

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
November 24, 2015 Meeting**

- 12. CAR No. 15-123** (J. & J. Monopoli) **725 North 26th Street**
Church Hill North Old and Historic District

Project Description: **Build new two-story garage**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to construct a two-bay two-story frame garage at the rear of this residential property in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The applicant has referenced Sanborn maps indicating that a one-story outbuilding with a similar footprint formerly stood on the site. These Sanborn maps also indicate that the previous outbuilding was oriented towards the alley. The proposed garage/apartment would be of slab-on-grade frame construction with Jeld-Wen wood 1/1 double-hung and transom-style windows. The two double-lite overhead garage doors address the side street (Cedar Street) rather than the alley. This area of the Church Hill North Old and Historic District features granite curbs with a granite-block-paver gutter pan. The orientation of the garage doors would require a curb cut adjacent to the alley for access.

This application previously came before the Commission on September 22, 2015. At that time, the Commission deferred the application and asked the applicant to return with a revised design for a smaller building to address issues with the scale of the proposed building and to include a site plan on a plat to assist with understanding the massing on the site. In response to the Commission's request, the applicant change the plans in the following ways:

- The roof form has changed from a shed roof which was 24' tall on the Cedar Street elevation and 23' at the rear to a gabled roof with a 24' tall ridge parallel to Cedar Street and 22' in height on the Cedar Street elevation.
- The applicant has presented two options for the width of the building on the Cedar Street elevation. The first option is the same as the previously reviewed plans with a 24' width. The second option reduces the width by 2' to 22'.

The Commission reviewed the application with the above mentioned changes on October 27, 2015. At that meeting, the Commission deferred the application and asked that the applicant provide updated plans to include dimensions on the door, the windows, and the garage doors to include head and sill heights. This application before the Commission includes the requested dimensions.

Staff has contacted the Department of Public Works Division of Right of Way Management regarding their review of the proposed curb cut. DPW staff stated that they would issue a permit for a driveway at this location as there is an existing apron across the street from an older garage that was torn down. As the

line for the Church Hill North Old and Historic District is Cedar Street, the existing curb cut is not within an Old and Historic District.

Staff has reviewed the Sanborn maps and the City's Assessor's records to determine the building form of any previous outbuilding on the property. The house appears to have been constructed in 1905. There was a one story auto garage built between 1905 and 1924. According to the Assessor's records, this garage was a 27' by 20' by 10' structure which appears to have been torn down in 1957. The Assessor's files indicate a 10 by 10 metal shed built on the property between 1977 and 1984. Staff was unable to find documentation of the two story shed described in this application.

Staff does not recommend approval of the current project. The plans for construction of the garage are only partially consistent with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* for residential outbuildings (page 48). The design features that are compatible with the design of the main house include its frame construction and lap siding and one-over-one double-hung windows. The building is smaller than the main residence and is located to the rear of the property, emphasizing its character as a secondary structure. Though the proposed gable roof is not consistent with the shed roofs of the primary structure, it is a roof profile found in numerous existing outbuildings in the neighborhood.

While the proposed garage appears to respect the siting, roof profile, and materials of existing outbuildings in the neighborhood, as to massing, staff has not been able to find historical antecedents for such a large two-story outbuilding in the immediate vicinity in the historic district. The applicant has provided photographs of secondary structures of varying scale; but only one of the twelve examples is within the Church Hill North Old and Historic District like the subject property, as the majority of the examples are in St. John's Church Old and Historic District. Though this application reduces the height of the structure as compared to the September submittal by 2' on the Cedar Street elevation and provides the option to reduce the width of the structure by 2', the overall height of the structure remains the same at 24', and the width of the structure has been minimally reduces and still accommodates 2 bays. Therefore, staff does not feel the application addresses the concerns raised by the Commission at September 22, 2015, when the Commission requested the applicant to return with a revised design for a smaller building to address issues with the scale of the proposed building.

Staff also recommends that the garage doors should address the alley for access. This traditional orientation of the garage would avoid the introduction of a curb cut across the public sidewalk and obviate the need to modify the historic curb and gutter materials.

In staff's opinion the massing of the building proposed and the orientation of the garage doors facing the street are elements that are not compatible with the Guidelines for outbuildings and the historical pattern of development in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The Commission may wish to consider if an outbuilding with the same 27' by 20' footprint and single story of the historic outbuilding as indicated in the Assessor's records would be an appropriate model for an outbuilding on this property.

It is therefore the assessment of staff that the project is not consistent with Richmond City Code Section 30-930.7 (a) *General standards*, and (c) *Standards for new construction*, and the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission in accordance with Section 30-930.7 (g) of the Code.