

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
June 23, 2015 Meeting**

8. **CAR No. 15-077** (Sterling Builder, LLC) **2401 East Marshall St./313 North 24<sup>th</sup> St.  
St. John's Church Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:** **Construct a new mixed use building and  
an addition to an existing structure.**

**Staff Contact:** **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to construct a mixed use project which will include multifamily residential, commercial units, and civic space in the St. John's Church Old and Historic District. The project will be located on two parcels, 2401 East Marshall and 313 North 24<sup>th</sup> Street, which are adjacent to Patrick Henry Memorial Park and in close proximity to Saint John's Episcopal Church.

Currently, 2401 East Marshall Street is developed with a parking lot. The applicant proposes to construct two new buildings on this property with parking in the interior. The proposed two story building which will front North 24<sup>th</sup> Street will have residential units which will be set back 8' from the property line and commercial units at the corner built closer to the property line on the ground floor and residential units on the second floor. The proposed two story building which will front East Marshall Street will have on the ground floor two live/work units set back 11'-11" from the property line and one live/work unit adjacent to the existing alley built 6'-11" from the property and on the second floor three residential units.

As a part of this project, the applicant is also proposing to renovate and expand the building at 313 North 24<sup>th</sup> Street. The existing brick building, commonly known as the Nolde Garage, was built in 1921 and is a contributing structure to the St. John's Church National Historic District. The structure is in poor condition and currently serves as warehouse space for the City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreations, and Community Facilities. The applicant proposes to install windows into the existing masonry on the side and front elevations and one on the rear. The ground floor of the structure will be developed with commercial fronting North 24<sup>th</sup> Street, a civic space in the center of the building which will open to the park, and residential in the rear. The applicant proposes a second floor addition which will be set back 15'-7 1/2" from the front property line and 11'-9" from the north property line and 11'-3" from the south property line adjacent to the park.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the "Standards for New Construction: Commercial" on pages 50 and 51 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.*

The applicant is proposing a roof top addition to a small scale structure. The proposed addition will be set back from the front and side property lines and located towards the center and rear of the property. As the property is located adjacent to a park, any proposed addition would be visible from the public right of way. The applicant has designed the addition to be subordinate in size to the main building. Additionally, as a part of the redevelopment of the property as a whole with other two story structures, the proposed second story addition is appropriate.

- 2. New commercial infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard development 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.*

As there is little development on the subject block, a dominate street wall is not present. On the North 24<sup>th</sup> Street block, the only structure is the Nolde Garage which is built to the property line. On East Marshall Street, the only structure is located across the alley from the proposed structure at the corner of North 25<sup>th</sup> Street and East Marshall and is built to the property lines.

At the corner of East Marshall and North 24<sup>th</sup> Street, the proposed structure will replicate the corner commercial condition prevalent in the district in which the corner building is located closer to the curb than the adjacent residential. The remainder of that building will be setback 8' which is similar to the building across

North 24<sup>th</sup> Street. Similarly, the structure fronting East Marshall Street will be set back from the property line almost 12 feet to replicate the set back of the buildings on the north side of East Marshall Street.

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

The proposed development consists of two new structures. One new structure will face North 24<sup>th</sup> Street, and the other structure will face East Marshall Street. Both prominent streets will be addressed by the two different buildings.

4. *For large-scale commercial parking, parking within the building is strongly encouraged. If a building includes parking within it, vehicle entry doors should be located on non-primary elevations.*

The project is not of the scale to accommodate parking within the building. The project proposes to locate parking in the interior of the lots. The parking will be screened by the existing building and the proposed new structures. The *Guidelines* for parking lots note that mature trees contribute to the character of Districts, provide visual interest, reduce the negative impacts of parking area and ease the effects of temperature and wind conditions (pg. 73, #5). For this reason, staff recommends that the applicant attempt to preserve the existing trees on the property near the parking area.

## **FORM**

1. *New commercial construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the immediate area. 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 proposed buildings offers a contemporary but compatible interpretation of forms found throughout the neighborhood. The historic structures surrounding the property offer a variety of heights and massing. Mansard and shed roofs are the dominate roof form. The proposed residential portion of the new construction follows the general form of three-bays per unit and 2-stories in height with a shed roof and a first floor stainless steel awning. This pattern resembles the form of the surrounding residential buildings, but the applicant has included a bay with a double window and door rather than the same size windows for each bay. Staff recommends that the applicant should maintain the fenestration pattern found in the neighborhood and replace the double window and doors with a single window and door. For the commercial portions of the new buildings, the applicant replicates the corner commercial conditions of the District with the development being located near the property lines and providing corner entrances.

Additionally, the applicant employs setbacks similar to the buildings located across the bordering streets

2. *New commercial construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby history commercial buildings in the district.*

The proposed buildings maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic commercial buildings by incorporating large areas of storefront glazing and stainless steel awning throughout the project.

