

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
November 22, 2016 Meeting**

8. **CAR No. 16-141** (D. Kleyman)

**808 North 21st Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

**Construct an eight unit multifamily
structure on a vacant lot.**

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests approval to construction of a multifamily building in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. The proposed structure will be located on a currently vacant lot on the west side of North 21st Street. Due to the grade of the property and the height of the proposal, portions of the proposed project will be visible from North 21st Street, Carrington Street, Mosby Street, Venable Street, and adjacent side and rear alleys.

The residential character of the Union Hill neighborhood consists of 2 to 2 ½ story, 3-bay structures with the subject block being developed with brick structures of the typical height and massing of the district in a mix of architectural styles. The project is adjacent to a 2-story brick structure which is currently being restored by the applicant. Adjacent to the historic structure are vacant lots as the historic brick structures were demolished prior to the establishment of the Old and Historic District. The remainder of the west side of the block is developed with 2 ½ story, Colonial Revival, brick residential structures with a 3-bay window rhythm and a 2 ½ story, Late Victorian, brick commercial structure at the corner of North 21st and Venable Streets. The east side of North 21st Street is developed with multiple 2-story, 3-bay, shed-roofed, Art Deco, brick structures, a 2-story, 6-bay, Colonial Revival double-house, and a two-story concrete block apartment building.

The applicant is proposing to construct two buildings connected by a central stair and deck. The building which will front 21st Street is a 2-story, 3-bay, Italianate inspired frame structure with a full façade front porch. This structure expands to an additional bay at the rear half of the structure. The structure will be clad in smooth fiber cement lapped siding with a 7" exposure and will have a cornice on the façade constructed of composite material in a design to match the adjacent historic building's cornice. The structure will have a flat roof and ranked, 2/2, PVC windows. The structure will be 27'-3" in height from grade.

The structure to the rear is 3-stories in height and will extend approximately 7 feet above the front structure. This lower two-stories of the structure will be clad in fiber cement lapped siding to match the other structure and will have ranked, 2/2, PVC windows. The third story will be clad in fiber cement boards with

casement windows. The front of the third story will be minimally slanted towards the rear of the structure and the proposed roof will have a minimal slope. The applicant is proposing a three-story porch at the rear. The proposed railings will be constructed of composite materials, and the applicant is proposing to paint the structure earth toned colors.

The proposed parking will be located at the rear of the structure. The trash receptacles will be located adjacent to the alley, and the outdoor mechanical equipment will be located to the north of the rear decks. The applicant proposes to screen the trash and mechanical equipment with a 5-foot tall dog-eared picket fence.

The applicant came before the Commission on September 27, 2016 for Conceptual Review. The Commission and staff had the following concerns with the project:

- The unrelated rear wing is not a form found in the District
- Perspective drawings are needed to understand the visibility of the structure
- The front structure should be a brick structure.
- The mass of the structure should be reduced.
- The trash and mechanical equipment should be screened.

The applicant is seeking **Final Approval** for this project. Commission staff reviewed the two, new buildings through the lens of the “Standards for New Construction: Residential” on pages 44 and 45 of *the Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* utilizing the checklist below

S=satisfies

D=does not satisfy

NA=not applicable

S **D** **NA**

New infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns in the surrounding district

The applicant has revised the building’s siting from the previous submittal to align the front of the porch with the front building wall of the adjacent structure. This alignment is appropriate for the diagonal street.

Where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block

Though a context site plan showing the setback of the structure across the alley was not provided, it appears that the adjacent structures have similar setbacks therefore this guideline does not apply.

New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site

The structure addresses North 21st Street.

- New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the district. Form refers to the combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building.**

Though the applicant has modified the plans to better relate the first two stories of the rear wing to the front structure with the use of the lapped siding, 2/2 windows, and privacy walls clad in lapped siding to cover portions of the stairs, the rear structure is still unrelated both architecturally on the third story and in its massing to the attached structure and is not a building form found in the district. Staff does not find the third floor effectively conveys the appearance of a mansard roof as was intend by the applicant due to the use of fiber cement panels and the inclusion of multiple openings. Staff also has concerns that the recessed portion of the front structure introduces another element to the composition of the structure which is not typically found in the District. Staff recommends this element better relate to the façade with the inclusion of a matching cornice.

- New construction should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps.**

The proposed project incorporates human-scale elements including a cornice, front and rear porches, and front steps as part of the project.

- New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings**

The typical height of the surrounding buildings is 2 to 2 ½ stories. The proposed structure is 3 stories. The applicant has attempted to minimize the impact of the height by locating the taller portion of the building at rear of the project over 55 feet from the street.

- New construction should respect the typical width, organization of bays, vertical alignment and symmetry of surrounding buildings.**

The proposed project does maintain the vertical alignment and the symmetry of the surrounding buildings. The applicant has modified the plans to propose a three bay façade to maintain the typical three bay pattern found in the surrounding buildings. The typical width of single family homes in the district is 20 feet. The façade of the proposed structure which reads as a single family dwelling is 17', and the applicant has setback the additional width approximately 14 feet.

- The size, proportion, and spacing patterns of doors and window openings should be compatible with patterns established in the district.**

The proposed windows are vertically aligned and symmetrically placed which is consistent with patterns in the district. The applicant has removed the transom windows which were included in the previous submittal.

- Porch and cornice heights should be compatible with adjacent buildings**

The porch and cornice heights relate to those of the adjacent structure to the north.

- Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district. Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted.**

The proposed construction utilizes cementitious lapped siding, trim, and panels; wooden front porch details; composite porch flooring and rear railings, and PVC windows. Though lapped siding is a material that is found in the district, the subject block is characterized by brick buildings. The Commission recommended the façade of the structure to be clad in brick rather than the proposed lap siding.

Staff recommends the Commission defer the application to allow the applicant the opportunity to address staff concerns regarding the building form, height, and materials of the structure. Staff has concerns regarding the compatibility of the height of the project's rear wing. Though the rear wing will not be visible from North 21st Street, the structure will be highly visible from Mosby and Carrington Streets and the surrounding alleys and at a height that is not consistent with the surrounding residential buildings. Though the footprint of the proposed building is in keeping with structures on the west side of North 21st Street, the height and composition of the structure is not. Staff recommends the applicant consider ways to minimize the height of the structure and utilize a building form and materials more appropriate for the subject block.