



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

9. COA-111517-2022	Final Review Meeting Date: 5/24/2022
Applicant/Petitioner	Baker Development
Project Description	Demolish an existing, frame, detached single family dwelling.
Project Location	
Address: 529 Mosby Street	
Historic District: Union Hill	
High-Level Details: <p>The applicant proposes to demolish an existing, frame, detached single family dwelling.</p> <p>The dwelling is known as the McAllister, Daniel House, is Greek Revival in style and was constructed in 1850.</p> <p>It is a 2-story, 3-bay frame house with a gable roof clad with standing seam metal. The windows have been replaced, and there have been alterations to the front porch.</p> <p>The applicant has submitted a structural report that demonstrates the property has been neglected and is need of many repairs due to water infiltration and poor drainage of storm water runoff. The dwelling must be brought up to current building code requirements.</p>	
Staff Recommendation	Denial
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@RVA.gov , 804-646-6569
Previous Reviews	The Commission has not previously reviewed this application.
Staff Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff believes that 529 Mosby Street a contributing part of the character of the Union Hill City Old and Historic District, and is not deteriorated beyond repair. Staff finds that the demolition of this structure would be detrimental to the character of the district. Staff finds this modest dwelling to be a quintessential example of architecture found in the Union Hill Old and Historic District, and valuable to the architectural history and development of Richmond.

Staff Analysis

Proposed Demolition

The following analysis pertains only to the proposed demolition of 529 Mosby Street. Staff notes that per the guidelines “demolition is considered an option of last resort for contributing historic properties and is only permitted under extreme circumstances.”

Under the provisions of Section 30-930.7(d) of the Richmond City Code, the Commission *shall approve* requests for demolition when *any* of the following are met:

- 1) There are no feasible alternatives to the proposed demolition. Feasible alternatives include an appropriate new use and rehabilitation, relocation of the structure to a compatible site or re-sale of the property to an individual committed to suitable rehabilitation or relocation.
- 2) A building or structure is deemed not be a contributing part of the historic character of an Old and Historic District.
- 3) The Commission deems that a building or structure has deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation.

The Richmond City Code also grants the Commission the authority to adopt additional considerations for demolition. The Commission has done so and has incorporated these standards into the Guidelines. They are as follows:

- 1) The historic and architectural value of a building;
- 2) The effect that demolition will have on the surrounding neighborhood;
- 3) The type and quality of the project that will replace the demolished building; and
- 4) The historic preservation goals outlines in the Master Plan and Downtown Plan.

The analysis below draws from the standards detailed above.

Guideline/Code Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Richmond City Code, Sec. 30-930.7(d)	<i>The Commission of Architectural Review shall not issue a certificate of appropriateness for demolition of any building or structure within an old and historic district, unless the applicant can show that there are no feasible alternatives to demolition. The demolition of historic buildings and elements in old and historic districts is strongly discouraged. The demolition of any building deemed by the Commission to be not a part of the historic character of an old and historic district shall be permitted. The demolition of any building that has deteriorated beyond the point of being feasibly rehabilitated is permissible, where the applicant can satisfy the Commission as to the infeasibility of rehabilitation. The Commission may adopt additional demolition standards for the review of certificates of appropriateness applications to supplement these standards.</i>	<p>Union Hill is primarily a residential district. The dwellings, which are constructed of frame and brick, are modest, working class houses, many of which were built prior to 1867 when Union Hill was annexed from Henrico County.</p> <p>Predominant architectural styles in the district, while subtle, are Italianate, and Greek Revival. Some of the first houses constructed for the working class during the 1840s were two-story, frame, Greek Revival-style dwellings set on raised brick foundations with shallow gable roofs, interior end chimneys and small porticoes at the entrances, which was the typical style of early dwellings in the district.</p> <p>One of the elements that shaped the development of Union Hill and has given it a unique character is the topography of the district. This can be seen in the irregular street grid that was adapted to the steep and rugged terrain. As development of the district continued in the 19th century the streets were leveled and brought to grade, many of the foundations and basements of the existing houses were exposed. Retaining walls and</p>

