



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

6. COA-144130-2024	Final Review	Meeting Date: 6/25/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Will Gillette, Baker Development Resources	
Project Description	Construct 15 new single family attached townhomes in groupings of two and three.	
Project Location		
Address: 2111-2119 Venable Street		
Historic District: Union Hill		
High-Level Details:		
<p>The applicant proposes to construct 15 townhomes in groupings of two and three. The new construction will be located between Venable Street and Burton Street with units fronting both streets.</p> <p>The townhomes will be three stories tall, some featuring rear third floor patios.</p> <p>The new construction will be frame with horizontal siding.</p> <p>The land is currently vacant.</p> <p>The current parcels will need to be subdivided.</p>		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@rva.gov , (804) 646-6569	
Previous Reviews	<p>The Commission reviewed this application as a final review at the May 28, 2024, meeting. The Commission voted to defer the application, as there were still revisions to the design being requested. Specifically, the Commission still had concern over the height of the units and the lack of variation. It was asked that the applicant consider placing units on slab, and some units on a foundation to create subtle differences in height. Implementation of an English basement, or a design that better references historic three-story residential buildings continued to be recommended by the Commission.</p> <p>The Commission reviewed this application as a final review at the March 26, 2024, meeting. The Commission voted to defer the application, as there were still revisions to the design being requested. Specifically, the Commission requested that the faux mansard roofs read more as a gable on the facades to visually reduce the ridge height. There was general concern over the horizontal band over the second story of the three story, Italianate building design. This element was asked to be removed. Some Commissioners expressed concern over having three story buildings fronting Burton Street, given the</p>	

	<p>street's width, and believed that two stories would be more appropriate for that frontage. The English Basement and more variety amongst the dwellings were further emphasized from previous meetings.</p> <p>The Commission conceptually reviewed this application at the November 2023 meeting. Comments from Commissioners included asking the applicant to consider the height of the proposed three-story buildings. Some Commissioners expressed that the height of the building would be less of a concern if there was more diversity in architectural style amongst the new construction. An English basement form was suggested to accomplish the desired living space while limiting the overall height. The 2300 block of Venable was asked to be studied as a good example of uniform buildings that featured pedestrian scale elements while still appearing to be distinct from one another. The Commission asked that the buildings have porches and stoops. The massing was not discussed in length, but it was recommended that the individual units could be in groupings of two rather than two and three.</p>
Conditions for Approval	<p>Staff recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final materials and colors be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval. • Final window and door schedule be submitted for administrative review and approval. • Information on hardscaping for sidewalks, alleys, and any parking pads, including materiality and dimension be submitted administrative review. • Details on any proposed walls or fences be submitted for Administrative Review

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards For New Construction, page 46	<p><i>All new residential and commercial construction, whether in the form of additions or entire buildings should be compatible with the historic features that characterize the setting and context. To protect the context of the surrounding historic district, new construction should reference the materials, features, size, scale, proportions, and massing of the existing historic buildings in its setting.</i></p>	<p>The new construction will be located directly to the east of a large, masonry church which features a tall square corner tower and a steeply pitched cross-gable roof. To the north, the site is bordered by a grouping of modest, frame Italianate dwellings that are two stories in height, three bays wide, and feature decorative cornices with cornice vents, brackets, and full-width, one story, covered front porches. To the east and south of the site, there is vacant land, a parking lot, and newer construction of differing architectural styles.</p> <p>During the last review, the Commission supported the reduction in pitch of the roofs on the units with faux mansards to better resemble a gable roof. The Commission also supported the removal of all third-floor setbacks on the primary facades. However, the Commission still had concerns over height, and the relation of the new construction to the context of Union Hill.</p> <p>In response, the applicant has revised the plans to add height and material variations that better reflect the organic development of the district.</p> <p>Height variation has been achieved by proposing a slab on some units, and a traditional foundation on others. Units on</p>

