

4. COA-072895-2020

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

May 26, 2020

PROPERTY ADDRESS

428 N. Arthur Ashe Boulevard

DISTRICT

Boulevard

APPLICANT

Virginia Museum of History and Culture



STAFF CONTACT

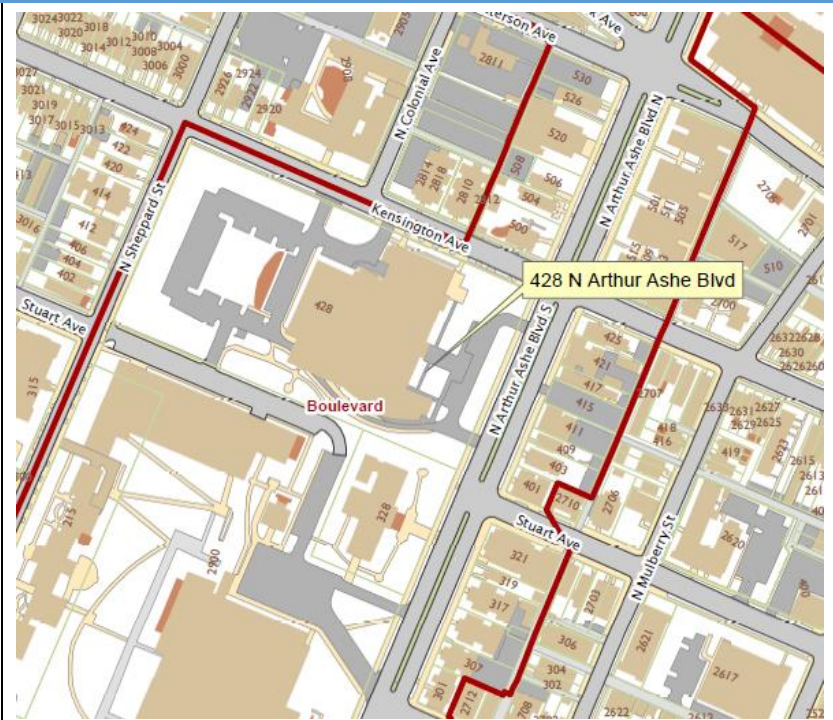
C. Jones

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Exterior alterations to the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, to include minor additions and site improvements.

PROJECT DETAILS

- The Virginia Museum of Historic and Culture (VMHC) proposes an expansion to the existing facility and site improvements to improve the overall visitor experience, the care for collections, and to meet the long range mission of the VMHC to be stewards of the history of the Commonwealth. The proposed expansion will occur within the existing footprint of the building, mostly on the south and west elevations.
- No changes to the façade (east elevation) facing N. Arthur Ashe Boulevard are proposed.
- On the south (VMFA facing) elevation, the applicant proposes: to enclose a portion of the second story and remove a decorative metal railing and replace it with limestone to match the existing materials; to convert an existing window to a set of paired doors; and to replace a different decorative railing with a glass railing in a design consistent with other proposed railings.
- On the west (parking lot facing) elevation the applicant proposes: to add two second floor additions on top of the existing roof structure; to convert the space between the two new wings to a terrace; to construct two new staircases to provide access to the exterior terrace space; and add an extension of the existing outdoor covered breezeway to provide a covered walkway adjacent to a new vehicle drop-off circle. The two wings will be visible from the north and south facing elevations. The proposed exterior material for the proposed additions is limestone, to match the existing additions.
- On the north (Kensington Avenue facing) elevation the existing decorative railing will be removed and replaced with a glass railing.
- The applicant also proposes to relocate the great lawn, add 66 parking spaces to the existing parking lot, create a new drop-off circle, and update the landscaping.
- The applicant has also applied for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to modify an existing SUP. The current SUP application is to change the address to allow for the construction requested in this application, including a modification of the number of parking spaces and removing an off-site parking requirement since the required number will be provided onsite.



