

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
October 27, 2015 Meeting**

9. CAR No. 15-132 (A. Gardner)

**508 North 26th Street
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

Reconstruct front gable

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests approval to reconstruct the front gable of a brick Queen Anne structure in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. Currently, the bricks have been removed from the triangular gable. The applicant proposes to install ¾" smooth plywood painted to match the surrounding brick into the triangular opening and reinstall the historic galvanized metal decorative sunburst panel onto the plywood.

Staff recommends approval with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that original features and materials that define the building style should be retained (pg. 55, #1). Below is a photograph of the original gable on the structure from April 2014:



Gable of 508 N. 26th Street in April 2014 (Source: Google Maps)

The sunburst panel and the brick construction of the gable are distinctive original features of this historic structure and should both have been retained and repaired as needed. The *Guidelines* state that “when the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials” (pg. 5, #6). Additionally, the *Guidelines* note that the purpose of replacing lost or

irreparable architectural features is to create a visual match to the original feature and that substitute materials should only be used when there is an unavailability of historic materials, unavailability of skilled craftsmen, or poor quality original materials (pg. 56-57). The proposed plywood gable does not effectively convey the same visual appearance as the historic brick gable as the historic gable had a distinctive brick pattern for the border. Using a substitute material for brick is not appropriate as brick is an available material of which a qualified craftsman can install. Staff recommends approval of the proposed reconstruction of gable to include the reinstallation of the sunburst panel with the condition that the gable be constructed of brick to match the historic gable not plywood.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with condition noted above, is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation in Section 114-930.7(b) 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.