



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

9. COA-137124-2023	Conceptual Review	Meeting Date: 10/24/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	William Gillette	
Project Description	Demolish a historic frame dwelling and construct six single family dwellings as three semi-attached pairs.	
Project Location		
Address: 2417-2421 Carrington		
Historic District: Union Hill		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant proposes to demolish the historic dwelling at 2417 Carrington Street, circa 1870. This dwelling has been altered in the last few decades, but Staff would like more information on the structural condition. The applicant proposes to construct six single family dwellings as three semi-attached pairs. The third pair of semi-attached units will be in the rear of 2417-2419 Carrington Street and will face the rear alley. 		
Staff Recommendation	Conceptual Review	
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, (804) 646-6569, alex.dandridge@rva.gov	
Previous Reviews	None	
Staff Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff requests additional information before making a decision, regarding the proposed demolition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recommends providing additional structural information to determine if the structure may have deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation; The dwelling is not associated with a building style, prominent architect, or historic event sufficient to suggest that its demolition would have an adverse effect on the historic character of the district; and If the Commission supports the requested demolition, staff has the following recommendations for the proposed new construction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the applicant submit a site plan showing the height of the new 2417-2419 dwelling and 2415 extant dwelling. That the bay windows be removed from the plans for 2417.5-2419.5 Carrington Street and replaced with a window more compatible with the district. Staff recommends wood or aluminum clad windows on each of the dwellings. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That all HVAC Equipment be located at the rear of the proposed dwellings, and out of view from the public right-of-way. Final plans should show the location of HVAC equipment for each new dwelling. • Staff recommends that the application be broken into two COA applications for the final review, one for demolition and one for new construction.
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Staff Analysis

Proposed Demolition

According to Sec. 30-930.7(d) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance: The commission of architectural review shall not issue a certificate of appropriateness for demolition of any building or structure within an old and historic district unless the applicant can show that there are no feasible alternatives to demolition. The demolition of historic buildings and elements in old and historic districts is strongly discouraged. The demolition of any building deemed by the commission to not be a part of the historic character of an old and historic district shall be permitted. The demolition of any building that has deteriorated beyond the point of being feasibly rehabilitated is permissible, where the applicant can satisfy the commission as to the infeasibility of rehabilitation. The commission may adopt additional demolition standards for the review of certificates of appropriateness applications to supplement these standards.

Guideline/Code Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<i>Under the provisions or Sec. 32-930.7., the Commission shall approve requests for demolition when:</i>		
Richmond City Code, Sec. 30-930.7(d)	<p><i>There are no feasible alternatives to the proposed demolition. "Feasible alternatives" include an appropriate new use and rehabilitation, relocation of the structure to a compatible site or re-sale of the property to an individual committed to suitable rehabilitation or relocation.</i></p> <p><i>A building or structure is deemed not to be a contributing part of the historic character of an Old and Historic District.</i></p> <p><i>The Commission deems that a building or structure has deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation.</i></p>	<p>The applicant has not provided evidence that the building can be rehabilitated along with the associated costs to rehabilitate. The applicant has not provided evidence that they have pursued incentives for rehabilitation, including the state historic rehabilitation tax credit program.</p> <p>Union Hill is primarily a residential district. The dwellings, which are constructed of frame and brick, are modest, working class houses, many of which were built prior to 1867 when Union Hill was annexed from Henrico County.</p> <p>Predominant architectural styles in the district, while subtle, are Italianate, and Greek Revival. Some of the first houses constructed for the working class during the 1840s were two-story, frame, Greek Revival-style dwellings set on raised brick foundations with shallow gable roofs, interior or end chimneys and small porticoes at the entrances, which was the typical style of early dwellings in the district.</p> <p>One of the elements that shaped the development of Union Hill and has given it a unique character is the topography of the district. This can be seen in the irregular street grid that was adapted to the steep and rugged terrain. As development of the district continued in the 19th century the streets were leveled and brought to grade, many of the foundations and basements of the existing houses were exposed. Retaining walls and front porches were constructed to reach entrances of the houses, which now sat much higher than the street. Street leveling and a hilly terrain resulted in tall foundations, and front porches that sit high above the street with far stretching front stairs.</p>

