

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT**

**December 15, 2015 Meeting**

**19. CAR No. 15-160** (D. Seibert)

**2317 Carrington Street  
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

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

**Staff Contact:** **K. Chen**

The applicant requests conceptual review of a free standing single family dwelling to be constructed on a vacant lot located in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. Staff has not confirmed that the proposed work is consistent with zoning or building code requirements.

The proposed new dwelling is located on Carrington Street which forms the northern boundary of the Union Hill Old and Historic District. A majority of the lots that face Carrington Street are vacant. The proposed building is of frame construction with a T-plan and cross gable roof. The projecting portion is organized with shingle-clad front gable roof, three-sided projecting bay and paired windows over the entry. There is a full width porch on this portion of the building. On the rear there is a deep screened-in porch.

Conceptual review is covered under Sec. 30-930.6(d) of the City Code: *The commission shall review and discuss the proposal with the applicant and make any necessary recommendations. Such Conceptual Review shall be advisory only.* Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the "Standards for New Construction: Residential" 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 or 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.*

A site plan was not provided. As a result, proposed setbacks could not be compared to the prevailing front and side yard setbacks of the surrounding blocks.

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

The proposed new construction will face Carrington Street the prominent 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 area surrounding the proposed new construction is largely vacant. A heavily altered 2-story, double house survives on the adjacent lot. This property has a full façade front porch, a minimal bracketed cornice, and a shed roof. The prevailing pattern on Carrington Street and the adjacent side streets is of 2-story, 3-bay, frame dwellings with shed or shallow gable roofs and full façade porches. These are mostly modest houses with limited decoration.

The T-plan, cross-gable roof combined with a projecting three-sided bay is a form not seen in the immediate area. There are some larger houses near Jefferson Park and a few larger frame houses scattered in the area north of the Union Hill district. The typical pattern for these houses is a front facing gable centered over the projecting bay with a hipped or compound roof behind.

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

The proposed new building incorporates a full façade front porch that maintains the existing human scale of the district.

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 new construction incorporates human scale elements in its design including a full façade front porch, front steps, and a cornice.

### **HEIGHT, WIDTH, PROPORTION & MASSING**

1. *New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.*

The elevation drawings included with the application do not include dimensions but the written narrative states that the front gable roof is 33' tall and the rear gable roof is 34.5' tall. The narrative states that the only remaining house on the block is 28' tall. Given the similarities in style of other houses in the surrounding neighborhood they are likely of a similar height – 28'.

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 typical orientation of residential properties in the district is a vertical orientation of ranked fenestration that is broken at the first story by a full façade porch and terminated at a shed or shallow gable roof line with a decorative cornice. The proposed new construction breaks the prevailing pattern by incorporated a front facing gable roof.

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

A context drawing and vertical dimensions were not provided.

### **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 specifications call for the use of smooth Hardie lap siding which is compatible with the predominance of frame construction in the surrounding area. The specifications also call for the use of cedar mill Hardie shingles in the gable ends. This is a material not found in the surrounding district.

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 Hardie plank siding will be Light Mist, and the smooth Hardie Trim and shingles will be Artic White. The roof will be clad with gray asphalt shingles and the porch deck will be Slate Gray, Azek t&g flooring. The fypon turned porch posts and corbels will be painted white. The PVC window sashes will be painted black. Colors were not provided for the front and rear doors.

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 will incorporate smooth Hardie Plank siding and cedar mill Hardie shingles. The roof will have asphalt shingles, there will Azek t&g porch floor decking, and the decorative elements – porch posts and corbels – will be fypon. There will be 2/2, sdl, PVC windows and smooth fiberglass doors.

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.*

Information was not provided for the location of mechanical equipment.