

2. COA-079736-2020

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

December 15, 2020

PROPERTY ADDRESS

304 N. 21st Street

DISTRICT

Shockoe Valley

APPLICANT

Crescent Development

STAFF CONTACT

Carey L. Jones

Commission of Architectural Review

STAFF REPORT



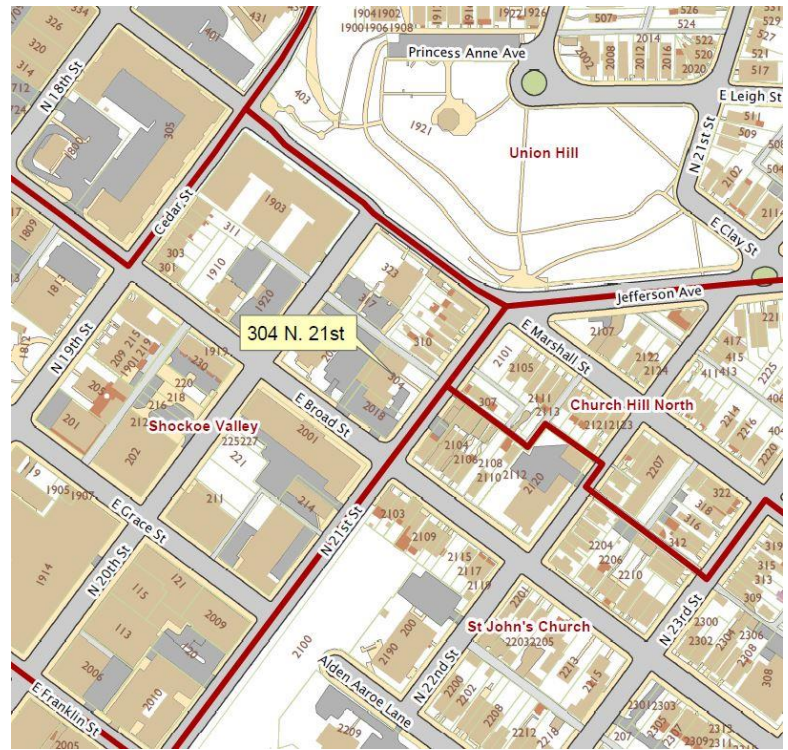
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Construct ten three-story row houses.

PROJECT DETAILS

- The applicant proposes to construct ten row houses on a vacant portion of the lot on the northwest corner of East Broad Street and North 21st Street.
- The property is already developed with an existing garage, built ca. 1930, surrounded by a paved parking area. The applicant intends to use state historic rehabilitation tax credits to convert the existing garage to new residential units.
- The proposed new construction includes two three-story townhouses facing East Broad Street and eight three-story townhouses with a recessed third story and rooftop balconies facing North 21st Street.
- The applicant proposes a mix of building materials on the visible elevations including brick, fiber cement lap siding, and fiber cement panels.

Based on conversations with staff in Land Use Administration, a special use permit will likely be necessary.



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CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The applicant is seeking **Conceptual Review** for this project. Conceptual review is covered under Sec. 30-930.6(d) of the City Code: The commission shall review and discuss the proposal with the applicant and make any necessary recommendations. Such Conceptual Review shall be advisory only. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the "Standards for New Construction" on pages 44, and 46-56 of the Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines utilizing the Guidelines presented below.

PREVIOUS REVIEWS

At the May 22, 2018 meeting the Commission reviewed a plan to rehabilitate and demolish the front portion of the existing commercial building, 2018 East Broad Street. The Commission approved the application at this meeting.

At the October 2020 meeting the Commission reviewed at the conceptual level a proposal to construct six two-story row houses on a vacant portion of the existing corner lot. During conceptual review the Commission primarily focused on the siting of the proposed townhouses and reiterated the need for new construction to

address the corner guidelines. The Commission also stressed the importance of having buildings that address East Broad Street.

SURROUNDING CONTEXT

The subject block of North 21st Street is developed with 2-story 3-bay frame Italianate buildings with full-façade porches and decorative cornices. The north side of the 2000 block of East Broad Street is vacant, with the exception of the building on the subject property and the New Light Baptist Church. The south side of East Broad Street is developed with a building constructed in 2011. The building is 3 stories tall with a recessed 4th story, and resembles brick row houses.

STAFF COMMENTS

Staff recommends that:

- the applicant consider including a porch in the design of the units on North 21st Street and additional exterior design elements on the East Broad Street elevation
- the applicant consider some of the design elements found on the surrounding buildings, such as an English basement or a rooftop element and consider a transitional design feature
- the applicant reconsider the fenestration patterns, including windows that turn the corner on the ground level and follow the patterns found in residential buildings in the district
- the applicant use consistent materials on all visible elevations
- the applicant schedule a meeting with Planning and Preservation, Zoning, and Land Use Administration staff prior to developing the plans further

STAFF ANALYSIS

Siting, pg. 46,
#s2-3

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.

