

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
July 26, 2016 Meeting**

10. CAR No. 16-112 (M. Jarreau)

**720 Jessamine Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

Construct a new duplex

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests conceptual review and comment to construct a new duplex on a vacant lot in the Union Hill Old and Historic District.

The proposed new construction will be a 2-story, two-bay, frame Greek Revival inspired cottage on a raised concrete foundation with a 2nd story full façade porch. The standing seam metal mansard roof extension over the front porch will be broken by two dormers that appear to be recessed into the roof. Behind the mansard is a low-pitched hipped roof clad in white TPO membrane. The full façade front porch has tapered 10” Doric columns, brick piers, and a simple cornice. At the rear of the structure, there is a two story covered porch over a basement patio. The structure will be clad with Hardie Plank lap siding and trim. The color indicated Pearl Gray is similar to colors found on the approved paint palette, page 60-61 in the *Guidelines*. The proposed double hung windows will have a 2/2 lite configuration and be PVC clad. The applicant is also proposing multiple smaller fixed windows on the south elevation. The duplex is located on a block developed with two-story, four bay frame Italianate double houses though the surrounding blocks are developed with a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings of various styles. The property across the street is currently vacant though the Commission has approved the construction of a three story mixed use development on the triangle lot. The structure directly to the right is a two-story, four bay frame Italianate double house on a brick foundation and to the left is a paved parking lot. There is an alley which runs behind the subject lot.

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 44 and 45 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

All new residential and commercial construction, whether in the form of additions or entire buildings, should be compatible with the historic features that characterize their setting and context. To protect the context of the surrounding historic district, new construction should reference the materials, features, size, scale, proportions, and massing of the existing historic building or buildings in its setting. However, compatibility does not mean duplicating the existing buildings or environment. In order to avoid creating a false sense of history, new construction should also be discernible from the old. Perhaps the best way to think about a compatible new building (or addition) is that it should be a good neighbor; one that enhances the character of the existing district and respects its historic context, rather than being an exact (and misleading) reproduction of another building.

Staff has some concerns regarding the proposed new construction's compatibility with the historic features that characterize its setting and context. While the immediate setting and context is characterized by two-story, four-bay, frame, Italianate-style double houses, the Union Hill neighborhood includes many raised cottages with English basements. The proposed new construction references this raised cottage construction though staff has concerns regarding the proposed height. Though building heights vary in the vicinity, the proposed structure is approximately 4 feet taller than the adjacent homes and is at a taller height than the residential construction on the block. The Commission may wish to consider encouraging the applicant to construct the structure with the English basement partially below ground which will reduce the overall height and is consistent with several of the raised cottages in the district.

The new construction incorporates some materials and features found in its setting – namely the use of frame and brick piers. Staff has concern that that concrete foundation is not appropriate for the district and recommends the use of a brick foundation for the English basement. Additionally, the proposed mansard roof projection over the full façade front porch is not a building form found in the District. Other concerns staff has regarding materials and form on the façade include the need to align the head of the adjacent window with the transom above the front door and the size of the framing surrounding the dormers. Staff also recommends against the use of white TPO on any visible portions of the roof as typically roofs in the Old and Historic District are gray or black.

There is currently a large mature tree on the subject lot. On page 73, the *Guidelines* state that: *Mature trees contribute to the character of Old and Historic districts, provide visual interest, reduce the negative impacts of parking areas and ease the effects of temperature and wind conditions. Every effort should be made to maintain and preserve them.* The site plan included with the application does not locate the tree or provide any indication of its fate.

Staff has not reviewed the conceptual design with Zoning for compliance though the applicant's plans indicate that a variance is required for the proposed side yard setback.

General Comments:

- Hardie or other fiber cement siding and trim must be smooth and un-beaded
- Windows must be true divided or simulated divided light.

The following items will need to be included for final review:

- 1) A fully dimensioned site plan to include the setbacks of the proposed structure and the adjacent structure and dimensions of the proposed structure including the proposed porches.
- 2) Materials, details and dimensions for mechanical equipment screening.
- 3) Dimensions on the side elevations need to be provided.
- 4) Details and dimensions for all trim and decorative elements, including the dormer.
- 5) A detailed statement of how the project conforms to the *Guidelines*.