



Commission of Architectural Review

8. COA-167745-2025	Conceptual Review	Meeting Date: 6/24/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Christopher Raynore	
Project Description	Construct a two-story single-family residence on a vacant lot	
Project Location		
Address: 520 Brook Road		
Historic District: Jackson Ward		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes new construction of a small, two-story single-family residence with basement and rooftop terrace at 520 Brook Road, located within the Jackson Ward Old and Historic District. The lot is triangular and limited in buildable area.</p> <p>The proposed infill building uses cementitious siding, vertically aligned windows, and a simple form with a modern interpretation.</p> <p>The project will require a Special Use Permit.</p>		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
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 application proposes an infill design that is appropriate for the highly constrained site parameters, and recommends the following modifications and clarifications to better align with the character of the Historic District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm setback dimensions and balcony encroachment through zoning and SUP review Strengthen the architectural hierarchy of the front façade by introducing a clearer base-middle-top composition Enhance the primary elevation's pedestrian orientation by introducing a defined entry sequence with a stoop, canopy, or recessed doorway Consider reconfiguring the current entrances so that the primary, more prominent door is located on the main elevation fronting Brook Road, with any utilitarian door moved to a less visible secondary location. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase transparency and improve the window-to-wall ratio on the main elevation to reflect the rhythm of adjacent residential structures, and consider relocating the internal stair to the west side to allow more openings • Confirm whether the cantilevered second-floor balcony complies with zoning and air rights, given its proximity to adjacent properties • Submit rooftop railing material and reflectivity specifications for review, and ensure any rooftop mechanical equipment is fully screened and minimally visible • Submit final color samples and material details for siding, trim, and windows for final review.
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Staff Analysis

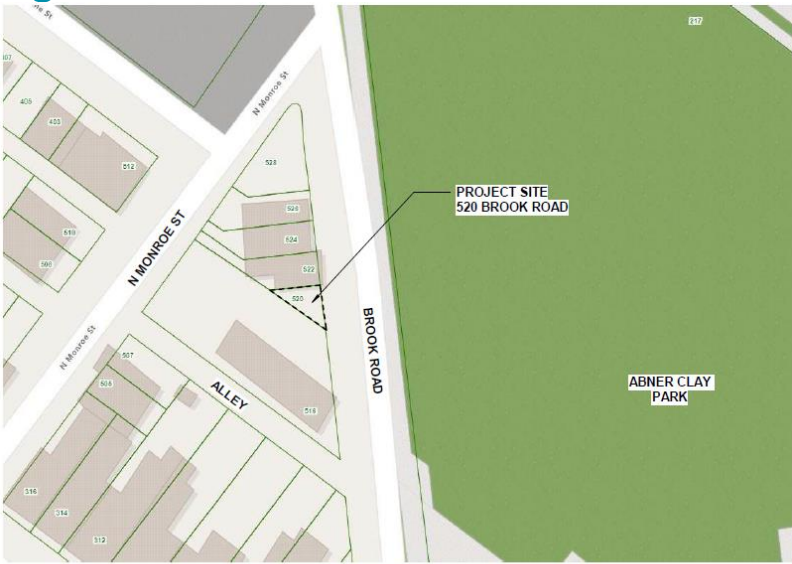
Surrounding Context		
<p>the subject property at 520 Brook Road sits mid-block between 516 and 522 Brook Road, directly across from Abner Clay Park. The block is characterized by two-story historic brick rowhouses with narrow lots and shallow setbacks. The adjacent buildings. Most surrounding buildings are two stories high, set close to the narrow sidewalk. Brick is the predominant cladding material, with traditional window openings and stoop entries. Porches are rare on this segment of the block, with primary entrances typically elevated above sidewalk level.</p>		
Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for New Construction: Siting, p. 46	<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>	<p>The proposed building maintains a similar setback to the adjacent property at 522 Brook Rd and aligns well with the general street wall. Given the atypical triangular shape of the lot, the building footprint demonstrates a sensitive approach to siting within a highly constrained context.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends confirming setback compliance through SUP/zoning review.</u></p>
Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion & Massing, page 47	<i>2. New residential construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of other residential properties in surrounding historic districts. New designs that call for wide massing should look to the project's local district for precedent.</i>	<p>The overall massing is compact and vertical in orientation, which is compatible with the neighborhood, and appropriate given the narrow lot and the scale of surrounding buildings.</p> <p>However, the primary façade lacks the definition and hierarchy seen in historic buildings, particularly a defined entry base.</p> <p>However, the primary elevation currently lacks the architectural hierarchy typically found in contributing residential buildings in the Historic District. In particular, the absence of a defined base weakens the visual organization of the façade.</p> <p><u>To strengthen the building's relationship to the streetscape, Staff recommends introducing a more prominent base-middle-top articulation on the front elevation; define entry feature more clearly with a stoop, recess, or canopy.</u></p>
Standards for New Construction: Materials & Colors, page 47	<i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i>	<p>The selected exterior materials include fiber cement siding with a shiplap profile and deep horizontal exposure. These elements are generally compatible with new construction in the district, and the proposed color palette relates well to the</p>

