

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
April 25, 2017, Meeting**

9. COA-015323-2017 (C. & M. McCalla)

**2900 East Leigh Street
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

Project Description: Construct a new single family home on a vacant lot.

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to construct a single family dwelling on a vacant lot at the corner of North 29th Street and East Leigh Street in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District.

The residential character of the north side of the subject block of East Leigh consists of two 4-bay, 2 story Greek Revival double houses with false mansard roofs and a new, 2 ½ story, Italianate inspired, single family dwelling. Much of the property on the south side of the subject block of East Leigh is vacant excluding a two story, 3-bay brick structure and 2-story frame Italianate structure which fronts North 29th. At the west corner of the North 29th and East Leigh Streets is a 1 ½ story, concrete block building with a gable roof. At the north corner, the property is developed with a 2 ½ story, Queen Anne mixed use structure clad in stone with a false mansard roof and a commercial storefront on the first floor.

The applicant came before the Commission on March 28, 2017, for conceptual review of a new 2 ½ story home that addressed East Leigh Street. The Commission was in general supportive of the proposed design. The Commission had the following concerns regarding the design:

- The foundation height of the North 29th Street side elevation is too high.
- The rear elevation reads as 3 stories.
- The project should retain the metal gable roof not the alternate shingles.
- The asymmetrical column placing on the front porch is not characteristic of the district.
- Raw wood as proposed does not age well, and Commissioners cautioned the use of thin materials.

The applicant has revised the plans as follows in response to the Commission's concerns:

- The foundation height has been reduced, and siding has been lowered below the height of the first floor.
- The porch columns have been centered on the first story windows and have increased in size.
- The elements that were proposed as raw wood were replaced with fiber cement panels.

In addition to the changes made in response to Commission comments, the plans have been changed as follows:

- Details of a shed of frame construction with a shed roof have been provided. The proposed shed will be at the rear of the lot.
- The rear dormer was widened to the east and is clad in lap siding. The applicant has stated this was required to allow for the stair overrun to access the attic level.

The applicant is seeking **Final Review** for this project. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the “Standards for New Construction: Residential” on pages 44 and 45 of the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* utilizing the checklist below.

S=satisfies

D=does not satisfy

NA=not applicable

S D NA

New infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns in the surrounding district

The building's setback matches that of the adjacent property.

Where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block

The building is located on the corner with only one adjoining building.

New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site

The structure addresses East Leigh Street. Historically, development at this corner has addressed East Leigh Street.

New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the district. Form refers to the combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building.

The project is of a similar scale to the double homes and the new construction on the block. The applicant has incorporated elements that characterize development in the district including a 3-bay façade composition, a full façade front porch, and a recessed rear portion. The proposed side gable roof form is an element that can be found on homes in the district including 510 North 29th Street which is on the adjacent block. Staff has concerns with the manner that the applicant has altered the roof form from the design presented during the Conceptual Review. By increasing the size of the dormer to the building wall, the roof form no longer reads as a side gable roof with a dormer. The new roof form as viewed from the alley and north of the property is not a form found in the district. This view of the roof will be visible as the proposed structure is taller than the adjacent existing structures. Staff recommends the gable roof without a dormer or

with a dormer as presented during conceptual review be retained as the proposed roof form is not compatible with the district.

New construction should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps.

The proposed project incorporates human-scale elements including an entrance portico, a side porch, and front steps as part of the project. The Guidelines encourage human scale elements to be included on the secondary, corner elevation for corner properties. The applicant has included a side porch and an extension of the front porch to the side elevation.

New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings

The typical heights of the surrounding buildings are 2 to 2 ½ stories. The cornice of the proposed structure will align with the adjacent structure and the height at the ridge is compatible with taller residential structures in the neighborhood. The Commission had concerns about the rear elevation reading as three stories. By increasing the size of the dormer as proposed, the structures reads more readily as a 3 story structure from the rear. Staff recommends the width of the dormer should remain as proposed during Conceptual Review so the element would continue to read as a dormer or the dormer element be removed and the gable roof form retained.

New construction should respect the typical width, organization of bays, vertical alignment and symmetry of surrounding buildings.

The project is of similar width to the adjacent double houses on the block. The proposed project does maintain the vertical alignment and the symmetry of the surrounding buildings.

The size, proportion, and spacing patterns of doors and window openings should be compatible with patterns established in the district.

The typically fenestration pattern includes ranked windows. The Commission's Guidelines for Corner Properties note that windows and doors on the corner elevations should be organized following the principals of the primary elevation to include being aligned vertically. The applicant has followed this guideline by including ranked windows on the side and highly visible rear elevations.

Porch and cornice heights should be compatible with adjacent buildings

The porch and cornice heights are compatible with those of the structures on the block. though dimensions have not been provided on the context elevation.

Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district. Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted.

The proposed construction will use fiber cement siding and panels, a metal roof, composite windows, and cable wiring or metal horizontal railings. Staff finds the materials are compatible with the frame structures found in the district. The applicant is proposing paint colors that are on the Commission's paint palette including grey colors for the lap siding and white for panels. Additionally, the applicant is proposing a wooden privacy fence with horizontal boards. Staff recommends the following conditions in regard to the materials:

- The fiber cement siding be smooth and un-beaded.
- Details of the proposed railings be submitted to staff for review and approval.
- The fence be painted or opaquely stained a color to be reviewed and approved by staff.

Shed: The proposed shed meets the Commission's Guidelines for sheds found on page 48 of the Guidelines as the shed is small, located at the rear of the property, clad in a material to match the primary structure, and has a roof form consistent with outbuildings in the district.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the Guidelines as the project is largely compatible with the historic features that characterizes its setting and context. Staff has concerns that by increasing the size of the dormer, the roof form is not compatible with the historic district and emphasizes the 3rd story of the structure. Staff believes with the conditions noted above to include maintaining the side gable roof form, the proposed project will be compatible with the district.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the acceptance of the stated conditions, the application 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.