

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
October 25, 2016 Meeting**

11. **CAR No. 16-153** (M. Jarreau)

**720 Jessamine Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

Construct a new duplex

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests approval to construct a new duplex on a vacant lot in the Union Hill Old and Historic District.

The proposed new construction will be a 2-story, two-bay, frame Greek Revival structure with a concrete English basement and a single-bay, front porch with a hip roof. The proposed roof is a low-pitched, hipped-roof clad in white TPO membrane. The front porch has 10" square columns, concrete piers, and a simple cornice. At the rear of the structure, there is a two-story, covered porch over a basement patio. The structure will be clad with Hardie Plank lap siding and trim. The color indicated as Light Gray is similar to colors found on the approved paint palette, page 60-61 in the *Guidelines*. The proposed double hung, PVC clad windows will have a 6/6, lite configuration on the façade and primarily a 2/2, lite configuration on the rear and side elevations. The applicant is also proposing multiple smaller fixed windows on the south elevation. The duplex is located on a block developed with two-story, four-bay, frame Italianate double houses though the surrounding blocks are developed with a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings of various styles. The property across the street is currently vacant though the Commission has approved the construction of a three-story, mixed use development on the triangular lot. The structure directly to the right is a two-story, four-bay, frame Italianate double house on a brick foundation and to the left is a paved parking lot. There is an alley which runs behind the subject lot.

This proposal was conceptually reviewed by the Commission at the July 26, 2016 meeting. The Commission generally agreed with staff's concerns regarding the height of the building and the use of the mansard porch roof which was a building form foreign to the district. The Commission encouraged the applicant to consider constructing a true English basement partially below ground which would reduce the overall height and be consistent with several of the raised cottages in the district.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions.

Staff Findings 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 believes the proposed new construction is consistent with the Commission's *Guidelines*. The applicant has responded to the concerns of the Commission by reducing the overall height of the structure by creating a true English basement. Additionally, the applicant has removed the mansard roof projection and has proposed a more traditional façade. The *Guidelines* note that materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district (pg. 45, Materials & Colors #2). As traditionally the roofs in the district are dark colors, staff recommends the proposed primary and porch roofs be clad in black or gray membrane, not the proposed white. The *Guidelines* also note that the size, proportion, and spacing pattern of window openings should be compatible with patterns established within the district (pg. 46, Doors and Windows #3). While smaller windows may be appropriate on the basement level, the smaller windows on the first floor side elevation are not a window pattern found in the district. As it does not appear that the window size is needed to accommodate the elements on the interior, staff recommends the front three windows on the first floor of the south elevation be increased in size to match the adjacent windows.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the noted conditions, is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 30.930.7(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.