		<p>a slab will also feature a two-story front porch. The front porch will be more ornate on the second story and simple without railings on the first floor. The first floor will also be clad in stucco rather than horizontal siding. While this configuration reduces the height, the material selection and emphasized upper porch reference the design of existing historic dwellings with raised foundations typical of Union Hill.</p> <p>Staff supports that changes in foundation type, material, and porch detailing as a means to create height variations amongst the units, and to better reference the design of other historic residential buildings in the district.</p>
Standards For New Construction: Siting, page 46	<i>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.</i>	The buildings will have a setback of approximately 7.5 feet from the face of the building to the sidewalk. Most buildings in Union Hill have shallow front yards.
Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46	<i>1. New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections, and roof shapes that lend identity to a building.</i>	<p>The applicant has revised the plans to embrace full three stories on the facades, rather than the setback third floors. Staff finds the removal of the third-floor setback appropriate.</p> <p>The roof shapes of the new buildings appear to be shallow pitched shed roofs (flat) which is in-keeping with roof shapes and forms found in the Union Hill City Old and Historic District. Some of the new buildings will also feature gable roofs and dormers on the facades. Gable roofs with dormers are found throughout Richmond's Old and Historic Districts and generally have a shallow pitched roof with greater projecting dormers.</p> <p>While there are three story buildings in Union Hill that feature a two-story, covered front porch, they often have a first floor that is at grade and are not ornate. The second story of the porch generally features more ornate elements like railings and brackets. This configuration emphasizes the second story of the porch more so than the first story. This visually breaks up the height of the building by emphasizing it in the middle of the façade, rather than emphasizing the verticality of the building.</p> <p>During the last review, Staff and the Commission recommended that the proposed buildings with two-story, covered front porches be lowered to grade and that the ground floor entrance and porch posts be simple and without railings, and that the second story of the porch feature more ornate elements like decorative posts and other architectural detailing. If implemented, these revisions would better reference the configuration of two-story porches on three-story dwellings within the context of the district.</p> <p>Staff finds that the applicant has revised the plans to reflect the recommendations of Staff and the Commission.</p>

Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46	<i>2. New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic, residential construction in the district.</i>	<p>The new construction will feature single bay one-story porches, and full-width two-story front porches which will increase the pedestrian scale of the buildings and block.</p>
Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion & Massing, page 47	<p><i>1. New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.</i></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. For example, full-block-long row house compositions are rare in Richmond. New residential buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face should still employ bays as an organizational device, but the new building should read as a single piece of architecture.</i></p> <p><i>3. The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.</i></p>	<p>While there are a few, taller, masonry buildings in the immediate area, they are institutional/religious buildings, while most residential buildings in the immediate area are two stories. During the last review, Staff and the Commission recommended that the applicant reduce the height of the buildings to better reference the typical height of residential buildings on the subject and surrounding blocks. While the plans still feature three story buildings on Venable and Burton Streets, the applicant has reduced the heights of some of the units by placing them on slab foundations. While a minimal reduction in height, staff finds that the variation in height that is created, along with other design revisions, makes the proposal more compatible with the surrounding context.</p> <p>While there are a few examples of three-story residential buildings in Union Hill, however, they always feature raised foundations or English basements with elevated front porches and a change in material between the ground floor and the upper levels. Some of these three-story buildings have an entrance at grade and two-story porches where the ground floor is treated simply, and the upper porch is more ornate.</p>
Standards for New Construction: Materials & Colors, page 47	<p><i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i></p>	<p>The new construction will be clad in horizontal siding, which generally resembles other types of horizontal siding found within the district.</p> <p>Roofs will be standing seam metal. Windows will be aluminum clad wood.</p> <p>The trim will be a composite material. Porches and decking will be wood. The foundation will be parged masonry.</p> <p>Since the last review, the applicant has revised the plans so that the first floor of the units on slab foundation are clad in stucco. This material will resemble a raised parged foundation which is common in the district.</p> <p>Staff finds that the selected materials are appropriate for the district.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that final materials and colors be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.</u></p>
Standards For New Construction: Doors and Windows, page 56	<p><i>2. The size, proportion and spacing patterns of door and window openings on free-standing new construction should be compatible with</i></p>	<p>During the conceptual review, each building had groupings of two and three windows. Staff found that groupings of windows of three and more are not common within the district. The plans have been updated and now show that the new buildings will have vertically aligned, single windows with divided lights. Staff finds that this configuration is more in-keeping with the historic district.</p>

