

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

13. **CAR No. 16-058** (Cava Capital) **2808 1/2 E. Leigh Street
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct three attached single family dwellings**

Staff Contact: **K. Chen**

The applicant requests approval to construct a new, two-story, three-bay, frame Italianate-style dwelling on a vacant lot in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District.

The application was presented for conceptual review at the March 22, 2016 meeting. The Commission's comments were primarily related to size and suitability of the lot for new construction, the grade change and the alignment of the new dwelling with the neighboring dwellings, and the use of a style more compatible with the adjacent dwellings. Other comments were related to the vertical dimensions including window head and sill locations, the location of HVAC units and trash and recycling containers.

The new dwelling will be a two-story, three-bay, frame, Italianate dwelling with a full façade, hipped-roof porch, and a decorative cornice. The porch will have square posts and a Richmond rail. The dwelling will be clad with smooth, Hardie, and have 2/2 vinyl clad windows. The dwelling is located on a block that was developed in the 1920s, replacing earlier dwellings, and consists primarily of masonry (brick and stucco), dwellings with mansard roofs and classically decorated porches. There is also a great deal of new in-fill, frame construction in the immediate vicinity.

The applicant provided revised site plan drawings that show the front and side yard setbacks have not changed since the conceptual review. The drawing also provides additional information on the location of air handling units near the mid-point on the east side of the property; the location of the trash and recycle bins near the front of the property on the west side of the front porch; and the preservation and reuse of the existing iron fence. Revised elevation drawings were included that explain the grade change across the block face and the alignment of the new house with the dwelling to the west (2808 East Leigh). The drawings also provide information on the head heights of the windows on the first and second stories and the window dimensions.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. 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 are 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 recommends approval of the project with conditions. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines*. The size, scale, proportions and massing of the proposed new construction are compatible with the *Guidelines* but the use of a frame Italianate-influenced dwelling in this location is not consistent with the *Guidelines*. Staff finds that the proposed new construction does not reference materials or features found within the immediate context of the building. The adjacent dwellings were constructed in the first quarter of the twentieth century and are primarily of masonry construction – brick and stucco – with mansard roofs and classically decorated porches. The immediate neighbor to the west is of frame construction with brick-text siding and a mansard roof. The house to the east is a craftsman design with stuccoed walls and a hipped-roof. Staff recommends that approval be conditioned on the incorporation of a roof form and style that are more compatible with the adjacent dwellings. The use of a front door without lights above the panels should also be considered.

It is the assessment of staff that with the acceptance of the above condition the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 114.930.7(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 code.