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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

BUILDING HISTORY

The Virginia Museum of History and Culture building, also known as Battle Abbey/Virginia Historical Society, is located at the southwest corner of North Arthur Ashe Boulevard and Kensington Avenue. The current building

configuration is the result of a number of building campaigns to accommodate the need for increased storage and display space. John P.B. Sinkler, of Bissell and Sinkler, an architecture firm based in Philadelphia, designed the original section, Battle Abbey, as a memorial and repository. Construction of the section facing North Arthur Ashe Boulevard began in 1912. The first addition to the building dates to a design by Baskervill & Lambert completed in 1921. This is followed by an addition in 1959 designed by Carneal & Johnston on the west (rear) elevation. Subsequent additions date to 1992 and 1998. Designed by Richmond architect Jim Glavé of Glavé Newman Anderson, they are located on the north (Kensington Avenue) elevation and accommodate the offices and collections of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. In 2006, Glavé and Holmes designed another large addition to the south (VMFA facing) elevation. This addition extends the original Battle Abbey section to the south and incorporates a curved wall on the south elevation. The design and detailing of these additions continue the limestone walls and align the cornices and incorporates post-modernist and neoclassical elements. The latest addition dates to 2014/2015 and adds additional neoclassical elements and new entrances on the north (Kensington Avenue) elevation and the south (VMFA facing) elevation.ⁱ

STAFF RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

- the additions be inset at least six inches to indicate that they are new construction
- the window and door specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval
- the replacement railings are differentiated from the new railings and reference the existing metalwork that dates to the same construction period
- the new masonry complement, but not replicate, the existing limestone, and specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval
- the final material specifications and colors be submitted to staff for review and approval
- the enclosure for the south elevation be glass or another visually permeable material
- the final lighting and landscaping plans be coordinated with CAR and Land Use Administration staff during review of the Special Use Permit
- any additional buildings or structures be submitted to the Commission for review and approval

STAFF ANALYSIS

Secretary of the Interior
Standards for Rehabilitation,
pgs. 4-5

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be preserved.

9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

The applicant proposes two second-story additions on the west (parking lot facing) elevation that will be visible from the north (Kensington Avenue facing) and south (VMFA facing) elevations. The new additions will increase the interior square footage but not the footprint of the building. The additions are designed to be architecturally cohesive with recent additions and will extend the walls of the existing additions vertically and horizontally to create an additional story on each corner of the west elevation. The new additions will utilize the same materials as the recent additions. The applicant also proposes to create a mezzanine space in the area between the new additions (on top of the existing west elevation) and install a set of stairs to provide access and egress to the outdoor space. The stairs will be concrete, supported by limestone clad walls, and have metal and glass railings.

Overall, staff is in support of the proposed additions and new exterior stairs. However, as detailed below, staff believes that the proposed additions and alterations are not in keeping with Guideline 9 and recommends ways to differentiate the existing building and new construction.

Standards for New Construction, pg. 46, Siting, #1	<i>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.</i>	The proposed additions will be located above an existing one-story section on the west (parking lot facing) elevation. The proposed additions will be one story in height and extend an existing cornice line from the north and south elevations. The additions will not be visible from North Arthur Ashe Boulevard (east elevation), or from the large lawn in front of the façade.
Standards for New Construction, pg. 46, Form, #1	<i>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.</i>	The applicant proposes two rectangular additions that are architecturally cohesive with the existing additions. The proposed additions will extend the existing wall plane and decorative details on either corner of the west elevation and extend east to connect internally with existing interior spaces. Staff finds the proposed additions are generally in keeping with the guidelines. However, staff finds that they are not differentiated since they extend the existing walls and use the same materials as the existing additions. Staff recommends approval of the additions with the condition that they are <u>inset at least six inches to differentiate them from the existing construction.</u>
New Construction, pg. 49, Doors and Windows, #1	<i>The size, proportion and spacing patterns of door and window openings on a new addition should follow patterns established by the original building. Windows on most commercial and residential properties throughout Old and Historic Districts have a vertical orientation.</i>	The applicant proposes large evenly spaced window openings on each face of the proposed additions. On the north and south elevations these will generally be aligned with existing openings. On the west elevation, there are generally no first floor openings. Staff recommends approval of the large windows with the condition that <u>the window specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval.</u>
New Construction, pg. 49, Porches and Porch Details, #1, 3	<p><i>1. Porch railings and balustrades are important character-defining features of historic buildings. The proportions of these railings are a significant contributing feature to the appearance of both the individual structure and the character of the entire neighborhood.</i></p> <p><i>3. New porch railing designs, compatible with the overall design of the building, will also be considered.</i></p>	The applicant proposes to remove existing railings and install new, modern, glass panels to form a railing or insert limestone to match the existing building. Staff finds that, though these are later additions, they do provide design continuity that aids understanding of the architectural development of the building. Staff also believes that the addition of either limestone or new glass panels to match the existing and proposed addition will confuse the developmental history of the building. Staff supports the removal of the non-historic features with the condition <u>that the new replacement railings are differentiated from the new railings and reference the existing metalwork that dates to the same construction period.</u>
New Construction, pg. 51, Decks, #s1-3	<p><i>1. Decks should not alter, damage or destroy significant site elements of the property.</i></p> <p><i>2. Decks should complement the</i></p>	The applicant proposes to install a terrace area between the new additions on the rear (west elevation). The terrace will not alter or damage site elements, or create a false sense of

