

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
June 24, 2014 Meeting**

11. **CAR No. 14-57** (RSS)

**501-513 N. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Church Hill North Old & Historic District**

**Project Description:**

**Replace non-historic windows**

**Staff Contact:**

**C. Easterling**

The applicant requests permission to replace windows at a portion of the townhouses located in the Jefferson Mews complex in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The townhouses were constructed in 1996, prior to the designation of the local historic district. The windows on the facades of the townhouses are windows with grids between the glass in a six-over-six configuration on the second floor and a nine-over-nine configuration on the ground floor. The windows on the rear of the buildings do not have any grids. The existing window sills and casings are wood. The applicant proposes replacing the existing window sash with a vinyl product that has a grid between the glass. The applicant proposes retaining the existing sills and framing, but would like to wrap them in aluminum.

**Staff recommends approval of the project with a condition.** The window guidelines outlined on page 59 of the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* emphasize the need to retain and repair all original windows, but provides guidance concerning the style of replacement windows if original windows are missing or deteriorated beyond repair:

- Original windows should be repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing them.
- Windows should be replaced only when they are missing or beyond repair. Any reconstruction should be based on physical evidence or photographic documentation.
- Changes to existing windows or the addition of new windows along a secondary elevation will be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.
- The architectural character of windows should not be altered by inappropriate materials or finishes that radically change the sash, depth of reveal, muntin configuration, the reflective quality or color of the glazing or the appearance of the frame.
- Do not replace multi-paned sash windows with new thermal sash windows that use false muntins.

The *Guidelines* also address the inappropriate replacement of windows on page 90: *It is generally not appropriate to replace historic windows. Replacements are often made as a result of poor maintenance of the original materials, or from a belief that original windows do not provide sufficient energy efficiency; such replacements are considered inappropriate if the new windows do not duplicate the historic character of original windows in size, materials or design.*

The above guidelines largely pertain to the replacement of historic wood windows. The townhouses slated for window replacement are not historic, and already have grid-between-glass windows that were installed prior to the designation of the historic district. It is the assessment of staff that the change from wood to vinyl window sash will not change the character of the existing buildings. Staff advises against allowing the applicant to wrap the existing wood sills and casing in aluminum, as this oftentimes results in water infiltration that can lead to undetected rot that can damage a building.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent in part with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 114-930.7(b) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the page cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.