

from the public right-of-way, a new painted wood door will be installed in an existing opening.

The storefront of the structure is proposed to be completely restored. A full-light entry door will be installed at the commercial entrance of the building, along with sidelights and transom windows. The one modified and three closed-in storefront window openings will be restored with wood-framed storefront window panels with transoms above. Below these windows, the existing wood framed sill panels will be refurbished.

The project also involves the creation of a parking lot, patio, and associated site improvements. The new asphalt drive and parking area will utilize an existing curbcut and provide space for three vehicles. The site plan shows the presence of shrubs or bushes which would help screen the parking lot from Venable Street, but no other detail on the plantings is given. Other site improvements include a resident terrace between the proposed new addition and N. 21st Street, grass plantings, trashcan area for residents, gravel trashcan area for commercial tenants, and HVAC units which should not be visible from a public right-of-way.

A six-foot high prefinished aluminum picket fence is proposed in several locations, including in front of the commercial trashcan area, between the resident terrace and N. 21st Street, between the parking area and the terrace and proposed new addition, as well as on three sides of the residential trashcan area. Matching gates to the proposed fence are proposed at each end of the segment of fence between the terrace and N. 21st Street.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* states that new additions should be subordinate in size to the main structure and should not destroy important architectural features (pp. 44-45). The new addition, despite being larger than the prior contemporary addition, will be smaller than the main structure and subordinate to it. The demolition of the contemporary one-story addition results in no loss of historic fabric, and the materials proposed for the new addition, including the new windows, will clearly differentiate the addition as contemporary to the main structure. Staff recommends the use of smooth cement board siding with no faux grain. Staff also recommends the applicant bring a paint color to the meeting for Commission review, or work with staff to determine an appropriate color for the addition.

The other proposed rehabilitation elements of the project, such as restoring the original commercial storefront and window openings are in line with the *Guidelines*, which support the reopening of closed window and door openings. Other repair and rehabilitation work appears in-kind and consists of restoring damaged elements or replacing them in-kind.

The proposed site improvements will provide amenities to future tenants while improving the appearance of the lot which is currently unmaintained grass. The *Guidelines* state that, "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 of shrubs and trees used should ensure a high density screen between parking lot and street” (p. 67 #1). While the parking lot is not large enough to need interior islands, it should be adequately screened from the public right-of-way. The applicant is encouraged to bring additional information to the meeting about the proposed screening plants so the Commission may consider whether adequate screening is provided.

In regards to the proposed prefinished aluminum picket fence, the *Guidelines* state that, “If not original to a site, new street-front fences, walls, and gates are not recommended, except in cases where new infill construction occurs adjacent to an historic property with a fence, wall, or gate” (p. 68 #3), and also that, “A new fence or wall should be constructed using materials and designs appropriate to the District. Height restrictions are governed by the Zoning Ordinance” (p. 68 #4). Properties south of the subject property have a mix of wood picket and chain link fences in their front yards. A chain link fence currently exists along the east and south sides of the subject property. While the proposed fence material may be appropriate in the District, the Commission should consider whether the fence allows enough visual permeability between the street and the sidewalk. The applicant should bring detailed information of the proposed fence and gates to the meeting for the Commission’s consideration, as well as verify that the proposed fence is compliant with the Zoning Regulations.

In regards to the residential trashcan area, the *Guidelines* note that such unattractive streetscape features can be screened effectively with appropriate landscaping. The Commission should consider whether the proposed aluminum picket fence will provide adequate screening for this element, or if other screening techniques are necessary. In regards to the on-site HVAC units, the *Guidelines* state that, “New [HVAC] 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. 58 #1). The proposed location of these units should minimize their visibility from Venable Street, and the proposed fence and gate should further screen these units from view.

While the *Guidelines* do not explicitly address walkway or patio materials, they are generally preferential to materials that relate well to those found in the district. The applicant should bring more information about the proposed terrace pavers to the meeting for the Commission’s consideration of their compatibility within the District.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation, New Construction, Demolition, and Site Improvements outlined in Sections 114.930.7(b)(c)(d)(e) 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. Staff recommends that any changes required by the National Park Service or the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for tax credit purposes be deferred to Commission staff for final review and approval.