COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
January 27, 2015 Meeting

3. CAR No. 14-131 (A. Beach) **3404 E. Broad Street**
Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District

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

Staff Contact: **K. Chen**

The applicant requests approval to construct a new single family dwelling at a vacant lot located in the Chimborazo Park Old and Historic District. Buildings in the immediate area include houses with Late Victorian and Queen Anne stylistic elements. The adjacent property to the east at 3406 East Broad Street is one of the later houses in the block constructed in 1931 in the Classical Revival style. While the adjacent property at 3400 East Broad Street is representative of the more typical, demonstrative, frame, Late Victorian dwellings found in this prominent block fronting on Chimborazo Park.

The applicant has proposed a two-story single-family dwelling in a simplified Late Victorian style. The application calls for an EPDM roof for the front porch and fiberglass Doric columns and a painted Richmond rail. The windows will be M&W Jefferson 300 series with a two-over-two configuration, and the primary entrance shall be a *Thurma Tru,* half-lite door with clear glass and two lower panels. The house will have smooth, fiber-cement siding with a 5" exposure. The paneled cornice will have single 8"x17" decorative fypon brackets at the edge of a false mansard roof covered with synthetic slate. There will be a two-story, covered rear porch with 6"x6", stained, pressure treated posts and painted wood steps and Richmond rail.

The applicant is seeking **final approval** for the design. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the Standards for New Construction on pages 44 and 45 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

All new residential and commercial construction, whether in the form of additions or entire buildings, should be compatible with the historic features that characterize their setting and context. To protect the context of the surrounding historic district, new construction should reference the materials, features, size, scale, proportions, and massing of the existing historic building or buildings in its setting. However, compatibility does not mean duplicating the existing buildings or environment. In order to avoid creating a false sense of history, new construction should also be discernible from the old. Perhaps the best way to

think about a compatible new building (or addition) is that it should be a good neighbor; one that enhances the character of the existing district and respects its historic context, rather than being an exact (and misleading) reproduction of another building.

SITING

1. *Additions should be subordinate in size to their main buildings and as inconspicuous as possible. Locating additions at the rear of on the least visible side of a building is preferred.*

This standard is not applicable.

2. *New residential infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns of the surrounding block. The minimum setbacks evident in most districts reinforce the traditional street wall. In cases where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block.*

The proposed infill is consistent with the setbacks of the adjacent properties.

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

The proposed new construction faces East Broad Street, the only street bordering the site.

FORM

1. *New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections, and roof shapes that lend identity to a building. Form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.*

The design of the new residence reflects the general two-story, side entrance, and projecting three-sided bay form found in the area. The false mansard roof and gable-roofed projecting bay are reflective of the prominent roof lines found in the district, especially, in the blocks fronting the park. The one-story, hip-roofed, full-width front porch is typical for the district. There is also historic precedent in this block for articulated entry doors including doors recessed in decorative alcoves, sidelights, transoms, and fan lights. The proposed Therma Tru door is similar to the entry door at 3400 East Broad Street without the sidelight. A single light transom is recommended. (The entry door shown on drawings C-1 and A-4 do not depict the proposed Therma Tru Half Lite Door with Clear Glass shown on the last page of the application.

2. *New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the district.*

The proposed building maintains the existing human scale of the neighborhood.

3. *New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design. In Richmond, porches were historically an integral part of residential design and provide much of the street-level architectural character of Richmond's historic districts.*

The proposed design calls for a front porch that is compatible with residential porches found throughout the district.

HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION, & MASSING

1. *New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding houses and commercial structures.*

The proposed residence will be approximately 30'-6" tall, which is comparable to the heights of the adjacent properties which are approximately, 33'-0" (west) and 35'-6" (east) tall. The proposed height includes approximately 5'-0" of roof exposure above the cornice.

2. *New construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of other residential properties in surrounding historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing should look to the project's local district for precedent. For example, full-block-long row house compositions are rare in Richmond. New residential buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face should still employ bays as an organizational device, but the new building should read as a single piece of architecture.*

The design respects the typical vertical orientation of two and 2 1/2-story residences in the district and the façade is broken by a three-sided, projecting bay, a typical element found on the street face. The verticality of the existing houses in the block is further emphasized by roof forms over the projecting bays making them a dominant feature of the facade. The proposed design incorporates a gable roof over the projecting bay that further emphasizes the verticality of the design.

3. *The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.*

The proposed cornice height is 25'-6" which is compatible with but slightly lower than the adjacent properties which are approximately 28' to the west and 26' to the east.

MATERIALS & COLORS

1. *Additions should not obscure or destroy original architectural elements.*

This standard is not applicable.

2. *Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.*

The wood frame construction is prevalent and the design calls for the use fiber-cement siding which is visually compatible. Membrane roofing is proposed for the rear shed roof and the front porch. The false mansard roof and the gable will receive synthetic slate. These materials are generally found to be appropriate for new construction projects located within City Old and Historic Districts.

3. *Paint colors for new additions should complement the historically appropriate colors used on the primary structure. Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors already found in the district.*

The applicant has indicated final color selections that appear to be appropriate for the district.

4. *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 project calls for smooth fiber cement siding in accordance with the guidelines for synthetic materials. The application calls for the use of 2/2 M&W Jefferson 300 series windows. This style of window has been previously approved by the Commission for use in new construction projects.

5. *Rooftop mechanical equipment should be located as discretely as possible to limit visibility. In addition, appropriate screening should be provided to conceal equipment from view. When rooftop railings are required for seating areas or for safe access to mechanical equipment, the railings should be as unobtrusive as possible, in order to minimize their appearance and visual impact on the surrounding district.*

The mechanical units will be located at the rear of the house under the stairs from the first floor of the two-story rear porch.

Staff recommends approval of the project. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines*. Staff recommends that approval be conditioned with additional information on the placement of mechanical equipment.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined 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 code.