		<p>front porches were constructed to reach entrances of the houses, which now sat much higher than the street. Street leveling and a hilly terrain resulted in tall foundations, and front porches that sit high above the street with far stretching front stairs.</p> <p>The dwelling located at 529 Mosby Street was constructed around 1850 and is a typical example of a modest, working class, Greek Revival dwelling situated above street grade.</p> <p>While the exterior of 529 Mosby Street has undergone some alterations, the modest architectural elements that classify its style remain in-tact such as the shallow gable, metal clad roof, portico entablature, and built in gutters. The original front porch columns have been removed, and the front façade fenestration has been altered.</p> <p>The applicant provided a structural report in their application to the Commission which calls out several areas of concern, including a pressure bulge on the north side of the foundation, improper notching of floor joists, an improperly constructed rear deck, significant water damage to wooden elements and foundation, and insufficient plumbing and electrical systems.</p> <p>While the report demonstrates that the dwelling has not received proper maintenance and upkeep and that there is ongoing damage from water infiltration and runoff, the building does not appear to have reached the point of being deteriorated beyond repair. The applicant did not provide information on the cost of rehabilitation for the commission to consider.</p> <p><u>Based on these findings, staff believes that 529 Mosby Street a contributing part of the character of the Union Hill City Old and Historic District, and is not deteriorated beyond repair.</u></p> <p>At this point, the applicant has not provided information on exploring options for rehabilitation that include resale or building onto the existing dwelling.</p>
Standards for Demolition, #1, p. 82	<i>The historic and architectural value of a building: The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation define an "historic" building or structure as being 50 years or older. It should not be inferred from this definition, however, that any building or structure less than 50 years old</i>	<p>While the dwelling at 529 Mosby Street is not considered a "high-style" example of Greek Revival, its modest detailing speaks to the working class that developed the neighborhood in the early and mid-19th century, referencing the popular architectural styles of the period.</p>

	<p><i>does not have intrinsic historic or architectural value.</i></p> <p><i>Often buildings or structures built more recently than 50 years ago exhibit significant architectural detailing or are associated with a building style, prominent architect or historical event sufficient to suggest that their demolition would have an adverse effect on the historic character of the district. The Commission has the discretionary power to decide, on a case-by-case basis, if a building not deemed "historic" according to The Secretary of the Interior's Standards is an appropriate candidate for demolition.</i></p> <p><i>There may instances when a property owner applies to the Commission for demolition of a building that is considered "historic" by virtue of the 50-year threshold, but the building design may be of such minor significance that the building is classified as noncontributing to the historic character of the District. If the building also meets one or more of the other criteria listed (i.e. if it is severely deteriorated, a source or blight or the demolition request will make way for new infill construction more appropriate to the District, etc.), the Commission may vote to approve the demolition. As with all potential demolitions, however, each case is approved or rejected on its own merits.</i></p>	<p><u>Staff finds that the dwelling is consistent with and contributes to the historic character of the district.</u></p>
<p>Standards for Demolition, #2, p. 83</p>	<p><i>The effect that demolition will have on the surrounding neighborhood:</i> <i>Individual buildings are significant contributing elements to the immediate area in which they are located. Removal of that building may have a positive effect on the neighborhood, but quite often demolitions have the opposite effect, producing a negative and irreversible impact to the streetscape. Since the Commission is charged with the preservation of entire Districts, and not just individual buildings and structures, adherence to these criteria is appropriate and justified.</i></p>	<p>This block of Mosby Street is located at the edge of the Union Hill City Old and Historic District, and serves as the western entrance to the district from Downtown Richmond.</p> <p>The western side of Mosby Street, which is not in a City Old and Historic District, has been redeveloped with apartment buildings, and the eastern side of Mosby where the subject property is located has several original dwellings remaining, some new construction, and vacant parcels which are a result of past demolitions. <u>Staff finds that the demolition of this structure would be detrimental to the character of the district</u>, as it is contributing to the original street wall, and is a remaining example of original architecture on a block</p>

		that has already seen demolitions prior to and post district designation.
Standards for Demolition, #3, p. 83	<i>The type and quality of the project that will replace the demolished building: When demolition requests are made in conjunction with designs for a replacement structure, the overall quality of the new design is an appropriate factor in determining the merits of demolition. The Commission may vote to approve demolition of a non-contributing building when provided detailed plans for appropriate, compatible infill construction. Conversely, a demolition request to accommodate the installation of an open parking lot with little or no screening would almost certainly be rejected. In most cases, a demolition permit will not be issued until the Commission has approved the design of a replacement structure.</i>	The applicant requested that the Commission consider the demolition of this property, as any new construction would be contingent on the commission's final decision.
Standards for Demolition, #4, p. 83	<i>The historic preservation goals outlined in the Master Plan and Downtown Plan: The overriding goal of both documents is to facilitate the preservation, rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of the City's valuable architectural history. To the degree that proposed demolitions do not run counter to this goal, reasonable and objective consideration may be given to such requests.</i>	The City's Master Plan, Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth, outlines several historic preservation goals, which includes a goal to reduce the demolition of historic buildings (Objective 3.2). Demolition of the existing dwelling at 529 Mosby Street would not further this goal outlined in the Master Plan. <u>Staff finds this modest dwelling to be a quintessential example of architecture found in the Union Hill Old and Historic District, and valuable to the architectural history and development of Richmond.</u>

Figures



1. Front Façade 2022



2. Front Façade 2000's



3. North Façade 2022



4. Pressure Bulge on foundation 2022



5. Rear 2022



6. Block context 2022