



Commission of Architectural Review

9. COA-176753-2025	Final Review	Meeting Date: 12/16/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Christopher Raynore	
Project Description	Construct a two-story single-family residence on a vacant lot	
Project Location		
Address: 520 Brook Road		
Historic District: Jackson Ward		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes new construction of a small, two-story single-family residence with basement and rooftop terrace at 520 Brook Road, located within the Jackson Ward Old and Historic District. The lot is triangular and limited in buildable area.</p> <p>The proposed infill building uses cementitious siding, vertically aligned windows, and a simple form with a modern interpretation.</p> <p>The project will require a Special Use Permit.</p>		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Yara Iwaz, Yara.Iwaz@RVA.gov, (804)646-6031	
Previous Reviews	<p>At the June 24, 2025 conceptual review the Commission made the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize site constraints and support sensitive massing and composition. • Encourage the use of brick and support a non-standard running bond and color as appropriate. • Improve base/middle/top hierarchy and define the primary entry. • Address fenestration rhythm and the window-to-wall ratio 	

Staff Recommendations	<p>Staff finds that the project has incorporated the comments and suggestions as discussed in the conceptual review, and recommends approval of the application, with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm setback compliance through SUP/zoning review. • Any design changes resulting from the SUP review to be submitted for chair and vice-chair approval. • Confirm with zoning whether the external spiral staircase is permissible • Final mechanical equipment location and screening method to be submitted for staff review and approval • Final window specifications to be submitted for staff review and approval.
-----------------------	--

Staff Analysis

Surrounding Context		
<p>the subject property at 520 Brook Road sits mid-block between 516 and 522 Brook Road, directly across from Abner Clay Park. The block is characterized by two-story historic brick rowhouses with narrow lots and shallow setbacks. The adjacent buildings. Most surrounding buildings are two stories high, set close to the narrow sidewalk. Brick is the predominant cladding material, with traditional window openings and stoop entries. Porches are rare on this segment of the block, with primary entrances typically elevated above sidewalk level.</p>		
Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for New Construction: Siting, p. 46	<p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>The proposed building maintains a similar setback to the adjacent property at 522 Brook Rd and aligns well with the general street wall. Given the atypical triangular shape of the lot, the building footprint demonstrates a sensitive approach to siting within a highly constrained context.</p> <p>The overall height of the building has been reduced, and the contextual elevation shows it with a height between that of the neighboring structures, reinforcing its integration into the context and respect for the block’s scale.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approving the building height.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends confirming setback compliance through SUP/zoning review. Any design changes resulting from the SUP review to be submitted for chair and vice-chair approval.</u></p>
Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion & Massing, page 47	<p><i>2. New residential 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.</i></p>	<p>The overall massing is compact and vertical in orientation, which is compatible with the neighborhood, and appropriate given the narrow lot and the scale of surrounding buildings.</p> <p>The primary façade has been revised to better define its base, middle and top, with the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recessed main entry accessible from the sidewalk of Brook Road, with two risers leading to a door with a half glass lite (two steps above grade) • Full-size vertically oriented windows • A cornice that aligns with the top of the adjacent building • A brick parapet topped with metal coping

		<p>These changes create a well-defined base, a better integrated elevation and a top that respects the heights of the surrounding structures and provides a clear visual termination at the top of the façade.</p> <p>The main entrance to the building presents a better interaction with the street that is consistent with the pedestrian-focused orientation typical of Jackson Ward. The recessed form is an appropriate response to the challenges posed by the lot size and setback constraints. Elevating the entry door identifies it as a more formal principal access to the building, which is consistent with the previous recommendations outlined in the conceptual review.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approving the design of the primary elevation.</u></p>
Standards for New Construction: Materials & Colors, page 47	<i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i>	<p>The exterior materials have been revised from a fiber cement siding to a light-brown brick in a running-bond pattern, responding to the Commission’s suggestion for a natural material, and in-line with the applicant’s goal of using natural and sustainable materials.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approving the brick materials as submitted.</u></p>
		<p>The previous north elevation featured a cantilevered balcony that potentially encroached on the adjacent lot. This elevation has been revised to instead have a metal spiral staircase that provides access to the vegetation roof.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends confirming with zoning whether the external spiral staircase is permissible.</u></p>
Standards For New Construction, p.47	<i>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.</i>	<p>The earlier design proposed a glass guardrail at the rooftop level, which raised questions regarding visibility, material reflectivity, and compatibility with the surrounding historic context. The applicant has since revised the design to incorporate a solid brick parapet with a simple metal coping. This modification provides a more coherent base-middle-top expression, reinforces the building’s masonry character, and improves the building’s contextual relationship to the block and to Abner Clay Park, where the roofline will be prominently visible.</p> <p>Mechanical system placement has not yet been illustrated on the updated drawings.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the revised parapet design. Final mechanical equipment location and screening method to be submitted for staff review and approval.</u></p>
Standards For New Construction: Doors and Windows, p.56	<i>2. The size, proportion and spacing patterns of door and window openings on free-standing new construction should be compatible with patterns established in the district</i>	<p>The window configuration has been significantly improved from the earlier concept. The revised design incorporates full-size, vertically windows that increase overall transparency and better reflect the typical void-to-solid ratios found on contributing buildings in the district. The use of simple, punched openings helps distinguish the building as contemporary construction while maintaining compatibility with historic fenestration patterns along Brook Road and in Jackson Ward. The fenestration pattern strengthens the</p>

		façade composition and aligns with Commission guidance from the conceptual review. <u>Staff recommends approval of the window approach as shown. Final window specifications to be submitted for staff review and approval.</u>
--	--	--