		<p>adjacent blue-painted brick building at 522 Brook Road and the black-trim details of 516 Brook Road.</p> <p>However, the proposed main entry features a full-height glass door with no projection or recess, which diminishes pedestrian engagement. The absence of human-scale design elements or entry differentiation is inconsistent with the pedestrian-focused orientation typical of Jackson Ward. <u>Staff recommends that the entry be enhanced through the introduction of architectural detailing that would create a clearer transition between public and private space.</u></p>
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>In historic residential architecture, it is common to find two distinct types of entrances: a prominent, formal entry elevated from the street with a stoop, portico, or canopy that signals the main living entrance to the public realm, and a more utilitarian side or rear entrance serving secondary functions (like access to kitchens or basements). These differentiated entry types reinforce the hierarchy and pedestrian orientation of the façade. In this proposal, this pattern appears to be reversed: the primary street-facing entrance is a utilitarian door flush at grade without articulation, while the actual main living entrance is tucked away in an alley behind a gate.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends reversing this functional hierarchy, by positioning the main entrance on the primary façade with a defined stoop or entry feature that engages the street, and relocating the secondary door to a less prominent side or rear location.</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>The proposed main entry features a full-height glass door with no projection or recess, which diminishes pedestrian engagement. The absence of human-scale design elements or entry differentiation is inconsistent with the distinguishable human scale elements typical of Jackson Ward. The building lacks an architectural feature signaling its main entry.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the entry be enhanced through the introduction of architectural detailing that would create a clearer transition between public and private space, and further defines that threshold.</u></p>
		<p>On the north elevation, a small second-floor balcony is proposed. However, it appears to be cantilevered close to the neighboring property line, and may encroach upon adjacent airspace and raise concerns about privacy and visual impact.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends confirming with zoning whether the cantilevered balcony is permissible.</u></p>
Standards For New Construction, p.47	<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 railings are required for seating areas or for safe</i>	<p>The proposed glass railing at the rooftop level introduces a distinctly contemporary element that is differentiated from historic architectural features.</p> <p>The glass transparency can help minimize the visual impact created by the height of the building and a bulky parapet. <u>Staff recommends submitting final material reflectivity and profile, to reduce visual disruption within the historic streetscape and the park.</u></p>

	<i>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>	<u>Additionally, Staff recommends that any rooftop mechanical units be fully screened from view using low-profile enclosures or setbacks, and that additional documentation be provided illustrating the visibility of any rooftop mechanical elements.</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>The proposed window proportions maintain a 1:2 height-to-width ratio, and are generally appropriate. The casement operation is compatible with a contemporary design approach.</p> <p>However, the overall fenestration pattern and the window-to-wall ratio on the main elevation do not align with residential precedents in the district. For example, the adjacent property at 516 Brook Road has approximately 30% fenestration and 70% solid wall, whereas the proposed design at 520 Brook Road appears to feature only about 15% fenestration ratio resulting in a relatively blank façade. This imbalance is likely a result of the staircase being placed along the main elevation, limiting opportunities for window openings. Additionally, the building does not read as oriented towards Brook Road and overlooking the park.</p> <p><u>To better reflect the rhythm and transparency of historic residential buildings in the district, staff recommends exploring options such as increasing transparency on the front elevation, potentially through the addition of more windows or a small projecting balcony or relocating the internal stair to the narrower western side of the lot (contingent on increased lot coverage allowed through the Special Use Permit).</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