The applicant proposes two buildings facing East Broad and eight buildings facing North 21st Street. The buildings facing North 21st St will have a two-foot setback while the buildings facing East Broad Street will be built to the lot line. Staff finds that the buildings in the surrounding area, both residential and mixed-use, have a consistent front yard setback which appears to be greater than two feet. Staff requests a context site plan to show the relationship between the proposed buildings and the other residential buildings on North 21st Street.

3. New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.

In response to Commission feedback, the applicant has updated the site layout and now proposes buildings facing onto East Broad and North 21st Streets.

Form, pg. 46
#s1-3

1. New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district.

The applicant now proposes a two-story mass with a third-story setback and street-facing balcony. Staff notes the predominant style for residential buildings is two stories in height with a one-story, full-width front porch. During conceptual review the applicant mentioned two-story buildings with engaged porches are also found in the district; however, a porch detail is not proposed. Staff recommends the applicant consider including a porch in the design of the units on North 21st Street and additional design details on the East Broad Street elevation.

Staff recommends that if the applicant wants to retain a taller design, that they consider some of the design elements found on the surrounding buildings, such as an English basement or a rooftop element that is differentiated in design, in order to achieve the desired development in a manner that minimizes the height while using a form found in the surrounding.

Staff also notes that the buildings proposed for North 21st Street have a front rooftop balcony created by a four-foot setback. Staff notes that none of the buildings in the immediate area have street-facing balconies. Staff further notes that rooftop balconies have recently been approved for townhouses in other districts with much greater setbacks.

2. New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the district.

The majority of the buildings on North 21st Street are two stories in height. Staff finds that the proposed three-story buildings located close to the lot line on North 21st Street are not in keeping with the human scale of the surrounding area.

On East Broad Street there are a variety of building heights including taller homes with English basements, two-story homes, and a three-story building across East Broad Street constructed in 2011.

3. New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design.

The applicant does not propose any human scale elements commonly found on residential buildings in the historic district, including front porches and steps.

Height, Width, Proportion, & Massing, pg. 47, #s1-3

1. New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.

The applicant proposes ten townhouses that are three stories in height, approximately 35 feet from grade on North 21st Street. Staff finds that these are taller than the surrounding buildings and are sited closer to North 21st Street than the historic pattern on the block. Staff also notes that the third story is approximately four feet taller than the first two stories and notes that this does not follow historic building forms.

Staff also notes that recently approved larger developments have had a transition from the lower-scale to the more dense developments and recommends the applicant consider a transitional design feature.

2. New residential construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of

The applicant proposes vertically aligned openings on the façade and side elevations on

other residential properties in surrounding historic districts.

the two East Broad Street-facing townhouses. On the façade of the eight North 21st Street-facing townhouses, the applicant proposes a small transom window on the first floor in the renderings. Staff notes the floor plans show two window openings on the ground level. Staff recommends against a ground level transom window. Staff further recommends a fenestration pattern on all visible elevations that is consistent with the historic patterns found in the district which typically have larger first floor windows.

3. The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.

Staff notes there are not compatible cornice lines on East Broad Street. However, North 21st Street is primarily residential buildings and the applicant proposes a building that is taller than the surrounding buildings. Staff requests the applicant submit a dimensioned context elevation for final review.

New Construction, Standards for New Construction: Corner Properties – Residential, pg. 48

*1. Secondary elevations of corner properties should reference massing similar to other corner locations in the historic district.
2. The material used in the primary elevation should be continued along the second, corner elevation.
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.*

As discussed during the conceptual review, this property is located on a corner lot, with prominent views of the site. The proposed ten townhouses do not reflect the overall size, scale, massing or architectural features of the surrounding corner properties Staff notes the scale and massing of the proposed buildings is similar to 2001-2021 East Broad, where the design includes architectural details and fenestration that turn the corner and continue the patterns found on the upper stories. Staff recommends the applicant include design elements that turn the corner and continue onto the North 21st Street units.

Materials and Colors, pg. 47, #s2-4

2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.

The applicant proposes a mix of materials on the highly visible elevations, including two different color bricks, fiber cement lap siding, and fiber cement panels, also in two different colors. Staff notes that other large scale residential buildings in the immediate area, including 2001-2021 across the street, use consistent materials on primary and secondary elevations. Staff recommends a consistent material be used on the building, in keeping with the patterns found in the surrounding area.

New Construction, Doors and Windows, pg. 49

3. The size, proportion, and spacing patterns of doors and window openings on free standing, new construction should be compatible with patterns established within the district.

The applicant proposes interior garages for the ten townhouses. Staff understands the need to accommodate parking on the site. However, staff finds that interior parking is not a feature found in the district. Staff further notes that the rear garage doors will likely be highly visible from East Broad Street. Additionally, representatives of the Land Use Administration

division have expressed similar concerns about the unscreened and visible bank of garage doors, and staff recommends the applicant meet with Land Use Administration and Planning and Preservation staff.

Mechanical
Equipment, pg.
68

The visual impact of new mechanical equipment should be minimized to protect the historic character of the district.

The plans submitted by the applicant indicate that the HVAC units will be located on the rooftops of the proposed townhouses. Staff believes this will be visible from East Broad Street and requests a line of site drawing from East Broad to indicate the visibility of the rooftop units.

