



**Staff Report**  
**City of Richmond, Virginia**

RICHMOND PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

**PDR**

## Commission of Architectural Review

4.COA-160010-2025	Final Review	Meeting Date: 1/28/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Will Gillette, Baker Development Resources	
Project Description	Construct a new three-story dwelling.	
Project Location	<p>Address 2201 Venable Street</p> <p>Historic District: Union Hill</p>	
The applicant proposes to construct a detached dwelling on the corner of Venable and North 22nd streets.		
The dwelling will be three stories in height. There will be a multi-story covered porch on the corner.		
The dwelling will be clad with lap siding and have vertically aligned windows and doors. There will be a decorative cornice and brackets at the roof line.		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, <a href="mailto:alex.dandridge@rva.gov">alex.dandridge@rva.gov</a> , (804) 646-6569	
Previous Reviews	<p>The Commission reviewed and deferred this application at the November 2024 meeting. The Commission deferred that application as there were still concerns with the overall design of the building. There was a consensus that the building either needed to read as residential or commercial but was somewhere in between. The Commission thought there were a few design solutions that could help ground the building on the corner, but the porch included in the design needed to have a depth closer to historic porches of six feet and have more of a presence. Cladding the building in brick was discussed as well as setback. Overall, the main points raised by the Commission were 1) creating a usable porch depth that better reflects the dimensions of historic porches in the district, 2) the setback, 3) using architectural elements that address/wrap the corner with a greater presence, 4) materiality, and 5) if built to the lot line, a more substantial building be designed. These elements were all ways that the building design could be revised, but it was stated by the Commission that all these suggestions may not need to be implemented to create an appropriate design.</p> <p>The Commission reviewed this application at the September 2024 meeting. The Commission deferred the application to allow the applicant additional time to revise the design to better reflect the massing and characteristics of other corner buildings within the district.</p>	

	<p>The Commission conceptually reviewed this application at the July 2024 meeting. Commissioners noted that the new construction's height was taller than most historic residential development; but could be acceptable with a "tweaked design" and because it is a corner property. Discussion around the overall design of the building included pushing the design farther to be more eclectic and to be more reflective of a corner commercial storefront at the ground floor, as that was the form the building was taking despite being residential. Brick was mentioned as being a more compatible material for a three-story corner building. The front balcony was discussed as being an element not common in the district.</p>
Conditions for Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The porches have a depth of at least six feet, and that depth be labeled on the plans prior to applying for a building permit. Any changes in design to accommodate the six-foot depth must be submitted to staff for Chair and Vice Chair approval.</li> <li>• The underside of the second story porch have a finished appearance such as a breadboard ceiling or other covering.</li> <li>• The decking boards be installed perpendicular to the face of the building.</li> <li>• Downspouts be round.</li> <li>• Gutter and downspout specifications be submitted for administrative review and approval.</li> <li>• Details on any proposed fencing be submitted for Administrative Review</li> </ul>

## Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards For New Construction, page 46	<p><i>All new residential and commercial construction, whether in the form of additions or entire buildings should be compatible with the historic features that characterize the setting and context. To protect the context of the surrounding historic district, new construction should reference the materials, features, size, scale, proportions, and massing of the existing historic buildings in its setting.</i></p>	<p>The new construction will be located on the southwest corner of a largely intact block primarily composed of two-story, Italianate, and Victorian-influenced, detached frame dwellings. The two-story, frame dwelling immediately to the east, and a single, two-story, brick dwelling near the eastern end of the block are set over English basements close to the sidewalk. The small front yards are enclosed by fences. The houses all have full façade front porches except for a pair of attached earlier Greek Revival dwellings on the eastern corner that have porticos at the entrances. The block directly north across Venable Street, while not as intact, is composed of pairs of brick and frame, two-story Victorian-inspired dwellings with full façade porches.</p> <p>The new construction will be three stories in height and set close to the sidewalk. The previous design features a recessed, two-story, three-sided bay, that addressed the corner, with a roof top terrace. The Commissioned found that this element was not compatible with other historic building features that characterize the district.</p> <p>The applicant has revised the plans, removing the chamfered corner. The design now includes a multi-story corner porch. This porch is a feature that is seen on other buildings within the city's Old and Historic Districts.</p> <p>The dwelling will be frame, with ranked windows and a decorative cornice - features that reference the neighboring buildings.</p>

		<p>During the last review, the Commission found that the building was taking on a more commercial form, but not including the ground-floor transparency that a traditional mixed-use building would typically have.</p> <p>The applicant has revised the plans to eliminate the faux, paneled storefront feature, and now includes porches that address the sidewalk and the corner of Venable and North 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. Staff supports this alteration.</p>
<p>Standards For New Construction: Siting, page 46</p>	<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.</i></p>	<p>The site plan provided indicates that there will be a 10" front yard setback from the property line. The application also refers to the prior development pattern for the property which was a brick commercial building set close to the street with a transparent storefront wrapping the corner. Corner brick commercial buildings in Union Hill do sit closer to the property lines and proud of their residential neighbors. They also feature large transparent sections at the corner.</p> <p>The applicant has not revised the setback of the building, which sits proud of its immediate neighbor to the east. This is in-keeping with the historic development of the site; however, not as typical, given the building is not a commercial mixed-use building.</p>
<p>Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46</p>	<p><i>1. New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections, and roof shapes that lend identity to a building.</i></p>	<p>Massing: The massing of the proposed new dwelling is taller than what is seen on the subject block. The recessed, two-story, three-sided bay on the corner with a roof top terrace is a form not found in the district.</p> <p>Symmetry: The new construction is generally symmetrical. The applicant has removed the roof terrace from the design.</p> <p>Proportions: The proposed dwelling is taller than existing historic residential buildings on this subject block in Union Hill.</p> <p>Roof shapes: The roof shape of the proposed new construction is in-keeping with roof shapes and forms found in the Union Hill City Old and Historic District.</p>

