

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
March 22, 2016 Meeting**

13. **CAR No. 16-037** (Cava Capital) **2808 ½ E. Leigh Street
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct new single family residence**

Staff Contact: **K. Chen**

The applicant requests conceptual review and comment to construct a new, two-story, three-bay, frame Italianate dwelling on a vacant lot in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District.

The new dwelling will be a two-story, three-bay, frame, Italianate dwelling with a full façade, hipped-roof porch, and a decorative cornice. The porch will have square posts and a Richmond rail. The dwelling will be clad with smooth, Hardie, and have 2/2 vinyl clad windows. The dwelling is located on a block that was developed in the 1920s, replacing earlier dwellings, and consists primarily of masonry (brick and stucco), dwellings with mansard roofs and classically decorated porches. There is also a great deal of new in-fill, frame construction in the immediate vicinity.

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.

SITING

- 1. Additions should be subordinate in size to their main buildings and as inconspicuous as possible. Locating additions at the rear or on the least visible side of a building is preferred.*

This guideline does not apply.

- 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 front yard setback will be 18'-0" which is compatible with the two adjacent properties where the front yard setbacks are slightly greater than 18'. The west side yard setback is 2'-0" and the east side yard is 3'-0". There are a variety of side yard setbacks on the block and 3'-0" is the minimum side yard setback required by zoning.

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

The new dwelling will be oriented towards Leigh Street, the 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.*

There is a preponderance of frame, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Victorian architecture in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The immediate buildings, on the same block face, are of masonry construction (brick and stucco) with slate-tile clad mansard roofs. The house immediately to the east is an American Foursquare with a hipped roof. The surrounding numbered streets are dominated by new, infill, frame construction. The proposed form, material and "Italianate" style are found in the district but not in the adjacent houses.

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

The proposed new construction maintains the human scale found in the district.

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 new construction incorporates a cornice and porch and front steps reinforcing the street level architectural character and human scale elements found in the district.

HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION & MASSING

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

The proposed new construction is two-stories in height, typical of the other dwellings found in the district. The total height of the new building is 27'-4" which is comparable with the heights of the adjacent buildings – 27'-0" for the house to the west and 28'-4" for the house to the east.

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 new construction is three-bays wide which is the typical configuration found in the district. It has ranked windows which reflects the typical vertical orientation of the surrounding residential properties. The vertical orientation is broken by the full façade porch and cornice also typical organizing elements found in the district. Window dimensions and head and sill heights were not included.

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

The cornice height is compatible but does not align with the adjacent houses because of the variety of roof forms. The house to the west has a mansard roof and the lower cornice is at approximately 22' as is the eave line on the hip roof of the house to the east. Cornice dimensions and details were not included in the elevation drawings.

MATERIALS & COLORS

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

This guideline does not apply.

- 2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.*

Frame is a typical construction material found in the district but the adjacent houses are of brick and stucco construction.

- 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 Hardie siding is indicated to be Evening Blue which is similar to Leisure Blue found on the color chart, page 60-61 of the *Guidelines*. The composite trim and windows will be white. A door color was not indicated.

- 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 siding will be smooth Hardie with a 5" exposure. The trim will be composite and the 2/2 windows will be M&W Jefferson 330 vinyl clad. The application did not indicate if they would be true or simulated divided light. The porch roof will be black EPDM and the main roof will be white TPO. No details or materials were included for the porch or cornice. The door will be fiber glass. The four panel door with upper lights is not a door type, historically found in the district.

- 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.*

No information was provided on the location and screening for mechanical units.