

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
July 28, 2015 Meeting**

9. **CAR No. 15-094** (J. & A. Tesauro) **3607 E. Broad Street
Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct a new single-family house**

Staff Contact: **K. Chen**

The applicant requests approval to construct a new single-family house on a vacant lot in the Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District. The proposed new dwelling is located on the south side of the 3600 block of East Broad Street on a narrow lot between two existing houses. The dwelling will have two-story, three-bay massing on the front and rise to three stories at the rear with a contemporary arrangement of large glass panels and decks enclosed with metal rails on the 2nd and 3rd stories. The rear of the property is minimally visible from a partial alley on the west side and is obscured from Government Road by the embankment and vegetation. The dwelling will be constructed of frame with smooth Hardie plank siding and trim. The house will have a mansard roof clad with standing seam metal and a metal awning over the front door supported by custom-made wrought-iron brackets. There will be a raised, bluestone patio enclosed with a parged block wall across the façade in lieu of a covered porch.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. 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* and the resulting comments follow.

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.

SITING

1. *Additions should be subordinate in size to their main buildings and as inconspicuous as possible. Locating additions at the rear or on the least visible side of a building is preferred.*

This standard is not applicable.

2. *New residential infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns of the surrounding block. The minimum setbacks evident in most districts reinforce the traditional street wall. In cases where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block.*

The new dwelling is set on a narrow lot, 22.17', between two existing houses. The proposed 3'-0" side yard setback is the minimum required under R-8 zoning and compatible with the adjacent houses. The front yard setbacks vary on the south side of the 3600 block of Broad Street. The house at 3601 sits far back on the lot and is placed at an angle to the street. The two houses to the west (3609 and 3611) are set back approximately 20'-7" from the street. The proposed front yard setback for the new dwelling is 15'-10" which aligns with the dwelling to the west (3605) and the prevailing front yard setback for the majority of the houses on the south and north sides of the street.

3. *New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.*

Like the other houses on the block, the proposed new dwelling is oriented towards Broad Street, the prominent street on the north. There is a steep embankment and heavy vegetation that visually separate the property from Government Road to the south.

FORM

1. *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.*

The proposed new dwelling has a two-story, three-bay, symmetrical massing with a box cornice and mansard roof clad with standing seam metal. There is a shed roof supported by wrought iron brackets over the front door and an uncovered, raised bluestone paved patio enclosed by a parged CMU wall. Two-story, three-bay symmetrical massing is the historically prevalent pattern on both sides of the 3600 block of E. Broad Street. There are a variety of roof shapes on the block – gable, hip, and shed, and a number of mansard roofs with metal and slate shingle cladding. Cornices also vary on the block from Italianate and Victorian with brackets, dentils, and panels to simple box

cornices especially on the houses with mansard roofs. Full façade porches with a variety of sawn and Classical detailing are a predominate element on the block.

2. *New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the district.*

The height and proportions of the proposed new dwelling maintain the existing human scale of the adjacent historic houses. The fenestration pattern also reflects the scale of the historic houses.

3. *New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design. In Richmond, porches were historically an integral part of residential design and provide much of the street-level architectural character of Richmond's historic districts.*

The proposed new dwelling does not incorporate a full-façade front porch like the other houses on the block but it does incorporate an awning and front steps to emphasize the entrance and break the verticality of the façade. The raised open patio at the front offers opportunities for interaction with the street.

HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION & MASSING

1. *New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.*

The proposed new dwelling is 22'-5" to the underside of the eave which is compatible with the adjacent houses. The mansard and shallow gable roof beyond rise approximately 8'-0" where the house is a full three-stories in height at the rear. The rear of the property is minimally visible from a partial alley to the west and is largely obscured from Government Road to the south by an embankment and vegetation. The underside of the eave on the house to the west is approximately 23'-0" and the house to the east is 21'-9 1/2". The house to the west has a hipped roof that rises above the cornice and the house to the east has a shallow gable that also rises above the cornice.

2. *New construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of other residential properties in surrounding historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing should look to the project's local district for precedent. For example, full-block-long row house compositions are rare in Richmond. New residential buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face should still employ bays as an organizational device, but the new building should read as a single piece of architecture.*

The proposed new dwelling respects the vertical orientation of the other residential properties on the block with its fenestration pattern and corner

boards. Unlike the other houses the verticality is not broken by a full façade porch.

3. *The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.*

The cornice height is compatible with the adjacent houses.

MATERIALS & COLORS

1. *Additions should not obscure or destroy original architectural elements.*

This standard does not apply.

2. *Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.*

The 3600 block of East Broad Street is a mixture of brick and frame construction. The proposed new dwelling will be of frame construction with smooth *Hardie* plank siding and smooth *Hardie* trim. The windows will be either *Weather Shield* or *Jeld-Wen* aluminum clad, simulated-divided light in a 2/2 configuration. The front door will be stained wood with a 3/4-lite and transom. The foundation and porch wall will be parged cmu and the patio (porch floor) and stair treads will be blue stone or a similar matching material. The awning over the front door and the main roof will be *Atas*, field-seamed standing-seam metal and the awning will be supported by custom wrought-iron brackets.

3. *Paint colors for new additions should complement the historically appropriate colors used on the primary structure. Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors already found in the district.*

The colors indicated in the application are all compatible with colors depicted in the paint palette contained the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*.

4. *Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted for use in City Old and Historic Districts. Other synthetic siding materials with a smooth, untextured finish may be allowed in limited cases, but approval by the Commission is always required.*

No vinyl, asphalt or aluminum siding are proposed as part of the project which will incorporate smooth *HardiePlank* siding and trim. The windows will be aluminum-clad 2/2 windows with simulated divided lights.

5. *Rooftop mechanical equipment should be located as discretely as possible to limit visibility. In addition, appropriate screening should be provided to conceal equipment from view. When rooftop railings are required for seating areas or*

for safe access to mechanical equipment, the railings should be as unobtrusive as possible, in order to minimize their appearance and visual impact on the surrounding district.

This standard is not applicable.

Staff recommends approval of the project with the following condition. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines which recommend --*

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.

The proposed new construction meets this recommendation except for the introduction of the raised parged block and bluestone patio on the façade of the dwelling. These are materials not typically found on the fronts of historic houses in the greater Church Hill/Chimborazo neighborhoods and are also not generally associated with vernacular frame dwelling forms.

Staff recommends that approval be conditioned with an alternative porch treatment more compatible with traditional materials and forms found in the area.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is largely consistent except for the raised bluestone patio on the façade with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 114.930.7(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.