



## Commission of Architectural Review

8. COA-186331-2026	Conceptual Review	Meeting Date: 6/23/2026
Applicant/Petitioner	Bill Laffoon	
Project Description	Construct a new multi-family building on a vacant corner lot	
Project Location		
Address: 2516 E Marshall St		
Historic District: Church Hill North		
<p><b>High-Level Details:</b></p> <p>The applicant proposes the construction of a new two-family, two-story dwelling on a vacant corner lot. The building is designed as two distinct masses, with one volume oriented toward East Marshall Street and the other toward North 26th Street. Each dwelling unit will have a dedicated accessory storage area, including a garage for one unit and a shed for the other.</p> <p>The East Marshall Street-facing portion of the building draws inspiration from the Greek Revival architectural tradition found within the district. In contrast, the North 26th Street-facing portion is more contemporary in character, featuring a simple form with a flat roof and a centrally located projecting bay capped by a triangular parapet.</p> <p>The proposal also includes the installation of a new curb cut along North 26th Street to provide vehicular access to the proposed garage.</p>		
Staff Recommendation		
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, Alex.Dandridge@RVA.gov, (804)646-6569	
Previous Reviews	None.	

Staff Recommendations	<p>Staff comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant further study the shape and design of the triangular parapet atop the center, projecting bay on the 26<sup>th</sup> street portion of the building.</li> <li>• Applicant provide additional information and more detailed elevation drawings for the North 26<sup>th</sup> Street entrance and garage door for final review.</li> <li>• Windows on the right bay of the North 26<sup>th</sup> Street portion of the building be adjusted to be evenly distributed across the wall planes that flank the center projecting bay and equally spaced.</li> <li>• Windows be aluminum clad wood, and features either one-over-one or two-over-two pane configurations, greater detail on proposed window design to be submitted with the final review.</li> <li>• Applicant consider cladding the garage in brick.</li> <li>• Applicant include the location of any trash collection areas and exterior HVAC with the final review, along with details on proposed screening as necessary.</li> <li>• Applicant include information regarding the proposed roof decks with the final submission. This should include a roof plan illustrating deck setbacks from the edges of the building, dimensions, materials, and railing design. Additionally, staff recommends that the applicant provide a line-of-sight or visibility study demonstrating the extent to which the roof decks will be visible from the public right-of-way, in order to confirm that their placement and design minimize visibility and are appropriate within the historic district context.</li> <li>• Applicant coordinate with the City's Department of Public Works regarding the feasibility of creating a new curb cut along North 26<sup>th</sup> Street to accommodate the proposed garage prior to the final review.</li> </ul>
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## Staff Analysis

<b>Surrounding Context</b>		
<p>The surrounding block context consists of residential and institutional buildings. There is a large masonry, gothic style church with pointed arch windows and a square corner steeple with castellations and pinnacles at the corner of East Marshall and North 26<sup>th</sup> Streets. There are masonry and frame residential buildings on the north and south sides of east Marshall Street. Residential buildings are mostly Italianate and Greek Revival in style. While widths look to vary slightly amongst residential buildings on the block, most are three bays wide with vertically aligned windows, flat or low sloped roofs with pronounced cornices, and have single-story, full-width, covered front porches that address the street. The site is situated across the street from an Italian Renaissance converted lofts living space.</p>		
<p>Overall, the surrounding context of the building is defined by the Italianate and Greek Revival style of its neighbors along the same street with vertically aligned windows, flat or low sloped roofs with pronounced cornices, and have single-story, full-width, covered front porches that address the street.</p>		
<p><b><i>For large scale, multi-family residential, the Guidelines suggest using the Standards for New Construction: Commercial</i></b></p>		
Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<b>Standards for New Construction:</b>	<i>2. New commercial infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard development patterns</i>	The proposed building will have a front yard setback of approximately 12 feet along the East Marshall Street frontage, which generally aligns with the

