



Commission of Architectural Review

3. COA-171753-2025	Conceptual Review Meeting Date: 10/28/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Casey Stone
Project Description	Construct a new multi-family building with a retail ground floor on vacant parcel.
Project Location	
Address: 700 N 21 st Street	
Historic District: Union Hill	
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes a three-story mixed-use building 1,000 sf of ground-floor commercial space and two residential units above. The building fills a narrow, constrained lot and will share a common wall with the adjacent building on N 21st St. The design includes a first-floor storefront wrapping the corner, painted fiber-cement lap siding on the upper floors, cantilevered metal balconies, a steep standing-seam roof, fiberglass pilasters. The applicant is pursuing a reduced side setback.</p>	Staff Recommendation
Staff Contact	Yara Iwaz, Yara.Iwaz@RVA.gov, (804)646-6031
Previous Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Staff Recommendations	<p>Staff finds that the proposed project generally meets the intent the District Guidelines. While some aspects are in alignment with historic district characteristics, others may require more contextual sensitivity. Staff recommends the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align the primary façade on North 21st Street with the historic setback established by adjacent buildings to maintain the continuous streetwall; confirm final setback through SUP review and show on site plan. Implement ways to mitigate the vertical emphasis and reduce the perceived height of the building. Extend the pilasters down to grade or over the parged foundation, to further enhance the storefront base.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify the roofline to a flat roof with a cornice treatment • Simplify balcony treatments, by eliminating gable projections and opting for a cornice design • Simplify window configurations to 1-over-1 double-hung units • Approve proposed materials; colors and finishes to be submitted for final review.
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Staff Analysis

Surrounding Context		
<p>The site occupies the corner of N. 21st and Cedar Streets within Union Hill, within an area of mixed small-scale commercial corners and predominantly two-story residential blocks. The block is predominantly two-story single-family, with elevated stoops and commercial corners. Historic buildings on the block typically feature a defined base (storefront or raised stoop), a middle with a vertical window rhythm, and a modest cornice/top. Projecting bays, shallow porches or stoops, cornices, and masonry bases are common character elements found around the site.</p>		
Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for New Construction: Siting, p. 46	<p>2. <i>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>Setback & Siting</p> <p>Historic Sanborn maps indicate that the earlier building on this lot shared the same setback alignment as the adjacent structure. The proposed design projects forward of this historic line, causing the new building to stand proud of its neighbors, rather than be flush with the historic street wall rhythm. Additionally, the new construction shares a common wall with the historic building, and the new construction appears to further protrude from the existing street wall, as seen in the contextual elevation provided by the applicant.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends aligning the primary façade on North 21st Street with the historic setback established by adjacent buildings to maintain the continuous streetwall; confirm final setback through SUP review and show on site plan.</u></p>
Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion & Massing, page 47	<p>1. <i>New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.</i></p> <p>2. <i>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.</i></p>	<p>Verticality</p> <p>The project features a three-story building, and is notably taller than the adjacent two-story historic buildings. The surrounding context mostly features two-story buildings, but three-story structures are found further down 21st street and in other areas of Union Hill, as well as two-story buildings with significantly raised foundations (See figures below).</p> <p>The design also aims to emphasize verticality (notably through the gabled standing-seam pitched roof form), which results in a scale</p>

		<p>that can overpower neighboring historic houses. The height also accentuates the narrow façade, producing a top-heavy appearance inconsistent with the rhythm of the surrounding block. The new building's location on a corner lot further reinforces its prominence and visibility within the historic block.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends studying ways to mitigate the vertical emphasis and reduce the perceived height of the building.</u></p> <p>Some design examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stepping back the second floor on the North 21st Street elevation, to better relate to the smaller neighboring structures, if building setback will remain unchanged • Simplifying roof form to a cornice, as seen in district precedents
<p>Standards For New Construction: Storefront Facades, p.49</p>	<p><i>1. Historically, storefronts were defined by simple piers, large storefront windows, a cornice, a signboard and/or attached signage, and awnings. The new storefront should be compatible with other historic storefronts within the district.</i></p>	<p><i>Commercial Storefront</i></p> <p>The proposed design features fiberglass pilasters that help create articulation on the ground floor and appropriately provides human-scale elements at the storefront level, by breaking the façade into smaller vertical components that reinforce the pedestrian expression of the building and enhance compatibility with the district.</p> <p>However, the pilasters terminate above the parged foundation, which visually appears to weaken the storefront base/ ground connection.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends extending the pilasters down to grade or over the parged foundation, to further enhance the storefront base.</u></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><i>Roof form</i></p> <p>The proposed hipped roof (as seen from the 21st street elevation, on the angled façade in particular) is inconsistent with typical roof forms at corner buildings in this district, which more commonly feature flat or parapeted rooflines and a cornice. The roof's slope accentuates the building's verticality and introduces a more suburban appearance not typical of Union Hill's urban character.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends simplifying the roofline to a flat roof with a cornice treatment, referencing the corner buildings shown in the applicant's contextual imagery.</u> This would help reduce the apparent height and reinforce the building's corner definition.</p>

