

20. COA-048387-2019

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

February 26, 2019

PROPERTY ADDRESS

2901 M Street

DISTRICT

Church Hill North

APPLICANT

C. Harris

STAFF CONTACT

C. Jones

Commission of Architectural Review

STAFF REPORT



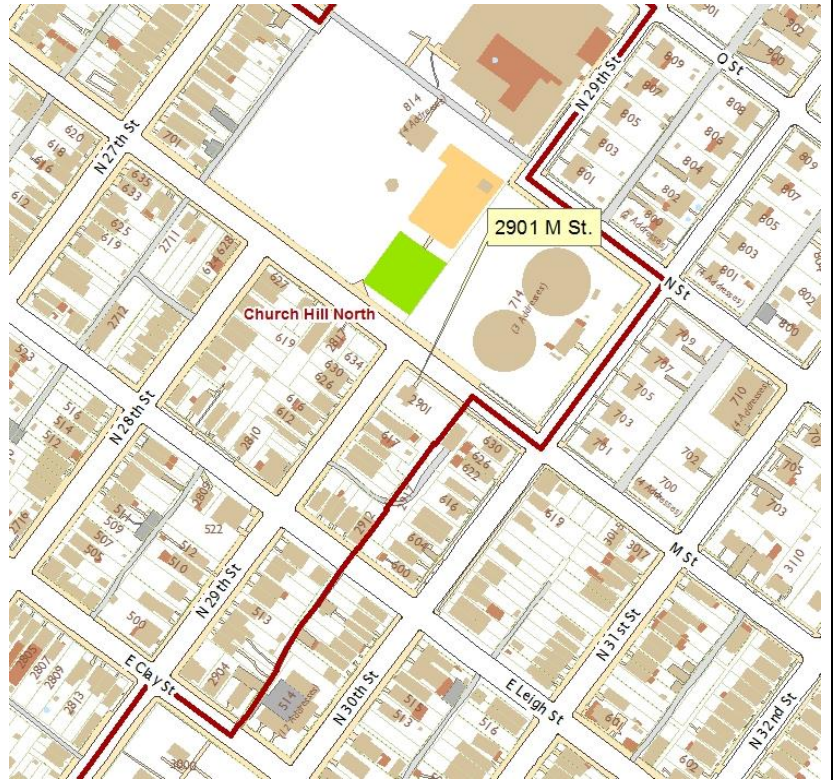
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Construct a new, multi-family residence. Possible demolition of existing building on the site.

PROJECT DETAILS

The applicant proposes two scenarios:

- Scenario 1 would keep the existing building on the site and construct a set of three attached residential buildings.
- Scenario 2 would demolish the existing building on the site and construct two sets of three attached residential buildings.
- The proposed buildings are three stories in height, two bays wide, with a single bay entry porch and two dormer windows.
- Proposed materials includes asphalt shingle roofs and EPDM membrane roofing, aluminum coping, painted composite fascia and rake, and "K" style gutters and downspouts. The proposed exterior siding is a smooth horizontal composite material with composite corner boards; proposed windows are double-hung, wood clad, with composite window and door trim, and proposed overhead garage doors are aluminum. Proposed porch materials are also composite.
- In order to access the rear of the lot, the applicant proposes to create a driveway. The applicant has spoken with Public Works about this proposal.



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CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The applicant is seeking **Conceptual Review** for this project. Conceptual review is covered under Sec. 30-930.6(d) of the City Code: The commission shall review and discuss the proposal with the applicant and make any necessary recommendations. Such Conceptual Review shall be advisory only. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the "Standards for New Construction" on pages 44, and 46-56 of the Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines, utilizing the Guidelines presented below. Staff has also utilized the "Standards for Demolition" on pages 82-83 of the Guidelines.

PREVIOUS REVIEWS

None.