<p>Standards For New Construction: Form, page 46</p>	<p><i>2. New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic, residential construction in the district.</i></p>	<p>Common human scale features in the Union Hill City Old and Historic District include front porches and low front yard picket fences or transparent storefronts. The applicant has revised the plans to include a side porch. The porch will feature a flat roof on the second story and will be supported by turned posts and have Richmond Rial. The depth of the porch was not provided in the application.</p> <p>To be in-keeping with the typical depth of historic porches found in the district, <u>Staff recommends that the porches have a depth of at least six feet, and that depth be labeled on the plans prior to applying for a building permit. Any changes in design to accommodate the six-foot depth must be submitted to staff for Chair and Vice Chair approval.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the underside of the second story porch have a finished appearance such as a breadboard ceiling or other covering.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the decking boards be installed perpendicular to the face of the building.</u></p>
<p>Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion &amp; Massing, page 47</p>	<p><i>1. New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.</i></p> <p><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. For example, full-block-long row house compositions are rare in Richmond. New residential buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face 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 of the historic dwellings in this block of Venable Street, on both the north and south sides, are two stories in height except for two-dwellings that are set on English basements. Staff recommends that the applicant reduce the height of the dwelling by one story to better reference the typical height of residential buildings on the subject block.</p> <p>The historic dwellings on the block are three-bays wide with ranked windows on the façade. There is a notable absence of projecting bays in this area. The proposed recessed, two-story, three-sided bay on the corner with a roof top terrace is a form not found in the district. Staff recommends that the two-story, three-sided bay on the corner be eliminated, and a compatible, transparent porch element be introduced.</p> <p>During the last review, the Commission emphasized the importance of including a dimensioned context drawing.</p>

<p>Standards for New Construction: Materials &amp; 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 building will be clad in horizontal siding, which generally resembles other types of horizontal siding found within the district.</p> <p>The foundations will be parged and painted, trim and soffits will be composite, exterior doors will be wooden, windows will be aluminum clad wood, front rails will be Richmond Rail, and the rear landing and steps will be treated wood.</p> <p>Windows will have a two-over-two pane configuration with simulated divided lights. Staff recommends that final window specifications be submitted for administrative review and approval.</p> <p>Gutter and downspout information was not provided in the application. <u>Staff recommends that the downspouts be round.</u> <u>Staff recommends that gutter and downspout specifications be submitted for administrative review and approval.</u></p>
<p>Standards For New Construction: Doors and Windows, page 56</p>	<p><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>	<p>The dwellings will have single, ranked windows in a three-bay arrangement on the façade. Staff finds that the fenestration pattern is generally in keeping with the pattern found in the district.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that final window and door specifications be submitted for administrative review and approval.</u></p>
<p>Standards for New Construction, Residential, Fences &amp; Walls, pg. 51</p>	<p><i>2. Fence, wall, or gate materials should relate to building materials commonly found in the neighborhood.</i></p>	<p>The context elevation provided appears to indicate that a board fence will be installed along 22<sup>nd</sup> Street between the new dwelling on Venable Street and the proposed new dwellings at 817 N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. <u>Staff recommends that details on any proposed fencing be submitted for Administrative Review.</u></p> <p>The proposed fencing will screen the trash receptacles.</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. 2201 Venable Street, ca. 1880s commercial building demolished in 1977. The infill along 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to the factory building is visible.

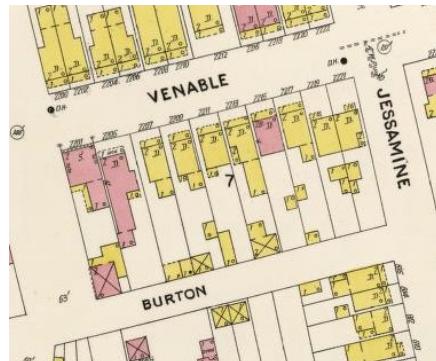


Figure 2. 1905 Sanborn Map

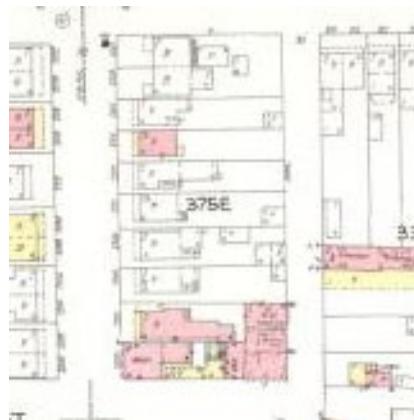


Figure 3. 1952 Sanborn Map



Figure 4. Northeast corner of N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Cedar Street.



Figure 5. Southeast corner of Venable Street and N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street.



Figure 6. Southeast corner of Venable Street and N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street.