



## Commission of Architectural Review

4. COA-186152-2026	Final Review	Meeting Date: 6/23/2026
Applicant/Petitioner	Kathleen Morgan	
Project Description	Construct new rear addition and apply new architectural features to a non contributing building	
Project Location		
Address: 4204 Hermitage Road		
Historic District: Hermitage Road		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes exterior alterations and the construction of a rear addition associated with an adaptive reuse of the former Scottish Rite Temple, constructed in 1969. The property is being converted into a Hindu Mandir (house of worship).</p> <p>The proposed scope of work includes the installation of new freestanding signage, decorative fiber-reinforced polymer (FRP) cresting and symbolic panels along the cornice and roofline, rooftop canopy elements, FRP column wraps at the primary entrance and portions of the 1991 addition, modifications to the shape of the entrance arch using a reversible FRP system, and the installation of decorative window elements. The proposal also includes construction of a new rear addition connected to the existing building by a hyphen. The masonry exterior of the original building will remain unpainted.</p>		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Yara Iwaz, Yara.Iwaz@RVA.gov, (804)646-6031	
Previous Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>June 1990: The Commission approved the addition of a childhood language center to the rear of the building</li> <li>November 2007: The Commission approved the installation of a free-standing sign on the property.</li> <li>July 2025: The Commission reviewed the proposal for an addition and adaptive reuse of the building in a conceptual</li> </ul>	

	<p>capacity, and provided the following comments: “The Commission found the proposed alterations and addition to be compatible with the existing building and supported staff’s assessment. Commissioners noted that the new building function represents an appropriate use of the space. The Commission supported the importance of expressing the building’s new religious function, and emphasized that it should still retain characteristics reflective of Richmond’s architectural identity, despite the building’s non-contributing status. The Commission discussed the reversibility of proposed alterations, with some members highlighting reversibility as a best preservation practice that allows flexibility for future use, while others prioritized the quality and permanence of the alterations in support of the building’s new function.”</p>
<p>Staff Recommendations</p>	<p>Staff finds the proposal to be compatible with the guidelines, and recommends approval with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve the addition of ornamental features, including column raps, cresting, panels and ornamental windows; installation should be done in a manner that minimizes damage to historic fabric.</li> <li>• Maintain the existing unpainted masonry</li> <li>• Approve the alteration to the exterior of the building; where attachment to existing masonry is required, new elements should be anchored through mortar joints rather than brick units whenever feasible to minimize impacts to the existing building fabric</li> <li>• Approve the freestanding sign; final sign materials to be submitted for staff review and approval</li> <li>• Approve of the proposed materials; final materials for the new addition to be submitted for staff review and approval</li> <li>• The applicant submit a comprehensive site plan identifying all setbacks, dimensions of the existing building and proposed addition, lot coverage calculations, refuse enclosure location and screening details, location of all exterior mechanical equipment, and location of the freestanding sign within the front yard. Site plan to be submitted to staff for review and approval. Any design modifications required to achieve zoning compliance shall be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.</li> </ul>

# Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<p>The Secretary of the Interior, Standards for Rehabilitation, page 4</p>	<p><i>1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.</i></p>	<p><i>Historic Preservation &amp; Continued Use</i></p> <p>The continued use of the building through its adaptation as a Mandir promotes the long-term viability of the property while avoiding vacancy or neglect. The proposed use requires exterior modifications associated with Hindu religious traditions but generally retains the overall form, scale, and rhythm of the existing building.</p> <p>Preservation practice recognizes that the continued use of large institutional buildings is often critical to their long-term stewardship. Staff acknowledges that the scale and specialized nature of building present challenges for occupancy and maintenance under a single-purpose program. The proposed religious and community use ensures continued investment in the property, activates a prominent site within the district, and supports programming that serves the broader community. Furthermore, the proposal emphasizes adaptive reuse rather than extensive reconstruction, retaining the primary building as a flexible institutional resource that may continue to accommodate community-oriented functions should ownership or occupancy change in the future.</p> <p>From a preservation standpoint, maintaining an actively used and well-maintained building is highly preferable to vacancy or deterioration.</p> <p><u>Staff supports the adaptive reuse of the building as a Mandir and finds that the proposed community-oriented institutional use promotes the long-term preservation and viability of the property.</u></p>
<p>Standards For New Construction (Including Additions, Siting, Page 46</p>	<p><i>1. Additions should be subordinate in size to their main buildings and as inconspicuous as possible. Locating additions at the rear or on the least visible side of a building is preferred.</i></p>	<p><i>Context &amp; Rear Addition</i></p> <p>The subject property occupies a large parcel at the northern edge of the Hermitage Road City Old and Historic District, between Hermitage Road and the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike. The Hermitage Road Historic District features late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century residential architecture, with a variety of styles, including Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Classical Revival. The district emphasizes landscaped setbacks, mature tree canopy, and detached buildings.</p> <p>Constructed in 1969 as the Scottish Rite Temple, the subject building differs from the surrounding historic resources in terms of age, scale, use, and architectural expression. The building exhibits a mid-century character defined by strong horizontal massing, textured brick masonry, cast concrete detailing, and a flat roof profile, making it a non-contributing resource.</p> <p>Sanborn maps do not indicate any building or structure on the site prior to 1969, and city assessor records show a building permit issued in 1968. The building is surrounded by institutional uses, including the Acca Shrine Temple to the</p>

		<p>southwest and the New Community School to the east. The property is further buffered from nearby historic residences by vegetation, topography, adjacent institutional buildings, and the presence of the interstate. The rear addition will be more visible from the interstate than from the public right-of-way within the historic district itself.</p> <p>The proposed rear addition remains subordinate to the primary building and occupies the least visible portion of the site. The topography of the site helps reinforce that hierarchy and subordinate relationship. While the Resource Protection Area necessitated a closer proximity between the addition and the original building than previously proposed, the introduction of a connecting hyphen further defines a visual distinction between old and new construction. The addition's placement minimizes impacts on views from Hermitage Road and the historic district.</p> <p>Selective demolition will be required to construct the addition, including the existing porte-cochère that was constructed as part of the 90s addition. The addition will be buffered from the existing building via a hyphen in that location. Staff finds selective demolition to be appropriate, as it impacts elements from the more recent addition, rather than original fabric.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the addition, as it continues to respect the hierarchy of the site and remains minimally visible from the historic district</u></p>
<p>The Secretary of the Interior, Standards for Rehabilitation, page 4</p>	<p><i>9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.</i></p>	<p><i>Character-defining features &amp; new interventions</i></p> <p>The building's style reads as mid-century modern institutional. Its character-defining features are its textured brick mass (which relates to the prevalence of brick construction elsewhere on Hermitage Road, including the New Community School across the street), its strongly horizontal composition, repetitive structural bays, overhanging horizontal roof forms, and its use of concrete detailing. The exterior brick is laid with alternating panels of smooth Flemish bond brick and brick with recessed and projecting headers, creating a textured surface that is among the building's most distinctive qualities.</p> <p>Other elements present on the building, including the cornice medallions, entrance arch configuration, and column treatments and mushroom shape, read as more ornamental in character, and are arguably not considered indicative of a particular architectural style, time period, or contribution to the district's historic character.</p> <p>The proposed FRP panels, cresting, "Jarukha" windows, and column wraps introduce a new layer of ornamentation while maintaining the existing structural rhythm established by the column spacing and horizontal entablature. The applicant has provided additional detailed information regarding installation methods, demonstrating that these interventions are intended to be reversible.</p> <p>The building's overall form, proportions, institutional style and materials remain legible, and the alterations do not remove</p>

