COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
January 26, 2016 Meeting

13. CAR No. 16-012 (D. Seibert) **2317 Carrington Street**
Union Hill Old and Historic District

Project Description: **Construct new single-family dwelling**

Staff Contact: **K. Chen**

The application was reviewed conceptually at the December 15, 2015 meeting. The Commission was generally favorable in its comments but there was some concern expressed about the scale and details of the façade especially related to the proportions of the front gable.

The proposed new dwelling is located on Carrington Street which forms the northern boundary of the Union Hill Old and Historic District. A majority of the lots that face Carrington Street are vacant. The proposed building is of frame construction with a T-plan and cross-gable roof. The projecting portion is organized with shingle-clad front-gable roof, three-sided projecting bay and paired windows over the entry. There is a full width porch on this portion of the building. On the rear there is a deep screened-in porch.

Modification that have been made to the design since conceptual review include:

- The height of the rear portion of the cross-gable roof has been aligned with the height of the front facing gable
- The window in the front gable was changed from a single, arched window to a tripartite window
- The depth of the projecting bay was increased
- Windows were changed from 2/2 to 1/1
- Glazing was added to the front door
- The porch columns were changed from turned posts to square posts and the size increased. A column was also removed in front of the bay window

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the “Standards for New Construction: Residential” on pages 44 and 45 of the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* and the resulting comments follow.

Staff Findings based on Commission of Architectural Review Guidelines

STANDARDS FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

All new residential and commercial construction, whether in the form of additions or entire buildings, should be compatible with the historic features that characterize their setting and context. To protect the context of the surrounding historic district, new construction should reference the materials, features, size, scale, proportions, and massing of the existing historic building or buildings in its setting. However, compatibility does not mean duplicating the existing buildings or environment. In order to avoid creating a false sense of history, new construction should also be discernible from the old. Perhaps the best way to think about a compatible new building (or addition) is that it should be a good neighbor; one that enhances the character of the existing district and respects its historic context, rather than being an exact (and misleading) reproduction of another building.

SITING

1. *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.*

This standard is not applicable.

2. *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. In cases where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block.*

This block is vacant except for one dwelling immediately to the west (right) of the proposed new dwelling. The plat provided with the application indicates that the new house will be set 16.27 feet from the front property line. The plat does not show the relationship between the proposed set back and the adjacent dwelling.

3. *New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.*

The proposed new construction will face Carrington Street the prominent street bordering the site.

FORM

1. *New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections, and roof*

shapes that lend identity to a building. Form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.

The area surrounding the proposed new construction is largely vacant. A heavily altered 2-story, double house survives on the adjacent lot. This property has a full-façade front porch, a minimal bracketed cornice, and a shed roof. The prevailing pattern on Carrington Street and the adjacent side streets is of 2-story, 3-bay, frame dwellings with shed or shallow gable roofs and full façade porches. These are mostly modest houses with limited decoration.

The T-plan, cross-gable roof combined with a projecting three-sided bay is a form not seen in the immediate area. There are some larger Queen Anne and Late Victorian-style houses near Jefferson and Chimborazo parks and a few larger frame houses scattered in the area north of the Union Hill in the Fairmount district. The typical pattern for these houses is a front facing gable centered over a projecting bay with a hipped or compound roof behind.

2. *New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the district.*

The proposed new building is two-stories in height with a full façade front porch that maintains the existing human scale of the district.

3. *New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design. In Richmond, porches were historically an integral part of residential design and provide much of the street-level architectural character of Richmond's historic districts.*

The proposed new construction incorporates human scale elements in its design including a full façade front porch, front steps, ranked windows, and a cornice.

HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION & MASSING

1. *New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.*

The elevation drawings included with the application indicate that the total height of the new dwelling, from ground to the top of the ridge, will be 32'-5". The height of the adjacent dwelling is 30'-4" from the ground to the top of the cornice.

2. *New construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of other residential properties in surrounding historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing should look to the project's local district for precedent. For example, full-block-long row house compositions are rare in Richmond. New residential buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face should still employ bays as an organizational device, but the new building should read as a single piece of architecture.*

The typical orientation of residential properties in the district is a vertical orientation of ranked fenestration that is broken at the first story by a full façade porch and terminated at a shed or shallow gable roof line with a decorative cornice. The proposed new construction breaks the prevailing pattern by incorporated a cross-gable roof with a front-facing pediment.

3. *The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.*

The cornice height of the proposed new dwelling is not compatible with the adjacent dwelling or the typical pattern in the neighborhood because it incorporates a different roof line – a cross-gable roof instead of the more typically found shed or shallow gable.

MATERIALS & COLORS

1. *Additions should not obscure or destroy original architectural elements.*

This standard is not applicable.

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

The specifications call for the use of smooth Hardie lap siding with a 7" reveal which is compatible with the predominance of frame construction in the surrounding area. The specifications also call for the use of cedar mill (textured) Hardie half-round shingles in the gable ends. This is a material not found in the surrounding district and the *Guidelines* on page 56 discourage the use of faux "wood grain" siding. The gables will have Hardie Trim Crown Moulding and there will be fypon corbels on the cornice. The porch roof and kicker roof in the gable will be standing seam metal and the primary roof will be dimensional, asphalt shingle. The porch deck will be Azek, the porch columns will be Fypon, and the rail will be painted wood Richmond rail with wider 3" pickets.

3. *Paint colors for new additions should complement the historically appropriate colors used on the primary structure. Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors already found in the district.*

The Hardie plank siding will be Light Mist, similar to #5 Colonial Revival Gray on the paint palette on pages 60-61 of the *Guidelines*. The smooth Hardie Trim, Crown Moulding, and shingles will be Artic White. The roof will be clad with gray asphalt shingles and the porch deck will be Slate Gray, Azek t&g flooring. The fypon porch posts and corbels will be painted white. The PVC window sashes will be painted black. The colors for the front and rear doors will be provided for administrative approval.

4. *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.

The project will incorporate smooth Hardie Plank siding and cedar mill Hardie shingles. The roof will have asphalt shingles, there will Azek t&g porch floor decking, and the decorative elements – porch posts and corbels – will be fypon. There will be 1/1 PVC windows and smooth fiberglass doors. Page 56 of the *Guidelines* restricts the use of Hardie and other substitute materials to new freestanding buildings.

5. *Rooftop mechanical equipment should be located as discretely as possible to limit visibility. In addition, appropriate screening should be provided to conceal equipment from view. When rooftop railings are required for seating areas or for safe access to mechanical equipment, the railings should be as unobtrusive as possible, in order to minimize their appearance and visual impact on the surrounding district.*

HVAC units will be located on the ground at the southwest corner of the dwelling.

The rear yard will be enclosed with a 6' wood privacy fence with a double gate to allow vehicle access from the alley off of Russell Street. The fence will need to be painted or opaquely stained.

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Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines*. Staff recommends that approval be conditioned on colors for the doors and fencing be submitted to staff for administrative approval.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 30.930.7(c) 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 code.