

14. COA-060090-2019

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

September 24th, 2019

PROPERTY ADDRESS

706 N. 21st Street

DISTRICT

Union Hill

Commission of Architectural Review

STAFF REPORT



APPLICANT

Xtreme Homes, LLC

STAFF CONTACT

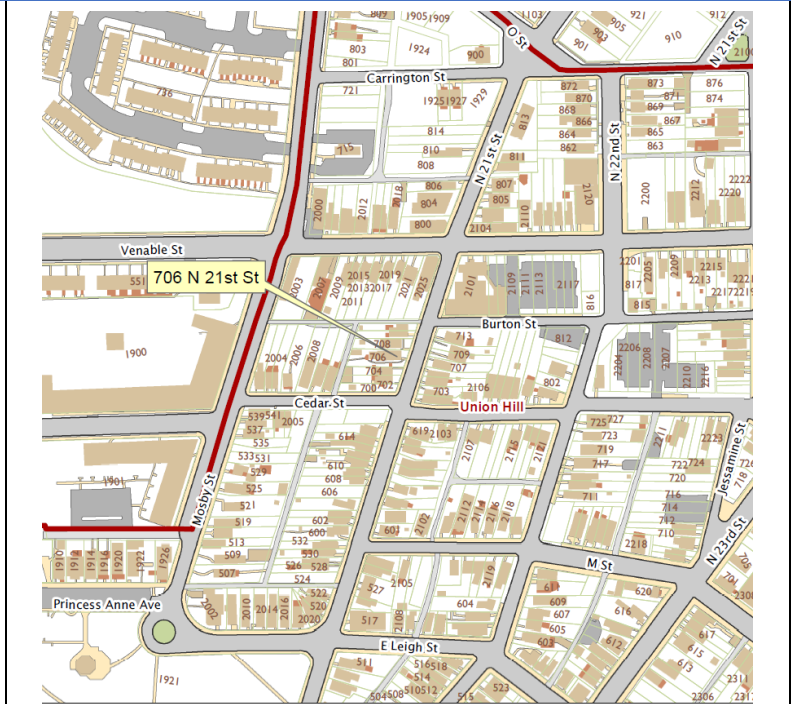
C. Jones

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Demolish a residential building.

PROJECT DETAILS

- The applicant requests permission to demolish the ca. 1885 residential building on the site.



The City of Richmond assumes no liability either for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in the information provided regardless of the cause of such or for any decision made, action taken, or action not taken by the user in reliance upon any maps or information provided herein.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

DENY

PREVIOUS REVIEWS

The Commission approved an application from the current owner and applicant for the rehabilitation of the building at the December 18, 2018 meeting. The current owner received approval for the rehabilitation including the construction of a second story rear addition and a single car garage. The current owner applied for a building permit for the rehabilitation and addition in March 2019. Staff contacted the applicant's representative on March 6, 2019 to address discrepancies between the Commission-approved plans and the submitted building permit plans. The applicant's representative did not respond to the email request for information. On April 1, 2019, staff contacted the applicant/owner and requested he address the discrepancies between the Commission-approved plans and the building permit plans. He also did not respond to staff's request. The building permit for the rehabilitation and addition has not been issued. On August 22, 2019, the owner applied to the Permits and Inspections office for a permit to demolish the entire structure. Staff visited the property in September 2019 and noticed windows and doors are open or missing and that measures have not been taken to protect the property from deterioration.

STAFF COMMENT

- The applicant secure the building to prevent any further damage, including fixing any damaged or missing gutters and closing any openings.

STAFF ANALYSIS

According to Sec. 30-930.7(d) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance: The commission of architectural review 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. The demolition of any building deemed by the commission to not be a part of the historic character of an old and historic district shall be permitted. The demolition of any building that has deteriorated beyond the point of being feasibly rehabilitated is permissible, where the applicant can satisfy the commission as to the infeasibility of rehabilitation. The commission may adopt additional demolition standards for the review of certificates of appropriateness applications to supplement these standards.

Under the provisions of 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.

