

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

17. **CAR No. 16-114** (M. Jareau)

**2411 M Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

**Construct a new 3-story, mixed use
building with an enclosed rooftop
amenity room and terraces**

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The application to construct a three-story, mixed use building with an enclosed rooftop amenity room and terraces on a vacant lot in the Union Hill Old and Historic District was reviewed conceptually at the May 24, 2016 meeting. At the May meeting, the Commission approved the demolition of the structure at 2416 Jefferson Avenue; and this lot is included in the subject proposal. During the conceptual review, the Commission was generally favorable in its comments but requested additional details for final review of the project. The applicant returned to the Commission on July 26, 2016 for final review of the proposed project. At this meeting several members of the surrounding community expressed concerns with the scale of the structure, the lack of green space, and the design of the storefronts. The Commission deferred the application to allow the applicant an opportunity to address the Commission's concerns. Though the majority of the Commissioners were still comfortable with the scale and massing of the project, some of the Commissioners expressed concerns that the project was too massive and suggested breaking up the façade by a change in materials or color.

The applicant returned to the Commission on December 13, 2017 with revised plans. While being generally in favor of the project's design, the Commission's relayed concerns regarding the visibility of the 4th floor. The Commission deferred the application to provide the applicant the opportunity to revise the plans to redesign the 4th story to minimize its visibility from the surrounding streets, to include an entrance into Union Hill on the 24th and M Street elevations, and to incorporate conditions included in the staff report including an alternate color for the recessed 3rd story and relocating the rooftop railing.

After the Commission meeting, the applicant met with CAR staff, the CAR Chair, and the CAR Vice Chair to discuss the Commission's recommendations and to share an alternate massing plan. In response to the Commission's comments, the following modifications have been made to the project since the project's December review:

- The mass of the 4th story has been setback an additional 9 to 13 feet from Jefferson Avenue.

- The rooftop railing has been setback a consistent 20 feet from North 24th Street.
- The recessed 3rd story which was previously a stark white color is proposed to be Classic French Grey.
- Openings sized for doors are proposed for the corner of M Street and North 24th Street.
- An alternate design was presented for the corner of M Street and Jefferson Avenue. The applicant has proposed build three stories at the corner without recessing the 3rd story. This element will be constructed of brick and will be similar to the proposal for the corner of M Street and North 24th Street.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the “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 recommends approval of the project with conditions. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines* as the project is largely compatible with the historic features that characterizes its setting and context. The setting and context is a mixture of one, two and 2 ½ story residential and commercial buildings. The building massing and size is significantly larger than the adjacent historic buildings but the design minimizes the impact by creating a transparent, human scale first story, stepping back the third and fourth floors, and using an alternative material on the third story to reduce the impact of the height. Additionally, with the revisions to reduce the massing of the 4th story and set it back at a greater distance, the impact of this additional height has been further reduced. The use of pilasters to organize and separate the bays also reduces the scale of the building. The use of brick for the lower two stories is compatible with the brick commercial buildings in the vicinity. The simplification of the design and the lack of ornamentation compliments the nearby commercial buildings and does not conflict with the adjacent residential buildings.

Though on the revised elevations depict doors at the corner of M and North 24th Streets, this detail is not consistent on the floor plans and the renderings. As providing these doors was a recommendation of the Commission and improves the connectivity to the residential neighborhood, staff recommends doors be include at this corner.

Staff finds the alternate massing proposal is compatible with the commercial corridor in which the project is located. The alternate massing proposal provides additional emphasis to the prominent commercial corner on the property. Several Commissioners expressed interest in the applicant locating the greater mass of the project on the commercial side of the lot. Staff believes this proposal

achieves that goal while utilizing materials and a fenestration pattern consistent with the District.

Staff recommends the approval be additionally conditioned on the following:

- Windows should be true or simulated divided light.
- Cementitious siding should be smooth and un-beaded.
- If the mechanical equipment screening is to be visible from the public right of way, details of the screening should be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.
- Brick colors are to be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.

It is the assessment of staff that with the acceptance of the stated conditions the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 30.930.7(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 code.