

13. COA-071870-2020

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

April 28, 2020

PROPERTY ADDRESS

2400 Venable Street

DISTRICT

Union Hill

APPLICANT

K. Thomas

STAFF CONTACT

C. Jeffries

Commission of Architectural Review

STAFF REPORT



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Rehabilitate an existing mixed-use building including partial demolition and construction of a front and rear addition.

PROJECT DETAILS

- The applicant proposes to rehabilitate a two-story brick mixed-use building on the corner of Venable and Pink Streets.
- The John P. Harwood house was built as a single-family home ca. 1856. The building was converted to a store in the 1920s. According to Sanborn maps of the property it has existed in its current footprint since at least 1925.
- The applicant is proposing a number of changes to the building including:
 - Demolish the front and rear additions
 - Build new, larger front and rear additions
 - Construct a new second-story rear deck
 - Construct a new inset side porch
 - Recreate an infilled window on the east elevation
 - Return a window to a door on the second story of the façade
- Proposed materials include brick, vertical wood siding, wood windows, and metal porch railings.
- Zoning staff has indicated that the proposed new construction does not meet zoning setback requirements.



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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.

PREVIOUS REVIEWS

None.

STAFF COMMENTS

- Staff offers the following comments regarding the design of the project:

- The footprint of the existing storefront should be maintained and not expanded.
- The proposed storefront design should be revised to include simple piers, a cornice, and a sign band.
- A material that is consistent with the building and the district should be used for the rear addition rather than the vertical siding proposed.
- The existing window opening on the rear elevation should be retained.
- The fenestration pattern of the second story of the rear elevation should be revised to be more consistent with patterns found in the district.
- The new windows on the addition should be a contemporary 1/1 light configuration.
- The wood sill of the reconstructed window on the west elevation should also be recreated, to match the other first story window openings.
- The proposed side porch should terminate at the rear wall of the existing building and the wall extension on the second story should be removed from the design.
- The rear balcony design should be revised to be more consistent with historic patterns.
- The applicant must obtain the necessary zoning approvals for the proposed porch.
- Staff recommends retention of all historic material that has not deteriorated past the point of feasible repair.
- Staff recommends the following information be submitted for final review:
 - Information regarding feasible alternatives to demolition, documentation of the existing conditions of the building, and a structural analysis from a licensed structural engineer.
 - If the applicant determines that window replacement may be required, a full window survey must be submitted for administrative review and approval prior to the removal of any windows.
 - Proposed paint colors.
 - A full list of proposed materials, including window and door specifications.
 - Fully dimensioned existing and proposed site plans.
 - Fully dimensioned elevations.
 - A site plan showing the proposed location of the HVAC equipment.

Staff recommends **denial** of the proposed partial demolition. Further, staff recommends **denial** of the proposed front addition as it is not consistent with the Commission’s Guidelines for additions.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Standards for Demolition	<p>Under the provisions of Sec. 32-930.7., the Commission shall approve requests for demolition when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>The applicant proposes to demolish the existing storefront and portions of the rear and side of the building. The applicant has not provided evidence that there are no feasible alternatives to the proposed demolition.</p> <p>Sanborn maps indicate that the building had a full-width front porch in 1905. A storefront was added to the building by 1925, as the 1925 map shows a footprint that is very similar to the existing conditions, with the exception of the enclosure of the rear inset porch. Though the existing storefront has been modified with brick infill, it still retains the historic footprint. The rear portions of the building appear unaltered since 1905, including the mix of masonry and frame walls shown on the 1905 map.</p>
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or structure has deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation.

Staff has requested information from the applicant regarding the current conditions of the front and rear sections. However, the applicant has not included documentation that indicates that the existing front and rear sections are deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation. Photographs of the interior indicate that portions of the roof of the 1-story portion are missing but they do not indicate that the existing walls are not sound.

Staff finds that the applicant has not demonstrated there are no feasible alternatives to demolition, the entire building is a contributing part of the historic character of the Union Hill District, and the applicant has not demonstrated that these portions of the building have deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation. Staff recommends denial of the proposed partial demolition.

Standards for Rehabilitation, commercial construction #2, pg. 58

Retain all original building elements and repair as needed; replace in-kind only if necessary.

