

**11. COA-084165-2020**

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

January 26, 2021

PROPERTY ADDRESS

2218 East Grace Street

DISTRICT

St. John's Church

APPLICANT

Twenty Three Hundred LLC

STAFF CONTACT

C. Jones

Commission of  
Architectural Review

STAFF REPORT

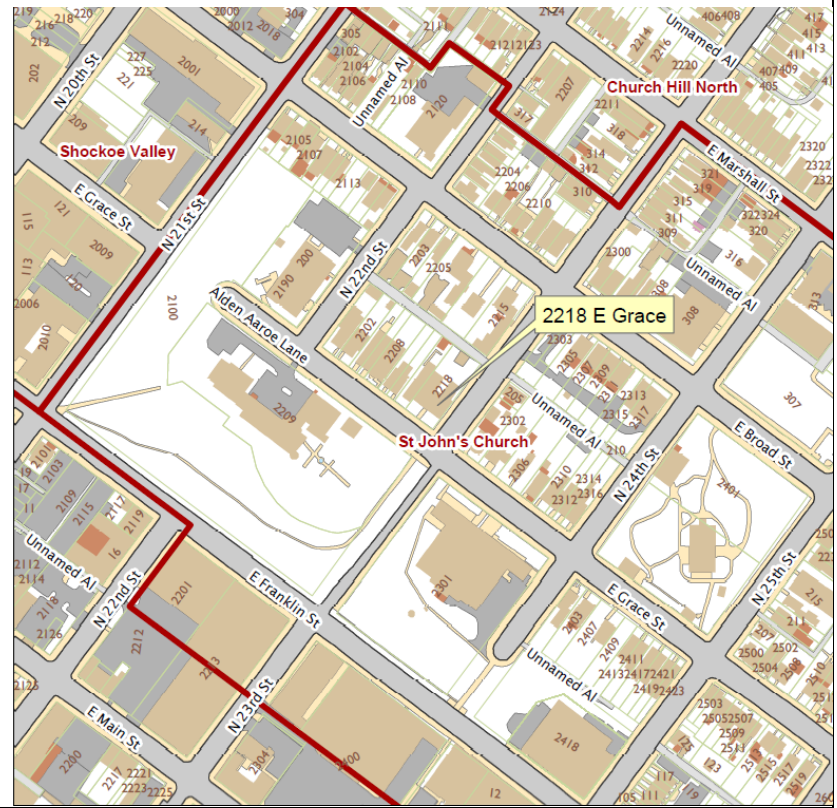


**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Install front yard hardscaping and multi-unit mail and package delivery boxes.**

**PROJECT DETAILS**

- The applicant proposes to hardscape and install mailboxes in the front yard of a 2-story brick Italianate building in the St. John's Church City Old and Historic District. The building is four attached houses built ca. 1890.
- The landscaping plans for the front yard include the following:
  - Install a patio using salvaged brick
  - Install a seating area on the eastern portion of the front yard, and remove an existing tree in this area
  - Install plantings and flower beds, including a 4-5 foot tall laurel hedge around the perimeter of the yard
- The applicant also proposes to install an outdoor mailbox cluster and two package drop boxes in the front yard.
  - The mailbox cluster will serve 8 tenants and will be approximately 65" high, in black
  - The drop boxes will be 40" high, also in black



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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**PARTIAL APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS**

**PREVIOUS REVIEWS**

The Commission reviewed and approved exterior alterations to the front and rear of the property in November 2018 and June 2019.

**STAFF RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS**

- The applicant use a compatible but differentiated brick for the front yard hardscaping, and specifications be submitted to staff for administrative approval
- The new boxes be located in the side yard, where the mailboxes for the property are currently located

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

Standards for Site Improvements,

8. *Landscape design should enhance the streetscape and contribute a strong aesthetic along street frontages. Appropriate*

The applicant proposes bushes along the corner of East Grace Street and North 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Staff finds that this in keeping with other

<p>Landscaping, pg. 77</p>	<p><i>landscaping should buffer the visual severity of surface parking lots from view...</i></p> <p><i>9. Landscape plans should select plant materials based on their: a) suitability to the site and urban surroundings, b) appropriateness to the local climate, soils and light conditions, c) ability to provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest, d) avoidance of not-native or invasive planting material.</i></p> <p><i>10. For existing buildings, the development of front yard hardscaped areas, where such elements did not exist historically, are discouraged.</i></p> <p><i>11. In instances where physical or documentary evidence does not exist, the proposed front yard landscaped area should be compatible in design, materials, and location, and should look to precedent on the block face or the block face opposite, or within the district, but not outside the district. By following this guidance, in some circumstances, permission for new front yard seating areas may be granted. Suitable design, materials, and location will vary by district. In any event, the nonhistorical over-development of front yards should be avoided.</i></p>	<p>corner landscaping in the immediate area.</p> <p>The property does not currently have hardscaping in the front yard and no physical or documentary evidence of hardscaping has been located. However, staff finds that the subject block does have properties with front yard hardscaping elements. Staff finds the proposed hardscaping and seating area is consistent with the block face.</p>
<p>Standards for Rehabilitation #10, pg. 56</p>	<p><i>While it is acceptable to use salvaged materials as in-kind replacement, adding features or salvaged architectural elements that suggest an inaccurate or undocumented sequence of construction should be avoided because this confuses our understanding of the evolution of Richmond's historic built environment.</i></p>	<p>The application states that brick removed from an existing rear-yard patio will be salvaged and used for the new front-yard hardscaping. As no evidence existing of front-yard hardscaping historically, staff finds the use of salvaged brick would suggest an inaccurate sequence of construction. <u>Staff recommends the applicant use a compatible but differentiated brick for the front yard hardscaping, and specifications be submitted to staff for administrative approval.</u></p>
<p>Mechanical Equipment, pg. 68</p>	<p><i>From time to time, the changing needs of owners and residents call for improvements to HVAC systems, the installation or upgrade of satellite television, and other similar technologies that enrich modern life. The visual impact of new mechanical equipment should be minimized to protect the historic character of the district.</i></p>	<p>Though the Guidelines do not specifically address mailboxes in City Old and Historic Districts, they recommend that modern equipment such as mechanical and communications equipment should be installed in a manner that minimizes its visual impact. Staff finds that the proposed mailbox cluster and package drop boxes will be visually intrusive in the front yard of the building. Staff also finds that the proposed landscaping will not effectively screen the mailbox cluster, which is taller than the proposed bushes. <u>Staff recommends the new boxes be located in the side yard, where the mailboxes for the property</u></p>

are currently located. If the applicant is concerned about visibility of the boxes, staff suggests a small sign be placed at the front of the building, directing delivery personnel to the side of the property.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (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.

## FIGURES



Figure 1. 2218 East Grace Street, façade



Figure 2. Existing location of mailboxes, east elevation



Figure 3. Front yard hardscaping in surrounding area



Figure 4. Front yard landscaping in surrounding area