<p>Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion & Massing, page 47</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.</i></p>	<p><i>Secondary Elevation</i></p> <p>The long Cedar Street elevation features two recessed bays with gable-roofed projections and full-height glass balconies. While balconies are seen in the district, their combination with gable forms and transparent glass railings creates a distinctly suburban character inconsistent with the simpler architectural expressions found in Union Hill.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends simplifying balcony treatments, such as eliminating gable projections and opting for a cornice design, to better align with the district's architectural language.</u></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><i>Windows</i></p> <p>The fenestration pattern is vertically aligned and consistent with adjacent buildings, and with the guideline recommendations for corner residential lots (on both the 21st Street and Cedar Street elevations.</p> <p>However, this is new construction, a simpler window could more clearly differentiate old from new.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends simplifying window configurations to 1-over-1 double-hung units, in lieu of the 6-over-6 proposed windows.</u></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><i>Materials</i></p> <p>The proposed materials, including cementitious siding and traditional trim profiles, appropriately reference nearby frame construction and are compatible with materials found in Union Hill.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of proposed materials; colors and finishes to be submitted for final review.</u></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: view from 21st Street



Figure 2: View from Cedar Street



Figure 3: Historic Streetwall on 21st Street



Figure 4: Surrounding structures on 21st Street, showing 2-story buildings with a raised foundation



