



**Staff Report**  
**City of Richmond, Virginia**



**Commission of Architectural Review**

9. COA-144130-2024	Final Review	Meeting Date: 3/26/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Will Gillette, Baker Development Resources	
Project Description	Construct 16 new single family attached townhomes in groupings of two and three.	
Project Location		
Address: 2111-2119 Venable Street		
Historic District: Union Hill		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to construct 16 townhomes in groupings of two and three. The new construction will be located between Venable Street and Burton Street with units fronting both streets.</p> <p>The townhomes will be three stories tall, some featuring rear third floor patios.</p> <p>The new construction will be frame with horizontal siding.</p> <p>The land is currently vacant.</p> <p>The current parcels will need to be subdivided.</p>	<p>Staff Recommendation</p> <p>Deferral</p>	
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, <a href="mailto:alex.dandridge@rva.gov">alex.dandridge@rva.gov</a> , (804) 646-6569	
Previous Reviews	<p>The Commission conceptually reviewed this application at the November 2023 meeting. Comments from Commissioners included asking the applicant to consider the height of the proposed three-story buildings. Some Commissioners expressed that the height of the building would be less of a concern if there was more diversity in architectural style amongst the new construction. An English basement form was suggested to accomplish the desired space while limiting the overall height. The 2300 block of Venable was asked to be studied as a good example of uniform buildings that featured pedestrian scale elements while still appearing to be distinct from one another. The Commission asked that the buildings have porches and stoops. The massing was not discussed in length, but it was recommended that the individual units could be in groupings of two rather than two and three.</p>	
Staff Recommendations	<p>Staff recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>against the horizontal band above the second-story windows</li> </ul>	

	<p>on the three-story buildings with that feature, and that the applicant consider implementing an English basement design on these building types to reduce height.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that designs with third floor projections and front facing roof decks be removed from the plans.</li> <li>• Rather than faux mansards with dormers, staff recommends that these buildings feature a faux gable roof on the façade that is shallowly pitched with greater projecting dormers.</li> <li>• The applicant reduce the height of the buildings to better reference the typical height of residential buildings on the subject block.</li> <li>• If they differ from what is presented in this application, Staff recommends that all final material and color specification be submitted for administrative approval.</li> <li>• Information on hardscaping for sidewalks, alleys, and any parking pads, including materiality and dimension be submitted for Administrative Review.</li> <li>• Details on any proposed walls or fences be submitted for Administrative Review.</li> </ul>
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## Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<p><b>Standards For New Construction, page 46</b></p>	<p><i>All new residential and commercial construction, whether in the form of additions or entire buildings should be compatible with the historic features that characterize the 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 buildings in its setting.</i></p>	<p>The new construction will be located directly to the east of a larger masonry building which features a tall square corner steeple and a steeply pitched cross-gable roof. To the north, the site is bordered by a grouping of in-tact frame, modest, Italianate dwellings that are two stories in height, three bays wide, and feature decorative cornices with cornice vents, brackets, and full-width, one story, covered front porches. To the east and south of the site, there is vacant land, a parking lot, and newer construction of differing architectural styles.</p> <p>Since the conceptual review, the applicant has revised the plans to include additional architectural detailing that references that of the Union Hill City Old and Historic District. Three types of building designs are being proposed for the new construction on 2111-2119 Venable Street.</p> <p>The first building type is a three-story building with a faux mansard on the third floor and a rear third floor roof terrace.</p> <p>The second building type is a three-story building with a decorative cornice, a horizontal band above the second-floor windows, and a rear third-floor roof terrace.</p> <p>The third building type is a three-story building with a decorative cornice above the second-floor windows and recessed third-floor on the façade.</p> <p>The inclusion of front porches and decorative cornices and brackets is in-keeping with the surrounding block and the Union Hill City Old and Historic District.</p> <p>The faux mansard roof form is not a common form found on historic buildings on the context block, or within the Union Hill City Old and Historic District.</p>

