

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
September 26, 2017, Meeting**

11. **COA-021082-2017** (Alexander HOA) **1101 West Grace Street  
West Grace Street Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:** **Remove a wall at the rear of the property.**

**Staff Contact:** **C. Jeffries**

The applicant requests approval to remove a portion of a masonry wall at the rear of a Colonial Revival multifamily building in the West Grace Street City Old and Historic District. The Commission deferred the application on August 22, 2017 to give the applicant the opportunity to explore repairing or replacing the existing wall and to provide additional information including an engineer's report regarding the condition of the existing wall. The applicant has submitted a letter from an engineer regarding the condition of the wall.

**Staff recommends approval of the project, with a condition.** *The Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that existing brick or stone walls should not be removed and that original walls should be retained and maintained (pg. 76, #1, 2). Though it is difficult to know when the wall was built, it is masonry and is likely what remains of the property's original landscaping. The wall extends along the rear of the property and along the northwestern property line. The wall is in obvious disrepair and the applicant has provided a letter from an engineer stating that the wall should be removed.

The wall has been in disrepair for several years, as the homeowner's association applied to remove the wall because of its condition in April of 2007. The application was denied. According to the 2007 application, the wall is 8' high and would not meet zoning requirements if rebuilt. The *Guidelines* note that parking lots should be well screened from the public right-of-way and adjacent properties (pg. 75 #1). As the applicant proposes to remove existing screening, staff recommends that the application be approved, with the condition that screening for the parking area be installed, the design to be administratively reviewed by staff.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the noted condition, is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 30-930.7(b) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the page cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.