

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
May 26, 2015 Meeting**

3. **CAR No. 15-068** (J. Haw)

**13 South 13th Street
Shockoe Slip Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

**Construct a new rooftop penthouse
and alter existing windows and doors**

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests approval to install a rooftop penthouse and replace existing windows and doors on a four story commercial structure in the Shockoe Slip Old and Historic District. This work is part of the rehabilitation of the office building which is known as the Powers-Taylor Building. State and Federal Part 2 tax credit applications and Part 2 amendments for this project have been reviewed and conditionally approved by the Department of Historic Resources and the National Park Service.

The proposed penthouse is a 37'-9 ½" by 17'-7 ½" structure which will be 9'-1" tall and is located in the center of the roof. The structure will have a flat roof and gray fiber cement board siding. In addition, the western and south elevations of the penthouse will include floor to ceiling windows. Adjacent to the penthouse, the applicant proposes to install a 20"-2" by 17'-7 ¼" wooden deck. A 3 foot tall, grey, metal guard rail will surround this proposed deck. The applicant installed a mock-up of the egress stairs which were approved administratively by staff, the proposed penthouse, and the proposed guard rail. The mock up was only visible from Main Street to the northeast of the property and minimally west of the property from a distance. The portion of the mock up visible primarily represents the egress stair overrun not the proposed penthouse.

In addition to the penthouse installation, the applicant is proposing to replace doors and windows on the west, south and east elevations and to remove the existing fire escape stairs on the east rear elevation. The façade will be preserved with no alterations to the building's historic elements, and deteriorated elements will be repaired in-kind. A pair of existing non-historic aluminum storefront doors will be replaced with new aluminum storefront doors of a higher quality.

On the south elevation, a non-historic fire escape was removed and the door openings boarded up prior to the applicant owning the property. The applicant proposes to infill these doors with inoperable glass storefront doors which will have 4" verticals, 8" sills, and 6" heads. In addition, two altered windows at the basement level on the south elevation will be replaced with two new metal windows which will match the historic sash and mullion and muntin configuration of the existing historic windows at the basement level.

On the east elevation, the applicant is proposing to remove the existing exterior staircase. The applicant is proposing to replace two non-historic doors that were used for the fire escape with one over one double-hung metal windows. In addition, an infilled window at the basement level on the south elevation will be restored with a new metal window which will match the historic sash and mullion and muntin configuration of the existing historic windows at the basement level of the south elevation.

Staff recommends approval of the project with a condition. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* advise that additions should be subordinate in size to their main building and as inconspicuous as possible (pg. 50). The proposed rooftop addition is small in size and setback from the edge of the building's roof which helps minimize its visibility from within the District. Additionally, the *Guidelines* recommend that new work be differentiated from the old and compatible to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment (pg. 5). The proposed penthouse is clearly differentiated from the historic brick structure through its use of fiber cement board siding and floor to ceiling windows. The proposed simple metal railing which surrounds the deck is also consistent with the *Guidelines* which recommend that rooftop railings should be "as unobtrusive as possible, in order to minimize their appearance and visual impact on the surrounding district" (pg. 51). Based on its limited visibility from the public right of way and use of compatible materials which do not create a false sense of historicism, staff recommends approval of the construction of the rooftop penthouse as proposed.

The *Guidelines* state that "boarded windows should be uncovered and repaired" (pg. 65, #4). The applicant proposes to reopen in-filled windows and doors on the south and east elevations. The *Guidelines* also recommend that "architectural appearance of original windows should be used as a model for new windows" (pg. 65, #10). The proposed new windows proposed to be installed in the existing openings on the basement level were designed to match the existing original basement window. The proposed one over one double hung sash windows which will replace the fire escape doors on the east elevation are appropriate as it is compatible contemporary design to the existing windows. As the proposed windows and doors will have either match the historic design or be of a compatible contemporary design, staff recommends approval for this rehabilitation work. In addition, staff recommends that any changes required by the National Park Service or the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for tax credit purposes be deferred to Commission staff for final review and approval.

It is the assessment of staff, with the condition noted above, that the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation in Section 114-930.7(b) and the Standards for New Construction 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 the code.