SURROUNDING CONTEXT

The majority of the surrounding area is characterized by historic and new construction, single family detached and semi-attached dwellings that are typically two or two-and-one-half stories in height, three bay with full width

porches, shed roofs, and decorative cornice lines. There are also a number of two-and-one-half-story, gable-front houses with two-story porches. Across M Street are two large water towers, and the current George Mason Elementary School and associated playgrounds. On the vacant lot at 2825 M Street, across the street from the project site, the Commission recently approved new construction of two single-family attached dwellings that will be two-and-one-half stories in height, five bays wide, with a side gable roof, dormers, and a centered entry porch.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Staff finds that the ca. 1945 brick Cape Cod-style house contributes to the historic significance of the Church Hill North Historic District, and recommends against its demolition.
- The applicant move the buildings closer to M Street to maintain the prevailing street set back.
- The applicant utilize a one-story, full-width porch in keeping with other attached dwellings in the district.
- The applicant consider a more angled pitch to the mansard and recess the dormer windows from the second story wall plane.
- The applicant align the window and door openings.
- That applicant carry the wrapped porch deeper, possibly to the projecting bay as is a common form found in the district. Staff recommends the applicant also consider adding openings into the front face of the projecting bay.
- The applicant increase the size of the openings on all visible elevations to be more rectangular in form and to increase the size of the window panes. Staff also recommends the applicant utilize a larger window on the first story in keeping with the general fenestration patterns found in the surrounding area.
- The applicant consider an entry door for the rear elevation.
- Consideration of a bank of freestanding garages at the rear of the property to be more in keeping with the historic patterns found in the district.

STAFF REQUESTS THE APPLICANT PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING FOR FINAL REVIEW:

- Specifications for the proposed composite materials and windows.
- A context elevation that compares the height of the proposed buildings with the other buildings in the historic district.
- Additional porch details.
- Dimensioned elevations without trees or other elements that obscure the building details.
- Detailed elevations and information about the height of the proposed buildings.
- If the applicant intends to locate the mechanical equipment outside the building, the location of the HVAC equipment.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Standards for Demolition, pg. 82

According to Sec. 114- 930.7(d) and 114-930.9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance: The Commission shall not issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of any building or structure within an Old and Historic District unless the applicant can show that there are no feasible alternatives to demolition. The demolition of historic buildings and elements in Old and Historic Districts is strongly discouraged.

Under the provisions or Sec. 32-930.7., the Commission shall approve requests for demolition when:

- 1) There are no feasible alternatives to the proposed demolition. "Feasible alternatives" include an appropriate new use and rehabilitation, relocation of the structure to a compatible site or re-sale of the property to an individual committed to suitable rehabilitation or relocation.*
- 2) A building or structure is deemed not to be a contributing part of the historic character of an Old and Historic District.*
- 3) The Commission deems that a building or structure has deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation.*

In addition to the above criteria, the Commission has the authority to consider four other factors in arriving at decisions involving proposed demolitions:

- 1) The historic and architectural value of a building.*
- 2) The effect that demolition will have on the surrounding neighborhood.*
- 3) The type and quality of the project that will replace the demolished building.*

4) *The historic preservation goals outlined in the Master Plan and Downtown Plan.*

The building is located within the Church Hill North City and Old Historic District, but not the state and national historic districts. There are not separate nomination forms for the City and Old Historic Districts and in general, staff relies on the national register nomination forms for historic context and areas of significance. The original Church Hill North Historic District nomination form from 1996 recommended a period of significance that ended in 1946. The National Park Service amended the period of significance to end in 1938 and removed a number of the areas of significance including community planning and development and ethnic heritage because they were not justified in the nomination, leaving only architecture as the area of significance for the original district. A nomination form prepared in 2000 expanded the district boundaries to the north and included ethnic heritage: black as an area of significance. The nomination states: *The majority of the houses in the expanded district were built for working class people. Among the occupations noted in the City Directories were clerks, managers, salesmen, book keepers, laborers, painters, bricklayers, hucksters, drivers, printers, box and trunk makers and machinists. Many of the houses as a consequence of these modest occupations, are small in scale and lacking in architectural embellishment. Stylistic influences are often limited to roof lines and modest decoration in porches and cornices. The Church Hill North (Boundary Increase) satisfies National Register Criteria A because it ... illustrates the rise of an African-American middle class that occurred in the early decades of the twentieth century. The district is also significant under Criteria C because it encompasses a fine collection of mid-to late-nineteenth and early twentieth century dwellings. The working class housing found in the district represents all of the major architectural styles of this era.* The period of significance for the boundary increase ends in 1940.

Based on research performed by Commission staff, the masonry, Cape Cod style house dates to ca. 1945 and was first owned by Henry C. and Emma Jean Ward. Census research indicates that Henry C Ward was African American, and was born August 1904 and died June 1958. Mr. Ward was a porter with the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. Additional research indicates the house is still owned by descendants and family members of the Wards. The nomination form for the historic district expansion clearly and succinctly provides justification for including ethnic heritage: black, and dwellings of modest architecture in the district. Staff believes this property is still owned by members of the Ward family, and that this property has a direct association with the areas of significance for the district. In addition, the property has few alterations and retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to be considered contributing to the historic district. Staff finds that had the originally proposed period and areas of significance, approved by the state review board, been retained by the National Park Service, this building could have been considered contributing. As such, staff recommends against the demolition of the existing building at 2901 M Street.

