

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
November 28, 2017, Meeting**

9. **COA-026402-2017** (J. Harlan)

**2710 East Clay Street  
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:**

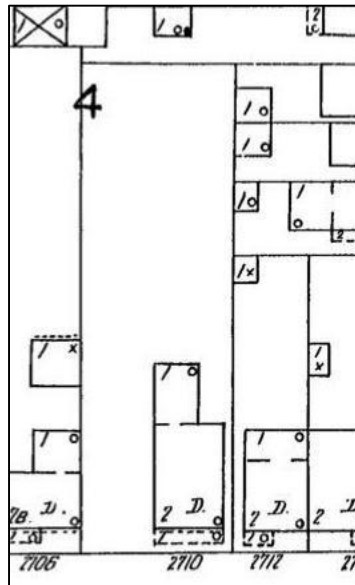
**Rehabilitate an existing home and  
construct a two-story rear addition.**

**Staff Contact:**

**M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to construct second story addition at the rear of a two-story 1880 brick vernacular Italianate dwelling in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District.

The existing home is a 2-story, 3-bay dwelling with a stepped parapet roof and a single story portion at the rear. Per the earliest available Sanborn map, the single story portion was in place by 1905. It appears the rear has been altered over time to include the construction of a small second story addition to accommodate a bathroom as this portion of the building is not present on the Sanborn maps.



Sanborn Map (1905)

The property does not have an alley that runs along the rear property line though an alley does terminate at the north corner of the property. The rear of the home is minimally visible from this alley. The northwest elevation is highly visible from East Clay Street as the subject lot is wider than the typical lot in the district and has an unimproved side yard.

The applicant is proposing a substantial 2-story addition. The applicant is proposing to demolish the rear and southeast building walls of the existing first story element and the rear building wall of the second story. The visible northwest building wall will remain intact. The proposed addition will expand the first floor to approximately the existing southeast building wall. The proposed second story will be inset the width of a brick from the existing building wall on the northwest elevation. The applicant is proposing to clad the addition in fiber lap siding and unpainted wood siding. In the addition the applicant is proposing single lite aluminum clad casement windows and full lite doors. The applicant is proposing to create four new window openings on the southeast elevation and install 2/2 windows and to modify an existing window on the northwest elevation to accommodate a door. Additionally the applicant is proposing a rear deck which will wrap to the side of the house. The deck and a second story balcony will have metal railings with wooden top rails.

The Commission conceptually reviewed this application on October 24, 2017. The Commission was general supportive of the proposed design. The Commission's concerns were limited to whether it was appropriate to allow the applicant to introduce new window openings in the southeast building wall of the existing structure, the use of alternate building materials for the wooden sidings, the joints of the fiber cement panels being painted and linking to the window opening, and centering the metal awning on the northwest elevation.

The plans were altered from conceptual review as follows:

- The addition will be clad in fiber cement lap siding rather than panels. The portion of the addition that was to be clad in wood siding will be clad in ship lap wood siding.
- On the northwest elevation, the metal canopy will be centered on the door. A window has been added to the proposed addition on this elevation.
- On the southeast elevation of the addition, the windows have been resized to be more consistent in size and align.
- On the southeast elevation of the existing structure, the light configuration of the new windows has been changed from 1/1 to 2/2 to match the historic windows.
- The railing design has been altered to include a wooden top rail.

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

**Addition:** The *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that additions should be subordinate in size and as inconspicuous as possible (pg. 52, Siting #1). Though substantial in scale, the proposed addition is located at the rear of the structure and is designed to minimize the visibility from East Clay Street by pulling in the mass from the existing building walls and being constructed at a lower height than the façade. The *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that additions should not obscure or destroy original architectural elements (pg. 47, Materials & Colors #1). On the highly visible northwest elevation, the applicant has designed the project to maintain an understanding of the original

first story portion. During conceptual review, the Commission was supportive of not maintaining the brick rear wall of the first story addition which is visible from the rear alley as the view is obscured. The *Guidelines* note that that new construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the district (pg. 52, Form #1). Staff finds the simple contemporary style of the proposed addition is compatible with the district while being clearly differentiated from the historic construction. The applicant has altered the plans to propose consistent window sizes and aligned windows on the southeast elevation which is more characteristic of the district than the previous mix of window sizes and lack of alignment. Staff finds the proposed fiber cement siding is consistent with the frame structures in the district while being differentiated from the historic brick structure, and therefore, staff recommends approval with the condition that the siding be smooth and without a bead. Additionally, staff finds the proposed side and rear decks are consistent with the Commission's guidelines for decks (pg. 51). Staff recommends **approval** of the proposed addition.

**New and Altered Openings:** The *Guidelines* discourage changes to existing windows and the addition of new windows, especially alterations to masonry structures, and note that the Commission will consider these alterations along a secondary elevation on a case-by-case basis (pg. 69, #5, #8). Staff is supportive of the conversion of a window on the side elevation to the door as it is a modification of an existing window opening. Staff recommends the proposed door fit within the jambs of the existing window opening. Staff has concerns with the introduction of the new masonry openings on the southeast elevation as the side elevation is visible from East Clay Street. Staff recognizes the need for an opening on the southeast elevation to provide egress into the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor bedroom and recommends the Commission **approval** of new openings be limited to the one northern most window on the second story. Staff recommends the window be true or simulated divided lite with interior and exterior muntins and a spacer bar. Staff recommends **denial** of the three additional proposed new openings on the southeast elevation of the existing structure.

It is the assessment of staff that, with these conditions, the application is partially consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Sections 30-930.7 (b) and (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 the code.