

**13. COA-086499-2021**

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

February 23, 2021

PROPERTY ADDRESS

304 N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street

DISTRICT

Shockoe Valley

APPLICANT

Crescent Development

STAFF CONTACT

Carey L. Jones

Commission of  
Architectural Review

STAFF REPORT

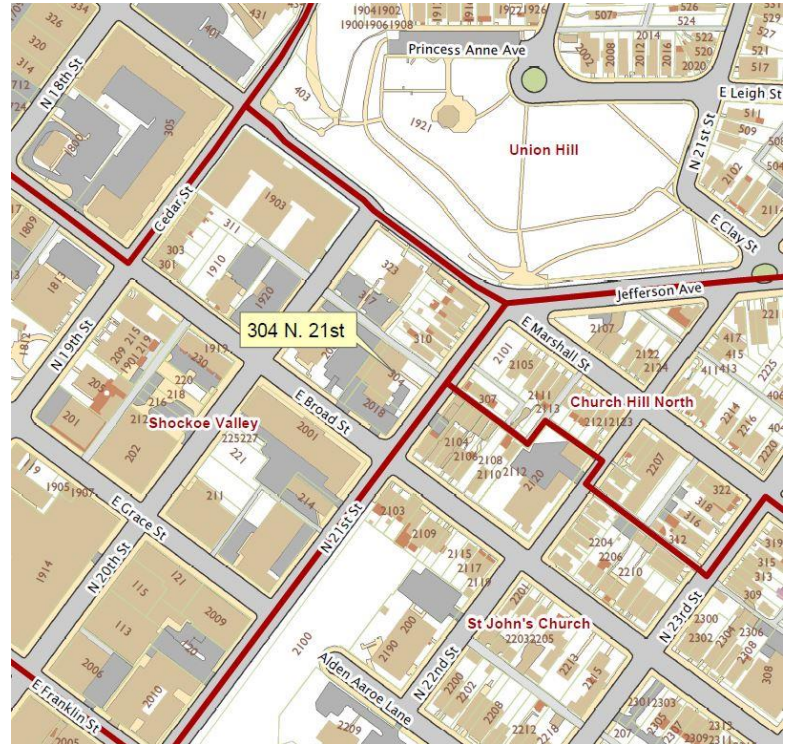


**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Partial demolition and rehabilitation of an existing masonry garage building; construct eight new townhouses.**

**PROJECT DETAILS**

- The applicant proposes to construct eight townhouses on a vacant portion of the lot on the northwest corner of East Broad Street and North 21<sup>st</sup> Street, and to rehabilitate an existing ca. 1925 garage building.
- The applicant proposes to rehabilitate the former garage building for a mix of commercial and residential use. The rehabilitation will include demolition of the front addition, side boiler room and shed. The applicant also plans to replace the non-historic, roll-up garage door on the façade with a modern aluminum and glass door; to convert an existing door opening to a window opening; and to make repairs to the historic steel windows.
- On the east elevation, the applicant proposes to install new, paired doors for access to a shared trash and recycling room that serves the entire complex, and a new window near the rear of the east elevation. The applicant also proposes to replace a garage door on the rear (alley) elevation and re-open an existing opening. On the roof, the applicant proposes to restore four skylights and install additional new skylights. The applicant also proposes in-kind repairs to the masonry and roof.



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- On the vacant portion of the lot, the applicant proposes to construct eight townhouses. The townhouses will be three stories in height with recessed entryways, rear rooftop spaces, and engaged parking spaces.
- The applicant proposes a mix of building materials on the visible elevations including brick, fiber cement lap siding, and fiber cement panels.
- The applicant also proposes to remove the existing billboard and chain-link fence and add screening for the parking along East Broad Street.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**PARTIAL APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS**

## PREVIOUS REVIEWS

At the May 2018 meeting, the Commission reviewed a plan to rehabilitate and demolish the front portion of the existing commercial building, at 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.

The Commission reviewed the project again at the December 2020 meeting. During the conceptual review staff confirmed that the Commission had previously approved the demolition of the front section of the historic garage. Staff have confirmed that it was the same applicants who applied for the demolition.

For the new construction, the Commission stressed the importance of the view from East Broad Street and recommended the applicants better integrate the two Broad Street-facing buildings with the overall design and address the corner guidelines. A suggestion was also made to open the bricked-in windows.