	<p><i>patterns established in the district.</i></p>	<p>During the conceptual review, the applicant proposed to use fiberglass, single-pane casement windows. The application has been revised to show that the buildings will now have windows with divided lights (two-over-two) which is more in-keeping with the district.</p> <p>During the last review, Staff recommended that the proposed buildings that featured eight-light glass and wood exterior doors and two-over-two windows should have simple wooden door with an upper transom, or a simple half wood and half glass door both of which are common in the district. The applicant has revised the plans so that the exterior doors are simple half glass doors without divisions.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that a final window and door schedule be submitted for administrative review and approval.</u></p>
<p>Site Improvements: Sidewalks & Curbs, page 76</p>	<p><i>4. Brick or granite pavers are the most appropriate choice in most Old and Historic Districts.</i></p> <p><i>5. Existing granite curbing should be retained whenever possible.</i></p> <p><i>6. Sidewalk design should allow for the installation of appropriate urban landscaping.</i></p>	<p>Based on the site plan submitted in the application, the units that front the north side of Burton Street and the south side of Venable Street will have an open area between them. From the plans, it is unclear what the treatment of this area will be. <u>Staff recommends that information on hardscaping for sidewalks, alleys, and any parking pads, including materiality and dimension be submitted for review.</u> Appropriate paving for Union Hill includes brick pavers, granite pavers, and gravel.</p> <p>Since the last review, it appears that one unit has been removed along Burton Street to include a parking area.</p>
<p>Standards for New Construction, Residential, Fences & Walls, pg. 51</p>	<p><i>1. Fence, wall, and gate designs should reflect the scale of the historic structures they surround, as well as the character of nearby fences, walls, and gates.</i></p> <p><i>2. Fence, wall, or gate materials should relate to building materials commonly found in the neighborhood.</i></p> <p><i>3. Privacy fences along the side and rear of a property should be constructed of wood of an appropriate design. Privacy fences are not appropriate in front of a historic building.</i></p>	<p>No information was given on any walls or fences that will be installed in association with the new construction. <u>Staff recommends that details on any proposed walls or fences be submitted for Administrative Review.</u> Walls and curbing will require review by the Commission, whereas wooden fences may be administratively approved if in compliance with the Commission's adopted administrative approval guidelines.</p>

Figures

Figure 1. View looking northeast on Venable Street.



Figure 2. Religious building at the corner of N. 21st Street and Venable Street.



Figure 3. Looking north on Venable Street at the corner of N. 22nd Street.



Figure 4. Vacant lot between Venable Street and Burton Street.



Figure 5. Vacant lot at the intersection of N. 22nd. Street and Burton Street.



Figure 6. View looking southeast from the intersection of N. 22ND Street and Burton Street.



Figure 7. Examples of shallowly pitched gabled roofs with dormer windows on new construction on 500 block of N. 24th Street in Church Hill North.



Figure 8. Example of shallowly pitched gabled roof with dormer windows on Venable Street in Union Hill.



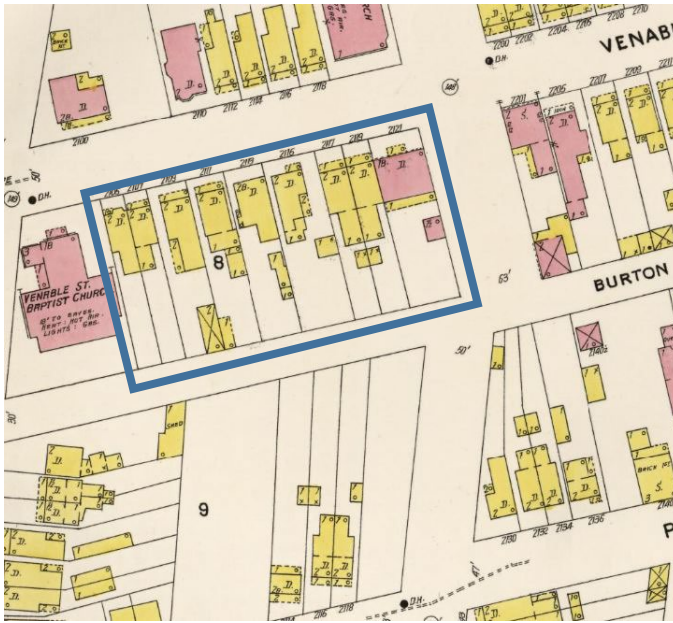
Figure 9. Example of shallowly pitched gabled roof with dormer windows in Shockoe Valley City Old and Historic District.



Figure 10. Example of new construction using an English basement at 720 Jessamine Street in Union Hill.



Figure 11. 1905 Sanborn Map. 2111-2119 Venable Street features mostly frame, two story buildings with front porches. All were demolished between the 1970's-1990's. As of 1905, there were not any buildings on the corner of Burton Street and 22nd Street that fronted on Burton Street.



2121



2119-2117



2115



2113



2111



2109

