

Church Hill Central Civic Association

Project Response Letter

Project No.: **SUP-118104-2022**

Address: **707 N. 31st St.**

Sent via Electronic Transmission

January 26, 2023

Mr. Mark Baker
Baker Development Resources
530 East Main Street, Suite 730
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Baker:

Thank you appearing before us recently to discuss your project. We thought the discussion was open, direct, and honest. And we appreciated the general nature of the discussion regarding the future of infill housing and development in Church Hill Central.

To that end, the comments of the Civic Association as it relates to the project are as follows:

1. Context: Property is within the 1972 George Mason Redevelopment Area, approved by Council and managed by RRHA (trying to find a copy of the plan now. Not able to find anything online about the details) There were obviously many properties cleared, re-platted(?) and new infrastructure and housing built.

The project is in a block that is poised to significantly change in character, much as occurred in 1972 with the adoption of the Redevelopment Plan. This will change the look and feel of the area. Not necessarily a bad thing, but without alleys there will be pressure on off-street parking. This project quadruples the density of this parcel.

2. Items Reviewed:
 - a. Urban Design: The buildings, particularly Building "B" looks very similar to other recent infill in the area. Building "A" with the extended bay structure is a better-looking building and just enough different from other buildings in the immediate area to stand out. No dimension on the bay, but it appears to be about 12" or so. Would like to see a dimension on that element so we can compare but would look much better and more consequential at 18"-24" deep. Don't be afraid to create something special!
 - b. Architecture:

“The Oakwood-Chimborazo district contains a significant collection of late-19th- and early-20th-century brick and frame dwellings that display an eclectic architectural mix of Late Victorian, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival styles, alongside Victorian cottages and a few bungalow-style houses.” (Oakwood-Chimborazo National Register Historic District Nomination Form, VDHR#127-0821, Summary Description)

In keeping with the historic eclectic character of the District we provide the following:

- i. Building A is an attractive building that is not replicated in many of the newer infill projects. Building A design should replace the existing Building B design. Building B, as presently designed, looks like too many other buildings in the area. We need to create more architectural interest in the area, not less.
 - ii. The bays on Building “A” aren’t deep enough...please make a bit deeper.
- c. Windows:
- i. Consistent color of window throughout. Please note on plans;
 - ii. Confirming window wrap on all windows. We believe they are included, but want to confirm; and
 - iii. Having no natural light into the kitchens is odd. Windows should be included in plans.
- d. Other specific building details:
- i. Landscape:
 1. Please pull privacy fence in along N. 31st St. to be slightly behind front façade of house. Provide landscaping along edge to match whatever is done alongside of house;
 2. Work with Urban Forestry for more gingkoes, or something of more substance in the “tree lawns”;
 3. Consider smaller ornamental trees in rear yards; and
 4. There are at least two squares of sidewalk along N Street that need to be replaced from root heaving from the tree in the yard that is scheduled for removal
 - ii. Parking: 4 units, with no off-street parking is concerning. This will become a problem as the balance of block is filled in. Surrounding blocks have alleys. This doesn’t. If this becomes the predominant pattern for the area—and it’s clear this area is “transitioning” in terms of housing type, lot layout, etc.—there will be issues.
 - iii. Porch/Deck Depth: Porch depth is listed at 6’, Thank you.
- e. Site Infrastructure, e.g., trash can locations, condenser locations/screening, fencing, bike parking, etc.: Trash can locations are acceptable, with recommendation that the fence gate be strong enough to withstand repeated use for cans. We note several where the fencing and gates are not in good repair, and the houses are not that old. Concerned about the location under windows of units...could be a bit unpleasant in warmer months. Please explore an alternative location, if possible.

Please note additional comments on the attached sheets that we have shared with you all in the past. If you have any questions, please contact me at cincygrad@yahoo.com or 608-692-4646.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Olinger", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark A. Olinger
1013 Oakwood Ave.
Richmond, VA 23223

c: Matt Jarreau
Jonathan Brown, Senior Planner, Department of Planning & Development Review