

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
April 28, 2014 Meeting**

5. **CAR No. 15-044** (A. Grier) **3317 Monument Avenue
Monument Avenue Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Infill 3 windows as part of elevator installation**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to make changes to this residential building located in the Monument Avenue Old and Historic District. The structure, a two-and-a-half-story brick house with a slate roof, was constructed in 1922. Work proposed involves removing three existing wood double-hung windows on the west elevation near the rear of the home to accommodate the installation of a new previously approved elevator in the interior of the house. The applicant proposes to store the frames and sash in the basement. Existing salvaged brick from the partial demolition at the rear of the property approved previously by the CAR will be used to infill the window openings which will be recessed 1" from the face of the wall. The new sills will be brick set in a rowlock pattern. If there is insufficient salvaged brick available, the applicant proposes the window openings to be infilled with stucco panels, and the sills to be wood to match the existing sills.

At the October 28, 2014, meeting of the CAR, the Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness at the subject site for enclosing a side porch, enlarging an existing window opening at the rear of the dining room in order to install a new exterior doorway, removing the porches on the rear elevation and constructing a new rear addition, and installing an elevator that requires changes to a portion of the roof and two windows visible from the public right-of-way. The work that was approved also included a new covered stoop with stairs and railings at the new doorway and an ornamental aluminum fence around the parking area off the alley at the rear of the property. The Commission conditioned their approval with the clarification that the window sashes will remain in place beside the elevator shaft.

The applicant is concerned that leaving the windows and closing them with a single wood panel as approved by the Commission in the previous Certificate of Appropriateness will allow for water infiltration into the inaccessible rear wall of the shaft and could damage the shaft walls and elevator cab. Therefore, the applicant is requesting that the Commission reverse their previous approval with respect to these windows.

Staff recommends approval of the project as proposed. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that original masonry openings for windows should be maintained and infilling original masonry openings is strongly discouraged (pg. 65). The Guidelines also state

that the architectural character of windows should not be altered and that the Commission should consider changes to the existing windows along a secondary elevation on a case-by-case basis (pg. 65). The proposed windows are located on a secondary façade with limited visibility from the public right of way due to their location near the rear of the house. Though the applicant agreed to maintain the sashes as a part of the previous approval; upon further investigation, it was determined that it would be impractical to do any repairs that would be necessary when any water infiltration occurs. The proposed infill is necessary to prevent the water infiltration which could damage the surrounding historic masonry and the elevator structure. The applicant has taken several measures to minimize the impact of infilling these windows and to maintain the historic appearance of these openings. The historic windows will be kept onsite to be possibly reinstalled if the elevator is removed in the future. Additionally, the infill will be inset to maintain the depth of the reveal and delineate the historic opening. Staff recommends approval of the proposed window infill as it is minimally visible from the public right of way, and steps have been taken to maintain the architectural character of the window openings.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent with Richmond City Code Section 114-930.7 (b) Standards for Rehabilitation 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.