

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
November 25, 2014 Meeting**

11. **CAR No. 14-124** (M. Morgan)

**2307 E. Clay Street
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

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

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval to construct a single-family dwelling at a vacant lot located in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. This application for a Certificate of Appropriateness is a follow-up from a Conceptual Review done in December 2013. The majority of historic buildings in Church Hill North were constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century, and include a wide variety of architectural forms and styles. The applicant has proposed a two-story dwelling with a walk-out basement at the rear of the property that echoes the design of Queen Anne-style houses in the area. The façade includes a projecting bay and turret, an offset entryway, and a one-story front porch. The rear of the building includes a two-story porch and basement entry. The applicant proposes cladding the majority of the building in brick veneer. The rest of the building, including the rear half of the left façade and the upper stories of the rear facade, would be clad with fiber cement siding. The applicant proposes a 10' front yard setback and 3' side yard setbacks.

There are currently no buildings facing the 2300 block of E. Clay Street. Buildings in the area include two-story historic residences facing 23rd and 24th Streets and contemporary buildings that are part of the Jefferson Mews complex.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the Standards for New Construction on pages 44 and 45 and the Standards for Site Improvements on pages 66 and 67 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

New construction should be compatible with the historic features that characterize its setting and context. To protect the significance of the historic context, the new work should reference the historic materials, features, size, scale, proportions, and massing of its setting. However, new construction should be clearly discernible from the old to protect the authenticity of the historic district.

SITING

1. *Additions should be subordinate in size to the main structure and as inconspicuous as possible. Locating them at the rear or least visible side of the structure is preferred.*

This standard is not applicable.

2. *New infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns of the surrounding block. The minimal setbacks evident in most districts reinforce the traditional street wall.*

The applicant proposes a 10' front yard setback which is the minimum setback required by Zoning Regulations. This is 2' closer than what was proposed at the time of Conceptual Review, and should help give the building more of a presence on E. Clay Street. The proposed 3' side yard setbacks are consistent with other properties in the area.

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

The proposed dwelling will face E. Clay Street, the only street bordering the site.

FORM

1. *New 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 structure. Building form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.*

The design of the building echoes the form of Queen Anne-style buildings found in the district. The false mansard roof, turret, and projecting bay reflect patterns found at properties such as 2300 E. Marshall Street and 320-322 N. 23rd Street in adjacent blocks. This version of the design appears to be more compatible with historic structures in the district than the previous design, as the two-story front porch and double turrets have been eliminated.

SCALE

1. *New construction should maintain the existing human scale of historic residential and commercial neighborhoods. The inappropriate use of monumentally-scaled buildings that overwhelm pedestrians at the street level is discouraged.*

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

2. *New additions and infill structures should incorporate human-scale elements such as storefronts and porches into their design.*

The proposed design calls for a front porch that has a form that is comparable to other porches in the area.

HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION, & MASSING

1. *New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding houses and commercial structures.*

The proposed structure will be 30' in height at the top of the false mansard roof. The context rendering supplied by the applicant indicates that the height of the proposed building will be slightly higher than houses on N. 23rd Street, but in line with houses on N. 24th Street.

2. *New construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of commercial and residential properties in historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing of more than 30 feet should be broken up by bays.*

The new design is much more consistent than the previous one in regard to the vertical orientation of typical residential properties in the district. By eliminating one turret and projecting bay and the two-story porch, the proposed building appears more vertical and less squat than the previous design.

3. *Typical massing patterns throughout city historic districts are simple and block-like; therefore, new structures should avoid the use of staggered setbacks, towers, or elaborate balconies.*

The applicant has proposed a solid, block-like design that is compatible with the massing of residential properties in the neighborhood.

MATERIALS, COLORS, & DETAILS

1. *New construction should not cover or destroy original architectural elements.*

This standard is not applicable.

2. *Missing building elements should be replaced with new elements compatible in size, scale, and material to the original elements without creating a false historical appearance.*

This standard is not applicable.

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

The applicant proposes brick veneer, fiber cement siding, stone veneer window headers, and architectural shingles or synthetic slate. The materials appear to be compatible with the district, as long as the fiber cement siding has a smooth

finish and not a faux grain. The applicant has stated that they will bring samples of these and other materials to the meeting for Commission members to view.

4. *Paint colors for new additions should complement those of the primary structure. Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors found in the immediate neighborhood and throughout the larger district.*

The applicant has not indicated color selections, but plans to bring a paint sample to the meeting for Commission members to view.

5. *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 fiber cement siding should have a smooth finish as previously indicated.

6. *Vinyl windows are strongly discouraged and rarely permitted.*

The applicant has not specified the material for the windows, except to indicate a 1/1 grid pattern on double-hung windows. The applicant is encouraged to propose a wood or aluminum-clad wood window.

Staff recommends approval of the project. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines*. The applicant has modified the design significantly in order to accommodate the Commission members' comments received at the Conceptual Review in December 2013. The new design is much more indicative of Queen Anne-styled houses found in the immediate neighborhood. The applicant is encouraged to bring samples or a list of all materials proposed for the new house to the Commission meeting in order to ensure their compatibility within the district.

It is the assessment of staff that the application 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.