

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
October 28, 2014 Meeting**

15. **CAR No. 14-125** (Ridge Point Real Estate)

**721 N. 24th Street
Union Hill Old & Historic District**

Project Description:

**Rehabilitate exterior and construct
new second-story addition**

Staff Contact:

W. Palmquist

The applicant requests approval to construct a rear 2nd story addition and make other exterior modifications to this house in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. One of the exterior modifications is removing the vinyl siding to expose the original hardboard siding beneath. If the siding is beyond the point of the repair, the applicant requests approval to replace it with cement board siding. The applicant also wishes to install a non-historic awning above the front porch to uncover the decorative porch elements. The applicant also proposes installing new fascia boards under the top of the roof line and install Fyphon corbels to add historic character to the house. An exterior gutter system is also proposed to be installed. The front porch roof, columns, and pickets will be maintained and repaired. All exterior trim will be painted white, and the applicant will seek staff approval for a body color once one is chosen.

The new 2nd story rear addition is proposed to be constructed above the existing 1st story rear addition, and cantilever over the existing side porch on the north side of the building. Because this requires a zoning variance which has not yet been approved, the applicant is proposes a second option where the addition would not extend over the porch. In either design, the slope of the shed roof will continue from the existing 2nd floor of the main structure to the proposed addition.

Both addition designs call for the removal of two windows at the existing rear 2nd floor, as well as a chimney above the existing 1st floor addition. These windows do not appear to be original as they are double-hung with a horizontal bar across each lite. The applicant proposes two new windows at the rear of the proposed 2nd story addition, which would be MW Jefferson 300 double-hung windows with a 6/6 grid pattern to match the existing historic windows. These windows are PVC-clad with simulated-divided lites.

The applicant is seeking historic tax credits for this project.

Staff recommends partial approval of the project with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* states that new additions should be subordinate in size to the main structure and should not destroy important architectural features (pp. 44-45). The proposed addition will be subordinate to the main structure as it will not exceed the footprint of the existing structure, nor exceed the height of the main structure. Staff recommends that a physical break, both vertically and horizontally, be visible

between the existing structure and addition in order to differentiate the two construction vintages. Also, in the design option where the new addition does not extend over the side porch, staff recommends that all windows on the new rear elevation align. Currently, the top-right window is proposed to be offset from the bottom-right existing window.

Staff is very supportive of the removal of the existing awning at the front of the house and the vinyl siding currently installed on all elevations. However, without any physical or pictorial evidence, staff would recommend denying the installation of Fyphon corbels to create a cornice which may not have existed originally. Houses along this block of N. 24th Street are of a variety of styles, some with brackets and some without, so it is not possible to derive information from other structures. Also, the space between the upper-story windows and the roof is relatively small, making it less likely that brackets originally existed. The *Guidelines* note that adding elements that suggest inaccuracies should be avoided as it confuses the understanding of historic neighborhoods (p. 51 #10). If in the process of removing the vinyl siding, the applicant finds physical evidence for the previous existence of brackets, he may return to the Commission to seek approval of this element of the project with that new information.

Staff recommends that if the existing hardboard is damaged beyond repair and cement board siding is installed, that it be a smooth texture with no faux grain as per the *Guidelines* (p. 45 #5).

Staff recommends that any changes required by the National Park Service or the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for tax credit purposes be deferred to Commission staff for final review and approval.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is partially consistent with the Standards for New Construction and Rehabilitation outlined in Section 114-930.7(b)(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 the code.