<p><b>Commercial. Siting, pg. 52</b></p>	<p><i>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>setback pattern established by the adjacent property at 2514 East Marshall Street and other contributing buildings within the district. While specific setback dimensions for 2514 East Marshall Street were not provided, the conceptual site plan suggests that the proposed building at 2516 East Marshall Street may project slightly forward of the front façade plane of the neighboring structure.</p> <p>Staff notes that 2514 East Marshall Street is set farther back from the street than many of the buildings on the immediate block. Although the historic buildings along this section of East Marshall Street generally maintain a consistent streetwall, minor variations in front yard setbacks are present. As proposed, the building's setback appears generally compatible with the established development pattern of the block.</p> <p>The portion of the building facing North 26th Street will be constructed primarily at a zero-foot setback from the property line. This setback pattern is consistent with the established development character of the district, where buildings located on corner lots commonly maintain little to no setback along secondary street frontages.</p> <p>The proposed building will front East Marshall Street, the predominate street, while the side portion will front North 26<sup>th</sup> Street.</p>
<p><b>Standards for New Construction: Commercial. Form, pg. 52</b></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><i>3. New commercial construction should incorporate human-scale elements at the pedestrian level.</i></p>	<p>The proposed building is designed to read as two primary structures connected by smaller intermediary masses containing a shed and garage. The primary building forms are generally rectangular and symmetrical, characteristics commonly found throughout the district. The proposed roof forms, consisting of low-pitched gable roofs and flat roofs, are also consistent with roof profiles found on historic buildings within the district.</p> <p>The overall composition presents as two two-story buildings connected by one-story accessory structures. This arrangement of varying building heights and interconnected masses is reflective of the organic development patterns commonly found on corner lots within the district, where buildings and additions were often constructed over time. The use of simple, vernacular forms further contributes to the proposal's compatibility with the historic character of the district.</p> <p>The portion of the building facing North 26th Street features a centrally located, slightly projecting bay capped by a triangular parapet. While projecting bays are found on buildings throughout the district, this particular treatment is less common. Historically, projecting bays are more typically terminated with a flat parapet, hipped roof form, or pronounced cornice detailing. An example of this treatment can be seen on the building located at 523 North 29th Street (see</p>

		<p>figure 5). As proposed, the triangular parapet introduces a less common design element but remains subordinate to the overall simple massing and form of the building.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the applicant further study the shape and design of the triangular parapet atop the center, projecting bay on the 26<sup>th</sup> street portion of the building.</u></p> <p>The East Marshall Street-facing portion of the building will feature a single-story, single-bay covered front porch, while the North 26th Street-facing portion will include a primary entrance oriented toward North 26th Street. These entrance features establish a direct relationship between the building and the public right-of-way, reinforcing the pedestrian-oriented character of the district. The porch and entry elements provide an appropriate human scale and are consistent with the patterns of access and street engagement found throughout the historic district.</p> <p>While the application includes a primary entrance and garage door opening along the North 26th Street elevation, limited information has been provided regarding the design, materials, and detailing of these features. As these elements will be visible from the public right-of-way and contribute to the character of the streetscape, <u>staff recommends that the applicant provide additional information and more detailed elevation drawings for the North 26th Street entrance and garage door for final review.</u> This information should include the proposed materials, dimensions, configuration, and any decorative detailing to ensure compatibility with the historic character of the district.</p>
<p><b>Standards for New Construction: Commercial, Height, width, Proportion &amp; Massing, pg. 53</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>New commercial construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings, both residential and commercial.</i></li> <li>2. <i>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></li> <li>3. <i>The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.</i></li> </ol>	<p>Both primary masses of the proposed building will be two stories in height and connected by smaller one-story sections. These heights are compatible with the surrounding district context, where two-story buildings are a predominant building form. The incorporation of lower one-story connecting elements helps reduce the perceived scale of the development and further breaks down the overall massing.</p> <p>The proposed buildings exhibit a vertical orientation, and the massing is articulated through variations in height and form. This approach helps to create the appearance of multiple structures and reflects the incremental development patterns often found within the district.</p> <p>The cornice height of the East Marshall Street-facing portion of the building exceeds that of the immediately adjacent historic building. While historic buildings within the district often maintain aligned cornice heights along a block face, variations do occur and are not uncommon. Given the presence of differing cornice heights elsewhere within the district, staff finds</p>