The applicant is proposing to remove a substantial portion of the existing building, the rear portions of which predate 1905, and the front of which dates to the 1920s. There is existing historic fabric in these sections of the building including historic brick, wood siding, and wood windows and doors. Staff recommends retention of all historic material that has not deteriorated past the point of feasible repair. Further, staff recommends the existing wood siding be repaired and retained, and any deteriorated siding be replaced in-kind with new wood.

Standards for Rehabilitation #1, pg. 59

Retain original features and materials that define the building style, including but not limited to wood siding, shingles, stucco and masonry.

Standards for Rehabilitation, commercial construction #3, pg. 58

Do not remove materials or elements that may seem out of place or not true to the original structure. Sometimes additions to a structure have achieved architectural and historic significance in their own right; consultation with staff representatives of the Commission is strongly encouraged.

Though the front storefront addition has been altered over time, notably with brick in-fill, staff finds that the footprint of this section of the building dates to the 1920s.

Standards for New Construction, siting #1, pg. 52

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.

The applicant is proposing two additions to the existing building. The applicant proposes to construct a three-bay storefront addition with a second story balcony. The addition has a brick bulkhead with operable sliding glass windows above. A glass door in the westernmost bay provides access to the commercial space. The new additions appear to be similar in size to the existing additions, though dimensions were not provided. The existing storefront is only two bays wide while the proposed front addition

Standards for New Construction, materials and colors #1, pg. 47

Additions should not obscure or destroy original architectural elements.

<p>Porches, Entrances and Doors #9, pg. 71</p>	<p>Existing entrances or porches should not be removed when an historic structure has been reoriented to accommodate a new use.</p>	<p>spans the entire façade. Though the proposed addition is subordinate in size to the main building, staff finds that it is not inconspicuous as it is on the façade. The proposed addition would also obscure or destroy the historic front entrance to the building, which has been in place since its construction. <u>Staff recommends denial of the proposed front addition and further recommends the existing storefront section be maintained.</u></p>
<p>New Construction, Storefront Facades #1, pg. 55</p>	<p>Historically, storefronts were defined by simple piers, large storefront windows, a cornice, and a signboard and/or attached signage</p>	<p>Historic photographs of the storefront are not clear enough to discern the historic storefront design. Staff is supportive of the removal of brick infill and the reconstruction of missing elements of the historic storefront such as the storefront windows and second story balcony.</p>
<p>New Construction, pg. 44</p>	<p>New construction activities may include: the contemporary reconstruction of a storefront, porch, bay window or other structural element where no documentary evidence exists to suggest the original façade</p>	<p>However, staff finds that the proposed design is not consistent with historic storefront elements and proportions. Though no dimensions were provided, the proposed brick bulkhead appears taller than historic patterns found throughout the district. In addition, the design does not include piers, a cornice, or sign band. <u>Staff recommends the storefront design be revised to include simple piers, a cornice, and a sign band.</u></p>
<p>Standards for Rehabilitation, commercial construction #1, pg. 58</p>	<p>Conduct pictorial research to determine the design of the original building. The Valentine Museum has an extensive collection of photographs of Richmond's 19th-century building stock to aid in this research. If no pictorial documentation is available, any new additions to the storefront design should respect the character, materials and architectural style of the entire building. If possible, careful exploratory demolition should be conducted to determine the extent and condition of all original materials. Consult a knowledgeable professional before beginning work.</p>	<p>Staff recommends the storefront design be revised to include simple piers, a cornice, and a sign band.</p>
<p>Standards for new construction, Form #1, pg. 52</p>	<p>New commercial construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the immediate area. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building. Building form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.</p>	<p>The applicant also proposes a new addition on the rear of the building which includes a first story masonry section, a second story frame section, a second story balcony, and an inset side porch. The rear addition seems to have a similar footprint, though it does include a larger second story. The plans indicate that the existing shed roof will be demolished and the new roof form will be flat and will include cantilevers over the rear elevations, necessitating the removal of an existing parapet on the east elevation. Staff finds that the proposed roof form is not consistent with historic patterns found throughout the district. <u>Staff recommends the historic roof form be maintained and the existing parapet wall on the east elevation be retained.</u></p>
<p>Standards for Rehabilitation, #4 pg. 59</p>	<p>Retain original roof shape, size, materials and related elements including cupolas, chimneys and weather vanes; if replacement is necessary, consideration for use of slate, wood and metal, with respect to color and patterns, should be given.</p>	<p>Staff finds that the proposed roof form is not consistent with historic patterns found throughout the district. <u>Staff recommends the historic roof form be maintained and the existing parapet wall on the east elevation be retained.</u></p>

Standards for New Construction, materials and colors #2, pg. 47

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

The applicant is proposing vertical wood siding for the second story of the rear addition. Staff finds that this is not a material typically found in the district and recommends a material that is more consistent with the district and building be used for the addition.