		<p>The three-story building with a horizontal band above the second story windows and below the third-floor windows is not a common design on the context block or within the district.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends against the horizontal band above the second-story windows on the three-story buildings with that feature and that the applicant consider implementing an English basement design on these building types to reduce height.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the pitch of the faux mansard be lower, to better resemble a more traditionally sloped gable roof with more pronounced dormers.</u></p>
<p><b>Standards For New Construction: Siting, page 46</b></p>	<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 buildings will have a setback of approximately 7.5 feet from the face of the building to the sidewalk.</p>
<p><b>Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46</b></p>	<p><i>1. 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.</i></p>	<p><i>Massing:</i> The massing of the units appears to be narrower and taller than what is typically seen on the subject block. They are approximately 36' tall and 15'4" wide.</p> <p><i>Symmetry:</i> The new construction is generally symmetrical.</p> <p><i>Proportions:</i> Most of the units will have symmetrical proportions and rear, third-floor terraces.</p> <p>A couple of the buildings will have third floor projections with front terraces. While the Commission has approved third floor roof decks with setback third floors or stair tower projections, it is the staff's opinion that this form is not compatible within historic districts, specifically in more modestly scaled districts such as Union Hill. <u>Staff recommends that designs with third floor projections and front facing roof decks be removed from the plans.</u></p> <p><i>Roof shapes:</i> The roof shapes of the new buildings appear to be shallow pitched shed roofs (flat) which is in-keeping with roof shapes and forms found in the Union Hill City Old and Historic District. Some of the new buildings will also feature faux mansard roofs on the facades. Gable roofs with dormers are found throughout Richmond's Old and Historic Districts; however, they generally have a shallow pitched roof with greater projecting dormers.</p> <p><u>Rather than faux mansards with dormers, staff recommends that these buildings feature a faux gable roof on the façade that is shallowly pitched with greater projecting dormers.</u> Staff finds that this roof form would be more compatible with the district and the shallower pitch of a faux gable would visually reduce the top of the roof's ridge.</p>
<p><b>Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46</b></p>	<p><i>2. New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby</i></p>	<p>During the conceptual review, the proposed buildings did not feature any human scale elements. The plans have been revised to include full-width and single bay front porches that address the front sidewalk and street.</p>

	<i>historic, residential construction in the district.</i>	
<b>Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion &amp; Massing, page 47</b>	<p><i>1. New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.</i></p> <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. For example, full-block-long row house compositions are rare in Richmond. New residential buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face should still employ bays as an organizational device, but the new building should read as a single piece of architecture.</i></p> <p><i>3. The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.</i></p>	<p>While there are a couple larger, taller masonry buildings in the immediate area, they are institutional/religious buildings, most residential buildings in the immediate area are two stories. <u>Staff recommends that the applicant reduce the height of the buildings to better reference the typical height of residential buildings on the subject block.</u></p> <p>While there are examples of three-story residential buildings in Union Hill, they often feature raised foundations or English basements with “skied” front porches.</p>
<b>Standards for New Construction: Materials &amp; Colors, page 47</b>	<i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i>	<p>The new construction will be clad in horizontal siding, which generally resembles other types of horizontal siding found within the district.</p> <p>Roofs will be standing seam metal. Windows will be aluminum clad wood.</p> <p>The trim will be a composite material. Porches and decking will be wood. The foundation will be parged masonry.</p> <p>Staff finds that the selected materials are appropriate for the district.</p> <p><u>If the materials differ from what is presented in this application, Staff recommends that all final material and color specification be submitted for administrative approval.</u></p>
<b>Standards For New Construction: Doors and Windows, page 56</b>	<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>During the conceptual review, each building had groupings of two-three windows. Staff found that groupings of windows of three and more are not common within the district. The plans have been updated and now show that the new buildings will have vertically aligned, single windows with divided lights. Staff finds that this configuration is more in-keeping with the historic district.</p> <p>During the conceptual review, the new building was proposed to use fiberglass, single-pane casement windows. The application has been revised to show that the buildings will now have windows with divided lights (two-over-two) which is more in-keeping with the district.</p>