Figure 5: Mixed-use building on 800 N 21st St



Figure 6: 3-story buildings on M street



Figure 7: 3-story church on 21st Street



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia

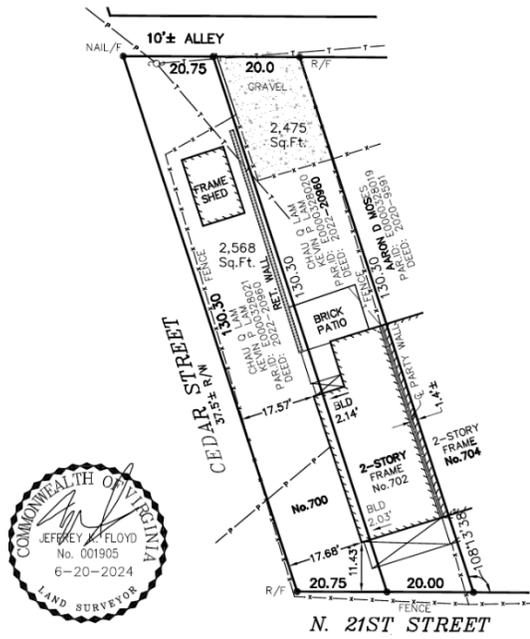


Figure 8

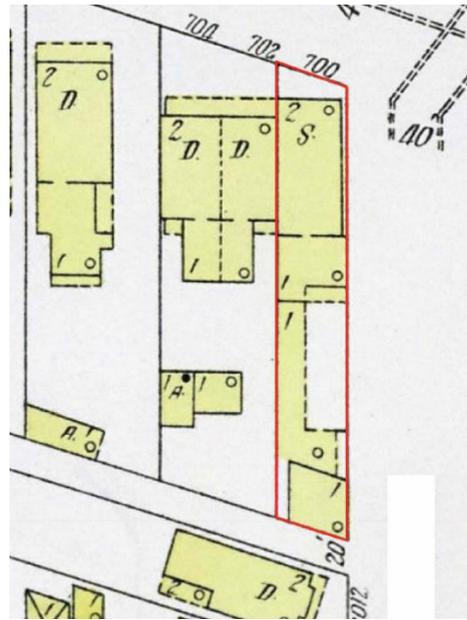


Figure 9

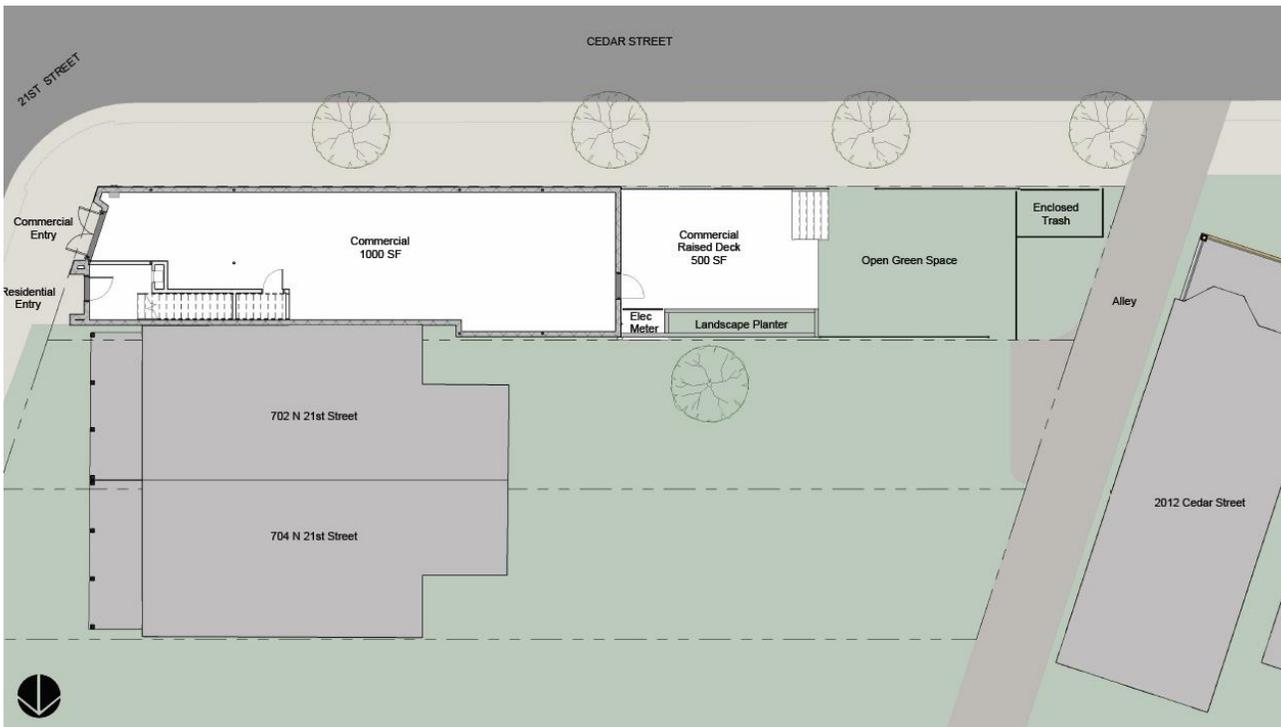
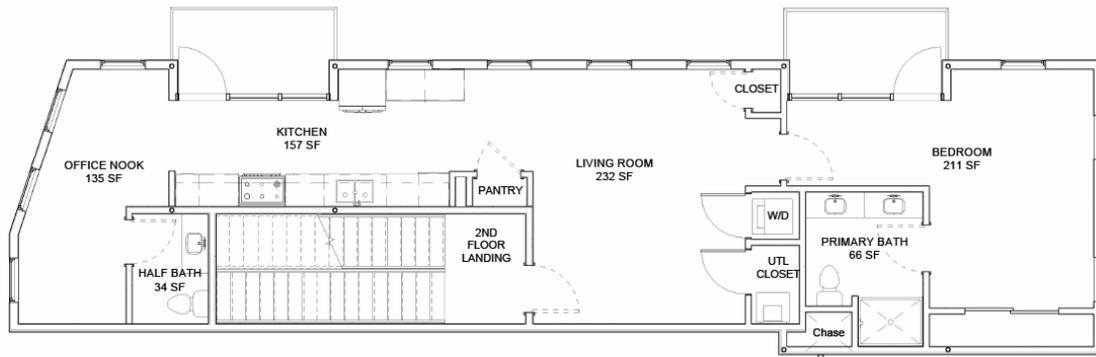
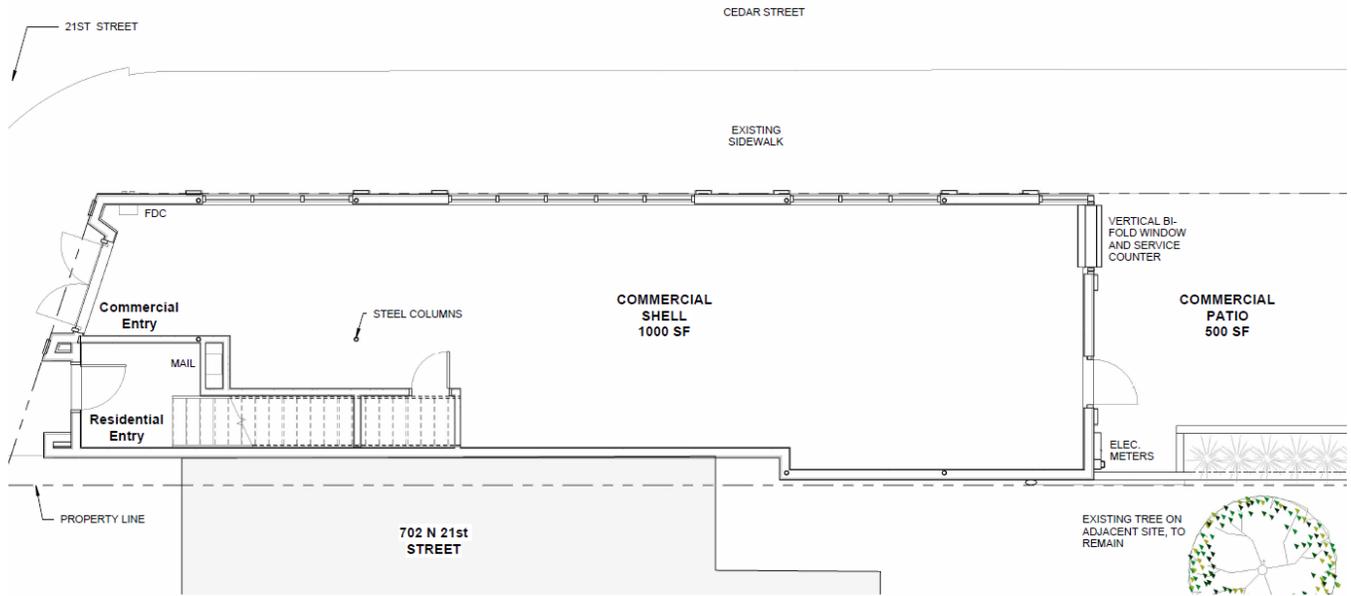
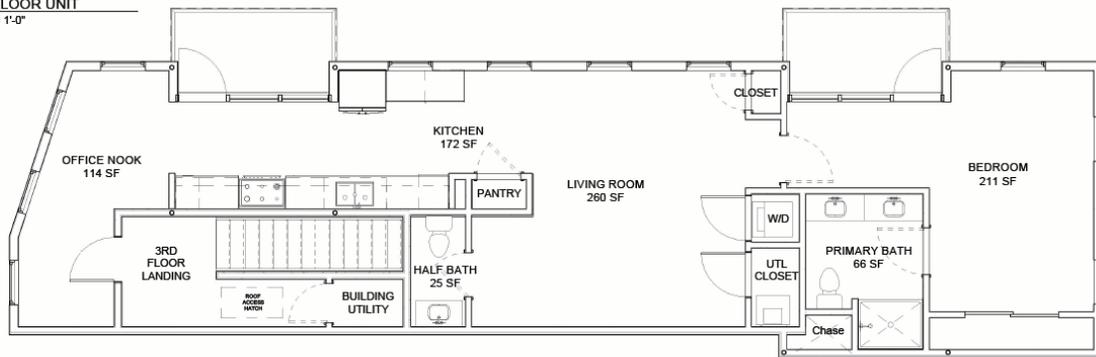