Staff notes that not all proposed materials were included on the submitted plans. Staff recommends a full list of materials be submitted for final review, including window and door specifications.

New Construction, doors and windows #1-2, pg. 49

1. The size, proportion and spacing patterns of door and window openings on a new addition should follow patterns established by the original building. Windows on most commercial and residential properties throughout Old and Historic Districts have a vertical orientation. Wide, horizontal so-called "picture windows" on new additions are strongly discouraged.
2. The architectural appearance of original windows should be used as models for new windows.

The applicant is proposing three wide transom windows at the rear of the new addition. This wall currently contains one vertically oriented window. Staff recommends denial of the transom windows on the rear elevation and recommends the existing window opening be retained.

Staff also finds that the proposed large opening with three sliding glass doors on the rear of the second story addition is not consistent with historic window and door openings found throughout the district. As this elevation is highly visible from the street, staff recommends the fenestration pattern of the second story of the rear elevation be revised to be more consistent with patterns found in the district.

Standards for Rehabilitation, #10 pg. 59

While it is acceptable to use salvaged materials as in-kind replacement, adding features or salvaged architectural elements that suggest an inaccurate or undocumented sequence of construction should be avoided because this confuses our understanding of the evolution of Richmond's historic built environment.

The plans call for 2/2 wood true divided light windows on the second story rear addition. As this creates a false sense of the history and evolution of the building, staff recommends the new windows on the addition be a contemporary 1/1 light configuration.

Standards for new construction, Form #1, pg. 52

New commercial construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the immediate area. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building. Building form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.

A large second story balcony is proposed at the rear of the building. Though no dimensions were provided, the balcony appears quite large and is not consistent with historic rear porch designs, which tend to be much shallower. The proposed balcony will also be very visible as the building is on a corner lot. Staff recommends the rear balcony design be revised to be more consistent with historic patterns found in the district.

The applicant is proposing a one-story rear inset porch that spans the three bays of the rear section of the east elevation and extends past the north (rear) elevation. A two-story

		<p>porch has been located on the east side of the building historically, though it did not extend to or past the rear of the building. Staff is supportive of the construction of a porch in this traditional location. However, the porch extends past the end of the building, creating a wall extension on the second story balcony above. Staff finds that neither of these design elements are consistent with building patterns found throughout the district. <u>Staff recommends the side porch terminate at the rear wall of the existing building and the wall extension on the second story be removed from the design.</u></p>
Standards for new construction, Siting #4, pg. 52	If setback waivers, or any other waivers are needed, the Commission can be petitioned to support a Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) waiver.	Staff also notes that Zoning staff have determined that the proposed rear inset porch does not meet setback requirements and would require a variance.
New Construction, porches and porch details #2, pg. 49	When designing a new railing for a new infill building, or for an existing building which has lost its railing and for which no documentary or physical evidence survives, the balusters in the traditional Richmond rail are generally rectangular in section (with the narrow dimension facing the street) or square.	Staff finds that the proposed railings on the front and rear balconies are consistent with railings found throughout the district. As photographic documentation is not clear enough to indicate the design of the historic railing, staff is supportive of the installation of Richmond rail. <u>Staff recommends the front balcony railing be wood, and painted a color complementary to the main building.</u>
New Construction, porches and porch details #3, pg. 49	New porch railing designs, compatible with the overall design of the building, will also be considered.	
New Construction, doors and windows #5, pg. 49	Original door and window surroundings should be retained.	The applicant is proposing to retain and repair existing historic windows. However, all of the windows on the building are currently boarded. <u>If the applicant determines that window replacement may be required, a full window survey must be submitted for review and approval prior to the removal of any windows.</u>
Windows #4, pg. 69	Boarded windows should be uncovered and repaired.	
Standards for Rehabilitation #5, pg. 59	Retain original windows including both functional and decorative elements such as frames, sash, muntins, glazing, sills, hood molds, paneled or decorated jambs and moldings, shutters and exterior blinds.	
Windows #7, pg. 69	Windows should only be replaced when they are missing or beyond repair. Any reconstruction should be based on physical evidence or photo documentation.	The plans indicate an infilled window will be reconstructed on the west elevation. Photographic documentation and physical evidence indicates that there was a window in this location. <u>Staff recommends the new window be aligned with the window above and the wood sill also be recreated, to match the other first story window openings.</u>