<p><b>Site Improvements: Sidewalks &amp; Curbs, page 76</b></p>	<p><i>4. Brick or granite pavers are the most appropriate choice in most Old and Historic Districts.</i></p> <p><i>5. Existing granite curbing should be retained whenever possible.</i></p> <p><i>6. Sidewalk design should allow for the installation of appropriate urban landscaping.</i></p>	<p>Based on the site plan submitted in the application, the units that front the north side of Burton Street and the south side of Venable Street will have an open area between them. From the plans, it is unclear what the treatment of this area will be. <u>Staff recommends that information on hardscaping for sidewalks, alleys, and any parking pads, including materiality and dimension be submitted for Administrative Review.</u> Appropriate paving for Union Hill includes brick pavers, granite pavers, and gravel.</p>
<p><b>Standards for New Construction, Residential, Fences &amp; Walls, pg. 51</b></p>	<p><i>1. Fence, wall, and gate designs should reflect the scale of the historic structures they surround, as well as the character of nearby fences, walls, and gates.</i></p> <p><i>2. Fence, wall, or gate materials should relate to building materials commonly found in the neighborhood.</i></p> <p><i>3. Privacy fences along the side and rear of a property should be constructed of wood of an appropriate design. Privacy fences are not appropriate in front of a historic building.</i></p>	<p>No information was given on any walls or fences that will be installed in association with the new construction. <u>Staff recommends that details on any proposed walls or fences be submitted for Administrative Review.</u> Walls and curbing will require review by the Commission, whereas wooden fences may be administratively approved if in compliance with the Commission's adopted administrative approval guidelines.</p>

## Figures

Figure 1. View looking northeast on Venable Street.



Figure 2. Religious building at the corner of N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Venable Street.



Figure 3. Looking north on Venable Street at the corner of N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street.



Figure 4. Vacant lot between Venable Street and Burton Street.



Figure 5. Vacant lot at the intersection of N. 22<sup>nd</sup>. Street and Burton Street.



Figure 6. View looking southeast from the intersection of N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Burton Street.



Figure 7. Examples of shallowly pitched gabled roofs with dormer windows on new construction on 500 block of N. 24<sup>th</sup> Street in Church Hill North.



Figure 8. Example of shallowly pitched gabled roof with dormer windows on Venable Street in Union Hill.



Figure 9. Example of shallowly pitched gabled roof with dormer windows in Shockoe Valley City Old and Historic District.



Figure 10. Example of new construction using an English basement at 720 Jessamine Street in Union Hill.



Figure 11. 1905 Sanborn Map. 2111-2119 Venable Street features mostly frame, two story buildings with front porches. All were demolished between the 1970's-1990's. As of 1905, there were not any buildings on the corner of Burton Street and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street that fronted on Burton Street.

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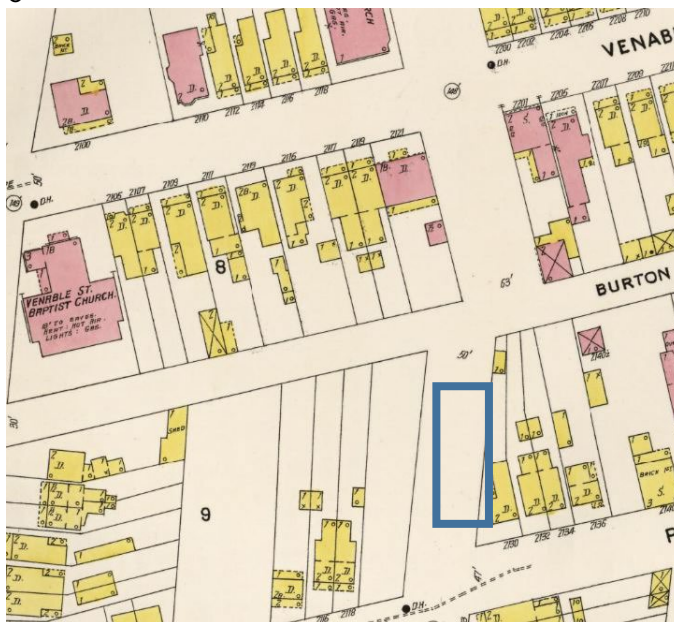


Figure 8. Subject block (2111-2119 Venable) in historic configuration, built-out. Photographs -1955-1977. 2115