	<p><i>architectural features of the main structure without creating a false historical appearance.</i></p> <p><i>3. Deck design may include vertical picket balustrades or contemporary railing that is in scale with the house and the deck.</i></p>	historical appearance.
Standards for New Construction, pg. 53, Materials and Colors, #2	<i>Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the surrounding neighborhood.</i>	The applicant proposes to use limestone that matches the existing materials for the new additions. Staff finds that this is not in keeping with Guidelines as it could confuse the construction history of the building. Staff recommends approval of a masonry material with the condition <u>that it complement, but not replicate, the existing limestone and the specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval.</u>
New Construction, pg. 56, Doors and Windows, #5	<i>With larger buildings, applicants are encouraged to develop multiple entry points (doors), in keeping with historic precedent for the building type in question. Single entry points - such as a single garage entrance accompanied by single pedestrian entrances are not in keeping with historic precedent, which demonstrates that most large buildings had multiple pedestrian entry points.</i>	<p>The applicant proposes to convert an existing window into a door on the south elevation. The new door opening will allow for access between an interior museum cafe and a new outdoor café space. Staff recommends approval of a door in this location with the condition that <u>the specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval.</u></p> <p>The applicant also proposes to construct a one-story covered walkway on the west (rear) elevation that extends the existing walkway. The walkway will have a gently curved, standing seam metal roof with flared eaves. The roof structure will be supported by painted steel tubes with light fixtures that sit on a limestone base. Staff recommends approval of the covered walkway with the condition that <u>the final material specifications and colors be submitted to staff for review and approval.</u></p>
Entrance and Porch Removal, Replacement, and Reconstruction, pg. 74, #13	<i>Porch enclosures to aid in energy conservation are only appropriate on secondary elevations. Solid materials are not recommended for use in enclosure projects since they can radically alter the historic appearance of a porch. Glass enclosures which reveal decorative porch elements are strongly preferred.</i>	The applicant proposes to enclose a portion of the south elevation to allow for interior gallery space. The applicant proposes to use metal panels to enclose the outdoor terrace area. Staff understands the needs for a solid material to be able to create a gallery space; however staff finds that this is not in keeping with the Guidelines which recommend against the use of solid materials for enclosures. Staff recommends approval of enclosing this space with <u>the condition that the enclosure be glass or another visually permeable material.</u>
Standards for Site Improvements, pg. 76	<i>1. Parking lots should be broken up as much as possible with interior landscaped islands and should be well screened from the public right-of-way and adjacent properties. Appropriate screening may include landscaping, walls, fences or berms.</i>	The applicant proposes a series of upgrades to the parking lot, landscaping, and lighting. These upgrades will include increasing the amount of parking spots by 66, relocating the great lawn, and creating a car turn-around area. Staff notes that the proposed site

If a vegetative screen is chosen, the type(s) and numbers of shrubs and trees used should ensure a high density screen between parking lot and street.

2. Commercial parking should be confined to the sides and rears of buildings.

3. Parking lot lighting should be kept to a minimum, keeping spill-over to a minimum and using the lowest wattage possible, especially in residential areas.

5. Mature trees contribute to the character of Old and Historic Districts, provide visual interest, reduce the negative impacts of parking areas and ease the effects of temperature and wind conditions. Every effort should be made to preserve and maintain them.

improvements will likely require the removal of a number of trees along Kensington Avenue, North Sheppard, and the south side of the site. Staff requests additional information about the landscape plan, including the tree removal, be submitted to staff. Staff recommends approval of the proposed site improvements with the condition that the final lighting and landscaping plans be coordinated with CAR and Land Use Administration staff during review of the Special Use Permit.

Staff also notes that the site plans show a cabin along the Kensington Street side, and requests that any additional buildings or structures be submitted to the Commission for review and approval.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 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.

FIGURES



Figure 1. Battle Abbey, ca. 1912-1921, facing Arthur Ashe Boulevard. No changes are proposed to this elevation.