		<p>the proposed height relationship to be generally compatible with the surrounding context.</p>
<p><b>Standards for New Construction: Corner Properties – Commercial, pg. 54</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Secondary elevations of corner properties should reference massing similar to other corner locations in the historic district.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The material used in the primary elevation should be continued along the second, corner elevation.</i></li> <li>3. <i>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></li> <li>4. <i>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></li> </ol>	<p>The massing and composition of the side elevation are generally consistent with historic precedents found throughout the district. The building will be clad in smooth fiber cement lap siding, which will wrap the primary elevations and continue along the North 26th Street frontage. The use of horizontal siding is compatible with the district's traditional materials.</p> <p>The proposed building will feature a brick foundation of an appropriate height, with slight variations in foundation exposure reflecting the natural grade changes across the site. This treatment is consistent with traditional construction patterns found within the district.</p> <p>The proposed windows and doors are vertically aligned and generally aligned in a manner that is compatible with the architectural composition of the building.</p> <p>On the North 26th Street-facing elevation, the windows are vertically aligned; however, they are positioned slightly off-center within the right bay. Because this portion of the building is otherwise designed with a symmetrical composition, the window placement appears somewhat inconsistent with the overall design intent. <u>Staff recommends that the windows on the right bay of the North 26<sup>th</sup> Street portion of the building be adjusted to be evenly distributed across the wall planes that flank the center projecting bay and equally spaced.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommend that windows be aluminum clad wood, and features either one-over-one or two-over-two pane configurations, greater detail on proposed window design to be submitted with the final review.</u></p>
<p><b>Standards for New Construction: Materials &amp; Colors, page 47</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <i>Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i></li> <li>3. <i>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></li> <li>4. <i>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</i></li> </ol>	<p>The proposed building will be clad in horizontal, smooth fiber cement siding and will feature aluminum-clad wood windows, a brick foundation, wood porch elements, and fiber cement trim. Staff finds that these materials are compatible with the appearance of traditional building materials commonly found throughout the district and are appropriate for new construction in this context.</p> <p>The proposed garage, located between the two primary building masses, is also proposed to be clad in horizontal siding. While this treatment is generally compatible with the overall design of the building, <u>staff recommends that the applicant consider cladding the garage in brick.</u> A brick-clad garage would further distinguish the connecting mass from the primary building volumes, reinforce the perception of multiple structures, and better relate to the masonry accessory</p>

	<i>approval by the Commission is always required.</i>	buildings and service structures historically found throughout the district.
<b>Standards For New Construction, p.47</b>	<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>Staff recommends that the applicant include the <u>location of any trash collection areas and exterior HVAC with the final review, along with details on proposed screening as necessary.</u></p> <p>Staff recommends that the applicant include <u>information regarding the proposed roof decks with the final submission. This should include a roof plan illustrating deck setbacks from the edges of the building, dimensions, materials, and railing design. Additionally, staff recommends that the applicant provide a line-of-sight or visibility study demonstrating the extent to which the roof decks will be visible from the public right-of-way, in order to confirm that their placement and design minimize visibility and are appropriate within the historic district context.</u></p>
<b>Coordination with the Department of Public Works</b>		The applicant proposes to install a new curb cut for access to the proposed garage along North 26 <sup>th</sup> Street. <u>Staff recommends that the applicant coordinate with the City's Department of Public Works regarding the feasibility of creating a new curb cut along North 26<sup>th</sup> Street to accommodate the proposed garage prior to the final review.</u>

*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. View of vacant lot looking northwest.



Figure 2. View of vacant lot looking north.



Figure 3. View of vacant lot looking northeast.



Figure 4. View of vacant lot looking south.



*Figure 5. Center projecting bay example at 523 N. 29th Street.*