



Commission of Architectural Review

10. COA-182576-2026	Conceptual Review Meeting Date: 4/28/2026
Applicant/Petitioner	Marisa Perez
Project Description	Construct three new two-story attached buildings on vacant lots.
Project Location	
Address: 1014-1016 Russell Street	
Historic District: Union Hill	
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes the construction of three new single-family buildings on vacant parcels. The project represents new construction on an undeveloped portion of the block. The proposed buildings are two stories in height with a side gable form, and include front-facing façades with entrances and full-width porches on Russell Street. Site plans also indicate a trash enclosure near the front of the lots.</p>	
Staff Recommendation	Conceptual Review
Staff Contact	Yara Iwaz, Yara.Iwaz@RVA.gov, (804)646-6031
Previous Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Staff Recommendations	<p>Staff finds that the proposed new construction is compatible with the Guidelines, and recommends the following for final review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed buildings to maintain a consistent height and roofline. Vertical trim pieces can be used to delineate the individual dwellings. Revise the fenestration pattern to include evenly spaced, vertically aligned, full-size windows, typically three bays on the primary façade, to better reflect historic district patterns. Consider revising the trash enclosure toward the rear of the property Revise the side elevation to verify that the windows are not facing a trash enclosure Enhance the articulation at the top of the second-floor façade to create a more clearly defined building

	<p>termination; this may include the introduction of a more substantial frieze, cornice, or comparable horizontal element at the roofline. Alternatively, modifications to the roof design and pitch can be considered.</p>
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- Material profiles, dimensions, finishes, and colors, as well as window specifications, be submitted in final review.

Staff Analysis

Surrounding Context

The subject properties are located on the west side of Russell Street, a block that is currently largely undeveloped. The east side of Russell Street contains a surface parking lot and the Shiloh Baptist Church, a one- to one-and-a-half-story structure. To the north, Carrington Street forms the boundary of the historic district and features a mix of historic and newer infill development. Notable examples include late 19th-century Italianate dwellings characterized by bracketed cornices, dentils, and full-width porches (2313 and 2315 Carrington), as well as more recent three-story semi-attached residences with dormers (2309 and 2311 Carrington). To the south, along Venable Street, the context includes earlier Italianate buildings, including attached residential buildings typically two stories in height, with raised brick foundations, bracketed cornices, and rhythmically spaced fenestration (2404-2406 Venable, and 2410 Venable).

Overall, the surrounding context is defined by a mix of historic and contemporary buildings, but with consistent characteristics including vertical window proportions, clearly articulated façades with base-middle-top composition, and relatively uniform building heights along established streets.

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for New Construction: Siting, page 46	<p><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. 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>Siting, Scale, Alignment</i></p> <p>The proposed development occupies a largely vacant portion of the block, where no street wall is established. As such, this project will play a significant role in informing the character of future development along Russell Street, including form, alignment, and general appearance of new construction.</p> <p>The siting appears generally consistent nearby lots of comparable size. Staff notes that, given the absence of established patterns on this side of the street, careful consideration of scale, size and façade design will be critical at final review.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approving the siting of the proposed buildings.</u></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>Height</i></p> <p>The proposed building heights (two to two-and-a-half stories) are generally compatible with the surrounding context, where two-story buildings predominate but taller forms are not uncommon. However, one of the proposed buildings appears slightly taller than the others, creating roofline that is not typical of the district, where attached buildings typically maintain consistent heights. While variation in height can be used to define or delineate individual buildings that share a continuous street-facing plane, this type of roofline change is more commonly associated with buildings featuring parapet walls, and less typical of attached frame construction within the district. In frame rowhouses, individual units are typically differentiated through trim details and color changes.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that all proposed buildings maintain a consistent height and roofline, to better reflect the</u></p>

		<u>rhythm found in the district. Trim can be used to delineate the individual dwellings.</u>
Standards For New Construction: Doors and Windows, p.56	<i>2. The size, proportion and spacing patterns of door and window openings on free-standing new construction should be compatible with patterns established in the district</i>	<p><i>Windows</i></p> <p>The proposed fenestration pattern includes grouped windows on the first and second floor. Traditional patterns in the district emphasize vertically aligned, evenly spaced, full-size window openings; groupings of windows would be more commonly found in newer construction outside of the district, or on projecting bays as part of a unified design, or on much larger structures that feature multiple double-window groupings. The current arrangement is atypical of the expected rhythm and proportions of the historic district, and appears more typical of suburban construction than urban historic context.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends revising the fenestration pattern to include evenly spaced, vertically aligned, full-size windows, typically three bays on the primary façade, to better reflect historic district patterns.</u></p>
Standards for Site Improvements, p.76	<i>8. 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 also be screened effectively with appropriate landscaping.</i>	<p><i>Trash enclosure</i></p> <p>The site plan indicates a trash enclosure located toward the front of the lot; however, the right (north) side elevation shows windows in front of this area. Additionally, the location of the trash on the front of the property may negatively impact the streetscape.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends considering revising the trash enclosure toward the rear of the property.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends revising the side elevation to verify that the windows are not facing a trash enclosure.</u></p>
Standards for New Construction: Form, page 46	<i>3. New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design. In Richmond, porches were historically an integral part of residential design and provide much of the street-level architectural character of Richmond's historic districts.</i>	<p><i>Base-middle-top composition</i></p> <p>In the district, roof forms that are highly visible from the street (such as mansard roofs, saltbox profiles, or gables) typically provide a strong and clearly articulated top to the building, that is very visible from the street due to its geometry. In cases where side-gable forms are used, the top of the façade is often reinforced through dormers, cornices, or transitions to flatter rear roof sections, which help define the building's termination at its top (as seen in Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4).</p> <p>In this proposal, while the façade is composed with a base (porch and entry), middle (second-floor fenestration), and an implied top, the limited visibility of the roof plane means that the perceived "top" of the building will occur near the gutter line at the top of the second floor, rather than the highest point of the roof as seen in the façade drawing. This can result in a weaker termination of the façade, as the sloped roof</p>

		<p>might not sufficiently contribute to the building's street presence.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends enhancing the articulation at the top of the second-floor façade to create a more clearly defined building termination. This may include the introduction of a more substantial frieze, cornice, or comparable horizontal element at the roofline. Alternatively, modifications to the roof design and pitch can be considered to better align with district precedents.</u></p>
<p>Standards for New Construction: Materials & Colors, page 47</p>	<p><i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i></p>	<p>The proposed exterior materials appear generally appropriate for the district. The use of brick piers, parged materials, synthetic siding and shingles are appropriate for new construction.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the proposed materials; final material profiles, dimensions, finishes, and colors, as well as window specifications, be submitted in final review.</u></p>

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (c) of the City Code, as well as with the Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.

Figures



Figure 1: site elevation of the attached buildings at 2222 Venable, showing similar roof form as the proposal



Figure 2: front elevation of 2222 Venable; the top of the building is perceived at the edge of the second floor, rather than the roof



Figure 3: 2210 Venable, with a similar roof form as the proposal



Figure 4: front elevation at 2210 Venable