

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
March 27, 2018, Meeting**

1. **COA-031802-2018** (J. Wilson)

**401 Chimborazo Boulevard
Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Restore the storefront and install a temporary ramp at the front of a mixed use building.**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

Description of Existing Structure: The existing structure is a Late Victorian frame mixed use building. The ground floor space was originally occupied by a confectioner shop. The building has been significantly altered over time to include the infilling the storefront with parged CMU block and brick, cladding the structure with vinyl siding, replacing windows, and installing vinyl shutters. Staff has been unable to locate photographs of the structure prior to the alterations.



401 Chimborazo Boulevard (March 2018)

Proposal: The applicant proposes to rehabilitate the structure by restoring the storefront and constructing a temporary ramp to access the front door. The proposed storefront will be constructed with a wood frame, beaded paneling for the base, and substantial glazing in the form of clear glass. The head heights of proposed new storefront windows and transoms will align with the head height of the entry door and transom. The applicant proposes to install a ramp to access the entrance as there is a 6" step to the landing at the entrance. The proposed

ramp will be on Chimborazo Boulevard and will not have a railing. Though the ramp will not be permanently affixed to the sidewalk or structure, it will be maintained in place and not removed when the business is not in operation. Details of the construction materials for the ramp have not been provided. The applicant intends to maintain the existing vinyl siding and shutters.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions.

Storefront: The *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* note that pictorial research should be used to determine the design of the original building; but when no pictorial evidence is available, any new additions to the storefront design should respect the character, materials, and architectural style of the entire building (pg. 58, #1). Staff has been unable to find pictorial evidence of the storefront prior to it being infilled. The *Guidelines* note that the historically, storefronts were defined by simple piers, large storefront windows, and a cornice and that a new storefront should be compatible with other historic storefronts within the district (pg. 49, Storefront Façade #1). Staff finds the proposed storefront is in keeping with the design of historic corner commercial storefronts in the district through the use of large storefront windows and is compatible with the design of the structure. Staff recommends details of paint colors be submitted for administrative review and approval.

Ramp: The *Guidelines* note that ramps should be located as to minimize the potential loss of historic features and that removable ramps are preferable as they are less likely to alter any significant features of a historic building than a permanent ramp (pg. 79, #8). The proposed ramp will be removable and does not alter the historic corner entrance or stair. Staff supports the proposed ramp location as it will provide the shortest distance possible from the access point to the destination without altering the entrance which is encouraged by the *Guidelines* (pg. 79, #3). The *Guidelines* state that ramps should use similar materials and design elements that are compatible with structure and emphasizes the use of compatible railings (pg. 79, #8). The ramp is small in scale and is proposed to not have a railing. Staff recommends that details of the proposed ramp construction including materials and design be submitted for administrative review and approval.

It is the assessment of staff that, with these conditions, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Sections 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.