4 VICINITY MAP

Figure 1

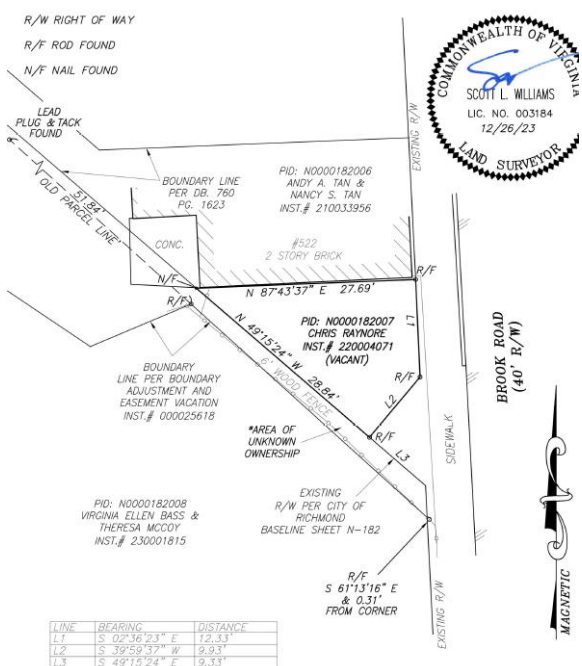


Figure 2

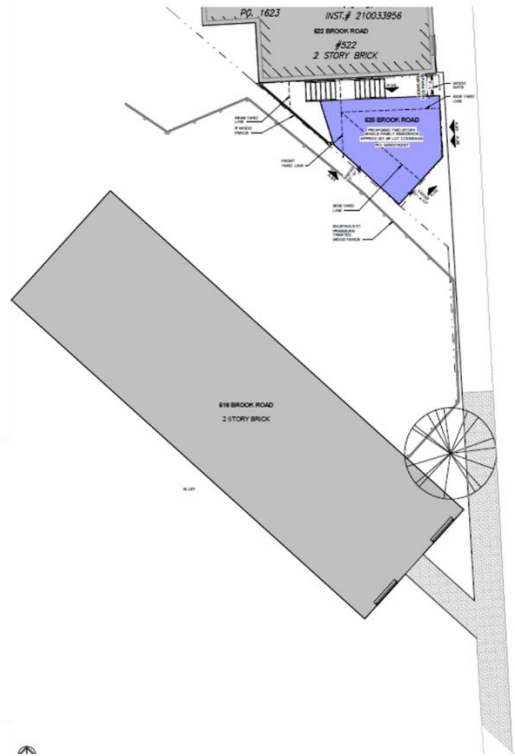


Figure 3

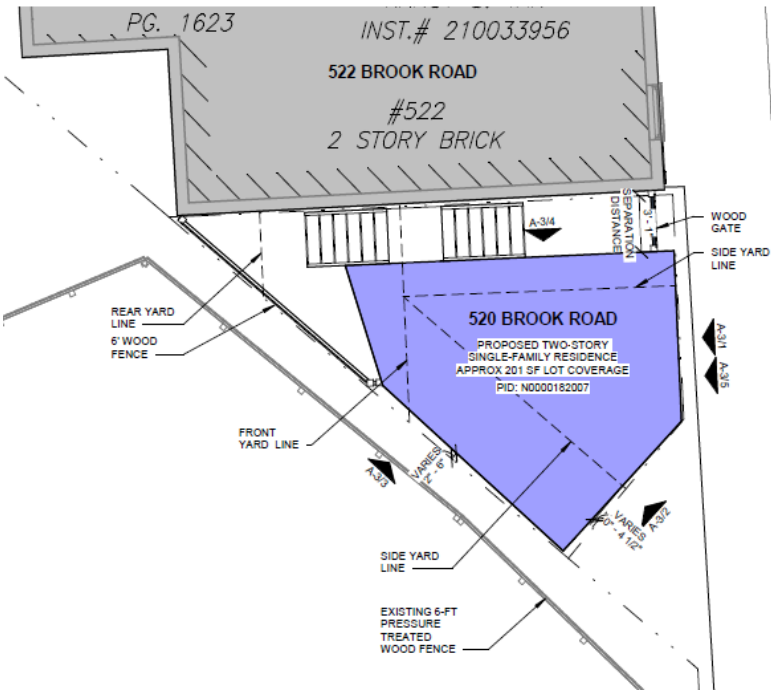


Figure 4



516 BROOK ROAD — 516 BROOK ROAD - FRONT FACADE
AT ANGLE SIMILAR TO PROPOSED
SOUTHEAST FACADE OF 520 BROOK

Figure 5



520 BROOK ROAD LOT — 522 BROOK ROAD - FRONT
FACADE AT PROPERTY LINE
PROPOSED DWELLING
AT THIS LOT

Figure 6



520 BROOK ROAD LOT — PROPOSED DWELLING
AT THIS LOT

Figure 7



522 BROOK ROAD

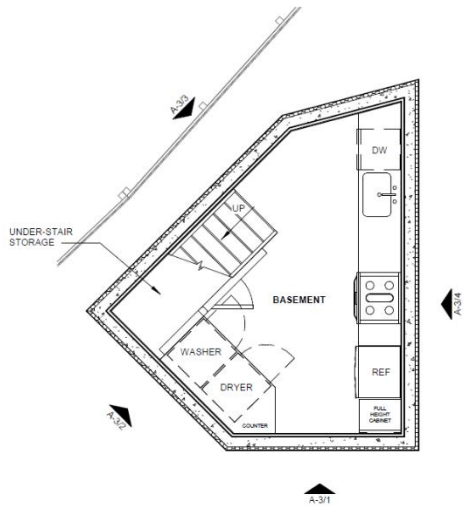
Figure 8



Figure 9

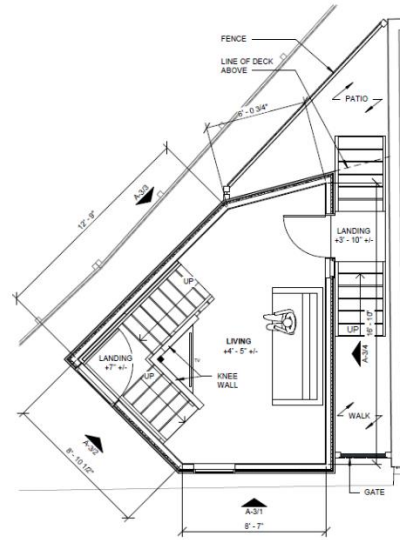


Staff Report City of Richmond, Virginia