In terms of the design, the Commission suggested that the proposed modern aesthetic could benefit from being even more modern, and suggested that the vestibule entry could be converted to a front porch, as a recessed piece so that this would read as a void inside the massing. The Commission also suggested that the front entry should be raised off the sidewalk, with more stairs from the garage, and that this would give more animation to the street façade. A suggestion was also made to reduce the number of townhouses to allow for additional rooftop space.

The Commission also discussed how the proposed buildings relate to the surrounding district and recommended the applicants follow the example of other properties across the street and down the block, and that they alter the design so as to soften the corner, possibly by adding a porch. The Commission also noted that the number of units in the design had increased from 6 to 10 from the previous submission, and stated that the setback difficulty could be addressed by reducing the number of units, thus reducing the need for square footage and allowing more of a setback, especially for the units on North 21<sup>st</sup> Street. The Commission also stated that the clerestory windows on the first floor on 21<sup>st</sup> Street are not appropriate for the neighborhood.

The Commission also discussed the visible garage doors from East Broad Street as not something commonly found in the district. However, the Commission also suggested that the advantage of having the garage doors is that they screen the parking and potentially also screen the supercars for the units, and that keeping the garage doors in the design might be a slightly better option, even though it is atypical.

In terms of the massing, the Commission suggested that the having the third floors of greater height than the two floors below them is problematic; and that having the third floors a different color and set back is the first step toward making them disappear, but having them taller counteracts that.

The Commission also discussed the location of the HVAC units and trash receptacles – the Commission suggested that the HVAC units and amenities for trash be incorporated in a thoughtful manner, as the needs for ten residences will be considerable and having a trash location far from a unit seems inhospitable and inconvenient, whereas having a nearer space in back would make the buildings more livable.

As requested, the applicants have met with Commission staff and a representative of the Land Use Administration department to discuss the project.

As detailed below, the applicants have responded to Commission feedback by reducing the number of townhouses from 10 to 8, adjusting the proportions of the third story, relocating the balconies to the rear,

updating the small ground level windows to be full-size windows, adding additional definition to the recessed entries, and redesigning the Broad Street-facing units.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS**

**2018 E Broad Street**

- denial of the paired door opening in the east elevation
- the new windows in the former garage bays fit within the existing openings
- the new doors in the re-opened former garage bays be the same size and width as the historic opening, and the updated specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval
- the infill masonry for the door to window conversion be recessed to maintain the appearance of the door opening
- the new opening on the rear elevation not increase the width of the opening, and final specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval
- the skylights be installed flush with the roof slope
- any replacement materials match the historic materials in design, composition, texture, profile, size, and color
- the final window and door specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval

**304 N. 21st Street**

- the applicant consider reducing the height of the top floor to be consistent with the other two floors
- the applicant provide a transition on the northernmost end unit between the historic building and the new construction
- a consistent material be used on the historic and new-construction buildings and the applicant continue to work with staff on the material and color palette during the special use permit review process.
- the applicant submit specifications for windows that are either wood or aluminum-clad wood for review and approval
- the applicant continue to work with Commission and Land Use Administration staff on the proposed screening during the special use permit application review process.
- the applicant consider providing a location for the trash receptacles in each garage space for the individual townhouses
- a line-of-sight drawing from East Broad Street be submitted to indicate the visibility of the rooftop HVAC units for review during the special use permit review process

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

**2018 East Broad – Rehabilitation of the existing garage building**

Section 30.930.7 (d) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance	<i>The Commission shall approve requests for demolition when there are no feasible alternatives to the proposed demolition; the building is deemed not to be a contributing part of the historic character of the Old and Historic District; or the building has deteriorated beyond the point of feasible rehabilitation.</i>	The applicant proposes demolition of the front masonry section of the historic garage building. Staff finds this is a ca. 1966 addition that was largely rebuilt and repaired in 1989. In keeping with the Commission decision made in May 2018, staff finds that this mid- to late-20th century section does not represent the pattern of commercial buildings found in the district and does not contribute to the architectural or historic character of the district; staff recommends approval of its demolition.
Secretary of the Interior Standards, pg. 5	<i>9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale</i>	On the East Broad Street-facing façade and on the rear elevation, the applicant proposes to replace the existing garage doors with new multi-light aluminum and glass storefront windows. Staff recommends approval, with <u>the condition that the new windows fit within the</u>

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*and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

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existing openings and the final specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval.