3. *New commercial construction should incorporate human-scale elements at the pedestrian level.*

The proposed buildings include human-scale elements such as the storefronts at the corner and the stainless steel awnings throughout the project. Additionally, the applicant proposes to create recessed entries with support columns at the corners of E. Marshall and N. 24<sup>th</sup> Street and E. Marshall Street and the mid-block alley similar to the pedestrian entrances for other commercial corner properties in the district. The applicant proposes to incorporate street side entrances directly into the ground floor residential units on the North 24<sup>th</sup> Street and East Marshall Street elevations instead of orienting the entrances to the parking area to the rear. Additionally, on the Nolde Garage building, the applicant proposes to remove a 32'-1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" by 11'-9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" portion of existing brick and replace it with glazing to include two entrances under a stainless steel awning. This will both provide a human scale elements of the awnings and glazing and also connectivity to the adjacent park.

### ***HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION & MASSING***

1. *New commercial construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings, both residential and commercial.*

The proposed new construction will be 28' in height, and with the proposed addition, the Nolde Garage building will also be 28' in height. These heights respect the typical heights of residential and commercial buildings in the area which range from 24' to 32' in height.

2. *New commercial construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of commercial buildings in Richmond's historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing should look to the project's local district for precedent. When designing new commercial buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face, the design should still employ bays as an organizational device, but the new building should read as a single piece of architecture.*

For the buildings which will be newly constructed, the applicant proposes to setback the residential portions and use a different material (siding rather than brick) to break up the massing of the building. For the Nolde Garage, the south elevation occupies more than a third of the block. The applicant proposes to

incorporate a large area of glazing to break up the massing between the front and the rear of the structure.

## **MATERIALS & COLORS**

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

The proposed addition will not cover or destroy original architectural elements as it is located on the top of the structure. The applicant is proposing to alter architectural elements of the existing structure with its renovation to include modifying existing openings on the front of the structure and introducing new openings on the secondary elevations. The *Guidelines* state that the size of windows should not be changed, and that changes to existing windows or the addition of new windows along a secondary elevation will be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis (pg. 65 #8). Staff recommends that the applicant should not alter the size of the western window opening of the front façade and should restore the size of the historic eastern window opening of the front façade. The applicant is proposing to remove a large portion of masonry on the south elevation to be replaced glazing. Though this is located on a secondary elevation, it is visible from the public right of way as it adjacent to the existing park. Staff recommends approval of these alterations as they provide connectivity to the park.

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

The applicant proposes to use brick to match the brick of the existing structure for the commercial elements of the proposed project. For the residential components and the rooftop addition, the applicant is proposing to clad these structures with cement composite siding with a 5.79" reveal and a stacked bond layout. Though immediately adjacent to the subject block the majority of the homes are brick, there are structures with siding found throughout the neighborhood. The proposed siding layout introduces a contemporary element while referencing the historic materials. The applicant is proposing to install aluminum one over one windows and doors throughout the project and a commercial aluminum storefront at the corner of East Marshall and North 24<sup>th</sup> Street. The applicant is proposing to steel awnings on the first floor of all of the structures and an aluminum fin shade on the south elevation of the building addition. The choice of materials is compatible with the structures in the area yet clearly differentiated while still simple in design.

3. *Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors already found in the immediate neighborhood and throughout the larger district.*

The applicant has not submitted paint colors for review. Staff recommends that the applicant provide paint colors for the siding for review and approval by Commission staff.

- 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 applicant is proposing smooth untextured cementitious siding on multiple elevations. The Commission may wish to consider whether the proposed layout of the siding is appropriate for the District as the proposed stacked bond layout is not traditionally found in the area.

- 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.*

The application does not show any visible rooftop mechanical equipment. The addition does include a rooftop railing to enclose a seating area off of the second floor. The applicant proposes to use a glass railing which will minimize the appearance of the railing and its visual impact on the surrounding district.

- 6. For larger-scale projects that involve communal garbage collection (such as dumpsters or other large collection device), these garbage receptacles should be located away from the primary elevation or elevations of the building (preferably to the rear) and screened from view.*

The application does not include any communal garbage collection locations.

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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 with the following:

- The applicant attempt to preserve the existing trees on the property near the parking area.
- On the proposed new buildings, the applicant should maintain the fenestration pattern found in the neighborhood and replace the double window and doors on the residential portions of the north and west elevations with single windows and doors.

- On the existing building, the applicant should not alter the size of the western window opening of the front façade and should restore the size of the historic eastern window opening of the front façade
- The applicant provide paint colors for the siding for review and approval by Commission Staff.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the conditions noted above, is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 114.930.7(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.