Maintenance and Repair, Masonry, pg. 89.	<p>If a masonry building has already been painted and the decision has been made to repaint the building, do not remove all paint completely from the masonry. If previously painted masonry is to be re-painted, it should start with the removal by hand of damaged or deteriorated paint only to the next sound level of paint. Primer and paints specially made for masonry should be used</p> <p>Do not repaint with mortar that is stronger than the original mortar or the existing brick.</p>	<p>The existing masonry appears to require repair in some areas. <u>Staff recommends any repointing be done in accordance with the Commission's Maintenance and Repair guide for masonry and the National Park Service's Preservation Brief #2.</u> In addition, if the masonry requires repainting, staff recommends that any damaged or deteriorated paint be removed by hand to the next sound level of paint prior to repainting. Staff requests any proposed paint colors be submitted for final review.</p>
Standards for Rehabilitation, #4 pg. 59	<p>Retain original roof shape, size, materials and related elements including cupolas, chimneys and weather vanes; if replacement is necessary, consideration for use of slate, wood and metal, with respect to color and patterns, should be given.</p>	<p>The plans indicate that the rear chimney will be removed on the interior. <u>Staff recommends the exterior portion of the chimney be retained, as is shown on the elevations.</u></p>
Standards for Rehabilitation, #10 pg. 59	<p>While it is acceptable to use salvaged materials as in-kind replacement, adding features or salvaged architectural elements that suggest an inaccurate or undocumented sequence of construction should be avoided because this confuses our understanding of the evolution of Richmond's historic built environment.</p>	<p>The plans indicate an opening on the second story of the façade will be converted back to a door opening, to access the second story balcony. Physical evidence and photographic documentation indicates that this opening was once a door. Staff is supportive of the reconstruction of this feature; however, <u>staff recommends the new door be of a contemporary design, as no evidence exists of the historic design of the door.</u></p>
Building and Site Accessibility, #6, pg. 79	<p>Regrading is appropriate in cases where the change in elevation between an existing slope and a step or steps is not great and meets ADA requirements. Appropriate regrading efforts should cover, but not remove or eliminate, original masonry steps.</p>	<p>The west elevations appear to depict a change in the grading on this side of the building, perhaps to improve access to the existing side door. As the building is located on the property line, <u>staff recommends the applicant contact the Department of Public Works to discuss potential work within the public right of way.</u></p>
HVAC Equipment #1, pg. 68	<p>New units should be placed in side or rear yards so as to minimize their visual impact. Side yard units should be located as far away from the front of the building as possible.</p>	<p>The plans do not indicate where mechanical equipment will be located. <u>Staff recommends a site plan showing the proposed location of the HVAC equipment be submitted for final review.</u></p>

FIGURES

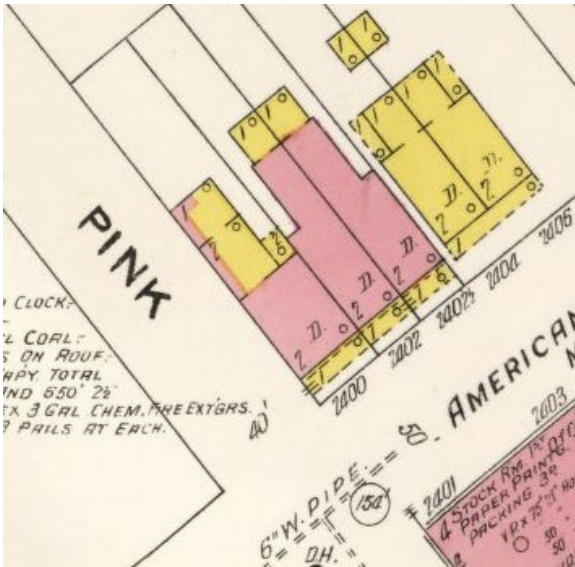


Figure 1. 1905 Sanborn map



Figure 2. 1925 Sanborn map



Figure 3. 2400 Venable Street façade, existing conditions



Figure 4. Rear elevations, existing conditions



Figure 5. Existing front entrance



Figure 6. Detail of damaged brick