Figure 2. South (VMFA facing) elevation. Proposed changes include enclosing the curved section, removal of the east railing and in-filling the space with masonry, and removal of the west railing and installation of glass panels.



Figure 3. Entrance from parking lot. Proposed location of covered walkway, vehicle turnaround, and outdoor cafe.



Figure 4. West (parking lot) facing elevation. Planned location of two additions, mezzanine, and new exterior stairs.



Figure 5. Northwest corner, location of proposed addition, new stairs, and new railing.



Figure 6. Great lawn, looking north from Museum Way.



Figure 7. Existing trees along North Sheppard.

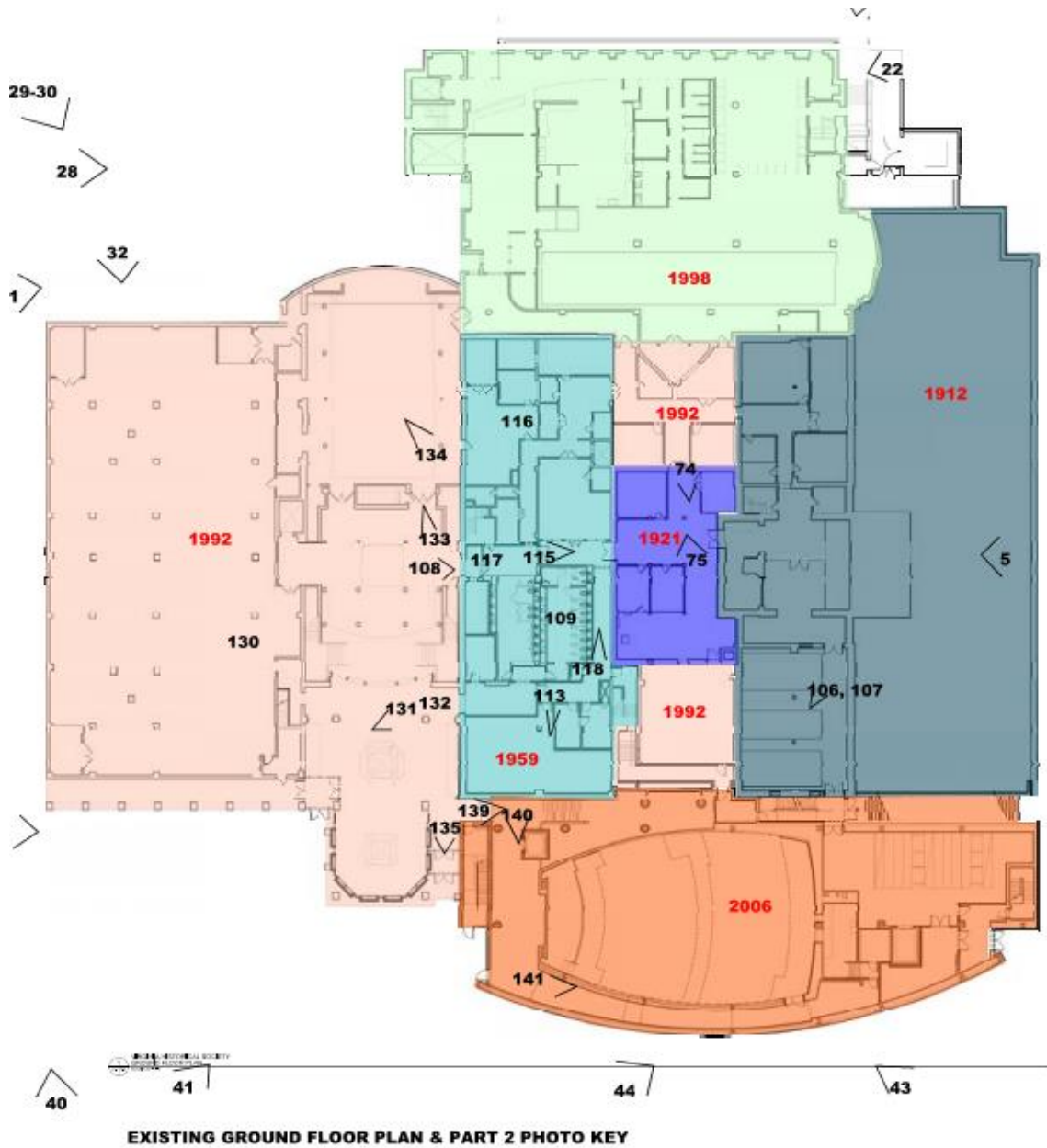
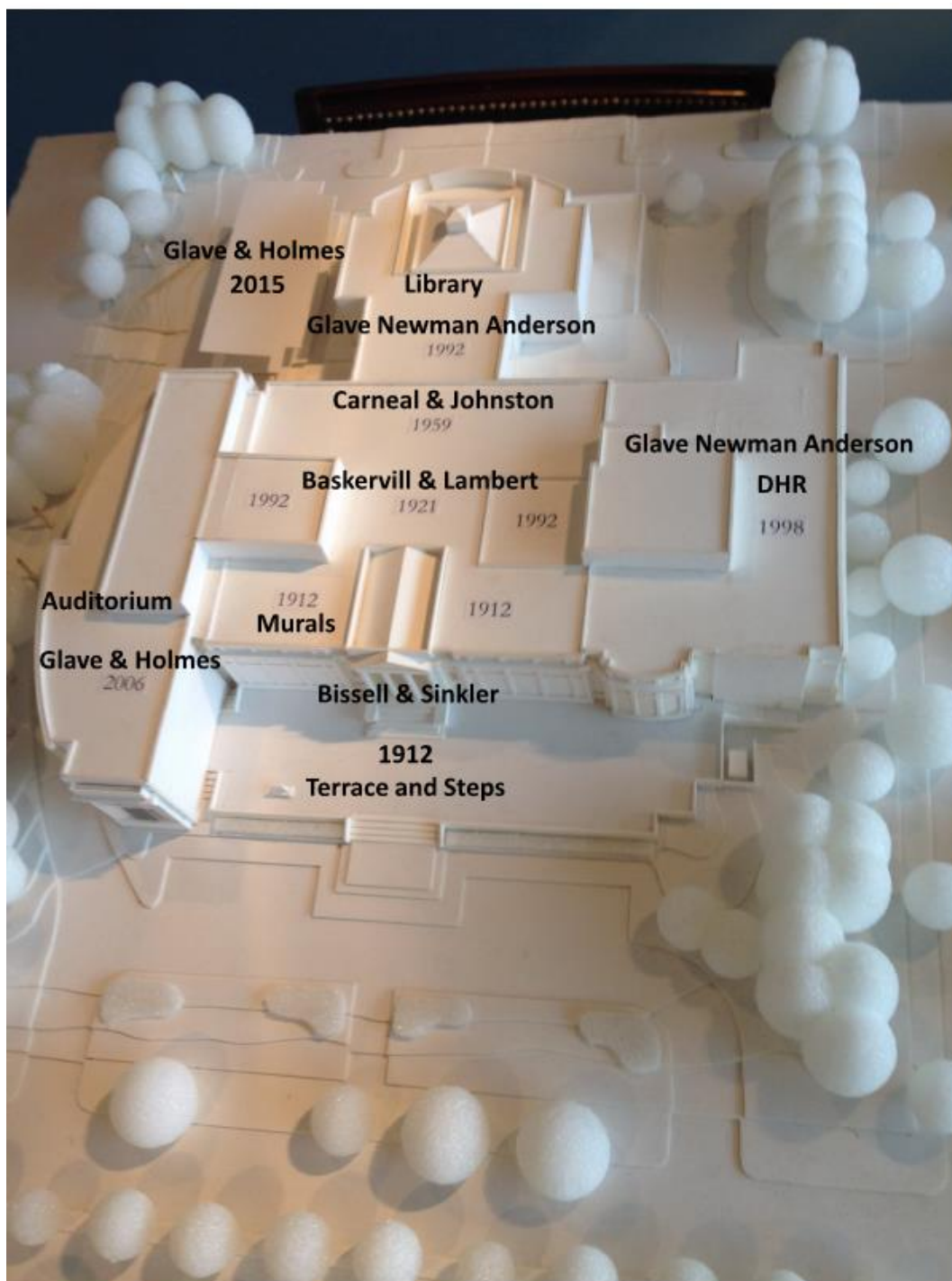


Figure 8. Floor plan with dates of construction. Courtesy of Sadler and Whitehead.



Virginia Historical Society – Battle Abbey Model

Figure 9. Model of 428 North Arthur Ashe Boulevard with dates of construction. Courtesy of Sadler and Whitehead.

ⁱ National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Boulevard Historic District, Additional Documentation, 9/29/2015 and research prepared by Sadler and Whitehead, 2015, for a historic rehabilitation tax credit application. On file the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.