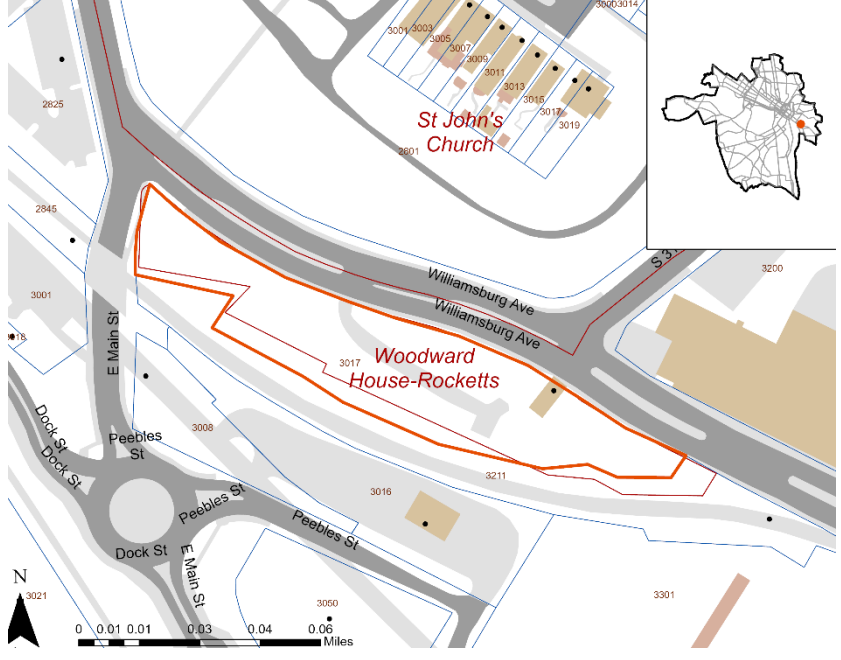


# Commission of Architectural Review

8. COA-182568-2026	Final Review	Meeting Date: 4/28/2026
Applicant/Petitioner	EMSEA Holdings, LLC	
Project Description	Construct a new parking area	
Project Location		
Address: 3017 Williamsburg Road		
Historic District: Woodward House-Rocketts		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The project proposed is within the individually listed Woodward House–Rocketts City Old &amp; Historic District. The proposal includes the construction of a surface parking lot with sixty-three spaces, including four ADA-compliant spaces, on the vacant land adjacent to the historic building. The existing house will not be altered. The proposed parking area will be located to the east and west sides of the structure and screened from Williamsburg Avenue through landscaping and existing fencing. The parking will service the nearby Armitage building.</p>		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Yara Iwaz, Yara.Iwaz@RVA.gov, (804)646-6031	
Previous Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2015: the Commission approved a proposal to replace wood siding and window sills with in-kind materials on the historic building</li> </ul>	
Staff Recommendations	<p>Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the Guidelines, and makes the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement all necessary protection measures to safeguard the adjacent historic building during construction; if any alterations are proposed to the historic building, a separate COA application must be submitted.</li> <li>Any fence replacement be done in-kind, with matching design and materials</li> <li>Submit a detailed lighting plan, including types of lighting to be used, for staff review and approval</li> <li>Submit signage design for staff review and approval.</li> <li>Any changes to the site grading and retaining treatment be submitted as part of an updated plan drawing, for staff review and approval</li> <li>Submit a complete landscaping plan, detailing which trees are to be removed, and which will be preserved, for staff review and approval. Mature trees should be preserved as much as possible.</li> <li>Submit final paving and curbing materials to staff for review and approval. Applicant should consider the use of granite</li> </ul>	

curbing and cobblestone aprons (or some other similar historic material) at the entrances and exits to the parking lot to better reference the former historic industrial and dockside character of the area.

- Submit an elevation drawing showing the design, height, materials, and screening treatment of the dumpster enclosure, for staff review and approval.
- The applicant coordinate with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to evaluate pedestrian circulation and determine whether additional safety measures (such as a crosswalk) are necessary.

# Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<p>The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, p.4</p>	<p><i>1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.</i></p> <p><i>2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.</i></p> <p><i>3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.</i></p>	<p>The Woodward House sits on a long, road-facing parcel along Williamsburg Avenue. The historic building is surrounded by its own established landscaping, which visually buffers it from the remainder of the site. The lot features varied topography, with a gentle slope near the street transitioning to a steeper grade toward the rear.</p> <p>The applicant proposes locating the parking area adjacent to, but visually separated from, the historic building. Existing trees are present on the site, particularly toward the southern portion, and are noted by the applicant as largely to be preserved.</p> <p>Using the seven aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association), we can determine that the primary structure remains in its original location and continues to convey its historic form and evolution, from its origins as an 18th-century cottage to its enlargement in the early 19th century. The building retains key character-defining features, including its massing, materials, and architectural detailing, which collectively express its historic design and workmanship. However, the broader setting of the property has changed significantly over time, particularly with the loss of the surrounding dockside neighborhood that once characterized the industrial waterfront area, and the building itself presents as the last remaining resource of this historic context.</p> <p>Sanborn maps and historical documentation indicate that the surrounding parcels were historically developed with a dense pattern of buildings, which have since been lost. The site has therefore undergone substantial changes, and as such, the integrity of setting has already been compromised over time.</p> <p>Given that the existing condition is an altered landscape rather than an intact historic setting, Staff finds that modifying these non-historic site features would not further affect the site's integrity.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approving the proposal to construct a new parking lot on the subject site.</u></p>
<p>The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, p.4</p>	<p><i>8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.</i></p> <p><i>9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the</i></p>	<p><i>Historic Building</i></p> <p>The proposal does not include any alterations to the historic building, which remains the primary historic resource on the site.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends implementing all necessary protection measures to safeguard the adjacent historic building during construction. If any alterations are proposed to the historic building, a separate COA application must be submitted.</u></p>

