



**Staff Report**  
**City of Richmond, Virginia**



**Commission of Architectural Review**

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|--|--|--------------------------|
| 2. COA-139775-2023   | Final Review   | Meeting Date: 12/19/2023 |
| Applicant/Petitioner   | Robert Ries  |                          |
| Project Description  | Install a new transom window opening on a previously altered storefront.   |                          |
| Project Location   |  |                          |
| Address: 411 Brook Road  |  |                          |
| Historic District: Jackson Ward  |  |                          |
| <p><b>High-Level Details:</b></p> <p>Applicant requests approval to alter the primary entrance of a mixed-use, Italianate building ca. 1880 by installing a new transom window above the front door.</p> <p>The façade has been altered over time and no longer features its original configuration.</p> <p>The proposed transom will be a custom stained-glass window that will feature the address of the building surrounded by colored geometric shapes.</p> |  |                          |
| Staff Recommendation   | Partial Approval   |                          |
| Staff Contact  | Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@rva.gov, (804) 646-6569   |                          |
| Previous Reviews   | In October 2023, the Commission reviewed alterations to the façade of this building, including adding a cement step to the entrance and raising the front door.  |                          |
| Conditions for Approval  | <p><b>Staff Recommends approval of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installation of a new transom window above the primary entrance that has clear glass and two panes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Staff Recommends denial of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installation of decorative stained glass</li> </ul> |                          |

## Staff Analysis

| Guideline Reference   | Reference Text  | Analysis   |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Building Elements, Widows, Window Replacement and/or Reconstruction, pg. 69</b></p> | <p><i>7. Windows should only be replaced when they are missing or beyond repair. Any reconstruction should be based on physical evidence or photo documentation.</i></p> <p><i>8. The number, location, size or glazing pattern of windows should not be changed by cutting new openings, blocking out windows or by installing replacement sash that do not fit the original window. Changes to existing windows or the addition of new windows along a secondary elevation will be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.</i></p> <p><i>9. The architectural character of windows should not be altered by inappropriate materials or finishes that radically change the sash, depth of reveal, muntin configuration, the reflective quality or color of the glazing or the appearance of the frame.</i></p> | <p>The applicant is proposing to install a new stained-glass transom window above the primary entrance to the building.</p> <p>The existing storefront and primary entrance configuration are not original. Photographic documentation shows that the original storefront did feature a two-paned transom window above the front door (see figure #1) which appears to be identical to the original transoms seen on the neighboring buildings.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the installation of a new transom window above the primary entrance.</u></p> <p>The original transom seen in the historic photograph, and the transom on the neighboring buildings feature a two-pane configuration. <u>Staff recommends that the new transom have two panes to match the configuration of the original and the neighboring storefronts.</u></p> <p>Decorative stained-glass windows were not a common architectural feature on storefronts of this period. <u>Staff recommends denial of the decorative stained glass. Staff recommends that the windows be clear glass.</u></p> |
| <p><b>Maintenance and Repair, Windows, Leaded and Art Glass Windows, pg. 98</b></p>       | <p><i>Leaded and Art Glass windows display patterned designs or decorative scenes. These elaborate windows were popular during the Victorian era and the early 20th-century, and they are most often located in transoms or in large compositions in stairwell walls</i></p>  | <p>While leaded glass was common in the Victorian era, it was more commonly used on residential buildings, or high style architecture. 411 Brook Road is an example of a modest masonry building and storefront that doesn't feature any ornate architectural detailing. Staff believes that a simple clear glass transom window would be most appropriate for the building.</p>   |
| <p><b>Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, pg. 4</b></p>               | <p><i>3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.</i></p>   | <p>While the storefront has been significantly altered over time and doesn't resemble its original appearance, it is important to prevent any further alterations to the building that would create a false sense of development.</p> <p>Photographic documentation exists that shows 411 Brook Road had a simple clear glass transom and was a modestly designed building. Staff believes that the installation of a stained-glass transom window would create a false sense of development by introducing an architectural feature that may have never existed on the building.</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. 411 Brook Road, approximately 1955, City of Richmond Assessors Office. Some original components/materials of the storefront are present.



Figure 2. 411 Brook Road, 1997. Storefront infilled with brick. Poor condition. Original materials and configuration have been removed/altered.



Figure 3. 411 Brook Road, existing conditions 2023. Google Street view 2023, accessed October 20, 2023.



Figure 3. Primary entrances along Brook Road that feature a wooden, stone, or concrete step.