The applicant has not provided information about the current condition of the building or feasible alternatives to demolition as required. Since the applicant has submitted plans that include keeping the building, there appears to be an alternative to demolishing it.

Siting, pg. 46, #s2-3	2. <i>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.</i>	The applicant has submitted a site plan which indicates the new buildings will set back approximately fourteen feet from the lot line and in front on the existing house. Staff notes the surrounding buildings on 29 th Street and M Street have setbacks that range from four feet to fourteen feet. <u>Staff recommends the applicant move the buildings closer to M Street to maintain the prevailing street setback.</u>
	3. <i>New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.</i>	The proposed buildings will face onto M Street, the prominent street for the lot.
Form, pg. 46 #s1-3	1. <i>New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district.</i>	The majority of the buildings in the surrounding historic district are detached or semi-attached dwellings. Staff finds that three attached dwellings is not a form commonly found in the district.

	<p>2. <i>New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the district.</i></p>	<p>The applicant did not provide a context elevation or a height of the proposed building. Staff notes that the proposed buildings are three stories in height. <u>Staff requests the applicant submit a context elevation that compares the height of the proposed building with surrounding buildings in the historic district for final review.</u></p>
	<p>3. <i>New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design.</i></p>	<p>Each of the dwelling units will have a one-bay entry porch. Staff finds that this is not an element typically used for semi-attached houses in the district. <u>Staff recommends the applicant utilize a one-story, full-width porch in keeping with other attached dwellings in the district. Staff requests the applicant submit additional porch details for final review.</u></p>
<p>Height, Width, Proportion, & Massing, pg. 47, #s1-3</p>	<p>1. <i>New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.</i></p>	<p>The majority of the surrounding buildings are two or two-and-one-half stories in height. Staff notes that new construction planned across 29th Street will be two-and-one-half stories in height. The applicant's plans include a false mansard roof with a dormer that extends the second story wall plane another level. <u>Staff recommends the applicant consider a more angled pitch to the mansard and recess the dormer windows from the second story wall plane.</u></p>
	<p>2. <i>New residential construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of other residential properties in surrounding historic districts.</i></p>	<p>The openings on the proposed façades do not appear to be vertically aligned. <u>Staff recommends the applicant align the window and door openings. Staff requests the applicant submit dimensioned elevations without trees or other elements that obscure the building details.</u></p>
	<p>3. <i>The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.</i></p>	<p>The applicant did not provide a dimensioned elevation or a context elevation. <u>Staff requests the applicant provide detailed elevations and information about the height of the proposed buildings.</u> Staff notes the surrounding buildings on 29th Street and M Street are generally two or two-and-one-half stories in height.</p>
<p>New Construction, Standards for New Construction: Corner Properties – Residential, pg. 48</p>	<p>1. <i>Secondary elevations of corner properties should reference massing similar to other corner locations in the historic district.</i> 2. <i>The material used in the primary elevation should be continued along the second, corner elevation.</i> 4. <i>Windows and doors on the secondary, corner elevation should be organized following the principals of the primary elevation: windows should be proportioned appropriately, aligned vertically, and</i></p>	<p>The proposed corner elevation carries the design details from the front elevation and has a two-story projecting bay and a porch which wraps around the side elevation. <u>Staff recommends that applicant carry the wrap-around porch further on the side elevation, possibly to the projecting bay as is a common form found in the district. Staff recommends the applicant also consider adding openings into the front face of the projecting bay.</u></p>

