



Commission of Architectural Review

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| 3. COA-175461-2025 | Final Review Meeting Date: 5/26/2026 |
| Applicant/Petitioner | Alessandro Ragazzi, Baker Development Resources |
| Project Description | Construct a new multifamily dwelling on the vacant lots |
| Project Location | |
| Address: 874 & 876 Jessamine Street | |
| Historic District: Union Hill | |
| <p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to construct 16-unit multi-family building on two vacant parcels.</p> <p>The previous buildings on the two sites were attached, frame, Italianate dwellings with full-width porches and bracketed cornices. The buildings were demolished sometime between 1992-2002.</p> <p>The two parcels will be combined into one.</p> <p>The applicant is also pursuing a Special Use Permit from the Land Use Division.</p> | |
| Staff Recommendation | Approval, with Conditions |
| Staff Contact | Alex Dandridge, Alex.Dandridge@RVA.gov, (804)646-6569 |
| Previous Reviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual Review - June 2025 • Staff met with the applicant on October 16th, 2025, and the applicant & architect on October 29th, 2025, to discuss the Commission's comments and assist in revisions. • Final review, deferred - November 2025 • Final Review, deferred - February 2026. The Commission recognized improvements to the building's design and architecture but still had concerns about its size, scale, and fit within the district. Some members supported the building type overall but questioned whether the requested lot coverage and overall proportions were appropriate for the surrounding area. While the design was seen as strong on its own, several members felt it still lacked compatibility with the district's character. The Commission also praised updates to the Carrington Street side and suggested adding more pedestrian-friendly features to improve the streetscape. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission also discussed functional and design concerns related to the trash enclosure and overall building composition. Concerns were raised about dumpster access, maneuverability, and potential neighborhood impacts associated with alley access via an easement. A design modification was proposed to reduce the length of one unit by removing a bay, thereby creating adequate space to relocate the trash enclosure to the Carrington Street elevation. This adjustment was noted as a potential solution to both functional issues and massing concerns, while also improving façade symmetry by creating an equal number of bays on either side of the main entrance. • Several members expressed support for exploring this concept further. The Commission voted to defer the item to allow the applicant time to evaluate and potentially incorporate the recommended design modifications. |
| Staff Recommendations | <p>Staff finds that the proposed revisions have adequately addressed the Commission’s comments, and recommends approval of the project with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recommends approval of the revised trash enclosure location and design, with the condition that the applicant coordinates with the Department of Public Works (DPW) regarding all collection access requirements. • Staff recommends that windows be aluminum clad wood or wood and feature simulated divided lights (SDLs). • Staff recommends that traditional red brick be used and that the fiber cement siding be a light color, unbeaded and smooth without a faux wood grain. • Staff recommends that final siding and brick materials and color selections be submitted to staff for review and approval. • Staff recommends that final railing material and design be submitted for staff review and approval. • Any changes to the building design, site layout, elevations, materials, or architectural details resulting from the SUP process shall be submitted to staff for review and approval. |

Staff Analysis

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| Surrounding Context | | |
| <p>The subject parcels are located at the northeastern edge of the Union Hill City Old and Historic District at the corner of Jessamine Street and Carrington Street. The existing built environment surrounding the site includes two story frame, three bay buildings with full-width covered front porches, constructed between 1890-1945. The east side of Jessamine Street across from the subject site has a larger, newer development constructed in 2018 that consists of one large four-story building, two large three-story buildings, as well as two two-story building’s that face Venable Street. Carrington Street consists of a conglomerate of cobblestones and asphalt, while Jessamine Street is asphalt. There are not any sidewalks existing adjacent to the subject site. Just to the north, there are several vacant parcels and vacant land owned by the city. Most of the surrounding area are residential uses, and some institutional uses.</p> | | |
| <i>For large scale, multi-family residential, the Guidelines suggest using the Standards for New Construction: Commercial</i> | | |
| Guideline Reference | Reference Text | Analysis |

