




Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

6. COA-144130-2024	Final Review	Meeting Date: 5/28/2024
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, alex.dandridge@rva.gov , (804) 646-6569	
Previous Reviews	<p>The Commission reviewed this application as a final review at the March 26, 2024 meeting. The Commission voted to defer the application, as there were still revisions to the design being requested. Specifically, the Commission requested that the faux mansard roofs read more as a gable on the facades to visually reduce the ridge height. There was general concern over the horizontal band over the second story of the three story, Italianate building design. This element was asked to be removed. Some Commissioners expressed concern over having three story buildings fronting Burton Street, given the street's width, and believed that two stories would be more appropriate for that frontage. The English Basement and more variety amongst the dwellings were further emphasized from previous meetings.</p> <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</p>	

	<p>basement form was suggested to accomplish the desired living 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>
<p>Staff Recommendations</p>	<p>Staff recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the proposed buildings with two-story, covered front porches, Staff recommends that the first floor of the building be lowered to grade and that the ground floor entrance and posts be simple and without railings. The second story of the porch should feature more ornate elements like decorative posts and other architectural detailing. • Exterior doors on the Italianate style building be a simple wooden door with an upper transom, or a simple half wood and half glass door both of which are common in the district. • Information on hardscaping for sidewalks, alleys, and any parking pads, including materiality and dimension be submitted for review. • Details on any proposed walls or fences be submitted for Administrative Review. • Applicant consider further reducing the pitch of the front gable roof to create a true gable, and to have a rear cross gable projection, a design that is more compatible with other buildings in the district.

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<p>Standards For New Construction, page 46</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 large, masonry church which features a tall square corner tower and a steeply pitched cross-gable roof. To the north, the site is bordered by a grouping of modest, frame 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 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>During the last review, one building type was a three-story building with a faux mansard on the third floor and a rear third floor roof terrace. Based on Staff and Commission comments, the faux mansard roof has been reduced in pitch to resemble a more traditional gable with dormer windows. Staff supports this revision.</p>

		<p>During the last review, the second building type was a three-story building with a decorative cornice, a horizontal band above the second-floor windows, and a rear third-floor roof terrace. The Commission was not in support of this design. The applicant has revised the plans to include a two-story, full width porch on the facade of this building type.</p> <p>During the last review, the third building type was a three-story building with a decorative cornice above the second-floor windows and recessed third floor on the façade. The Commission and staff were not supportive of the third-floor setback. The applicant has responded by removing this design from the plans.</p> <p>Staff supports the inclusion of front porches on this block, as it is a common feature seen on historic buildings in Union Hill and enhances the pedestrian scale of the district.</p>
<p>Standards For New Construction: Siting, page 46</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. Most buildings in Union Hill have shallow front yards.</p>
<p>Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46</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>During the previous review of this application, Staff and the Commission expressed concern over the continued use of third floor recessed decks on the facade within City Old and Historic Districts and recommended that buildings with these designs be removed from the plans.</p> <p>The applicant has revised the plans to embrace full three stories on the facades, rather than the setback third floors. Staff finds the removal of the third-floor setback appropriate.</p> <p>During the previous review, the Commission also expressed concern over the construction of three-story buildings on Burton Street. The application has not been revised to address this concern.</p> <p>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 gable roofs and dormers on the facades. Gable roofs with dormers are found throughout Richmond's Old and Historic Districts and generally have a shallow pitched roof with greater projecting dormers.</p> <p>While there are three story buildings in Union Hill that feature a two-story, covered front porch, they often have a first floor that is at grade and are not ornate. The second story of the porch generally features more ornate elements like railings and brackets. This configuration emphasizes the second story of the porch more so than the first story. This visually breaks up the height of the building by emphasizing in the middle of the façade, rather than emphasizing the verticality of the building.</p>

		<p><u>For the proposed buildings with two-story, covered front porches, Staff recommends that the first floor of the building be lowered to grade and that the ground floor entrance and posts be simple and without railings. The second story of the porch should feature more ornate elements like decorative posts and other architectural detailing.</u> This would better reference the configuration of two-story porches on three-story dwellings within the context of the district.</p>
<p>Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46</p>	<p><i>2. New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic, residential construction in the district.</i></p>	<p>The new construction will feature full-width one and two-story front porches which will increase the pedestrian scale of the buildings and block.</p>
<p>Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion & Massing, page 47</p>	<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 few, taller, masonry buildings in the immediate area, they are institutional/religious buildings, while most residential buildings in the immediate area are two stories. During the last review, Staff and the Commission recommended that <u>the applicant reduce the height of the buildings to better reference the typical height of residential buildings on the subject and surrounding blocks.</u></p> <p>While there are a few examples of three-story residential buildings in Union Hill, however, they always feature raised foundations or English basements with elevated front porches and a change in material between the ground floor and the upper levels. Some of these three-story buildings have an entrance at grade and two-story porches where the ground floor is treated simply, and the upper porch is more ornate.</p> <p>The applicant has responded by reducing the pitch of the roof by adding a front gable and dormers instead of a steeper mansard with dormers. This change in slope should decrease the overall appearance of the height of the ridge.</p> <p>The other units have not changed in height. The addition of two-story porches breaks up the vertical massing but does not reduce the overall height as requested. Especially, not those units fronting Burton Street where the Commission requested two stories in height.</p>
<p>Standards for New Construction: Materials & Colors, page 47</p>	<p><i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i></p>	<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>Standards For New Construction: Doors and Windows, page 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</i></p>	<p>During the conceptual review, each building had groupings of two and 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</p>