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Secretary of the Interior Standards, pgs. 4-5

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*5. Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*

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The applicant also proposes to re-open a number of infilled openings. On the façade, the applicant proposes to insert new doors in a former garage bay. Staff finds that there is physical and documentary evidence to suggest that the historic opening is larger than currently proposed by the applicant, and these large openings are a character-defining feature of the façade. Staff recommends approval of the re-opening of this bay and installation of new doors, with the condition that the opening be the same size and width as the historic opening. Staff recommends that updated opening specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval. The applicant also proposes to convert an existing door to a window. Staff recommends approval with the condition that the infill masonry be recessed to maintain the appearance of the door opening. On the rear elevation, the applicant proposes to re-open an existing opening and raise the header height to address the alley grade. Staff recommends approval with the condition that the new opening not increase the width of the opening, and final specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval.

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Building Elements, Windows, pg. 69

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*7. Windows should only be replaced when they are missing or beyond repair. Any reconstruction should be based on physical evidence or photo documentation.  
10. The architectural appearance of original windows should be used as a model for new windows. Changes in the sash, depth or reveal, muntin configuration, frame or glazing is strongly discouraged.*

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Building Elements, Windows, pg. 69, #s7-8

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*8. The number, location, size or glazing pattern of windows should not be changed by cutting new openings, blocking out windows or by installing replacement sash that do not fit the original window. Changes to existing windows or the addition of new windows along a secondary elevation will be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.*

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The applicant also proposes two new openings on the east elevation: one set of paired doors to provide an opening for the shared trash receptacle area, and one set of storefront windows for a residential unit. Staff understands the need for these openings and notes that the new windows will be differentiated from the historic windows. Staff recommends approval of the new storefront window openings with the condition that the final specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval.

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Staff understands that the doors are needed to provide access to a common area for the trash receptacles, including for the eight new townhouses. Staff has concerns about the utility of locating all of the trash receptacles in a separate building and recommends that applicant consider having space for the trash receptacles in each unit. Staff recommends denial of the additional paired door opening in the east elevation.

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Building Elements, Roofs, pg. 66	<p>4. <i>New elements such as vents or skylights should not be added to the front façade of a roof. These elements should be located in roof areas hidden from primary views.</i></p> <p>10. <i>Original chimneys, skylights and light wells that contribute to the style and character of the building should be retained, as their removal could alter the overall character of the structure.</i></p>	<p>The applicant also proposes to reopen two existing skylights on each roof slope and install three new skylights on each roof slope. Staff finds that the roofs are not highly visible from East Broad Street due to the parapet walls, and recommends approval of the proposed skylights with the condition <u>that they be installed flush with the roof slope.</u></p>
Secretary of the Interior Standards, pg. 5	<p>6. <i>Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. When the severity of deterioration requires replacement or a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.</i></p>	<p>The applicant proposes a number of exterior repairs, including replacing the roof shingles and repairing or replacing the existing coping. Staff recommends approval with the condition that <u>any replacement materials match the historic materials in design, composition, texture, profile, size, and color.</u></p>
<b>304 N. 21st Street – New construction of eight townhouses</b>		
Siting, pg. 46, #s2-3	<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>The applicant proposes two buildings facing East Broad and six buildings facing North 21<sup>st</sup> Street. In response to Commission feedback, the applicant has reduced the number of townhouses facing North 21<sup>st</sup> Street by two and has brought the buildings to the front and side lot lines.</p>
	<p>3. <i>New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.</i></p>	<p>The applicant proposes buildings facing onto East Broad and North 21<sup>st</sup> Streets.</p>
Form, pg. 46 #s1-3	<p>1. <i>New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district.</i></p>	<p>Based on Commission feedback, the applicant has added inset porches and altered the third floor. Staff finds that while the predominant style of residential buildings in the area includes a one-story, full-width porch, there are also examples of residential buildings with inset porches.</p>
		<p>The applicant has also reconfigured the third floor. Staff notes that the third floor remains the tallest floor by approximately four feet, while the traditional pattern in the neighborhood is that the first floor be the tallest floor. Staff recommends <u>the applicant consider reducing the height of the top floor to be consistent with the other two floors.</u></p>
		<p>Staff also notes that in response to staff and Commission feedback the applicant has relocated the balconies to the rear.</p>
	<p>2. <i>New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the</i></p>	<p>The majority of the buildings on North 21<sup>st</sup> Street are two stories in height. Staff finds that the proposed three-story buildings located</p>

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*district.*

close to the lot line on North 21<sup>st</sup> Street are not in keeping with the general scale of the surrounding area. Staff also notes that East Broad Street and North 21<sup>st</sup> Street are wider than most streets found in the district.