FIGURES

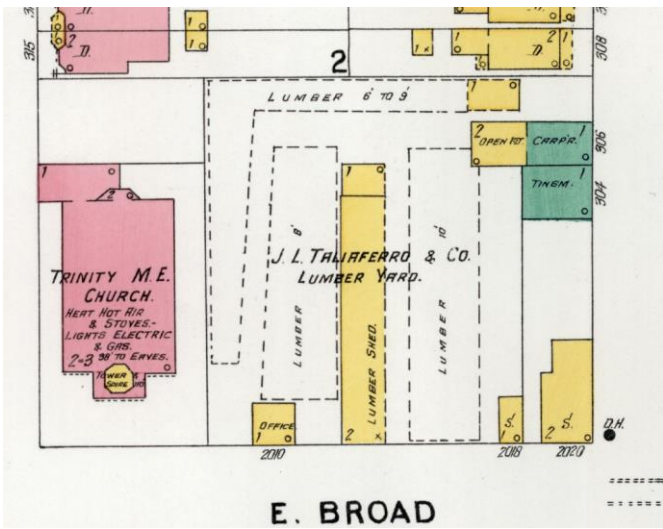


Figure 1. Sanborn Map, 1905.

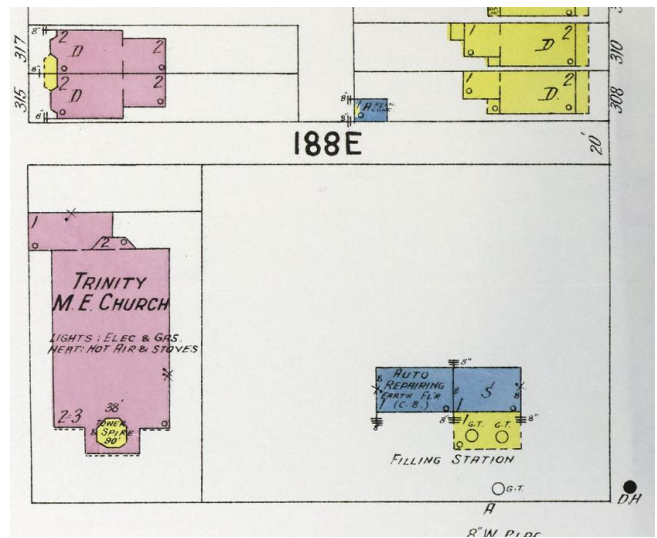


Figure 2. Sanborn Map, 1925.

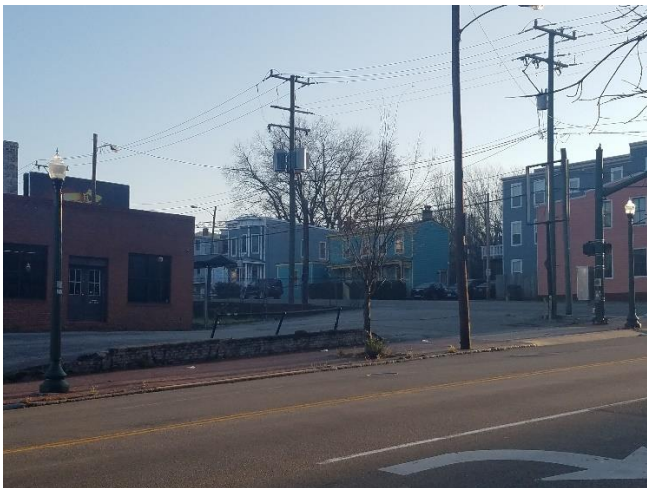


Figure 3. 304 North 21st Street, view from East Broad Street.

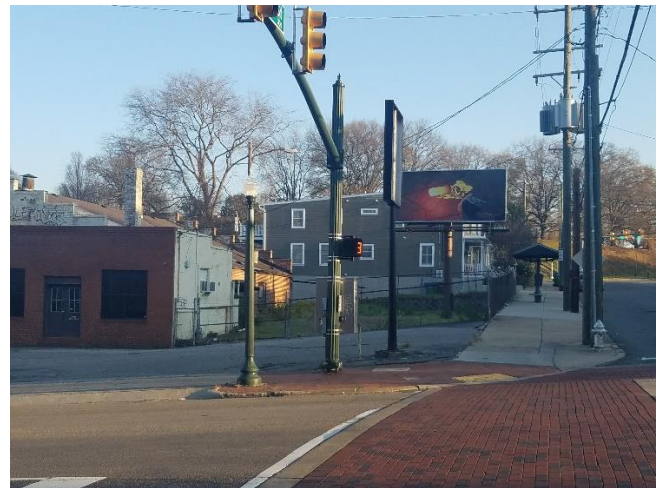


Figure 4. 304 North 21st Street, view of corner location and existing buildings on North 21st Street.



Figure 5. 304 North 21st Street from 21st Street



Figure 6. 300 block North 21st Street, even side north of subject lot



Figure 7. 2016-2018 East Broad Street



Figure 8. 300 block North 21st Street, odd side



Figure 9. 2001-2021 East Broad St.



Figure 10. 1919 East Broad Street.