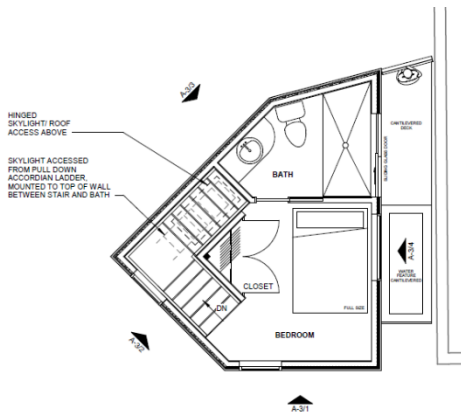
1 BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN
1/4" = 1'-0"

Figure 10



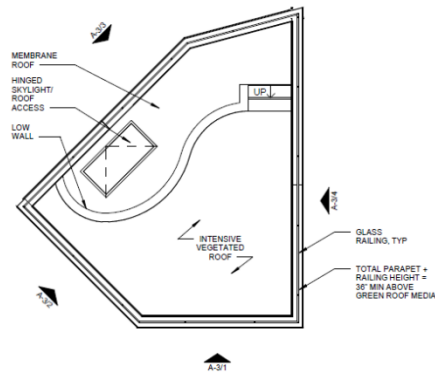
2 FIRST FLOOR PLAN
1/4" = 1'-0"

Figure 11



3 SECOND FLOOR PLAN
1/4" = 1'-0"

Figure 12



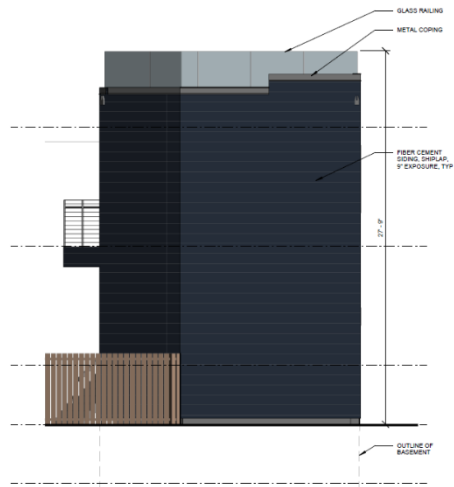
4 ROOF PLAN
1/4" = 1'-0"

Figure 13



2 SOUTHEAST ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"

Figure 14



3 SOUTHWEST ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"

Figure 15



4 NORTH ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"

Figure 16



1 PERSPECTIVE FROM BROOK ROAD LOOKING WEST

Figure 17



Figure 18