



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2017-072: To amend and reordain City Code § 30-930.5 to establish the Mason's Hall Old and Historic District.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Commission of Architectural Review
Date: April 3, 2017

PETITIONER

Historic Richmond Foundation on behalf of Mason's Hall 1785 and Richmond-Randolph Lodge No. 19 (the property owner)

LOCATION

1805-1807 East Franklin Street

PURPOSE

To amend Chapter 30, Article IX, Division 4 of the Richmond City Code to designate the Mason's Hall Old and Historic District. The designation would cover the single property at 1805-1807 E. Franklin Street (E0000132001), known as Mason's Hall.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19 is the first building erected in the United States for Masonic purposes and has remained in continuous use by a lodge of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons. The corner stone for the lodge was laid in 1785. A lack of funds halted construction at the top of the brick basement and the upper two stories were built of frame and completed in 1787. The Lodge is working with the Historic Richmond Foundation to facilitate needed repairs to ensure the preservation of the building. Together, the Lodge and the Historic Richmond Foundation have requested the City Old and Historic designation as it is an additional tool for the recognition and preservation of the building.

On January 24, 2017, after conducting a public hearing, the Commission of Architectural Review (CAR) affirmed that the single property known as Mason's Hall meets the criteria for designation as the structure is one of the earliest and more significant buildings in the City of Richmond. The CAR voted unanimously to recommend the parcel be designated the Mason's Hall Old and Historic District.

Therefore, the Commission of Architectural Review recommends approval of the establishment of the Mason's Hall City Old and Historic District for the single property located at 1805-1807 East Franklin Street.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The subject property consists of a single parcel of 0.143 acres of land improved with a two-story, five-bay frame building built on a high English basement with a low-hipped roof surmounted by an octagonal cupola which was erected from 1785-1787. The façade was organized by a slightly projected, pedimented central pavilion. In the mid-nineteenth century, the façade was remodeled in the style of the time. The major alterations included the installation of classical pedimented portico with Tuscan piers and Doric columns, the removal of the two windows flanking the entrance, and the replacement of the arched window arrangement on the second story with a three-part window with a Greek cornice.

The Mason's Hall, Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19, is located in the National Register listed Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row Historic District and is individually listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. It is directly across Franklin Street from the southern boundary of the Shockoe Valley Old and Historic District.

Proposed Use of the Property

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate the structure and to maintain the site for use as a meeting hall.

Master Plan

The subject property is designated Urban Center Area in the Richmond Downtown Plan, which supports a mix of land uses. Specifically for Shockoe Bottom, the plan states "it is important that the historic character of Shockoe Bottom be preserved" (p. 4.56).

Zoning & Ordinance Conditions

The subject property is a part of a row of parcels fronting East Franklin Street zoned M-1 surrounded by a larger B-5 zoning district.

The designation of City Old and Historic Districts is governed by Section 30-930.4 of the City Code. City Old and Historic Districts are design overlays embodied in the Zoning Code, and designation follows much of the same procedures as rezoning.

Section 30-930.4 (d) includes criteria for the designation that all proposed Old and Historic Districts must meet. Once a district is created, all exterior changes visible from a public right of way must receive a certificate of appropriateness in accordance with Section 30-930.6. In accordance with Section 30-930.7(g) the Commission has adopted the Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines to guide property owners in planning their projects. The review of applications for certificates of appropriateness by the Commission is governed by the Standards in Section 30-930.7.

Surrounding Area

A mix of commercial, office, and residential land uses are present in the vicinity.

Community Participation

In accordance with the requirements of City Code Section 30 930.4 (c), CAR staff prepared the following notices for a January 24, 2017, public hearing:

- Legal notices of the meeting were published in the Richmond Times Dispatch 16 and 9 days prior to the hearing.
- Notices of the public hearing were mailed directly to the property owner within the proposed Mason's Hall Old and Historic District, as well as to those property owners within 150 feet of the proposed district, 13 days prior to the hearing.
- Notices of the public hearing were distributed to the CAR e mail distribution list and posted on Legistar 13 days prior to the hearing.

At the public hearing, the CAR heard input from three speakers, all of whom spoke in favor of the Old and Historic District.

One letter of support was received.

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