		<p>any essential character-defining features of the original fabric.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approving the addition of ornamental features, including column raps, cresting, panels and ornamental windows. Installation should be done in a manner that minimizes damage to historic fabric.</u></p>
<p>Paint, Historic Masonry, page 63</p>	<p><i>1) Do not paint historic brick or stone masonry that has not previously been painted. Painting previously unpainted masonry is historically inaccurate and is not permitted. Property owners who wish to remove paint from masonry should work with a qualified contractor knowledgeable in the use of non-abrasive cleaners.</i></p>	<p><b>Brick</b></p> <p>The applicant has revised the proposal since the conceptual review, and the masonry will remain unpainted. The textured brick exterior, composed of alternating smooth Flemish bond panels and brick with recessed and projecting headers, will be retained in its current unpainted condition. Staff supports this revision, as the brick cladding remains one of the few features that visually relates the building to the broader material character of the district.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of maintaining the existing unpainted masonry.</u></p>
<p>The Secretary of the Interior, Standards for Rehabilitation, page 4</p>	<p><i>9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.</i></p>	<p><b>Proposed alteration &amp; ornamentation</b></p> <p>The proposed religious ornamentation does not attempt to replicate the architectural vocabulary of Hermitage Road's earlier residences and instead clearly communicates the building's contemporary use. The removal of the previously proposed garland feature further simplifies the intervention.</p> <p>The proposal introduces new ornamental elements associated with the building's religious function, while removing or replacing decorative components that are either no longer related to the building's use, or secondary to the building's primary architectural character. Staff has established that the defining characteristics of the 1969 building remain intact despite these alterations. The proposed interventions do not obscure the building's identity as a mid-century institutional structure, but instead represent a new layer in the building's continued evolution and use. Because the alterations are differentiated from the original design and do not seek to create a false historical appearance associated with the Hermitage Road Historic District, they are consistent with an adaptive rehabilitation approach.</p> <p>The applicant has also provided detailed renderings demonstrating the installation methods for the FRP cornice system, column wraps, entrance arch overlay, and decorative windows, including the use of metal studs and clips that do not require removal or alteration of the underlying cast concrete columns or masonry. Staff finds the documentation adequately demonstrates reversibility and compatibility with the existing fabric.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the alteration to the exterior of the building; where attachment to existing masonry is required, new elements should be anchored through mortar joints rather than brick units whenever feasible to minimize impacts to the existing building fabric.</u></p>

<p>Standards for Signage, page 74</p>	<p><i>Freestanding Signs. Located in front of buildings and set back from the street, these signs are generally seen on residential structures that have been converted to commercial use, but are acceptable signs for any commercial property and include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Post-top Signs mounted to posts or other supports.</i></li> <li>• <i>Monument Signs ground-mounted with a ground clearance of eight (8) inches or less.</i></li> <li>• <i>Hanging Signs suspended from braces, beams or other supports connected to a freestanding pole.</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Sign</i></p> <p>The proposed freestanding sign is appropriately located within landscaped portions of the site. The proposed stone or cast concrete materials are consistent with the building's architectural. The sign will also not be internally illuminated consistently with the Guidelines.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the freestanding sign. Final sign materials to be submitted for staff review and approval.</u></p>
<p>Standards for New Construction, Materials &amp; Colors, Page 53</p>	<p><i>2. Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the surrounding neighborhood.</i></p>	<p><i>Materials</i></p> <p>The existing building features an extensive use of textured red brick and cast concrete elements. The proposal introduces new materials including fiber-reinforced polymer (FRP) architectural elements, decorative cresting matching the color and finish of the existing concrete, and red stone cladding on the addition that matches the color of the brick but relates to the use of stone in traditional Mandir buildings. Staff finds that the proposed material palette achieves compatibility while remaining distinguishable from the original construction. The proposed red stone addition references the color and visual weight of the existing brick without attempting to replicate it exactly, allowing the addition to be identifiable as a contemporary intervention.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the proposed materials approach. Final materials for the new addition to be submitted for staff review and approval.</u></p>
		<p><i>Zoning Requirements</i></p> <p>Zoning Administration has noted that required setback dimensions, lot coverage calculations, building height compliance information, refuse storage details, and screening information have not been provided. Additionally, outdoor mechanical equipment locations have not been identified. While these items are primarily zoning matters, any resulting modifications to the footprint, height, massing, setbacks, screening is subject to review by the Commission.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the applicant submit a comprehensive site plan identifying all setbacks, dimensions of the existing building and proposed addition, lot coverage calculations, refuse enclosure location and screening details, location of all exterior mechanical equipment, and location of the freestanding sign within the front yard. Site plan to be</u></p>

		<u>submitted to staff for review and approval. Any design modifications required to achieve zoning compliance shall be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.</u>
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*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



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6