwelling. As the structure is near Libby Hill Park, the rear and south side elevation of the structure may be subject to public view though the view is currently obscured by vegetation.

**Surrounding Context:** The project site is located on North 31<sup>st</sup> Street near the terminus of East Franklin Street. To the north of the subject site are two rows of frame late-Victorian dwellings which were constructed ca. 1893. The structure at 10-14 North 31<sup>st</sup> Street includes three attached dwellings with single bay porches, and this structure has been altered over time to include inappropriate cladding. The structure at 16-24 North 31<sup>st</sup> Street includes five attached dwellings with projecting bays and a full width front porch. Prior to a fire in 1987, a double house of a similar style to the structure at 10-14 North 31<sup>st</sup> Street but with a full width front porch stood on the subject site. The land immediately across the street and to the south is vacant and includes portions of Libby Hill Park. East Franklin Street is developed with one historic structure, a Late-Victorian, frame, two-story, three-bay dwelling on the north side of the street; two 2-story concrete block apartment buildings; and several new single family and attached single family homes that are three stories in height.

**Previous Reviews:** This application has not been previously reviewed by the Commission.

The applicant is seeking **Conceptual Review** for this project. Conceptual review is covered under Sec. 30-930.6(d) of the City Code: The commission shall review

and discuss the proposal with the applicant and make any necessary recommendations. Such Conceptual Review shall be advisory only. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the “Standards for New Construction: Residential” on pages 46-51 of the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* utilizing the checklist below.

**S=satisfies**

**D=does not satisfy**

**NA=not applicable**

**S**   **D**   **NA**  
     

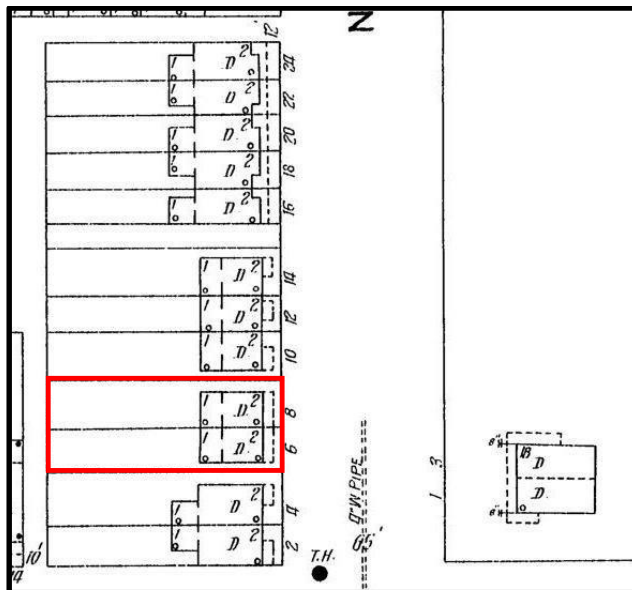
**New infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns in the surrounding district**

The new houses will have a 22 foot front yard setback and approximately 5 and 3.5 foot side yard setbacks. The applicant has not provided a context elevation to determine the compatibility of the setback with the adjacent homes. Staff recommends the front yard setback match that of the adjacent homes if the setback meets the minimum zoning requirements.

**Where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block**

There is only one adjacent building to the proposed structure. Additionally, per the 1925 Sanborn Map, the setback of the remaining structures on the block matches the historical pattern for the block.



**New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site**

The new building is oriented towards North 31<sup>st</sup> Street, the prominent street bordering the site.

- New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the district. Form refers to the combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building.**

The new construction uses a building form consistent with the Italianate double houses found throughout the district as it has a 3-bay configuration, symmetrical façade, full façade porch, and a shed roof. Staff has concerns that as the limited historic context on North 31<sup>st</sup> Street consists entirely of 2-story structures that the 3-story structure is out of scale with the historic construction.

- New construction should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps.**

The proposed new dwellings maintain the existing human scale found in the surrounding area through the incorporation of porches, cornices, and front steps.

- New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings**

The new houses are approximately 32' in height and do not respect the typical height of the surrounding buildings. Though a dimensioned context elevation was not provided, staff estimates the structure will be approximately 10 feet taller than the adjacent historic construction. While three stories is found in the new construction on East Franklin and at the top of the hill facing Libby Park, staff recommends the height of the structure should be consistent with the historic adjacent construction as to not dwarf the limited historic fabric that remains in the area.

- New construction should respect the typical width, organization of bays, vertical alignment and symmetry of surrounding buildings.**

The proposed 32' width of the double house appears to be consistent with the width of the adjacent attached homes. The 3-bay composition and vertical alignment of the openings on the façade and rear of the structure is consistent with the composition of structures in the district. Staff recommends the applicant confirm the location of the openings on the side elevations as there are inconsistencies between the floor plans and the elevations.

- The size, proportion, and spacing patterns of doors and window openings should be compatible with patterns established in the district.**

The windows on structures in the district are typically of a similar size, regularly placed, and ranked. The proposed fenestration is consistent with patterns found in the district.

- Porch and cornice heights should be compatible with adjacent buildings**

Though a dimensioned context elevation was not provided, the porch height appears compatible with the adjacent structure. Staff has concerns that at 3-stories, the cornice height will not be compatible with the adjacent historic structures.

**Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district. Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted.**

Vinyl siding is not an appropriate material for use in the district. Staff recommends the porch roof be clad in dark membrane rather than the proposed asphalt shingles to convey the appearance of a flat lock metal roof which is typical of structures in the district.

The following items will need to be included for final review (please refer to the Commission's New Construction Checklist and Required Dimensions document for additional details):

1. Dimensioned context elevation and site plan
2. Detail of the proposed bracket
3. Site plan to include parking, trash, and mechanical equipment locations
4. Statement of how the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* informed the proposed work.