

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
September 25, 2018, Meeting**

6. **COA-036126-2018** (M. Walker)

**2009 Venable Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Rehabilitate a single family home**

Staff Contact: **C. Jeffries**

The applicant requests approval to rehabilitate a home in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. The Italianate-style home was constructed ca. 1882 and is a 2-story frame house with a projecting bay, and a 1-story, 1-bay front porch. The structure has a decorative cornice with a pierced soffit and sawn brackets. The home has been vacant for several years and is in a state of disrepair. The property has been cited for maintenance code violations and has been declared a derelict building.

The applicant is proposing to complete the following work:

- Remove the existing siding from the side and rear and install smooth, unbeaded Hardie-plank siding. The siding on the façade will be repaired and replaced where necessary with new wood siding.
- The soffit will be repaired with wood as needed and a new gutter will be installed on the front.
- Install 2/2 double hung wood windows in all window openings. There are currently no existing windows. New wood doors will be installed in the existing door frames.
- The front porch will be replaced as needed with wood to match the recently rehabilitated porches on the similar buildings on the block. The front and rear porch roofs will be replaced with black standing seam metal.
- The door onto the rear porch on the west elevation will be replaced with a window.
- A 6' wooden privacy fence will be installed.
- The cement block shed in the rear yard will be clad in smooth Hardie-plank siding, to match the primary structure.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions.

Siding: The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that on existing buildings, the use of fiber cement siding should be limited to secondary elevations with limited visibility from the public right-of-way (pg. 60). Though the application notes the use of fiber cement siding on the exterior front, staff has confirmed with the applicant that the siding on the façade will be repaired or replaced in-kind as needed. Staff recommends the condition of

the historic siding be assessed in coordination with staff and be salvaged for installation on the façade; and if the siding cannot be salvaged, wood siding with a reveal to match the historic reveal be installed on the façade. Staff recommends the fiber cement siding installed on the secondary elevations be smooth, unbeaded, and with a reveal to match the historic reveal found on the wood siding of the front façade. The color for the siding should be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval. The cornice on the façade should be repaired or replaced where necessary with an exact match, in wood. Details of any replacement cornice elements should be submitted for administrative review and approval. Staff also recommends that any replacement trim match the existing wood trim.

Soffit and Gutters: The *Guidelines* state that original wood features should be retained or repaired in-kind (pg. 59, #2, 7). The *Guidelines* further state that fundamental architectural features should not be removed or radically altered (pg.59, #9). Staff supports the in-kind repair of the soffit and recommends the existing box gutter be repaired and the proposed suspended gutter not be installed. Staff finds that a suspended gutter would obscure the unique cornice on the façade which is a character defining feature of this block of similar homes.

Windows and Doors: The *Guidelines* state that all original windows should be retained (pg. 65, #1). The applicant has stated that all of the historic windows are missing. The applicant is proposing to install double hung wood windows in a 2/2 configuration. Staff has discovered photographic documentation which shows the windows were 2/2 on the façade and 6/6 on the side elevation, which is consistent with historic windows on structures within the district. Staff recommends the new windows be 2/2 on the façade and 6/6 on the side and rear and have true or simulated divided lites with interior and exterior muntins and a spacer bar and specifications for the new windows be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.

The applicant is also proposing to install wood doors in the existing frames. The *Guidelines* recommend using available documentation when reconstructing missing elements (pg. 59, #7). Staff has not been able to locate documentation of the original doors however a wood door is appropriate. Staff recommends details of the new doors be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval prior to installation and the doors fit the existing openings. In addition, staff recommends that the transom over the front door remain a single lite, rather than the 3-lite transom depicted in the plans.

Porch: The *Guidelines* recommend using documentation when reconstructing missing elements including physical evidence such as surviving posts, brackets and soffit details (pg. 59). The front porch of this structure retains no historic fabric. Staff recommends the porch be restored to match front porches found on the recently rehabilitated adjacent homes, a porch detail to be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval. If the porch roof structure is replaced, it should match the existing roof rather than the roof depicted in the plans. In addition, all replacement materials should be wood. The *Guidelines* note that front porches typically have shallow pitched metal roofs with flat seams and that prefabricated

metal roof systems are inappropriate on historic front porches (pg. 62, #5, #6). Staff recommends the new front porch roof be a metal roof with flat-lock seams or a black membrane roof.

Changes to Openings: The *Guidelines* state that the number, location, size, or glazing pattern of windows should not be changed (pg. 69, #8). The applicant is proposing to change a door on the west elevation to a window. As the opening is minimally visible from the public right away, staff recommends approval of the alteration to the door opening on the west elevation, with the condition that the existing transom remain and the new window fit within the jambs of the existing door opening. Staff also recommends that the dimensions of the existing windows be maintained and all replacement windows fit the existing openings.

Accessory Structure: The applicant is proposing to clad the existing accessory structure at the rear of the property in smooth Hardie-plank siding to match the main structure. The *Guidelines* state that outbuildings should be compatible with the design of the primary building including materials selection, and should also respect the materials and colors of existing outbuildings in the neighborhood (pg. 51, #1, #2). Staff recommends approval of the proposed siding as the structure is constructed of unparged cement block, which is not consistent with historic materials within the district. The new siding should be smooth and without a bead, the color to match the main structure.

Privacy Fence: The *Guidelines* state that rear yard privacy fences should mimic traditional fence designs (pg. 78, #9). Staff recommends that details of the proposed fence, including a site plan, be submitted for staff review and approval prior to installation.

Drafting Errors: Staff notes that the submitted plans do not accurately depict the existing building, including the pitch of the roof at the rear, the three existing chimneys, the front porch roof, the fenestration pattern on the west elevation, and the window opening on the recessed bay on the south elevation. Staff recommends that the existing historic elements remain, and not be altered to match the inconsistencies depicted on the submitted plans.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the conditions noted above, 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 pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.