	<i>arranged as though designing a primary elevation.</i>	
Materials and Colors, pg. 47, #s2-4	<p>2. <i>Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i></p> <p>3. <i>Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors already found in the district.</i></p> <p>4. <i>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.</i></p>	The applicant proposed to use fiber cement siding in a gray color. Other colors include White Hyacinth for the trim and railings, Renwick beige for the porch details, Rockwood dark green for the doors, and Frostwork for the ceiling. Staff finds that these are appropriate colors for the district. <u>Staff requests specifications for the proposed composite materials and windows.</u>
New Construction, Doors and Windows, pg. 49 #3	3. <i>The size, proportion, and spacing patterns of doors and window openings on free standing, new construction should be compatible with patterns established within the district.</i>	The openings on the proposed façades appear to be smaller than what is typical for the district and are not vertically aligned. <u>Staff recommends the applicant increase the size of the openings on all visible elevations to be more rectangular in form and to increase the size of the window panes. Staff also recommends the applicant utilize a larger window on the first story in keeping with the general fenestration patterns found in the surrounding area.</u>
New Construction, Doors and Windows, pg. 56, #5	5. <i>With larger buildings, applicants are encouraged to develop multiple entry points (doors), in keeping with historic precedent for the building type in question. Single entry points - such as a single garage entrance accompanied by single pedestrian entrances are not in keeping with historic precedent, which demonstrates that most large buildings had multiple pedestrian entry points.</i>	The applicant proposes rear-loaded garages for each dwelling unit. Staff finds that this is not a form typically found in urban districts. <u>Staff recommends that the applicant consider an entry door for the rear elevation.</u> If the applicant wants to provide enclosed parking structures, <u>staff recommends the consideration of a bank of free-standing garages at the rear of the property to be more in keeping with the historic patterns found in the district.</u>
Mechanical Equipment, pg. 68	<i>The visual impact of new mechanical equipment should be minimized to protect the historic character of the district.</i>	The applicant has not provided information about the location of the mechanical equipment. <u>Staff requests if the applicant intends to locate the mechanical equipment outside the building the location of the HVAC equipment be submitted for final review.</u>

FIGURES

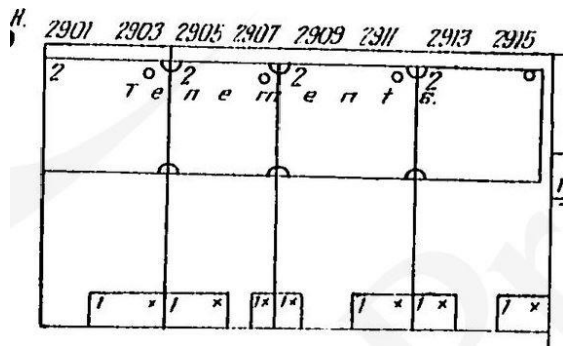


Figure 1. 2901 M Street, 1905 Sanborn map.

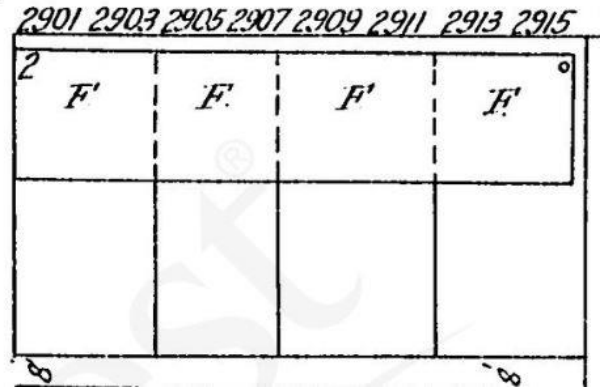


Figure 2. 2901 M Street, 1925 Sanborn map.

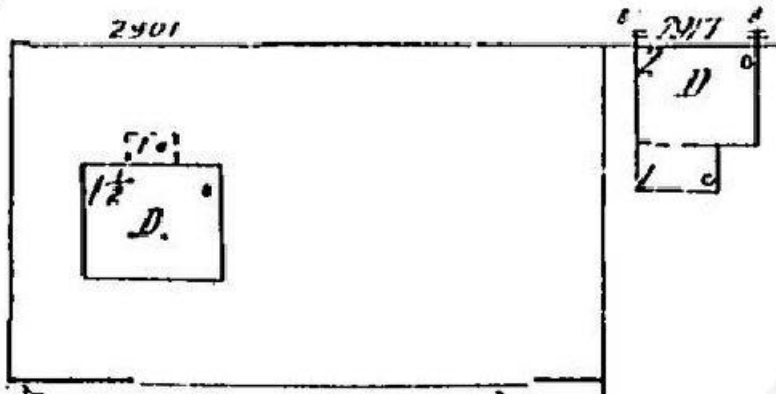


Figure 3. 2901 M Street, 1952 Sanborn map.



Figure 4. 2901 M Street.



Figure 5. 2901 M Street with view of new construction.



Figure 6. 2901 M Street, location of proposed driveway.