



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

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| 7. COA-161218-2025 | Final Review | Meeting Date: 2/25/2025 |
| Applicant/Petitioner | Heywood Harrison / COR Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities | |
| Project Description | Rehabilitate and repair an existing masonry retaining wall. | |
| Project Location | | |
| Address: 2401 E Broad Street | | |
| Historic District: St. John's Church | | |
| <p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes repairs to the retaining wall along N. 24th Street at the St. John's Church Cemetery. A new reinforced concrete retaining wall will be constructed in front of the historic masonry wall, in order to respect any potential graves as well as the existing structures behind it. The new wall will extend about 16 inches from the existing wall and will preserve historical elements, such as the wall caps and metal posts. The new retaining wall to be enclosed by brick rowlock and brick veneer at the base and all existing fencing to be repaired and reset to match the existing. The project also includes replacing the brick sidewalk to match existing. Only the N. 24th Street wall is being repaired at this time, with future repairs planned for East Broad Street and East Grace Street as funding allows.</p> | | |
| Staff Recommendation | Approval, with Conditions | |
| Staff Contact | Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@rva.gov, (804) 646-6569 | |
| Previous Reviews | CAR No. 09-076: 2009 | |
| Staff Recommendations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recommends that masonry cleaning be performed by a qualified contractor using non-invasive techniques, with low-pressure water washing and mild detergent as the preferred method. Sandblasting is strictly prohibited. • Staff recommends that repointing mortar should match the strength of the existing mortar, and no waterproofing or water-repellent coatings should be used, as these products can trap moisture within the masonry. • Staff recommends that the brick veneer on the new concrete retaining wall match the existing brick wall in brick dimension, bond pattern, and joint profile as closely as possible. • Staff recommends that existing fence / railing to be repaired, cleaned, and repainted in-kind, as well as protected during | |

Staff Analysis

| Guideline Reference | Reference Text | Analysis |
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| <p>Standards for Rehabilitation, Residential Construction, pg. 59</p> | <p><i>1. Retain original features and materials that define the building style, including but not limited to wood siding, shingles, stucco, and masonry.</i></p> <p><i>7. Repair damaged elements instead of replacing them. Use materials that match the original in type or use physically and chemically compatible substitute materials that convey the same appearance as the surviving elements or sections. Use available documentation when reconstructing missing elements. Pictorial, historical, or physical documentation can be helpful.</i></p> | <p>The applicant proposes constructing a new reinforced concrete cantilevered retaining wall in front of the historic masonry wall. The scope of work includes cleaning the existing brick retaining wall and repairing water-damaged masonry. Deteriorated brick and mortar will be removed, replaced, and repointed as needed.</p> <p>The new wall will have a footing below the sidewalk, a key beneath the footing, and may extend into the existing retaining wall. It will project approximately 16 inches from the existing wall and, in some areas, will terminate short of the top to preserve historic wall caps and metal posts. The final wall design will feature oversized handmade brick laid with hydraulic lime mortar in a common bond or five-course American bond pattern with a header every sixth course to match the existing masonry. Given past structural failures, such as the collapse along North 25th Street in 2003, the proposed approach is necessary to prevent similar incidents while maintaining the historic character of the site.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that masonry cleaning be performed by a qualified contractor using non-invasive techniques, with low-pressure water washing and mild detergent as the preferred method. Sandblasting is strictly prohibited.</u></p> |
| <p>Standards for Site Improvements, Fences & Walls, pg. 78</p> | <p><i>1. Original fences and walls should be retained and maintained whenever possible.</i></p> <p><i>12. Stone walls should be repointed as needed, making sure that mortar, mortar joints and missing stone match existing material.</i></p> | <p><u>Staff recommends that repointing mortar should match the strength of the existing mortar, and no waterproofing or water-repellent coatings should be used, as these products can trap moisture within the masonry.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the brick veneer on the new concrete retaining wall match the existing brick wall in brick dimension, bond pattern, and joint profile as closely as possible.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that existing fence / railing to be repaired, cleaned, and repainted in-kind, as well as protected during construction.</u></p> |
| <p>Standards for Site Improvements, Sidewalks & Curbs, pg. 76</p> | <p><i>4. Brick or granite pavers are the most appropriate choice in most Old and Historic Districts.</i></p> <p><i>6. Sidewalk design should allow for the installation of appropriate urban landscaping.</i></p> | <p>The applicant proposes to remove existing brick sidewalk along North 24th Street. Contractor to salvage and store all sound brick for reuse with reconstructed brick sidewalk with pavers in herringbone pattern to match existing. Final sidewalk plan to match existing urban landscaping and city utility infrastructure.</p> |

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.



Figure 2.



Figure 4



Figure 6



Figure 5

