

**6. COA-091355-2021**

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

May 25, 2021

PROPERTY ADDRESS

0 N 29<sup>th</sup> Street

DISTRICT

St. John's Church

Commission of  
Architectural Review

STAFF REPORT



APPLICANT

Department of Parks, Recreation, and  
Community Facilities

STAFF CONTACT

C. Jones

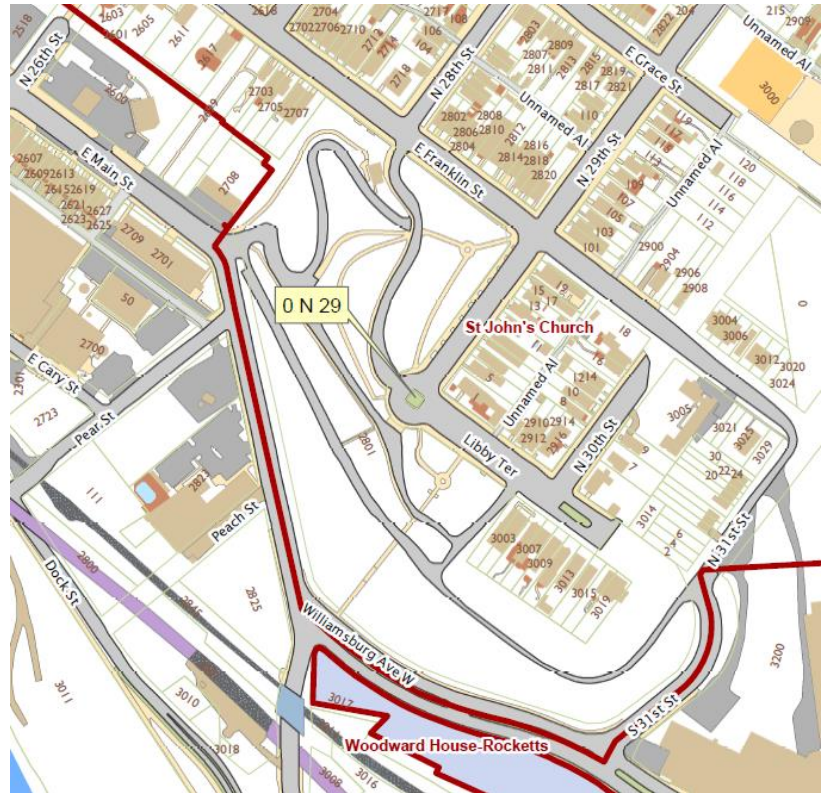
**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Remove a monument, pedestal, steps, curbs, and a decorative fence.**

**PROJECT DETAILS**

- The applicant proposes to remove the Soldiers and Sailors monument, pedestal, steps, and a decorative fence in a traffic circle located at the intersection of N. 29th Street and Libby Terrace.
- The monument was previously removed by order of the mayor.
- Once the removal is complete, the applicant proposes to install granite cobblestone to match existing paving from the Department of Public Works inventory.

The location of the monument, pedestal, and related objects has not been determined and is not considered as part of this application. Should any part of the monument and related objects be considered for reinstallation in a City and Old Historic District, an application to locate them in a City and Old Historic District will be necessary.



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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS**

Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the "Building Relocation" section of the Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines utilizing the Guidelines presented below. Since the Guidelines do not specifically address removal and relocation of objects other than buildings, Commission staff also utilized the City Code of Ordinance, specifically the zoning ordinance, available here:

[https://library.municode.com/va/richmond/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodetd=CH30ZO\\_ARTIINGE](https://library.municode.com/va/richmond/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodetd=CH30ZO_ARTIINGE).

Staff also utilized the guidance provided by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) in their document titled: DHR Guidance Regarding Confederate Monuments, available here:

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Monument-Removal-Guidance-Letterhead.pdf>.

**PREVIOUS REVIEWS**

The Commission has not previously reviewed this application.

