

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
January 26, 2016 Meeting**

12. **CAR No. 16-011** (E. Reiuikobas)

**322 N. 36th Street
Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct a single-family house**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to construct a single-family house on a vacant lot in the Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District. The proposed building is a simply designed structure with a false mansard roof and front porch.

The new building will be situated on a corner lot between an existing, historic house and E. Marshall Street. The applicant came before the Commission on June 23, 2015, and received approval for the construction of the similar 2-story single family structure. The Commission recommended approval of the project with multiple conditions (see attached meeting minutes). The applicant has submitted a new plan for the proposed home that alters the building height, setback, and details. The proposed structure will be approximately 28'-5" in height at the front elevation and will slope to 26' at the rear. It will have side yard setback of 3' from the adjacent property, a 0' setback from East Marshall Street, and a front yard setback of 10'.

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 of 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.*

The proposed 3' side yard setback from the adjacent structure reflects the typical pattern along the block. The applicant is proposing to build to the property line on East Marshall Street which appears to be consistent with the property across the street which looks to be built to the property line adjacent to East Marshall Street. Because Zoning considers the side yard facing E. Marshall Street as a front yard, the applicant will be seeking Board of Zoning Appeals relief in order to have a 10' side yard setback. The proposed 10' front yard setback would align the structure with that of the existing, adjacent structures, which according to the applicant also have 10' front yard setbacks.

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

The new house will face N. 36th Street, the most 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 form of the proposed building is typical of two-story buildings located in the Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District. As noted on the block, the roof forms in the District vary and include false mansard roofs similar to the one proposed.

The subject property is a corner location. Typically in corner locations in the Old and Historic District, the secondary elevation references the form of the primary elevation. The windows on the secondary, corner elevations are traditionally organized following the principals of the primary elevation with windows proportioned appropriately, aligned vertically, and arranged similar to the a primary elevation. This traditional window alignment at a corner property can be seen across the street from the subject property at 323 North 36th Street. For this reason, staff recommends that on the head heights of all windows align

horizontally including the proposed kitchen window, the windows align vertically, and all proposed windows are to be the same width.

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

The applicant has made the effort to maintain the human scale of the district. The subject lot is at a lower elevation than the adjacent lot. Rather than building the structure to ensure the porch height aligns with the adjacent property which would require a higher poured concrete foundation, the applicant is proposing a lower porch height. This characteristic of stepping down in porch heights along this sloped street can be seen in the homes on the odd side of the subject block. The choice to not align the porch heights results in a foundation height of approximately 3'-10". This foundation height is at a level that will not detract from the pedestrian experience as it would not create the impression of a concrete wall adjacent to the sidewalk on East Marshall Street.

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 building's design calls for a front porch and front porch steps at the corner which lend human-scale elements to the building's design.

HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION & MASSING

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

The proposed building will be a total of 28'-5" in height which, according to the context rendering provided by the applicant, would be shorter than the height of the adjacent, historic houses. It appears that the roofline height will match the cornice height of the adjacent building. The building height is consistent with other structures found along the block.

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 proposed building design respects the typical vertical orientation of two-story residences in the district.

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

Because the proposed structure utilizes a false mansard, whereas the existing houses have shed roofs, the cornice height of the proposed building will be lower than that of the existing houses.

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 applicant proposes fiber cement siding, brick piers with wood lattice below, composite porch decking, 8"x8" porch posts, standing seam metal front porch roof painted black, DaVinci faux slate shingles in European Gray on the front of the mansard, wooden Richmond rail porch railings, eight-paneled front door with single lite transom above, a craftsman style door at the rear, a single lite door to the rear balcony, and 1/1 double-hung wood windows. The windows vary in width from 3' on front and left side elevations; 2'-4" and 2'-8" on the right, E. Marshall Street Elevation; and 2'-6" on the rear elevation. As the guidelines state that the size of window openings on new construction should be compatible with patterns established within the district (pg. 46, Doors and Windows, #3), staff recommends that all windows should be the same width. The proposed eight-panel front door and craftsman rear door are not compatible with doors found in the historic district. Staff recommends the applicant install simple six-panel doors or other doors of a more appropriate style then proposed to be reviewed and administratively approved by staff. The applicant is proposing a concrete parged foundation. Staff recommends that the parge coat be opaque, and the coursing beneath must not telegraph through the parge coat.

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 applicant proposes "Leisure Blue" for the body color of the house, which is a color found on the CAR paint color palette. The applicant is proposing white for all trim. The Guidelines state that decks should be painted or stained a neutral color that complements one or more of the colors found on the main structure (pg. 48, Decks #2). For this reason, staff recommends that the applicant paint or opaquely stain the rear porch structure in a color to be reviewed and administratively approved by staff.

3. *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 proposed building design calls for fiber cement siding. Staff recommends the use of smooth unbeaded fiber cement siding with no faux wood grain.

4. *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.*

The applicant is proposing to locate the mechanical HVAC equipment in the rear yard. The applicant has stated that he proposes to install a privacy fence to screen the view of the equipment from the public right of way.

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 the following conditions:

- The head heights of all windows on the same floor align horizontally including the proposed kitchen window
- The first floor windows and doors align vertically with the second floor openings
- All proposed windows are to be the same width
- Simple six-panel doors or other doors of a more appropriate style than proposed be submitted for review and administrative approval by staff
- The parge coat be opaque, and the coursing beneath must not telegraph through the parge coat
- The rear porch structure be painted or opaquely stained in a color to be reviewed and administratively approved by staff
- The fiber cement siding have a smooth finish with no faux wood grain or beading.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the conditions above, is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 30.930.7(c) of the City Code, and 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.