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: Previous context elevation



Figure 2: Current context elevation

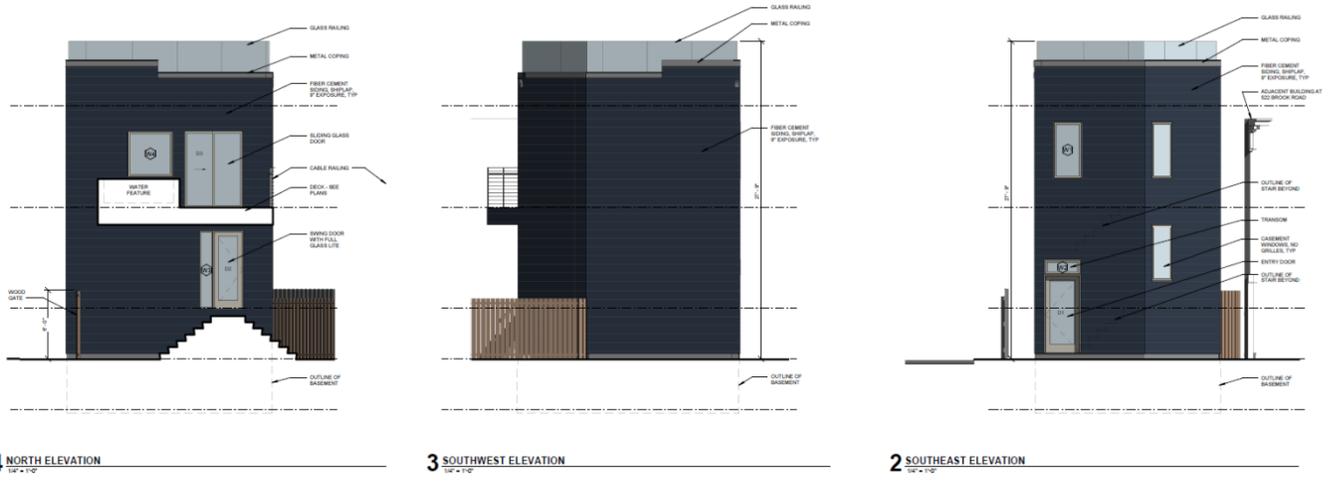


Figure 3: previous elevation drawings

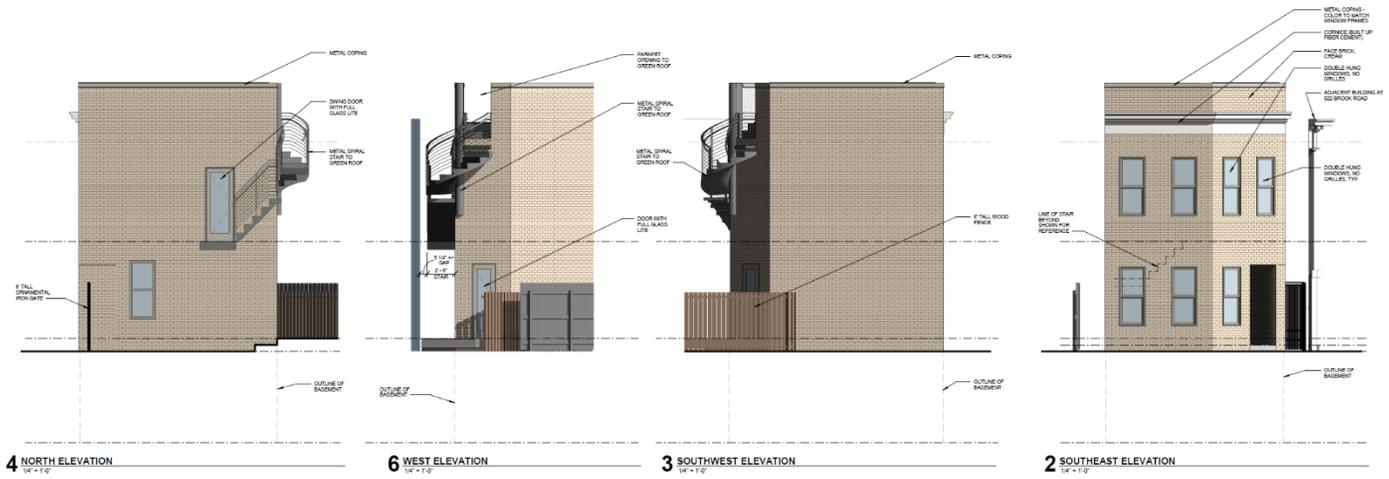


Figure 4: current elevation drawings