Figure 10



① 2nd FLOOR UNIT
3/16" = 1'-0"



② 3rd FLOOR UNIT
3/16" = 1'-0"

Figure 11



Front View

Cedar Street View

Figure 12

PROPOSED ELEVATION DESIGN

- ① STANDING SEAM METAL ROOF WITH MATCHING FASCIA AND GUTTER, ENGINEERED WOOD SOFFIT BELOW
- ② FIBER CEMENT LAP SIDING - PAINTED
- ③ FIBER CEMENT PANEL SIDING - PAINTED
- ④ PARGED FOUNDATION WALL
- ⑤ SINGLE HUNG WINDOW - 34"x 60"
- ⑥ CANTILEVERED METAL BALCONY WITH ENGINEERED WOOD SOFFIT BELOW
- ⑦ METAL RAILING
- ⑧ STOREFRONT ASSEMBLY

- ⑨ HOLLOW METAL DOOR, PAINTED
- ⑩ VERTICAL BI-FOLD WINDOW
- ⑪ WOOD PANEL WITH TRIM, PAINTED
- ⑫ FIBERGLASS PILASTER, PAINTED
- ⑬ FIBERGLASS CORNICE, PAINTED
- ⑭ METAL CANOPY WITH ENGINEERED WOOD SOFFIT BELOW
- ⑮ ELECTRICAL METER BANK, TO BE COORDINATED WITH DOMINION
- ⑯ TRASH ENCLOSURE

- ⑰ CONDUCTOR BOX AND DOWNSPOUT PIPED TO LANDSCAPING PLANTER
- ⑱ ADJACENT SINGLE FAMILY HOUSE
- ⑲ ELECTRICAL METERS
- ⑳ LANDSCAPING PLANTER
- ㉑ RAISED WOODED DECK
- ㉒ SCREEN
- ㉓ OVERFLOW



① ENTRY ELEVATION
1/8" = 1'-0"



② CEDAR STREET
1/8" = 1'-0"

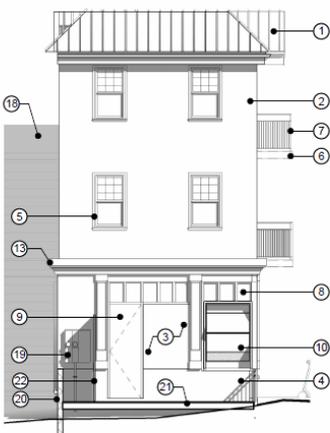
Figure 13

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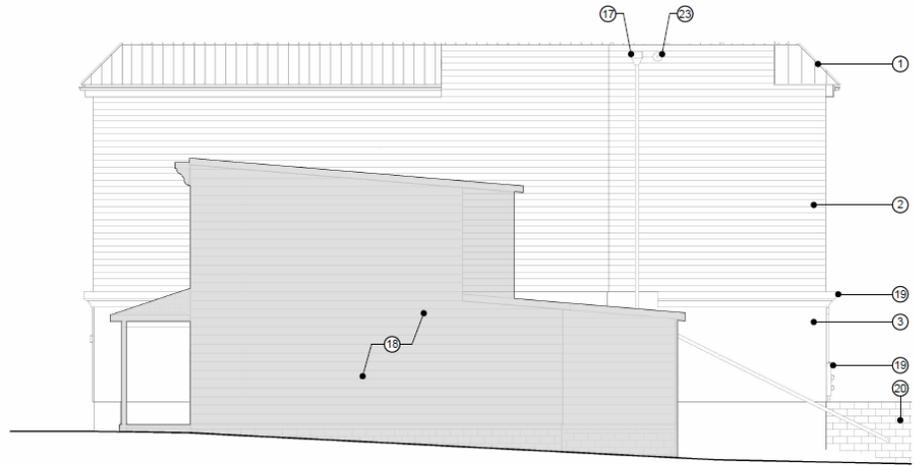
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① REAR PATIO
1/8" = 1'-0"



② SIDE ELEVATION
1/8" = 1'-0"

Figure 14