

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

12. **CAR No. 14-58** (Sterling Bilder LLC) **421-423 N. 25th Street**
Church Hill North Old and Historic District

Project Description: **Improve portions of vacant lots for parking**

Staff Contact: **C. Easterling**

The applicant requests permission to improve portions of two vacant lots located in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District for parking that will benefit the occupants of the East End Theater after it is rehabilitated. The applicant proposes a parking area made of permeable pavers that will accommodate four parking spaces. The applicant intends to supply a sample paver at the June Commission meeting. The plans call for a four-foot wide walkway that runs from the parking area to North 25th Street, and a landscape buffer that will screen the appearance of the parking spaces. The landscaped area will include evergreen shrubs, a crepe myrtle tree, and a picket fence set fifteen feet back from the 25th Street sidewalk.

Staff recommends approval of the project with a condition. The Standards for Site Improvements outlined in the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* notes that parking lots should be designed and screened in a way that minimizes the impact of the lot on surrounding buildings (pg. 67). The *Guidelines* states that fences, walls, and/or vegetation may be used to screen parking lots, and that if vegetation is chosen as the method of screening, the type and number of shrubs and trees should be selected to create a “high density screen” (pg. 67, #1).

The proposed parking area is ideally located at the rear of the lots, near the alley. The slope of the lots, combined with the proposed vegetation and fence, serves to adequately mitigate the impact of the small parking area when viewed from 25th Street. The applicant must supply a sample of the proposed paver to the Commission for review and approval. Additionally, the applicant should supply the Commission with additional information about the style and material of the proposed fence.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions noted above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Site Improvements outlined in Section 114-930.7(e) 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.