

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

11. **CAR No. 15-078** (A. Manuchehr) **3820 Hermitage Road
Hermitage Road Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construction of a new outbuilding**

Staff Contact: **K. Chen**

The applicant requests approval to construct a new two-story outbuilding in the rear yard of 3820 Hermitage Road, located in the Hermitage Road Old and Historic District. Surrounding properties are mostly single-family residential situated on large parcels with generous setbacks from the street. This application came before the Commission at the April 22, 2014 meeting. A Certificate of Appropriateness was issued with the following conditions:

- The garage doors shall be wood and that the window trim shall match the window trim on the main house, and
- The Commission strongly recommended (but did not require) that the windows and doors of the primary elevation be aligned, and
- Any changes to the design to achieve alignment of these features must be reviewed and approved by Commission staff.

The application is before the Commission at this time because there were additional changes to the project beyond the alignment of the windows. The modifications to the design include:

- Brick exterior walls instead of the approved stucco,
- The replacement of the approved Ludowici Spanish tile roof with a Gerard stone-coated metal roofing with a Barrel Vault profile, and
- The addition of an exterior stair and open porch on the second story at the southeast corner,

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 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.*

The proposed outbuilding has been moved 15' closer to the rear of the main dwelling. The front of the outbuilding is now proposed to be 60' from the rear of the main dwelling; the approved distance was 75'. Rather than being centered in the rear yard, the rear of the outbuilding is now about half way between the main dwelling and the rear property line. The outbuilding is still set 10' from the northern property line. The outbuilding would be minimally visible from Hermitage Road and more visible from the rear alley.

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.*

This standard is not applicable.

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

The proposed outbuilding will face toward Hermitage Road in the same manner as the main dwelling structure.

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 proposed outbuilding is compatible with the main dwelling structure. Both the proposed and existing structures are considered Italian Renaissance, with mostly square building footprints and hipped roofs. Proportions between the building's width and height are similar, as is the low roofline in relation to the top of the upper-floor windows.

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 dimensions of the revised outbuilding are slightly larger 25' (excluding the exterior stair) x 37', when compared to the 29' x 33' in the approved application. No vertical height was given in this application but on the original application the height was proposed to be 27'. The main dwelling on the property is

approximately 45' x 45' and 35' in height. While the proposed structure is not so much smaller than the main structure, it is not uncommon for properties in this district to have large outbuildings set on large building lots, in part owing to the pastoral history of the area. The applicant has provided several examples of properties within and adjacent to the district with large outbuildings.

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

The exterior stair and recessed entryway is of human-scale and relates well to the main dwelling.

HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION, & MASSING

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

The proposed outbuilding is in proportion to the existing dwelling structure as well as to structures on surrounding properties.

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 fenestration pattern has been aligned as requested by the Commission which respects the vertical orientation of the existing dwelling.

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.*

Structures located in the Hermitage Road Old & Historic District differ from many others in the city in that they are not simple and block-like, representing a variety of architectural styles such as Italian Renaissance and Queen Anne. In any case, the proposed design is not overly elaborate and would not detract from the main dwelling structure or surrounding structures.

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 proposed outbuilding would be composed of brick walls with a Gerard stone-coated metal tile roof with a barrel vault profile. Brick is a common material on outbuildings in the neighborhood and the metal barrel tile roofing is similar in character to the Ludowici tile roof on the main dwelling. Custom window boxes matching the main dwelling structure are proposed to provide more continuity in design.

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 indicated final color selections which would mirror that of the main dwelling. While the palette of building colors is varied throughout the district, the proposed colors would be compatible with those found at nearby properties.

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 project calls for brick exterior walls in accordance with the guidelines for synthetic materials. No information was provided for the color of the brick. The garage doors will be fiberglass with a bead board finish and applied rails and stiles. A condition of the previous application was the use of wood doors.

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

The application calls for the use of Anderson 400 Series picture aluminum clad wood windows. The proposed window grid pattern matches that of the main dwelling structure.

Staff recommends approval of the project with a condition. The overall building form, scale, siting, massing, and materials appear to be compatible with the Hermitage Road Old and Historic District, and staff recommends approval of the application as proposed with the condition that the garage doors be wood.

It is the assessment of staff that the project, with the condition above, is consistent with Richmond City Code Section 114-930.7 (c) Standards for New Construction, as well as the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission in accordance with Section 114-930.7 (g) of the Code.