

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

17. **CAR No. 14-48** (Z. Kennedy)

**2912 E. Leigh Street
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

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

Staff Contact: **C. Easterling**

The applicant requests approval to construct a new single-family dwelling at a vacant lot located in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The applicant had previously sought conceptual review for two attached residences, but withdrew the application from the Commission's May agenda. The proposed single-family dwelling is a two-story building with a shed roof that replicates the Italianate building style found throughout the district. The building height is 28', which is comparable to other two-story buildings in the immediate area. The dwelling will have 3' side yard setbacks and a 9' front yard setback, which should align the face of the building with the setback of the adjacent building. The applicant proposes cement board siding, a shingled porch roof, and wood posts and railing for the porch. The applicant has not provided specific information about the windows, trim, or cornice, and this information should be provided to the Commission in advance of the meeting. It is essential that the applicant also supply side and rear elevation drawings.

The applicant is seeking a **Certificate of Appropriateness** for this project. 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 9' front yard setback appears to be in keeping with the setbacks established by historic buildings in the immediate area.

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

The proposed dwelling will face East Leigh 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 Church Hill North 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 28' tall at the ridge of the roof. The context rendering supplied by the applicant indicates that the height of the proposed building is similar to the height of the adjacent historic buildings.

- 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 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 design calls for fiber cement siding, wood posts and rails for the front porch, and asphalt shingles for the front porch. Though asphalt shingle porch roofs have been occasionally approved by the Commission as a way of differentiating new infill construction, staff would prefer to see a membrane porch roof, as that would be more compatible with flat-seam metal roofs in the district. The applicant must provide information about the materials for the windows, doors, trim, cornice, and rear deck.

- 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 has not yet indicated final color selections for the building. Staff recommends that the Commission defer final review and approval of color selections to staff. The front porch and rear deck should be painted or stained a neutral color that complements the overall color scheme of the house.

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 does not provide specific information about the windows. Staff is not opposed to the two-over-one configuration on the façade, as this helps to differentiate the infill from the historic architecture in the immediate area. The windows should have true or simulated divided lites.

The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines*. The applicant must supply drawings for the side and rear elevations of the property before the Commission can move forward with evaluating the entire project. Additionally, the applicant still needs to verify the materials for certain features.