

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
April 28, 2015 Meeting**

3. **CAR No. 15-042** (J. DeHoff)

**2 West Main Street  
Zero Blocks East and West Franklin Street  
Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:** **Demolish structure and build surface parking lot**

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

The applicant requests approval to demolish a single story commercial building within the Zero Blocks East and West Franklin Street Old and Historic District and install a surface parking lot connected to an existing surface parking lot directly northeast of the site. A new simple metal fence which will be 3 ½ feet tall will be installed on the frontages facing West Main Street and North Foushee Street. The proposed planting plan includes the four 2 ½" caliper willow oak trees at the four corners of the paved area; eleven 2' tall Steeds Upright Holly trees fronting the paved area at the north, east, and south corners; big blue liriopie at the base of the tree plantings; and mulched beds which will be planted along the northwest and southeast borders. The applicant has stated that the mulched beds will be planted in a similar fashion to the mulched beds which line the street adjacent to their parking lot at West Grace Street and North Foushee Street.

**Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions.** Under the provisions of Section 114.930.7 (d) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Commission shall approve requests for demolition when there are no feasible alternatives to the proposed demolition; the building is deemed not to be a contributing part of the historic character of the Old and Historic District; or the building has deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation. The building which is proposed to be demolished is a single story, rectangular, masonry building constructed in 1960. The Zero Blocks of East and West Franklin Street Old and Historic District was designated a district because of the eclectic array of residences in Italianate, Romanesque, and Georgian Revival style constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Staff finds that this 20<sup>th</sup> century building is not a contributing part of the historic character of the Old and Historic District as it was not constructed during the period of significance for the structures in the District and is not of the architectural style of the historic structures in the district. Based on this finding, staff recommends that this structure may be demolished.

The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* also state that when reviewing a proposed demolition, the Commission should consider the type and quality of the project that will replace the demolished building and that approval of a demolition request to accommodate the installation of an open parking lot with little or no screening would not be appropriate (pg. 79). Though the applicant is proposing to install a parking lot, the proposed parking lot would be screened by both a fence and

landscaping. The proposed fence is consistent with the Guidelines (pg. 74, #4) as the new fence will be constructed using materials and design appropriate for the District and is of a similar design as the fence surrounding the adjacent parking lot. In parking lots, the *Guidelines* state that for vegetative screens, the type and number of trees and shrubs should be chosen to ensure a high density screen between the parking lot and the street (pg. 73, #1). Though the application includes the planting of four shade trees and other bushes and plants at the corners of the paved area, staff recommends that the applicant increase the vegetative screening in the mulch beds along North Foushee Street and the property to northwest. Additionally, the *Guidelines* address the needed to preserve mature trees in parking lots as they provide visual interest, reduce the negative impacts of parking areas and ease the effects of temperature and wind. Currently, there is a tree on the edge of the property adjacent to the fence on the northwest side of the property. Staff recommends that the applicant attempt to preserve the existing trees on the property.

It is the assessment of staff, if the applicant accepts the conditions described above, that the application with these conditions is consistent with the Standards for Demolition in Section 114-930.7(d) and the Standards for Site Improvements in Section 114-930.7(e) 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 the code.