



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

8. COA-132788-2023	Conceptual Review Meeting Date: 7/25/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Rick Fischl, SMBW, PLLC
Project Description	Construct a new, five-story commercial building.
Project Location	
Address: 13 E. Broad Street	
Historic District: Broad Street	
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The Applicant proposes to construct a 5-story commercial building on a vacant lot. The building will serve as the Headquarters for the VPM Media Corporation and will be programmed with commercial space, offices, media production space, and community space. The basement story will feature some housing and off-street parking.</p> <p>The original building on this lot was demolished in the 1980's after being damaged by a fire. The vacant lot is currently used as private parking.</p> <p>The new construction will have a zero-set back from the buildings to the east and west. The new building will have a concrete podium and floors 2-5 will be clad with engineered stone and feature some metal accent panels.</p> <p>The portion of the development that fronts East Grace Street will not be reviewed by the Commission, as it is outside of the Broad Street Historic District; the southern boundary being the alleyway between East Broad and East Grace.</p>	
Staff Recommendation	
Previous Reviews	None.
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@rva.gov , (804) 646-6569
Staff Recommendations	None.

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<p>New Construction: Commercial, Siting, pg. 52, #s 2-5</p>	<p><i>2. New commercial infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard development patterns of the surrounding block. The minimum setbacks evident in most districts reinforce the traditional street wall. In cases where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block.</i></p> <p><i>3. New commercial buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.</i></p> <p><i>4. If setback waivers, or any other waivers are needed, the Commission can be petitioned to support a Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) waiver.</i></p> <p><i>5. For large-scale commercial parking, parking within the building is strongly encouraged. If a building includes parking within it, vehicle entry doors should be located on non-primary elevations.</i></p>	<p>The new construction will be a zero-setback development. This development pattern is in-keeping with the district. The zero front setback is compatible with the existing neighboring buildings and reinforces the street wall. The building will be directly attached to the neighboring buildings. This is compatible with the district and historic configuration of the previous building on the lot.</p> <p>The building will face the most prominent street, East Broad Street.</p> <p>Based on the application narrative, no waivers or variances will be needed from the Board of Zoning Appeals, as this is a by-right development.</p> <p>Structured off-street parking will be provided on-site, being located below-grade and also in the interior of the site between the 13 East Broad building, and the other proposed building to the rear. The second proposed building will front East Grace Street. Parking will be obscured by the two new buildings.</p>
<p>New Construction: Commercial, Form, pg. 52, #s 2-3</p>	<p><i>1. New commercial construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the immediate area. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building. Building form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.</i></p> <p><i>2. New commercial construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic commercial buildings in the district.</i></p> <p><i>3. New commercial construction should incorporate human-scale elements at the pedestrian level.</i></p>	<p>The new construction has been designed to take cues from and compliment the prevailing cornice heights, rhythm, fenestrations, and heights found within the district and on the subject block.</p> <p>Most existing buildings on the subject block are three-stories in height. The new building has been designed so that the first three floors will align with the existing buildings and the upper two floors will be set back so that the additional height of the new construction does not overwhelm the neighboring historic buildings.</p> <p>The new construction has been designed so that it is broken into four bays that are compatible with the width of the other building facades on the subject block. This configuration reinforces the rhythm of the block. The applicant has provided a historic image of the original building on the site prior to front façade alterations that demonstrates that the original building was also similarly divided into 4 bays on the front façade, breaking up the large mass of the building.</p>

		<p>Several recessed areas have been punched into the front façade to give the building a contemporary design while still referencing the rhythm and proportions on the block. There is a large recessed area on the ground floor that creates a pedestrian scale element reinforcing the human scale of the building.</p>
<p>New Construction: Commercial, Height, Width, Proportions & Massing, pg. 53, #'s 1-3</p>	<p><i>1. New commercial construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings, both residential and commercial.</i></p> <p><i>2. New commercial construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of commercial buildings in Richmond's historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing should look to the project's local district for precedent. When designing new commercial buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face, the design 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>Most buildings on the subject block are three-stories in height; however the new construction will be five-stories. While not common on the subject block, there is historic precedent within the Broad Street City Old and Historic District for buildings that are greater than three-stories. Furthermore, the upper two-stories of the proposed building will be setback from the front façade of the building to emphasize the lower three floors and to subordinate the upper two floors. Staff finds the additional height to be acceptable in the locations for the above mentioned reasons.</p> <p>While the building will be wider than most existing buildings, the front façade will be divided into bays that are similar in width to those buildings which sufficiently breaks-up the massing of the front façade.</p> <p>The head height of the third floor is compatible with the height of the existing building's cornice to the west.</p>
<p>New Construction: Commercial, Materials & Colors, pg. 53, #'s 1-6</p>	<p><i>1. Additions should not cover or destroy original architectural elements.</i></p> <p><i>2. Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the surrounding neighborhood.</i></p> <p><i>3. Paint colors used should be similar to the historically appropriate colors already found in the immediate neighborhood and throughout the larger district (see Painting Section starting on page 60).</i></p> <p><i>4. Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted for use in City Old and Historic Districts. Other synthetic siding materials with a smooth, untextured finish may be allowed in limited cases, but approval by the Commission is always required.</i></p> <p><i>5. Rooftop mechanical equipment should be located as discretely as possible to limit visibility. In addition, appropriate screening should be provided to conceal equipment from view. When rooftop</i></p>	<p>The new building will be attached to the existing buildings to the east and west. No character defining architectural features will be obscured from view by the new construction. The building to the east does feature a mural that will likely be obscured, and the building to the west has several windows; however these windows are not original. Staff was unable to locate any approvals for the installation of these windows.</p> <p>The Broad Street City Old and Historic District features a variety of cladding materials, mostly brick, but a few examples of wood and stucco. The new building will predominantly be clad in engineered stone with metal accent panels. Staff finds this material to be visually non-obtrusive and compatible with the contemporary design of the building.</p> <p>The applicant has indicated that rooftop mechanical equipment will not be visible from the public right of way, being screened from view on the roof.</p>

	<p><i>railings are required for seating areas or for safe access to mechanical equipment, the railings should be as unobtrusive as possible, in order to minimize their appearance and visual impact on the surrounding district.</i></p> <p><i>6. For larger-scale projects that involve communal garbage collection (such as dumpsters or other large collection device), these garbage receptacles should be located away from the primary elevation or elevations of the building (preferably to the rear) and screened from view.</i></p>	<p>Trash collection will be located in an area that is accessed from other points other than Broad Street. It will be minimally visible.</p>
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Figures

Figure 1. Original building.



Figure 2. Original building after front façade alterations. *Demolished 1989*



Figure 3. Subject block looking west.



Figure 4. View from subject block looking northeast



Figure 5. View of existing lot from north side of Broad Street.



Figure 6. Side of existing building to the east of site.



Figure 7. Side of existing building to the west of site.



Figure 8. Rear of site looking north toward Broad Street.

