

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

20. **CAR No. 16-057 (M. Jarreau)** **3000-3006 E. Franklin Street
St. John's Church Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct three attached single family dwellings**

Staff Contact: **K. Chen**

The applicant requests conceptual review and comment to construct three attached single-family dwellings on vacant lots in the St. John's Church Old and Historic District.

The proposed new construction will be three-story, frame, contemporary attached dwellings set on brick foundations. The buildings respond to the site by stepping down the hill. The center unit is recessed within the massing of the building, and three-bays wide with a two-story, three-bay porch. The flanking units are two-bays wide with two-story, "Charleston"-style side entry porches that extend the full length of the east and west elevations with enclosed facades and doors. All three dwellings have skirt boards and vertical corner boards, 1/1 composite windows with decorative hoods, and built up cornices. All of the porches will be approached by brick steps and will have stamped concrete flooring on the lower levels and t&g stained wood on the upper levels. They will have wood Richmond rails, 8" wood box columns, wood box cornices and field crimped standing seam metal roofs. The east and west elevations are symmetrically organized with ranked doors and windows and two-story, five-bay porches. The symmetry is broken on the first floor by the off-set entry door in the center bay and the introduction of a casement window on the second story.

The proposed new construction is located on the north side of Franklin Street about half way between the intersection of N. 29th Street to the west and N. 31st Street to the east. The street slopes steeply down to the east. With the exception of a free standing, Late-Victorian, frame, two-story, three-bay dwelling on the north side of Franklin Street and two, two-story concrete block apartment buildings on the south side of Franklin, the area is sparsely developed. Further to the east facing N. 31st Street are two rows of frame Late-Victorian dwellings. To the west facing 29th Street are densely developed blocks of predominately three-bay brick dwellings built in the mid to late nineteenth century that are two to four stories in height. A common denominator of the nearby historic buildings are porticoes or full façade porches and walls that terminate in cornices or mansard roofs. To the east of the proposed new construction are three new dwellings approved by the Commission at their January 2016 meeting. These new buildings are three-story, with mansard roofs and stylized cornices, and porches or porticoes at the entrances, and fiber cement lap siding.

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: 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.

Staff found that in general the proposed new construction was compatible with the historic features that characterizes its setting and context. The proposed design incorporates contemporary elements and does not try to duplicate existing buildings, while being reflective of traditional materials and forms such as wood siding and porches. Staff is concerned about the height of the building which exceeds the height allowed under the zoning and the context drawing, included with 2908 E. Franklin, indicates that the proposed new construction is substantially taller than the adjacent historic building while being at a lower elevation. Variations in building heights is not uncommon along block faces, especially along steeply sloped streets where buildings of similar heights step down the hill. That pattern is seen in the building itself but is not unified across the block face. Staff is also concerned about the introduction of the “Charleston” style entry porches. The two-story porch with an enclosed façade entrance is a feature largely associated with a specific region and unseen in Richmond. More traditionally in this district and in the City as a whole side porches are recessed from the façade and often located within an off set in the foot print towards the rear of the building.

The applicant has stated that a Special Use Permit is required to allow for the construction of three attached dwellings at this location. The application did not

state if the SUP would also include the height which currently exceeds the 35' allowed under R-6 zoning.

General Comments:

Hardie or other fiber cement siding and trim must be smooth and un-beaded

The following items will need to be included for final review:

- 1) A site plan showing the front and side yard setbacks for the proposed new construction and those of the adjacent properties. Location of mechanical equipment and trash receptacles and how they will be screened. Location and elevations of any proposed fencing.
- 2) Second and third floor plans to ensure that the fenestration patterns seen on the elevations agree with the plans.
- 3) Vertical dimensions indicating the relationship of the finished grade to the height of the porches, floor levels and the top of the parapet.
- 4) Dimensions of the windows and dimensions for the placement of windows above the finished-floor elevation and door heads on all elevations.
- 5) A dimensioned context drawing illustrating the vertical relationship of the proposed new construction and the adjacent buildings.
- 6) Details and dimensions of the projecting wood heads with wood panel and built up cornices.