**STAFF RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS**

- the gentlest means possible be used to remove the objects
- the objects be removed in a single piece if possible, or be disassembled at the original joints
- all removed pieces be stored in a secure environment before final disposition

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

Building Relocation, pg. 81	<i>1. Will the proposed relocation have a detrimental effect on the structural soundness of the building?</i>	The applicant provides a preliminary process for removal including using a hand grinder to remove any mortar, cutting any internal/hidden bronze pins or straps, and possibly adding holes in the hidden faces of some stone components to allow for pin insertion and lifting access. Staff finds that this is minimally invasive and recommends approval with the condition that <u>the gentlest means possible be used to remove the objects.</u>
	<i>2. Will the proposed relocation have a detrimental effect on other historic sites, buildings or structures in an Old and Historic District?</i>	The applicant does not propose any changes to any other elements in the St. John’s Church City and Old Historic District. As such, staff finds that removing the objects associated with the Soldiers and Sailors memorial will not have a detrimental effect on other historic sites, buildings, or structures in the St. John’s Church Historic District.
Code of Ordinances, Sec. 30-100, Purpose	<i>The purpose of this chapter is to adopt a comprehensive zoning plan designed to:</i> <i>(2) Secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other danger;</i> <i>(3) Promote health, sanitation and general welfare;</i> <i>(7) Facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community;</i>	As indicated in the application, the monument and associated objects in prominent public places are symbols of oppression and inequality which are associated with the era of legalized segregation, known as the Jim Crow laws <sup>1</sup> , and the Lost Cause. <sup>2</sup> The applicant further states that the monuments have become locations that endanger public safety. Staff finds that the removal of the monuments and associated objects is in keeping with the City of Richmond Code of Ordinances.
DHR Guidance, Considerations for Appropriate Removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Methods – remove in a single piece if possible. If not, disassemble at original joints</i></li><li>• <i>Safekeeping of associated plaques, time capsules, removal ornament</i></li><li>• <i>Storage, Repurposing, Deaccessioning, Acquisition by another entity or institution</i></li><li>• <i>Security</i></li></ul>	Staff recommends the monument and associated <u>objects be removed in a single piece if possible, or be disassembled at the original joints.</u> Staff further recommends <u>all removed pieces be stored in a secure environment before final disposition.</u>

<sup>1</sup> *Why the COV Can Remove Richmond’s Lee Monument Despite its Designation to the State and Federal Historic Registers.* DHR webpage, accessed May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021: <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/news/why-the-cov-can-remove-richmonds-lee-monument-despite-its-designation-to-the-state-and-federal-historic-registers/>

<sup>2</sup> *The Lost Cause: Definitions and Origins.* The American Battlefield Trust. Article published October 30, 2020 and updated March 25, 2021. Accessed May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/lost-cause-definition-and-origins>

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DHR Guidance,  
Implications  
Regarding  
National  
Register of  
Historic Places  
and Virginia  
Landmarks  
Register  
Listings

*Concerning most historic districts in Virginia, removal of a monument/memorial that is a contributing object or structure likely would not cause the entire district to be delisted. Both the VLR and NRHP have a high bar for delisting a historic district, as the entire district must be found no longer to be a distinguishable entity with significance and integrity. That said, demolitions in one area on the edge of a district can result in changing the district's boundary to remove that area. Demolitions that eat up the center of a district likely would lead to delisting as the VLR and NRHP do not allow 'donut holes' in districts. But the types of monuments and memorials in most districts do not have that kind of scale.*

The St. John's Church City and Old Historic District is 118 acres and consists of 643 properties, and preserves one of the largest and most diverse collections of historic buildings in Richmond. The district is named after St. John's Church, where Patrick Henry gave his famous "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech in 1741. The residential buildings in the district range from early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Federal style buildings to mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century Greek Revival, to later 19<sup>th</sup>-century styles. The district is primarily significant for its representative architectural styles and its association with St. Johns Church. Staff notes the National Register of Historic Places nomination form does not identify the statue and related objects as significant features of the district. Staff finds that the removal of the statue and related objects will not impact the overall significance of the district and that the district will continue to maintain its historic significance and integrity.

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It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards and Guidelines outlined in Section 30-930.7 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.

**FIGURES**



*Figure 1. Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Monument, prior to monument removal.*



*Figure 2. Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Monument, current condition.*