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| <p>Standards for New Construction: Commercial. Siting, pg. 52</p> | <p><i>2. New commercial infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard development patterns of the surrounding block. The minimum setbacks evident in most districts reinforce the traditional street wall. In cases where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block.</i></p> <p><i>3. New commercial buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.</i></p> <p><i>4. If setback waivers, or any other waivers are needed, the Commission can be petitioned to support a Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) waiver.</i></p> <p><i>5. For large-scale commercial parking, parking within the building is strongly encouraged. If a building includes parking within it, vehicle entry doors should be located on non-primary elevations.</i></p> | <p><u>Carrington Street Elevation & Revised Massing</u></p> <p>In response to Commission comments regarding scale, symmetry, and overall massing, as well as the location of the trash enclosure at the rear of the lot, the applicant revised the building by removing one bay from the overall composition. This modification has resulted in a substantially improved Carrington Street elevation. The revised façade now presents a more balanced composition, with four evenly spaced bays located on either side of the central entrance element. The use of full-height, vertically aligned window openings reinforces the vertical rhythm typical of residential buildings throughout the district and creates a more coherent and ordered façade composition.</p> <p>The reduction in building length also lessens the perceived scale and bulk of the project along Carrington Street, improving its relationship to the surrounding neighborhood context. Staff finds that these revisions successfully address several of the Commission’s previous concerns regarding massing and façade organization.</p> <p>Staff recommends approval of the revised Carrington Street elevation and reduction in massing.</p> <p>The proposed building will be set back from Jessamine Street by 14 feet. The submitted site plan indicates that the face of the new building will align with that of the extant building at 870-872 Jessamine Street.</p> <p>The new building will face the most prominent Street, Jessamine; however, will have a large elevation facing Carrington Street to the north.</p> <p>There are not any parking lots or structures proposed in the scope of work.</p> |
| <p>Standards for New Construction: Commercial. Form, pg. 52</p> | <p><i>1. New commercial construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the immediate area. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections, and roof shapes that lend identity to a building. Building form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.</i></p> <p><i>2. New commercial construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic commercial buildings in the district.</i></p> | <p>The new building will consist of two rectangular forms, a three story mass to the north, and a narrower two-story mass to the south. The two forms will be joined by a two-story hyphen, which is in set between the two masses. Buildings with rectangular forms are common in new and historic buildings in the immediate area; however, the scale of the building is larger than historic residential buildings in the district but appears to be a bit smaller in scale than the multi-family building directly across Jessamine Street which was approved by the Commission in 2018.</p> |

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| | <p><i>3. New commercial construction should incorporate human-scale elements at the pedestrian level.</i></p> | <p>The mass of the building is broken up by a deep in set on the Jessamine elevation, which helps reduce its bulk and better reflects the rhythm seen in historic homes in the district.</p> |
| <p>Standards for New Construction: Commercial, Height, width, Proportion & Massing, pg. 53</p> | <p><i>1. New commercial construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings, both residential and commercial.</i></p> <p><i>2. New commercial construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of commercial buildings in Richmond's historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing should look to the project's local district for precedent. When designing new commercial buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face, the design 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>The northmost mass of building at the corner of Jessamine and Carrington Streets will be three stories in height and taller than the historic residential buildings surrounding it. The southmost mass of the building will be two-stories in height and narrower, which better reflects the scale of the historic residential buildings next to it at 872-870 Jessamine Street.</p> <p>The southmost mass closest to the extant historic buildings at 872-870 Jessamine Street is two stories in height and serves as a transition to the northmost mass which remains three-story in height. Staff finds that reducing the height closest to the extant historic buildings serves as a proper transition to the proposed three-story mass. The three -story mass holds the corner of Jessamine and Carrington Street well and relates somewhat in height to the new construction across Jessamine Street.</p> <p>In the conceptual review submittal, the Carrington Street elevation featured a fenestration pattern of alternating full-sized windows and square windows. There was an in set midway across the elevation with a small side entrance door, as well as a blank stair tower that projected above the third-story roofline and had small utility doors at its base. The Commission found that the entrance to this elevation needed to be more articulated, and that the stair tower element was problematic.</p> <p>The applicant has revised the plans to incorporate the Commission's comments.</p> <p>The stair tower has been moved farther into the interior of the building and is no longer a visible exterior element. The side entrance is better defined, being in a projecting bay that is clad in brick two stories up, and having a canopy with a standing seam metal roof supported by square posts over the entrance doors. The fenestration has not been altered. Overall, staff is supportive of these revisions.</p> <p>During the November review, staff and the Commission recommended that the fenestration on the Carrington Street elevation consist of windows of the same size. The applicant has responded to this recommendation, showing a consistent window</p> |

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| | | size on this elevation in the revised plans. Staff support this revision. |
| Standards for New Construction: Corner Properties – Commercial, pg. 54 | <p><i>1. Secondary elevations of corner properties should reference massing similar to other corner locations in the historic district.</i></p> <p><i>2. The material used in the primary elevation should be continued along the second, corner elevation.</i></p> <p><i>3. Particular attention should be paid to the height of foundations to create an appropriately scaled appearance that relates to neighboring structures and is consistent with neighboring properties. Heights should be kept to a level that will enhance, not detract from, the pedestrian experience. Foundation materials should be selected that are compatible with historic materials and consistent with properties within the district. If the foundations are parged, the parge coat must be opaque, and the coursing beneath must not telegraph through the parge coat.</i></p> <p><i>4. Windows and doors on the secondary, corner elevation should be organized following the principals of the primary elevation: windows should be proportioned appropriately, aligned vertically, and arranged as though designing a primary elevation.</i></p> | <p>The materials used on the primary elevations are continued along the second corner elevation. The horizontal fiber cement siding and masonry reinforce the building’s base-middle-top composition and align with both historic and contemporary materials in the district.</p> <p>The variation in material contributes positively to the building’s overall articulation. Brick is used on the ground floor along portions of northmost mass along Jessamine and Carrington Street elevations, creating a strong visual base and helping to differentiate it from the siding used on the upper levels.</p> <p>On the southmost mass, along with the reduction in height, the applicant has revised the plans so that this portion of the building is entirely clad in horizontal, fiber cement lap siding. Staff supports this revision, as lap siding is common throughout the district.</p> <p>During the last review, the Carrington Street elevation had a roof line with a parapet wall with subtle differences in its height across the elevation.</p> <p>Staff found that a parapet wall with a consistent height across the entire elevation would be more in-keeping with precedent found in the district. The applicant has responded by revising the plans to show a consistent parapet wall height along the Carrington Street elevation. Staff supports this revision.</p> |
| Standards for New Construction: Materials & Colors, page 47 | <p><i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i></p> <p><i>3. Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors already found in the immediate neighborhood and throughout the larger district (see Painting Section starting on page 60).</i></p> <p><i>4. Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted for use in City Old and Historic Districts. Other synthetic siding materials with a smooth, untextured finish may be allowed in limited cases, but approval by the Commission is always required.</i></p> | <p>The exterior of the building will have a brick base and horizontal, fiber cement lap siding. The windows will be double-hung two-over-two. The porches will be wrapped in composite trim and supported by square columns and enclosed with a simple composite handrail. Staff finds the materials to be compatible with materials found throughout the district.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that windows be aluminum clad wood or wood and feature simulated divided lights (SDLs).</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that traditional red brick be used and that the fiber cement siding be a light color, unbeaded and smooth without a faux wood grain.</u></p> |