	<i>massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.</i>	
New Construction, p.51	<p><i>1. Fence, wall, and gate designs should reflect the scale of the historic structures they surround, as well as the character of nearby fences, walls, and gates.</i></p> <p><i>2. Fence, wall, or gate materials should relate to building materials commonly</i></p>	<p><i>Fence</i></p> <p>The proposal includes the retention of the existing fence, and an in-kind replacement where necessary.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that any fence replacement be done in-kind, with matching design and materials.</u></p>
Standards for site improvements, p. 77 Standards for Signage, p. 75	<p><i>3. Parking lot lighting should be kept to a minimum, keeping spill-over to a minimum and using the lowest wattage possible, especially in residential areas.</i></p> <p><i>7. Signs should not be internally illuminated.</i></p> <p><i>8. Signs should not use animation or flashing or moving lights.</i></p> <p><i>9. LED and plasma display signs will not be approved for use in City Old and Historic Districts.</i></p>	<p><i>Lighting and Signage</i></p> <p>The presence of parking would typically necessitate directional and regulatory freestanding signage, as well as increased and additional lighting. No signage plan has been submitted. Any signage, including lighting, should be carefully designed to align with the guidelines. Internally illuminated or LED-lit signage is not appropriate; subtle, downward-directed lighting is preferred.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends submitting a detailed lighting plan, including types of lighting to be used, for staff review and approval.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends submitting signage design for staff review and approval.</u></p>
		<p><i>Topography and Grading</i></p> <p>The site features some varied topography. The applicant has stated that the new parking will maintain the existing grade. However, the overall level change from Williamsburg Avenue dropping down to the existing rails, suggests that additional grading might be necessary at the boundary of the site, with a potential need for retaining. Such features would likely be visible from the public right-of-way.</p> <p>The eastern part of the site, where a smaller portion of the parking will be located, features a 10 ft. grade change, which further suggests that additional grading may be required.</p> <p><u>Staff recommend that any changes to the site grading and retaining treatment be submitted as part of an updated plan drawing, for staff review and approval.</u></p>
Standards for site improvements, p. 77	<p><i>1. Parking lots should be broken up as much as possible with interior landscaped islands and should be well screened from the public right-of-way and adjacent properties. Appropriate screening may include landscaping, walls, fences or berms. If a vegetative screen is chosen, the type(s) and numbers or shrubs and trees used should ensure a high</i></p>	<p><i>Trees</i></p> <p>The submitted plan demonstrates that the parking field is broken up with interior tree plantings, which helps reduce the visual impact of a large paved area. This approach is consistent with the guidelines that intend to avoid expansive uninterrupted parking surfaces, especially on such a large lot.</p>

	<i>density screen between parking lot and street.</i>	
Standards for site improvements, p. 77	<i>5. Mature trees contribute to the character of Old and Historic Districts, provide visual interest, reduce the negative impacts or parking areas and ease the effects of temperature and wind conditions. Every effort should be made to preserve and maintain them.</i>	<p><i>Trees and screening</i></p> <p>The plan indicates preservation of trees outside the limits of the new lot, as well as new tree plantings within the lot. However, renderings and plans suggest some alteration of existing vegetation, including what appears to be the removal of some of the larger trees. While trees are vital to providing screening of the parking lot, mature trees should also be preserved as outlined in the guidelines.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends submitting a complete landscaping plan, detailing which trees are to be removed, and which will be preserved, for staff review and approval. Mature trees should be preserved as much as possible.</u></p>
Standards for New Construction, Materials & Colors, Page 53	<i>2. Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the surrounding neighborhood.</i>	<p><i>Materials</i></p> <p>The paving and curbing materials for the proposed parking lot have not been fully specified in the application materials. Submitted renderings appear to suggest a gravel-like surface treatment in portions of the lot.</p> <p>Staff recommends that the applicant consider the use of granite curbing and a cobblestone (or other comparable historical paving material) apron, at the access and egress points of the lot along Williamsburg Avenue. These materials would help reference the historic industrial and dockside character of the area.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends submitting final paving and curbing materials to staff for review and approval.</u></p>
		<p><i>Dumpster Enclosure</i></p> <p>The submitted site plan and renderings indicate the presence of a dumpster enclosure within the proposed parking lot. This structure will be visible from the public right-of-way.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends submitting an elevation drawing showing the design, height, materials, and screening treatment of the dumpster enclosure, for staff review and approval.</u></p>
		<p><i>Pedestrian safety</i></p> <p>The introduction of a large surface parking lot adjacent in the proposed area will significantly increase pedestrian movement between the site and the nearby Armitage Building. This will likely require pedestrians to cross Williamsburg Avenue, which is a heavily traveled corridor.</p> <p><u>Staff therefore recommends that the applicant coordinate with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to evaluate pedestrian circulation and</u></p>

		<u>determine whether additional safety measures (such as a crosswalk) are necessary.</u>
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*It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (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 the code.*