The applicant has provided evidence that the building can be rehabilitated along with the associated costs to rehabilitate. The applicant has not provided evidence that they have pursued incentives for rehabilitation, including the historic rehabilitation tax credits or the City of Richmond Tax Abatement program. Further, the applicant has not provided evidence that they have tried to sell the property to an individual who will rehabilitate the property per city code. Staff finds this criterion is not met.

2) A building or structure is deemed not to be a contributing part of the historic character of an Old and Historic District.

The building is located within the Union Hill City and Old Historic District. There are not 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 National Register nomination form identifies the period of significance for the district as 19th century with significant dates from 1800 to 1940. The nomination designates this building as a contributing resource to the historic district. Staff has compared photos from when the building was recorded in 1977 and 1993, to the current conditions and finds that this building is relatively unchanged. Staff further finds that the ca. 1885 building is one of the oldest on the block, it maintains its historic integrity, and contributes to the historic character of the Old and Historic District, as it was constructed during the period of significance and is in keeping with the general architectural styles of the historic buildings in the District.

3) The Commission deems that a building or structure has deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation.

The applicant has provided a statement from an engineering firm that the building is deteriorated. However, the statement is not detailed in terms of how the conclusions were reached or how extensive the structural damage is. The conclusions in the engineer's statement are based on a site visit, and no additional investigations were conducted. The engineer's statement is not supported by photographic

documentation. Additionally, the recommendation of cost savings by the engineer are not supported by any analysis and the statement says: "will likely exceed" though the author provided no evidence including the cost of addressing the structural damage. Staff finds that there is not sufficient information to support a claim that the building is 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.*

As described above, staff finds that this is a contributing building to the Union Hill City and Old Historic District.

2) *The effect that demolition will have on the surrounding neighborhood.*

The building is located on an intact block of historic houses, some of which have recently been renovated. Staff finds that the demolition of this early building would have a negative effect on the block by altering its historic integrity and changing the overall look and feel of the historic development pattern of the area.

3) *The type and quality of the project that will replace the demolished building.*

The applicant has submitted a separate application for the construction of two semi-attached residences. Staff finds that the proposed new construction does not replicate the historic form, use, or style of the existing historic building and would introduce an incompatible element to the block.

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

The 2000 Master Plan identifies vacant and deteriorating housing as a significant issue in the East District and states: "given that the majority of structures throughout the District are historically and architecturally significant, demolition to address problems associated with blighted housing will need to be used sparingly." Staff finds the demolition of this historic residence is not in keeping the goals of the Master Plan.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is not consistent with the Standards for Demolition outlined in Section 30.930.7(d) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of code.

FIGURES



Figure 1. 706 North 21st Street, current conditions.



Figure 2. 706 North 21st Street, current conditions.



Figure 3. 706 North 21st Street, October 2018.



Figure 4. 706 North 21st Street, October 2018.

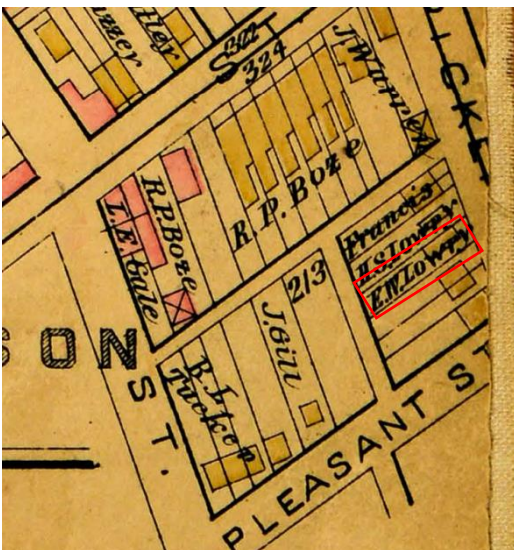


Figure 5. Baist Atlas, 1889.



Figure 6. Sanborn Map, 1905.



Figure 7. 706 North 21st Street, 1977.



Figure 8. 706 North 21st Street, 1993.