

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
September 23, 2014 Meeting**

11. **CAR No. 14-103** (Ridge Point Real Estate) **718-720 North 27th Street**
Church Hill North Old and Historic District

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

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval to construct a new single-family house on two vacant lot located in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The proposed building is a two-story building with a shed roof that replicates the Italianate buildings style found throughout the district. A new 6' privacy fence with wood pickets will be installed at the rear of the property between the rear yard and the proposed parking area, which will be gravel and accommodate one to two cars.

The building is situated between two existing houses on the northwest side of an otherwise intact block. The structure will be 28'-11" at the peak of the roof, which based upon the rendered street elevation, will match closely the heights of nearby structures. The building will have 3'-3" side yard setbacks and a 16' front yard setback, which would align with the existing house to the north, and be set back approximately 8' from the house to the south. The building will have one-story front and rear porches.

The applicant proposes smooth cement board siding, brick veneer foundation and porch columns, black membrane main roof, matte black metal or architectural shingle porch roofs, Richmond rails on the porches, front porch fiberglass columns, and a wooden front door with a transom above and side lites.

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 proposed 3'-3" side yard setbacks will reflect the typical pattern along the block. The proposed setback will be consistent with the existing structure to the north, but will be setback approximately 8' from the structure to the south, due to a slightly offset setback along this side of the block

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

The proposed dwelling will face North 27th Street, the most prominent 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 form of the building is typical of two-story Italianate buildings located in the Union Hill Old and Historic District.

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 28'-11" tall at the ridge of the roof. The context rendering supplied by the applicant indicates that the height of the proposed building is comparable to adjacent buildings and others on the block.

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

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 proposed massing is generally simple and block-like.

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 smooth cement board siding, brick veneer foundation and porch columns, black membrane main roof, matte black metal or architectural shingle porch roofs, Richmond rails on the porches, front porch fiberglass columns, and a wooden front door with a transom above and side lites. Staff would recommend the use of wood or aluminum-clad wood windows with true or simulated divided lites. Staff would also recommend the installation of black metal porch roofs instead of architectural shingles.

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 proposes painting the structure “Pacific Blue,” a color which is similar to the color palette developed by the Commission to help staff approve paint colors. All trim will be painted white.

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 application calls for fiber cement siding for the dwelling. The siding should have a smooth finish (and not a faux grain), in accordance with the Commission’s guidelines for synthetic materials.

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

The application specifies the installation of wood and composite windows. Staff recommends the use of wood or aluminum-clad wood windows with true or simulated divided lites.

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 with the installation of wood or aluminum-clad wood windows with true or simulated divided lites, as well as the installation of black metal porch roofs.

The applicant proposes a single double-door at the rear, first-floor elevation. This is a more contemporary design, whereas a single door with window may be more compatible with historic structures. The Commission may want to consider the compatibility of this design against the benefit that it would clearly differentiate it as new construction.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outline 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.