

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
February 23, 2016 Meeting**

5. **CAR No. 16-022** (B. Traylor)

**2413 Carrington Street  
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:**

**Construct new duplex**

**Staff Contact:**

**K. Chen**

The applicant requests approval to construct a new duplex and garage in the Union Hill Old and Historic District.

The new duplex will be a two-story, three bay frame dwelling with a front gable roof and full façade porch. The building will be clad with smooth cementitious siding; and there will be smooth, scalloped shingles in the front gable. The decorative elements are simple in design. The two-story, two-bay garage will be located at the rear of the property facing the alley and will reflect the design and materials of the main dwelling.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. 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 does not apply.

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.*

There are two standing houses to the east and a vacant lot and paved parking area to the east. The site plan provided indicates that the adjacent house to the east has an approximately 13' front yard setback and is set on the adjoining property line. The proposed new duplex will have a front yard setback of approximately 13' and 4' side yard setbacks.

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

The proposed new duplex, like its neighbors, is oriented towards 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 majority of the houses in the immediate area are two-story, three bay, frame new and historic Italianate style houses. The house immediately to the east, 2415, is an early-twentieth century, two-story, three bay, frame dwelling with an Italianate cornice, shed roof and full façade porch. The next house to the east, 2417, is a heavily altered early-twentieth century two-story, two-bay, frame dwelling with a pyramidal roof.

The façade of the proposed new duplex reflects the symmetry and proportions of the adjacent houses. The roof shape diverges from the surrounding dwellings where front gables are rarely seen. The proposed decorative elements of the new dwelling are simple. The front porch will have a hipped-roof clad with black membrane, square columns, a plain cornice, a concrete deck with a brick row lock, face and steps, and no balustrade. The front facing gable is shown with scalloped shingles in the tympanum and a plain raking cornice. The roof over the horizontal cornice will be clad with black membrane roofing. There is a single

light window located at the top of the pediment. Staff would suggest the use of a centered louver rather than the proposed window.

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

The proposed new duplex maintains the human scale of the adjacent properties.

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 duplex maintains the human scale through the incorporation of porches, cornices and ranked window openings.

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

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

The proposed new duplex is a two-story, three bay, frame dwelling with a front gable roof and full façade porch. The top of the porch is set approximately 1'-6" above grade which is more compatible with 2417 Carrington Street which is shown as 2 steps above grade. The house between is shown as having 5 steps to the top of the porch. The total height of the new duplex is shown as 28'-0" which is indicated as being 12" higher than 2415 and 5'-0" higher than 2417 Carrington Street. The elevation drawing indicates that the windows heads on the first story of the façade are set at 8'-0" above the finished floor and the second story windows are set at 7'-2" above finish floor. Head heights are given for the first story windows on the east elevation as 6'-8" above finish floor which does not align with the head height of the front windows. Head heights were not indicated for the second story windows nor given for the rear and west elevation. The windows on the side elevations are also of varying sizes and do not align vertically.

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 proposed new duplex respects the vertical orientation of the adjacent dwellings through the use of symmetrically placed ranked openings on the façade. The verticality is broken by the full façade porch and cornice at the base of the front gable. The proposed new construction does extend the verticality through the introduction of a front facing gable roof.

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

The cornice height does not align with the adjacent houses because of the introduction of a different roof form. The porch roof cornice relates to the porches on the block.

## **MATERIALS & COLORS**

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

This standard does not apply.

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

The new duplex will be clad with smooth, cementitious siding and the gable will have smooth, cementitious, scalloped shingles. The corner boards, cornice, and porch posts will be composite materials. The porch roof and lower edge of the front gable will be clad with black membrane and the main roof will have black dimensional, asphalt shingles. The foundation will be parged block. The front porch will have a concrete deck with a brick rowlock, face and steps. The windows will be aluminum clad and the doors will be 6-panel, smooth fiberglass.

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 body of the dwelling will be Boothbay Blue which is similar to #32 – Bunglehouse Blue on the approved palette. The trim and windows will be white and the front door will be red. Staff suggests the use of a black front door to match the doors on the rear of the dwelling and the garage.

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 building will use smooth, untextured synthetic materials including cementitious, composite trim, and fiberglass doors. The porch roof will have

membrane roofing and the main roof will have dimensional asphalt shingles. These are all materials approved for new construction.

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 on the east side of the duplex in the setback and screened from view by a 6' fence enclosing the yard.

### Garage

The application calls for the construction of a two-story, two-bay garage. The garage will be setback 15' from the alley and 19' from the face of the porch on the rear of the dwelling. It will have 3'-6" side yard setbacks and be 1'-0" wider than the main dwelling. The garage will be 21'-4" to the top of the gable which is approximately 6'-8" lower than the top of the ridge on the main dwelling. The garage will have an applied gable on the front (north) yard facing and rear (south) alley facing elevations. There will be two, white, steel garage doors facing the alley. Stairs will lead from the rear yard to a landing and a door on the second story. The stairs will be constructed of wood with a Richmond rail. The colors and materials will match the main dwelling. Staff recommends that the stairs be painted or opaquely stained.

The garage meets the guidelines for residential outbuildings contained on page 48 or the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*. It is located at the rear of the property, and respects the massing, roof profiles, materials and colors of the main dwelling.

### Fence and landscaping

The side and rear yard will be enclosed by a 6'-0" dog-eared privacy fence. Staff recommends that the fence be painted or opaquely stained. There will be a concrete sidewalk from the front porch steps to the public sidewalk and a concrete sidewalk on the west side of the dwelling from the public sidewalk to the rear yard.

**Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions.** 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:

- The window in the front gable be replaced with a centered louver.
- The front door be black to match the other doors
- The fence and garage stairs be painted or opaquely stained

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 30.930.7(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.