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.

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

In response to Commission feedback, the applicant now proposes front stairs and inset porches on both elevations. In keeping with the modern design, the applicant proposes a simplified cornice line.

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

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

The applicant proposes eight townhouses that are three stories in height, approximately 34 feet from grade. Staff finds that these are taller than the surrounding buildings and are sited closer to North 21<sup>st</sup> 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 notes that the Commission recently approved a design in a nearby district that had a one-end-unit transition between the historic buildings and the new construction, and recommends consideration of a similar massing.

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*2. New residential construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of other residential properties in surrounding historic districts.*

The applicant proposes vertically aligned openings on the façade and side elevations on the two East Broad Street-facing townhouses. On the façade of the six North 21<sup>st</sup> Street-facing townhouses, the applicant has responded to Commission feedback and reconfigured the openings to be horizontally and vertically aligned.

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

As noted above, the applicant proposes taller buildings than those in the surrounding area and a simplified cornice line in keeping with the modern design.

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New Construction, Standards for New Construction: Corner Properties – Residential, pg. 48	<p>1. <i>Secondary elevations of corner properties should reference massing similar to other corner locations in the historic district.</i></p> <p>2. <i>The material used in the primary elevation should be continued along the second, corner elevation.</i></p> <p>4. <i>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>	The applicant has responded to Commission feedback and now proposes decorative elements that address the corner, including a projecting bay on the corner, a horizontal band between the second and third story, and a cornice line. Staff finds that these design features address the corner guidelines.
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Materials and Colors, pg. 47, #s2-4	<p>2. <i>Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i></p>	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. Staff notes that other large scale residential buildings in the immediate area, including 2001-2021 East Broad Street across the street, use consistent materials on primary and secondary elevations and <u>recommends a consistent material be used on the historic and new construction buildings, in keeping with the patterns found in the surrounding area.</u> Staff recommends the <u>applicant continue to work with staff on the material and color palette during the special use permit review process.</u>
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Staff also notes that the applicant proposes fiberglass windows for the new construction, which are not in keeping with the Commission *Guidelines*. Staff requests the applicant submit specifications for windows that are either wood or aluminum-clad wood for review and approval.

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New Construction, Doors and Windows, pg. 49	<p>3. <i>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.</i></p>	The applicant proposes interior garages for the ten townhouses. Staff understands the need to accommodate parking for each unit and recognizes that the applicant proposes screening along East Broad Street where the garage doors will be the highly visible. Staff also notes that this was discussed in conversations with the applicant and staff from the Land Use Administration. Staff recommends <u>the applicant continue to work with Commission and Land Use Administration staff on the proposed screening during the special use permit application review process.</u>
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Standards for Site Improvements, pg. 76	<p>8. <i>Landscape design should enhance the streetscape and contribute a strong aesthetic along street frontages. Appropriate landscaping should buffer the visual severity of surface parking lots from view. Vacant lots, large expanses of blank wall and other unattractive streetscape features (i.e. utilities, rear yard trash depots, etc.) can</i></p>	Staff also notes that the Commission discussed
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*also be screened effectively with appropriate landscaping.*

the location of the trash receptacles during the December conceptual review. The applicant proposes locating all of the trash receptacles in the rehabilitated garage building. Staff questions the utility of this proposal and suggests the applicant consider providing a location in each garage space for the individual townhouses. This would also remove the need for an additional new opening on the east elevation of the historic garage building.

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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-sight drawing from East Broad to indicate the visibility of the rooftop units to be reviewed during the special use permit review process.



FIGURES

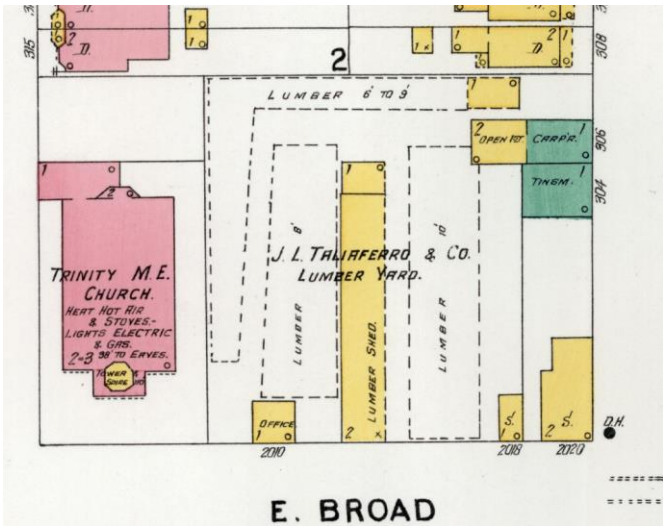


Figure 1. Sanborn Map, 1905.

