

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

15. **CAR No. 15-082** (A. Pace)

**322 N. 36<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:** **Construct a single-family house**

**Staff Contact:** **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval to construct a single-family house on a vacant lot in the Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District. The proposed building is an Italianate-influenced structure with a false mansard roof and front porch. The design is modeled closely after a previously-completed new construction project done by the same developer at 418 N. 24<sup>th</sup> Street.

The new building will be situated on a corner lot between an existing, historic house and E. Marshall Street. The structure will be a total of 26'-4 1/4" in height. It will have side yard setbacks of 3' and a front yard setback of 10'.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. 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 of on the least visible side of a building is preferred.*

This standard is not applicable.

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 proposed 3' side yard setbacks reflect the typical pattern along the block. The proposed 10' front yard setback would align the structure with that of the existing, adjacent structures, which according to the applicant also have 10' front yard setbacks. Because Zoning considers the side yard facing E. Marshall Street as a front yard, the applicant will be seeking Board of Zoning Appeals relief in order to have a 3' side yard setback.

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

The new house will face N. 36<sup>th</sup> Street, the most 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.*

The form of the proposed building is typical of two-story Italianate buildings located in the Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District.

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

The proposed building maintains the existing human scale of the neighborhood.

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 building's design calls for a front porch which lends human-scale elements to the building's design.

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

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

The proposed building will be a total of 26'-4 1/4" in height which, according to the context rendering provided by the applicant, would closely match the height of

the adjacent, historic houses. The building height is consistent with other structures found along the block.

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 building design respects the typical vertical orientation of two-story residences in the district.

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

Because the proposed structure utilizes a false mansard, whereas the existing houses have shed roofs, the cornice height of the proposed building will be lower than that of the existing houses.

## **MATERIALS & COLORS**

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

This standard is not applicable.

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

The applicant proposes fiber cement siding, brick piers with wood lattice below, composite porch decking, 8"x8" porch posts, standing seam metal front porch roof painted black, DaVinci faux slate shingles in European Gray on the front of the mansard, 3-tap charcoal shingles on the rear of the mansard and the main roof, wooden Richmond rail porch railings, custom-made cornice with brackets and porch frieze details, six-paneled front door with 3-lite transom above, and 1/1 double-hung wood windows. Windows on the first floor are 2'-4" x 5'-6" and windows on the second floor are 2'-4" x 5'-2", with the exception of the rear first floor window which is 2'-4" x 3'-4". Staff recommends that the proposed cornice brackets be spaced to frame each window, not spaced equidistantly across the cornice as is currently proposed.

*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 applicant proposes "Leisure Blue" for the body color of the house, which is a color found on the CAR paint color palette. The applicant is proposing white for all trim.

3. *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 proposed building design calls for fiber cement siding. Staff recommends the use of smooth fiber cement siding with no faux wood grain.

4. *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.*

This standard is not applicable.

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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 on the following conditions:

- That the cornice brackets be located to frame each window, not spaced equidistantly across the cornice as is currently proposed.
- That the fiber cement siding has a smooth finish with no faux wood grain.
- That the windows on the right elevation, facing E. Marshall Street be better aligned, a detail which may be deferred to staff for their review and approval.
- That the second floor rear window be centered and not slightly offset.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the conditions above, is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 114.930.7(c) of the City Code, and 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.