		<p>The dwelling located at 2417 Carrington Street was constructed around 1870 and is a typical example of a modest, working class, frame dwelling with a hipped roof and an interior chimney.</p> <p>The exterior of the 2417 Carrington Street has been significantly altered and is in disrepair.</p> <p>While the condition of the exterior appears to be heavily altered and interior images indicate much of the same, clear images of actual structural issues such as failing structural members have not been submitted. <u>Staff recommends that the applicant submit additional images that demonstrate the conditions of the dwelling's structural members.</u> Better understanding the structural condition of the dwelling would ensure that the Commission can adequately review this demolition proposal.</p>
<p>In addition to the above criteria, the Commission has the authority to consider four other factors in arriving at decisions involving proposed demolitions:</p>		
<p>Standards for Demolition, page 82</p>	<p>1) <i>The historic and architectural value of a building:</i> <i>The Secretary of The Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation define an 'historic' building or structure as being 50 years or older... Often buildings or structures built more than 50 years ago exhibit significant architectural detailing or are associated with a building style, prominent architect, or historical event sufficient to suggest that their demolition would have an adverse effect on the historic character of the district.</i></p>	<p>The building located at 2417 Carrington Street has been altered and does not currently display a distinct architectural style. Two historic photographs from Assessor Cards dating to the 1940s and 1950s indicate the house once had a Craftsman Style front porch. At this time, the house had a pair of evenly spaced windows on the second floor, and an adjoining pair of one-over-one double hung windows on the first floor. The porch had a flat roof with square columns over brick piers on the west and east sides. Based on the date of construction, Staff believes that the house had already been altered from its original appearance in these photos. Staff were unable to find any earlier photographs. Comparing these photographs with the extant dwelling, it is evident that the siding, window configurations, window sizing and front porch have all been altered. The form of the house, roof pitch, and chimney appear intact. While this building no longer represents a distinct style, it is significant as being an original dwelling in the Union Hill City Old and Historic District.</p>
<p>Standards for Demolition, page 83</p>	<p>2) <i>The effect that demolition will have on the surrounding neighborhood:</i> <i>Individual buildings are significant contributing elements to the immediate area in which they are located. Removal of that building may have a positive effect on the neighborhood, but quite often demolitions have the opposite effect, producing a negative and irreversible impact on the streetscape. Since the Commission is charged with the preservation of entire Districts, and not just individual buildings and structures, adherence to these criteria is appropriate and justified.</i></p>	<p>While staff acknowledges that this house has been altered, the house retains some historic character. The scale of the house is smaller than surrounding dwellings and has a more compact size. Many of the historic dwellings located near this house have Italianate features including decorative cornices, and decorative brackets around the porch posts. This house is significant for having a roof form and scale, commonly found in early Union Hill dwellings. Although the house lacks many of its original materials, the form, structure, and roof remain intact.</p>

Standards for Demolition, page 83	3) <i>The type and quality of the project that will replace the demolished building: When demolition requests are made in conjunction with designs for a replacement structure, the overall quality of the new design is an appropriate factor in determining the merits of demolition. The Commission may vote to approve demolition of a non-contributing building when provided detailed plans for appropriate, compatible infill construction... In most cases, a demolition permit will not be issued until the Commission has approved the design of a replacement structure.</i>	The design for the new houses will be modern, but will be compatible in size. The new house at 2413 Carrington and approved by CAR in 2016 is about 28' tall. The new dwellings proposed for 2417-2421 Carrington Street will be between 22' and 25' tall. The applicant has not specified the materials for the new buildings, but they will have horizontal siding that will appear as wood. The proposed new dwellings will have flat roofs with simple cornice lines. The three new pairs of houses proposed for the 2417-2421 Carrington lots will be compatible with the historic and new dwellings in the neighborhood. These new dwellings will have similar setbacks and widths as the existing dwellings on the block.
Standards for Demolition, page 83	4) <i>The historic preservation goals outlined in the Master Plan and Downtown Plan.</i>	The City's Master Plan, Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth, outlines several historic preservation goals, which includes a goal to reduce the demolition of historic buildings (Objective 3.2). Demolition of the existing dwelling at 2417 Carrington Street would not further this goal outlined in the Master Plan. However, the plan also acknowledges that not all buildings that have past the standards 50-year threshold are well-built or of historical value.

New Construction

The following analysis relates to the construction of the proposed attached, single-family dwellings. The Commission will need to approve of the proposed demolition before the final design of the proposed dwelling can be approved.

