

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

10. CAR No. 16-029 (Linden Row Inn)

**100 E Franklin Street
Linden Row Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

**Modify an existing window opening
and install two projecting signs**

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests approval to convert an existing window opening to a door opening and install two projecting signs on the North 1st Street elevation of the Linden Row Inn. Linden Row consists of a series of Greek Revival row houses built between 1840 and c. 1860, and the Historic Richmond Foundation holds an easement on this property and has reviewed this application.

Currently, the existing window opening located on the 1st Street elevation which is proposed to be altered is infilled with a painted louvers. The applicant is proposing to remove the brick beneath the existing sill to the inside floor level and install a full lite wood door in the opening. The existing granite window sill will be relocated to the base of the proposed door, and the existing stone lintel will be retained in place. The applicant proposes to maintain the existing masonry jambs in place and tooth in with brick the new jambs. The applicant has noted that it would be difficult to reopen the existing door opening adjacent to the proposed new door opening due to the presence of mechanical piping behind the existing door opening.

The current signage on the building consists of a small plaque and awning adjacent to the building entrance on the 1st Street elevation, a freestanding hanging sign at the corner of 1st and East Franklin Streets, and banners in the doorways along E. Franklin Street. The applicant is proposing to install a 2' by 3' projecting metal hanging sign above the proposed new opening. The applicant is proposing to light the signage with bracket mounted lights on either side of the sign.

The applicant is proposing to install a second projecting sign on the 1st Street elevation near the existing building entrance. This proposed blade sign will be 1'-6" by 6'-6" and will be constructed of metal. The sign will be located at the level of the 2nd floor windows and will be adjacent to the existing projecting bay window. The sign is proposed to be lit with lights on either side in the same manner as the other proposed sign.

Staff recommends partial approval of the project.

Door Opening

The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that the size of existing window openings should not be

changed, but changes to existing windows along a secondary elevation will be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis (pg. 65, #8). The proposed alterations are on a secondary side elevation though this elevation is highly visible due to the corner location of this property. The applicant is taking care to retain the character defining features of this opening which include the stone lintel, granite sill, and the vertical alignment with the window above. Additionally, the proposed full lite door reintroduces glazing to the currently infilled window and clearly differentiates the proposed door from the historic doors. For these reasons, staff recommends approval of the proposed door installation.

Signage

The *Guidelines* note that that signage should be easily read, complement the signage of neighboring businesses, relate to architectural features of the building, and be located in traditional sign placement areas (pg. 71). The proposed hanging sign is easy to read and is located in a traditional sign placement area above a doorway. The hanging sign complements the small scale, pedestrian oriented signage found in the neighboring business on E. Franklin Street. The Guidelines state that internally illuminated signs are not appropriate in the Old and Historic District (pg. 71). The applicant is proposing to light the signs with bracket mounted lights, not internal illumination. Staff recommends approval of the projecting hanging sign and the associated lighting.

Though the proposed blade sign is easy to read and is not internally illuminated, staff recommends denial of this proposed sign. The sign is located mid-block in a non-traditional sign placement area. The sign will obstruct the visibility of the adjacent projecting bay as viewed coming down 1st Street, and the Guidelines note that important architectural elements should not be obstructed by signage (pg. 71). The proposed vertically oriented blade sign is more appropriate for commercial corridors such as Broad Street and E. Grace Street and does not complement the building's current signage nor the small scale signage of the adjacent Zero Blocks East and West Franklin Street Old and Historic District. Staff also has concerns about the visual clutter created by collocating this sign adjacent to the existing awning and wall sign which will work to detract from the architecture of the façade. The Commission may wish to consider if a corner location may be more appropriate for the proposed sign.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is partially consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and Standards for Signage outlined in Sections 30-930.7(b) and 30-930.7(f) 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.