

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
June 28, 2016 Meeting**

18. **CAR No. 16-101** (M. McAteer)

**2230 Venable Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct two new multifamily structures and rehabilitate an existing structure to include new windows.**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests conceptual review and comment for the rehabilitation of an existing structure to accommodate multifamily units and the construction of two multifamily structures on adjacent vacant lots in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. The subject lots are located in a block bound by Venable, Jessamine, Carrington, and Tulip Streets. The majority of this block is vacant land with the exception of the three-story building to be rehabilitated; a single story, 6-bay, brick building which was constructed in 1850 that has been altered through the years; and a vacant service station which was constructed in 1931 at the corner of Venable and Tulip Streets. The surrounding neighborhood is primarily developed with two-story, frame and brick, single-family dwellings with front porches.

The proposed rehabilitation is of a three-story, brick Colonial Revival structure which was constructed in 1923 as a Baptist community center. The applicant proposes to convert the structure into 12 residential units. To facilitate this adaptive reuse, the applicant is proposing to install new windows in the existing window openings to match the historic windows, repair elements including the masonry with in-kind material, and paint the trim.

The remainder of the lot to the west of the existing structure is vacant from Venable Street to Carrington Street. The applicant is proposing to construct a three-story, 36 unit building which will face Jessamine Street with an additional 4th story roof top element on the Carrington Street elevation. The proposed structure will extend from Carrington Street to approximately 60 feet from Venable Street. The proposed Jessamine Street façade is organized in 29-bays, broken-up by changes in materials from dark gray bricks to gray and black Hardipanel, and recessed elements. The applicant is proposing to construct a surface parking lot immediately to the east of the proposed structure.

Adjacent to the existing structure to the east, there are three vacant lots, fronting on Venable Street. The applicant proposes to develop these lots with a three story building with community space on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors. The upper floors are proposed to be clad in a gray brick. The front façade ground floor will primarily be composed of commercial storefront.

The applicant is seeking **Conceptual Review** for this project. 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 Rehabilitation: Residential” on page 55 and “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 REHABILITATION

The Guidelines for Rehabilitation note that original features should be maintained and when replacing elements, the replacement should match the original in materials and design. Staff finds the proposed rehabilitation conforms to these guidelines as the proposed replacement windows will match the historic windows in appearance. The following items are needed for final review of the rehabilitation project:

- 1) A details of the proposed windows to include materials
- 2) Trim paint color

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:

Both of the proposed structures appear to respect the prevailing setbacks of the surrounding blocks though a context site plan was not provided for review. Additionally, both structures address the most prominent adjacent streets of Jessamine Street for the larger structure and Venable Street for the small structure. Staff has concerns regarding how the larger building addressed Carrington Street. Carrington Street is located on the edge of the Old and Historic District is the site of much planned redevelopment. Staff has concerns that this

façade limitedly addresses this street as the proposed design creates a brick wall at the pedestrian level along Carrington Street.

Form:

Jessamine Street Structure

The most prevalent building organization found on buildings in the surrounding blocks includes three evenly spaced vertically oriented bays. Staff encourages the applicant to utilize this typical pattern to group the development into three bays rather than the currently proposed five bay groupings.

Staff has concerns that the proposed first floor configuration of the retaining wall, brick porch walls, and stairs which appear to encroach into the public right of way will detract from the human experience along both Jessamine and Carrington Streets and particularly near the intersection of these two streets. Staff has observed physical evidence of low retaining walls near the edge of the right of way on the subject property and surrounding property and encourages the applicant to incorporate this existing building form into the design. The proposed brick wall for the first floor porches does not provide interaction with the street, and staff encourages the applicant to use a transparent material for these porches or to allow these porches to remain open to the street.

Staff believes that the proposed stairs that cross the front of the structure do not represent a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the District. Though side stoops are found in the District, long steep stairs which cross the front façade of structures are not an element found in the Old and Historic District.

The Guidelines note that the size, proportion, and spacing patterns of doors and window openings on freestanding, new construction should be compatible with patterns established within the district (pg. 46, Doors and Windows #3). Staff has concerns that the proposed round windows on the first floor are not consistent with the shape of windows found in the Old and Historic District.

Venable Street Structure

The typical form for mixed use structures in the District includes ground floor commercial storefront with residential windows above that relate to the storefront below. The proposed structure includes the human scale element of the ground floor storefront with substantial glazing, though staff has concerns that the upper story residential bays do not appear to relate to the first floor bays as none of the bays align.

Height, Width, Proportion, & Massing

Both structures appear taller than the surrounding residential single-family development though in keeping with the heights of the proposed rehabilitated structure and larger developments in the area outside of the immediate vicinity. Staff requests the applicant provide context elevations to illustrate the height in relation to the surrounding properties.

The proposed structures do employ bays as an organizational device, and staff encourages the applicant to explore opportunities to reference the three bay configuration prominent in the area in the proposed design.

Materials and Colors

The applicant has proposed to use materials compatible with the District including brick and cementitious siding. The proposed materials will be differentiated from the historic materials through color (dark gray bricks) and design (cementitious panels).

The following items will need to be included for final review:

- 1) A site plan with dimensions showing the size of the proposed new construction, the setbacks of the proposed new construction and of the adjacent properties, and the location of trash and recycling containers and exterior HVAC units and screening if required.
- 2) A dimensioned context drawing illustrating the vertical relationship of the proposed new construction and the adjacent buildings including the buildings across the bordering streets.
- 3) Vertical dimensions indicating the relationship of the sidewalk grade to the height of the foundation and porch as well as the height of the cornice and fourth floor roof top element.
- 4) Dimensions for the windows and doors and their placement above finished-floor elevation.
- 5) Legible descriptions of proposed materials to include colors.
- 6) Details of the proposed parking lot lighting and landscaping.
- 7) A detailed statement of how the project conforms to the *Guidelines*.