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| | | <p><u>Staff recommends that final siding and brick materials and color selections be submitted to staff for review and approval.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that final railing material and design be submitted for staff review and approval.</u></p> |
| <p>Standards For New Construction, p.47</p> | <p><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> <p><i>6. For larger-scale projects that involve communal garbage collection (such as dumpsters or other large collection device), these garbage receptacles should be located away from the primary elevation or elevations of the building (preferably to the rear) and screened from view.</i></p> | <p><u>Revised Trash Enclosure & location</u></p> <p>Since the previous review, the applicant has revised the trash collection strategy in response to Commission concerns regarding dumpster location, alley access, and the relationship of the trash enclosure to adjacent residential units. The previously proposed dumpster enclosure accessed through the alley easement has been removed. In its place, the applicant now proposes individual can enclosures located along the Carrington Street side of the property on concrete pads with reinforced wood framing. This revision helps in addressing concerns regarding circulation, maneuverability, and potential impacts on neighboring properties.</p> <p>Staff finds the revised trash collection approach to be a substantial improvement over the previously proposed enclosure and more compatible with the surrounding residential context. The revised siting also better integrates the service function into the site plan while reducing impacts on the rear elevation and adjacent units.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the revised trash enclosure location and design, with the condition that the applicant coordinates with the Department of Public Works (DPW) regarding all collection requirements.</u></p> <p>The roof plan submitted with the application demonstrates that the HVAC equipment will be located at the center of the roof and obscured from view by a parapet wall.</p> |
| <p>Standards For New Construction: Doors and Windows, p.56</p> | <p><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> | <p>Since the conceptual submittal, the side entrance adjacent to Carrington Street is better defined, being in a projecting bay that is clad in brick two stories up, and there is a canopy with a standing seam metal roof supported by square posts over the entrance doors. The fenestration has not been altered. Overall, staff is supportive of these revisions.</p> <p>The placement of the exterior doors on each unit is appropriate for the district.</p> |

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| <p>Standards For New Construction: Doors and Windows, p.56</p> | <p><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> | <p>Windows and doors on the Carrington Street elevation are arranged similarly to those on the Jessamine Street elevation, being vertically aligned, which is consistent with the typical rhythm found in residential buildings throughout the district and neighborhood.</p> <p>During the last review, the Carrington Street elevation featured fenestration with varying window sizes. Staff found that the varying window sizes undermined the sense of consistency and hierarchy expected of the prominent and more visible public-facing façade on Carrington Street.</p> <p>The Carrington Street elevation has been revised to feature window of all the same size. Staff supports this revision.</p> |
| | <p><i>3. New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design. In Richmond, porches were historically an integral part of residential design and provide much of the street-level architectural character of Richmond's historic districts.</i></p> | <p>To address the staff and Commission's comments regarding the inclusion of additional pedestrian scale elements along the Carrington Street elevation, the applicant revised the plans to show an accurate grade change along Carrington Street that reduces the height of the foundation. The plans have also been revised to include a water table detail at the foundation which adds more interest at the pedestrian level.</p> |

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. Looking northwest from Jessamine Street at the subject site, June 2025.



Figure 2. Looking south down Jessamine Street. Subject site on the right-hand side.



Figure 3. Residential buildings on nearby 22nd Street



Figure 4. Residential buildings on nearby 22nd Street, June 2025.



Figure 5. New construction approved by CAR in 2018 across from the subject site. Southeast corner of Jessamine and Carrington Street.



Figure 6. View of subject site looking south. Taken from small "park" north of Carrington Street, outside of the Union Hill COHD.



Figure 7. Original buildings located at 874-876 Jessamine Street, 1950s. Demolished between 1992-2002.