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards For New Construction: Siting, page 46	2. <i>New residential infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns of the surrounding block. The minimum setbacks evident in most districts reinforce the traditional street wall.</i>	Based on the submitted plans, the proposed new construction should have similar front and side yard setbacks. By keeping the new construction east of the current 2417 Carrington dwelling, the side yard for 2415 Carrington Street will be retained.
Standards For New Construction: Siting, page 46.	3. <i>New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.</i>	The proposed new dwellings of 2417-2419 and 2421-2423 will face Carrington Street. The third pair of 2417.5-2419.5 will face the public alley. This third pair will be located directly behind 2417-2419 Carrington Street and will have smaller square footages.
Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46	1. <i>New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building. Form is greatly influenced by architectural style of a given structure.</i>	The proposed dwellings have a modified form, similar to the historic Italianate dwellings on the block. While the historic dwellings have decorative cornices and brackets on the porch posts, the new dwellings will have few details and will appear modest in size. The dwellings proposed for 2417.5-2419.5 Carrington Street will have a single garage door and a pedestrian door on the front of each dwelling. This is a very modern design not found in this district. These two dwellings also have large bay windows proposed for the second floors. Picture windows are generally not appropriate for buildings in City Old and Historic

		districts. <u>Staff recommends removing the picture windows from the proposed plans and using a window design more common in the district.</u>
Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46.	<p>2. <i>New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the district.</i></p> <p>3. <i>New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design.</i></p>	The new residential construction proposed for 2417-2423 will be similar in scale to the surrounding buildings. Most of the surrounding dwellings have full-width porches across the front of the dwellings. Four steps will lead up to small stoops at the proposed 2417- 2419 houses. 2417.5-2419.5 are proposed to be at grade with no front steps or front porches. The residential dwelling proposed for 2421 Carrington Street will have a full front porch with three square posts and a hipped roof. The plans for 2423 Carrington Street include four steps to a small stoop at the entrance.
Standards For New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion, & Massing, page 47.	<p>1. <i>New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.</i></p>	The applicant did not include the height of the extant 2415 Carrington Street in the plans. The new construction at 2413 Carrington is higher than number 2415 and is about 28' tall. The new dwellings at 2417 to 2421 Carrington Street will vary from 22' to 25' tall. 2417 and 2419 Carrington will be flush, attached dwellings at about 25' tall. 2417.5-2419.5 Carrington Street will also be flush, attached dwellings and will be about 22' tall. 2421 and 2423 Carrington Street will be attached dwellings with slightly different heights. 2421 Carrington Street will be about 23'6 and 2423 Carrington will be about 24'10 tall. The applicant did not provide any other measurements of surrounding dwellings besides 2413 Carrington Street.
Standards For New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion, & Massing, page 47.	<p>2. <i>New residential construction should respect the vertical orientation of other residential properties in surrounding historic districts.</i></p>	The windows and doors on the proposed new dwellings will all be vertically aligned.
Standards For New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion, & Massing, page 47.	<p>3. <i>The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.</i></p>	The proposed cornice height for 2417-2419 Carrington Street seems to be close to the neighboring 2415 Carrington Street. <u>Staff recommends the applicant provide a site plan to show the height and cornice lines for 2417-2419 and 2415 Carrington Street.</u>
Standards For New Construction: Materials and Colors, page 47.	<p>2. <i>Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i></p> <p>3. <i>Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors already found in the district.</i></p> <p>4. <i>Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted for use in City Old and Historic Districts. Other synthetic siding materials with a smooth, untextured finish may be allowed in limited cases, but approval by the Commission is always required.</i></p>	The applicant has not stated the materials or colors chosen for the new dwellings located at 2417- 2421 Carrington Street. Staff will not approve vinyl as an exterior material facing the public right-of-way. <u>Staff recommends wood or aluminum clad windows on each of the dwellings.</u>
Mechanical Equipment, page 68.	<p><i>The visual impact of new mechanical equipment should be minimized to protect the historic character of the district.</i></p>	The applicant did not note the location of Mechanical and HVAC equipment. <u>Staff recommends locating all</u>

HVAC Equipment at the rear of the proposed dwellings, and out of view from the public right-of-way.

Figures



Figure 1. Existing Dwelling at 2417 Carrington Street



Figure 2. Sanborn Map from 1905 showing the 2400 block of Carrington Street.



Figure 3. View of 2417, 2415 and 2413 Carrington Street.



Figure 4. View of 1108 and 1110 North 24th Street, which are northwest of the project site.



Figure 5. View of the east side and rear addition at 2417 Carrington Street.



Figure 6. View of the poor condition of the foundation on the west side of 2417 Carrington Street.

Figure 7. View of the poor condition of the siding and porch roof on the west side of 2417 Carrington Street.



Figure 9. Historic photograph of 2417 Carrington Street from the 1950s. The photograph is on the 1956 Assessor Card for the property. From this photograph, it appears the roof, chimney and form of the house are intact. The size of the windows, window configuration, porch and exterior materials have all been altered.



Figure 8. View showing the different replacement materials on the north and west sides of 2417 Carrington Street.