



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

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| 9. COA-161196-2025 | Conceptual Review | Meeting Date: 2/25/2025 |
| Applicant/Petitioner | Matt Morgan, project:HOMES | |
| Project Description | Construct a new three-story multi-family building. | |
| Project Location | | |
| Address: 815-821 Mosby St. | | |
| Historic District: Union Hill | | |
| <p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant requests approval to construct a new, three-story multi-family building on a vacant lot. The new building will have three projecting bays on the façade with recessed, covered balconies. There will be a prominent cornice on the third-story, and the building will be clad in materials that resemble those traditionally found in Union Hill.</p> <p>In August 2020, the Building Commissioner authorized the demolition of a vacant two-story building located on the site.</p> | | |
| Staff Recommendation | Conceptual Review | |
| Staff Contact | Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@rva.gov , 804-646-6569 | |
| Previous Reviews | <p>The Commission approved plans for this site in May 2022; however, that project was never completed.</p> <p>In August 2020, in accordance with Section 30-930.6(j) of the city code, the Building Commissioner authorized the demolition of a vacant 2-story frame building. The building was deemed a public hazard, due to significant water intrusion which deteriorated load bearing structural members.</p> <p>In 2019, the Commission approved the demolition of a concrete retaining wall at this site.</p> | |
| Staff Recommendations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The setback of the neighboring buildings be submitted on a site plan with the final review. • The first-floor balconies have front yard sidewalks and stair access that connect to the public sidewalk along Mosby Street. • Existing and proposed building heights be included in the final context rendering to better compare the height of the new building with that of the existing buildings. • The transition from brick to horizontal siding be further studied on the south elevation. • The location of all exterior mechanical equipment be shown on a site plan for final review, and it be adequately screened from the | |

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| | <p>public right-of-way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a new retaining wall is needed across the front yard, specifications be submitted with the final review. Any new retaining wall should be constructed of materials common in the district such as brick, concrete, or parged block. • Staff recommends that the parking area behind the building be adequately screened from the public right way; means of screening submitted with the final review. |
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Staff Analysis

| Guideline Reference | Reference Text | Analysis |
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| Siting, pg. 46, #2-3 | <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 proposed building will have an approximate setback of 12 feet. While the irregularly shaped commercial building to the north doesn't have a deep setback and will sit proud of the proposed building, the proposed building appears to have a similar setback to the existing buildings to the south along Mosby Street. The proposed setback will help reinforce the street wall. <u>Staff recommends that the setback of the neighboring buildings be submitted on a site plan with the final review.</u> |
| Form, pg. 46, #1-3 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district.</i> <i>2. New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the district</i> <i>3. New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design.</i> | <p>The proposed building will overall be rectangular in form, with projecting bays across the front. While the building itself has a larger mass than what is typical of the district, the front projecting bays help break the building up into three main sections that are three bays wide, which is common in the Union Hill City Old and Historic District.</p> <p>The existing human scale of the block will be maintained with the inclusion of a cornice and brick detailing, as well as recessed porches.</p> <p>The site sits higher than the sidewalk. To enhance the pedestrian scale of the proposed building, <u>Staff recommends that the first-floor balconies have front yard sidewalks and stair access that connect to the public sidewalk along Mosby Street,</u> which is typical of the district. As proposed, there will not be an access to the first-floor balconies, but rather just a straight across railing. Within Union Hill, it is not typical to have porches and railings on ground floors without access from the sidewalk/yard.</p> |
| Height, Width, Proportion, & Massing, pg. 47, #1-3 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.</i> <i>2. New residential construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of other residential properties in the surrounding historic districts.</i> | The proposed building will be three-stories in height, which is taller than most residential buildings in Union Hill; however, the applicant has implemented a few design solutions that make the building more compatible with its surroundings. Existing three-story buildings in Union Hill are typically on raised foundations. 809 Mosby Street is a nearby historic |

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| | <p>3. <i>The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.</i></p> | <p>building that sits on a raised foundation and is three-stories in height. The proposed building's design has taken material cues from 809 Mosby Street, having a brick first floor to resemble a raised foundation, and then lap siding on the upper two-stories.</p> <p>Based on a context rendering, it appears that the overall height of the cornice will align with 809 Mosby Street. <u>Staff recommends that existing and proposed building heights be included in the final context rendering to better compare the height of the new building with that of the existing buildings.</u></p> |
| <p>New Construction, Doors and Windows, pg.49 #3</p> | <p>3. <i>The size, proportion, and spacing patterns of doors and window openings on free standing, new construction should be compatible with patterns established in the district.</i></p> | <p>Windows and doors will be vertically aligned and appear to be similar in size to historic window and door dimensions.</p> |
| <p>New Construction, Materials & Colors, pg. 53</p> | <p>2. <i>Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the surrounding neighborhood.</i></p> <p>5. <i>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 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>The proposed building will have a brick base on the facade and fiber cement lap siding on the upper two-stories. Trim will be a composite material. The cornice will be contemporary in design with a fiber cement board and batten, fiber cement fascia board, and a prefinished metal coping.</p> <p>Board and batten siding will be used within the recessed areas of the façade, and on the north elevation. While the Commission has not typically supported the use of board and batten siding, painted a dark color, it could be visually recessed against the lighter colored, more traditional materials being used. If the Commission doesn't support board and batten siding in this location, then a hardi panel could also be appropriate.</p> <p><u>The first story brick terminates on the south elevation abruptly. Staff recommends that the transition from brick to siding be further studied on the south elevation.</u></p> <p>Exterior doors will be Fiberglass, and the exterior windows will be Anderson 100 series, which are made of a composite material consisting of reclaimed wood and PVC polymer fibers.</p> |
| <p>Mechanical Equipment, pg. 68</p> | <p><i>The visual impact of new mechanical equipment should be minimized to protect the historic character of the district.</i></p> | <p><u>Staff recommends that the location of all exterior mechanical equipment be shown on a site plan for final review, and that it be adequately screened from the public right-of-way</u></p> |
| <p>Site Improvements, Sidewalks & Curbs, pg. 76</p> | <p>7. <i>Sidewalks and curbs should be built of common building materials found throughout the District. Generally, simple paving designs are more compatible with</i></p> | <p>There is a steep grade between the public sidewalk and the face of the building. <u>Staff recommends that if a new retaining wall is needed across the front yard, specifications be submitted with the final review. Any new retaining wall should be</u></p> |

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| | <i>the diverse building styles and better unify the various elements found on streets</i> | <u>constructed of materials common in the district such as brick, concrete, or parged block.</u> |
| Site Improvements, Parking Lots, pg. 77 | <i>1. Parking lots should be broken up as much as possible with interior landscaped islands and should be well screened from the public right-of-way and adjacent properties.</i> | There are a few parking spots proposed at the rear of the building. <u>Staff recommends that the parking area behind the building be adequately screened from the public right way; means of screening submitted with the final review.</u> |

Figures



Figure 1. View from rear



Figure 2. View of rear from O and Carrington St.



Figure 3. View from Mosby Street



Figure 4. 805-807 Mosby Street



Figure 5. 809 Mosby Street

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