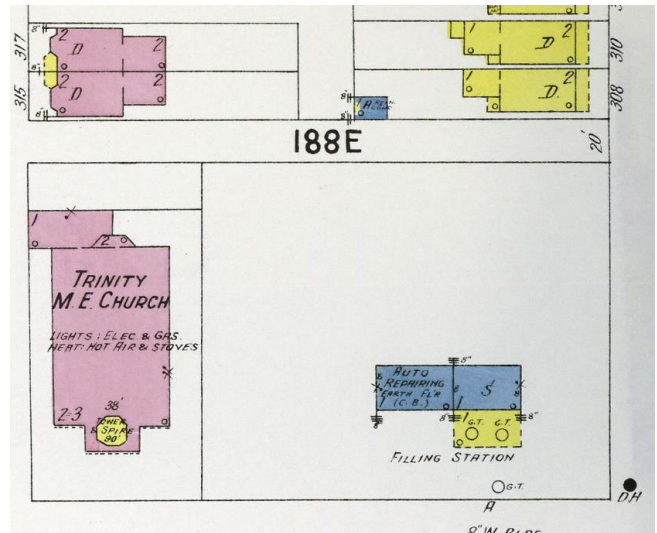


Figure 2. Sanborn Map, 1925.



Figure 3. 2018 E. Broad Street, ca. 1950.



Figure 4. 2018 E. Broad Street, ca. 1969 section.

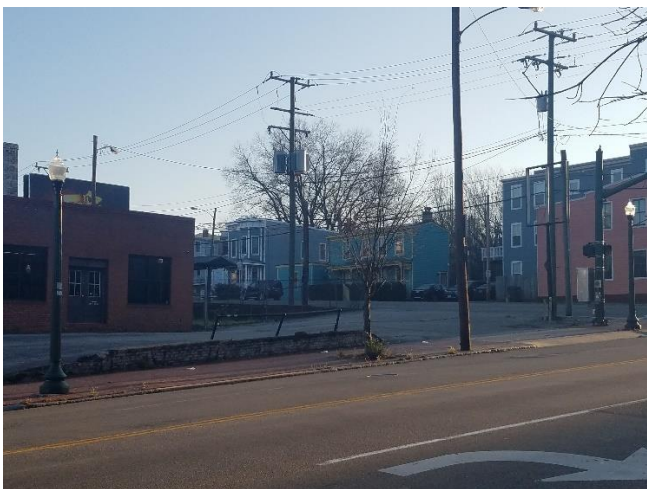


Figure 5. 304 North 21st Street, view from East Broad Street.

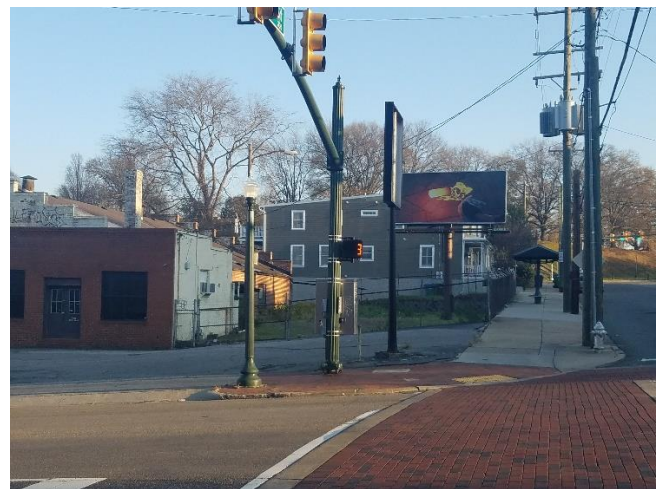


Figure 6. 304 North 21st Street, view of corner location and existing buildings on North 21st Street.



Figure 7. 304 North 21st Street from 21<sup>st</sup> Street



Figure 8. 300 block North 21st Street, even side north of subject lot



Figure 9. 2016-2018 East Broad Street



Figure 10. 300 block North 21st Street, odd side



Figure 11. 2001-2021 East Broad St.



Figure 12. 1919 East Broad Street.