	<p><i>patterns established in the district.</i></p>	<p>windows with divided lights. Staff finds that this configuration is more in-keeping with the historic district.</p> <p>During the conceptual review, the applicant 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>The three-story Italianate style building are proposed to have eight-light glass and wood exterior doors. The windows on these buildings are two-over-two. Staff finds that the light proportions between the windows and the exterior doors are not compatible. <u>Staff recommends that the exterior doors on the Italianate style building be a simple wooden door with an upper transom, or a simple half wood and half glass door both of which are common in the district.</u></p>
<p>Site Improvements: Sidewalks & Curbs, page 76</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 review.</u> Appropriate paving for Union Hill includes brick pavers, granite pavers, and gravel.</p> <p>Since the last review, it appears that one unit has been removed along Burton Street to include a parking area.</p>
<p>Standards for New Construction, Residential, Fences & Walls, pg. 51</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>
<p>Standards for New Construction: Corner Properties - Residential</p>	<p><i>1. Secondary elevations of corner properties should reference massing like other corner locations in the historic district.</i></p> <p><i>2. The material used in the primary elevation should be</i></p>	<p>While the end units of the new construction will appear as corner units, they may be obscured at a future date should construction occur on the adjacent parcels. The easternmost units have the greatest potential of being obscured in the future; however, the westernmost units may remain quite visible, as they are adjacent to a driveway and setback from the neighboring church building.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the applicant consider further reducing the pitch of the front gable roof to create a true</u></p>

	<p><i>continued along the second, corner elevation.</i></p> <p><i>4. Windows and doors on the secondary, corner elevation should be organized following the principles of the primary elevation: windows should be proportioned appropriately, aligned vertically, and arranged as though designing a primary elevation.</i></p> <p><i>5. For residential corner properties, we strongly encourage the use of architectural elements that are typical of residential corner properties in Richmond's historic districts: porches that turn from primary to secondary elevations, corner towers, projecting bay windows, side entrances (including porticos, and shed roofs, where appropriate), side porches, lighting related to that on the primary elevation, and other similar treatments that treat the secondary corner elevation as an architecturally important elevation.</i></p>	<p><u>gable, and to have a rear cross gable projection, a design that is more compatible with other buildings in the district.</u></p> <p>Staff believes that this will add additional interest to the corner units that feature a gable roof and dormer on the façade and shed roof to the rear.</p>
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Figures

Figure 1. View looking northeast on Venable Street.



Figure 2. Religious building at the corner of N. 21st Street and Venable Street.

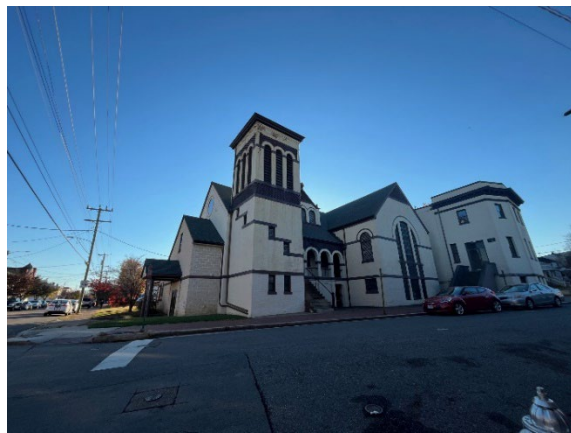


Figure 3. Looking north on Venable Street at the corner of N. 22nd Street.

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



Figure 5. Vacant lot at the intersection of N. 22nd. Street and Burton Street.



Figure 6. View looking southeast from the intersection of N. 22ND Street and Burton Street.



Figure 7. Examples of shallowly pitched gabled roofs with dormer windows on new construction on 500 block of N. 24th 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 22nd Street that fronted on Burton Street.

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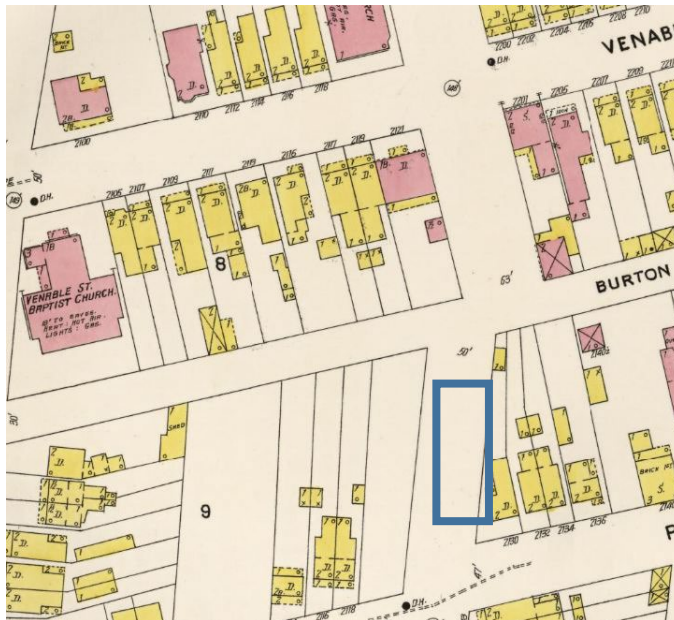


Figure 8. Subject block (2111-2119 Venable) in historic configuration, built-out. Photographs -1955-1977. 2115



