

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

5. **CAR No. 17-006** (J. Bolton)

**2230 Venable Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct five new multifamily structures.**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to construct a multifamily development consisting of five buildings on vacant lots in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. The subject lots are located in a block bound by Venable, Jessamine, Carrington, and Tulip Streets. The majority of this block is vacant land with the exception of the three-story building (the Citadel of Hope) that the Commission approved to be rehabilitated; a single story, 6-bay, brick building which was constructed in 1850 that has been altered through the years; and a vacant service station which was constructed in 1931 at the corner of Venable and Tulip Streets. The surrounding neighborhood is primarily developed with two-story, frame and brick, single-family dwellings with front porches.

On November 22, 2016, the Commission denied the applicant's request to construct two, multifamily structures on the subject parcels. The Commission found the massing and scale of the proposed new construction to be incompatible with the Union Hill Old and Historic District. The applicant has appealed this decision to City Council.

This application before the Commission attempts to address the Commission's concerns with massing, scale, and height by breaking up the development's density into multiple buildings of varying heights. As this project has received Low Income Housing Tax Credits for the specific unit count and other amenities provided by the development, these details could not be changed as a part of the revisions to the plan.

The proposed new construction consists of 5 buildings -- two addressing Venable Street and three addressing Jessamine Street. On Venable Street, the applicant is proposing two, two-story buildings to frame the existing Citadel of Hope. The buildings will be approximately 28 ½' in height and approximately 43' wide. The buildings will sit proud of the Citadel of Hope and will be setback from Venable Street 26 ½' for the building at the corner of Jessamine and approximate 18' for the building east of the Citadel. Each building will be composed of two, three-bay elements connected by a recessed stairwell. The recessed elements will have a storefront entry with two square windows above and will be clad in 8" ship lap fiber cement siding in a light grey color. The remainder of the buildings will be clad in brick in a light sandstone color and the windows will be aluminum clad

wood windows. The three-bay elements will have 2nd story balconies with custom steel railings and a first floor raised patio.

On Jessamine Street, the applicant proposes a 2-story, a 3-story, and a 4-story building. The buildings will be setback approximately 4'-9" to 5'-5 ¾" from Jessamine Street with the facades aligning in the same plane. The two-story building is located closest to Venable Street and will have the same composition as the proposed buildings on Venable Street. All elements of the two-story Jessamine building will be clad in ship lap fiber cement siding in light greys.

The three-story building will be located north of the two-story building and will have the same composition as the two-story buildings with an additional story and balcony. The three-bay elements will be clad in a red brick and the recessed portion will be clad in ship lap fiber cement siding in a light grey.

The final building is a four-story structure at the corner of Jessamine and Carrington streets. The proposed structure will extend from Carrington Street approximately 120 feet down Jessamine Street. The first three-levels of the proposed Jessamine Street façade are organized into three, 3-part sections separated by recessed brick sections. The center element includes glazing and projecting balconies and the outer elements are clad in brick and included vertically ranked single windows. The first three-stories of the Carrington Street elevation is organized in a similar manner to the Jessamine Street elevation with the primary difference being a larger recessed brick element. The fourth story is proposed to be clad in a dark grey ship lap fiber cement siding. The fourth floor will be recessed from the building face by 4'-3 ½" from Jessamine Street, 5'-11" from Carrington Street, and 9'-7 ½" from the proposed parking. The proposed structure is approximately 48 feet in height. The applicant is proposing to construct a surface parking lot and trash enclosure immediately to the east of the proposed structure.

Staff recommends approval of the proposed project with conditions. Commission staff reviewed the five, 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*. Staff finds the design of the proposed project has been revised from the previous submittal to respond to many of the Commission's concerns and to be consistent with some of the Commission's *Guidelines for New Construction*. The applicant has broken-up the massing to be more consistent with the development in the district.

Two and Three Story Buildings: The two and three-story buildings with their three-bay composition are of a similar scale to the residential development in the district. Staff recommends the following conditions in regard to the design of these buildings:

- A dimensioned parapet detail be provided for administrative review and approval.
- On each three bay section, staff recommends the openings be symmetrically placed to reflect the symmetry of the surrounding buildings.
- Staff recommends the door to the stairwell be more residential in character. In the Union Hill neighborhood, commercial uses are primarily located on corners with corner entrances and storefronts which wrap the corner and therefore the use of storefront is inappropriate at this location. Staff recommends a center door with a transom and sidelights to achieve a residential appearance.
- Staff recommends the stairwell windows be the same size as the other windows on the façade to maintain the rhythm of fenestration on the façade.
- Details of the stair entry be provided for administrative review and approval.
- The foundation of the first floor patios be clad in brick to be consistent with the brick foundations found in the district.
- Railings be install on the first floor to create a true porch which is characteristic of the neighborhood.
- As long transom windows are not a window form found in the district, staff recommends all windows on the west elevation of the building at the corner of Venable and Jessamine Streets be the same length.
- On the brick buildings, staff recommends the recessed portion be brick rather than the proposed siding as the mix of materials is not characteristic of the district.

Four Story Building: The applicant has designed the four story building at the corner of Carrington and Jessamine Streets to minimize the fourth story by setting it back. This building utilizes materials appropriate for the district and provides human scale elements with the individual entrances to the street. Additionally, the ranked single windows are more in keeping with the scale and rhythm of the fenestration pattern found in the district. Staff recommends the following conditions in regard to the design of this building:

- Staff recommends the visible portion of the foundation should be consistent throughout the project. As the visible portion of the foundation is 2'-6" for the smaller buildings on Jessamine Street, staff recommends this be maintained for the Jessamine and Carrington Street elevations of the four story building. Reducing the height of the foundation wall will improve the pedestrian environment.
- Staff recommends brick details such as the proposed soldier coursing be consistent throughout the structure.

In addition to the conditions noted above, staff recommends the following conditions of approval for all buildings:

- Siding be smooth and unbeaded
- Windows be simulated or true divided lite

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the noted conditions, is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 30.930.7(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 code.