

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
January 27, 2015 Meeting**

6. **CAR No. 15-005** (2813MSt LLC) **2813 M Street
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Revision to approved quadraplex
design: two-story front porch**

Staff Contact: **J. Hill**

The applicant is returning with a proposed revision to recently approved plans for a quadraplex in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The revision involves constructing a two-story covered porch on the façade. The applicant has provided photographic examples of a number of two-story covered porches found in nearby National Register and City Old and Historic Districts. A number of two-story porches are found nearby on North 29th Street on houses of relatively recent construction that date from just prior to the designation of the area as a City Old and Historic District.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions.

The Standards for New Construction in the *Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state:

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 the architectural style of a given structure.

In this case the porch design appears to be appropriate for the scale and style of the approved building, but the two-story form is not one found on historic houses in the immediate vicinity of the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The single historic house on the block face is a one-story residence with a full-width front porch. Staff concerns that the two-story porch begins to crowd the one-story house are tempered somewhat by the open form of the porch and dimensions of the posts and rails. (An earlier street elevation is provided showing the relationship to its neighbors of the new construction with a one-story porch.)

The Commission has previously voiced a concern that there has been little variation among the designs for new construction in the Old and Historic Districts. Because the overall building form, scale, siting, massing, and materials appear to be generally compatible with the Church Hill North Old and Historic District, and the because the porch form is rare, but not unprecedented, in a wider area of historic districts in the eastern part of the city, staff recommends approval of the application.

It is therefore the assessment of staff that the project is consistent with Richmond City Code Section 114-930.7 (c) Standards for New Construction, as well as the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission in accordance with Section 114-930.7 (g) of the Code.