

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
December 13, 2016 Meeting**

9. **CAR No. 16-114** (M. Jareau)

**2411 M Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

**Construct a new 3-story, mixed use
building with an enclosed rooftop
amenity room and terraces**

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The application to construct a three-story, mixed use building with an enclosed rooftop amenity room and terraces on a vacant lot in the Union Hill Old and Historic District was reviewed conceptually at the May 24, 2016 meeting. At the May meeting, the Commission approved the demolition of the structure at 2416 Jefferson Avenue; and this lot is included in the subject proposal. During the conceptual review, the Commission was generally favorable in its comments but requested additional details for final review of the project. The Commission discussed whether the proposed balconies should project or be recessed as the design proposed a mix of both, and the majority of the Commissioners supported the use of projecting balconies to break up the massing of the structure. The applicant returned to the Commission on July 26, 2016 for final review of the proposed project. At this meeting several members of the surrounding community expressed concerns with the scale of the structure, the lack of green space, and the design of the storefronts. The Commission deferred the application to allow the applicant an opportunity to address the Commission's concerns. Though the majority of the Commissioners were still comfortable with the scale and massing of the project, some of the Commissioners expressed concerns that the project was too massive and suggested breaking up the façade by a change in materials or color. The Commissioners shared the following additional concerns:

- The need for more vegetation as a part of the project
- Doors should be incorporated into the storefronts
- Consideration of an alternate color for the third story as the stark white calls attention to that level
- The visibility of the mechanical equipment.

The following modifications have been made to the project since the project's July review:

- The railing for the rooftop assembly area has been moved closer to the North 24th Street frontage. Additionally, the renderings show planter boxes on the roof.
- Doors and planter boxes have been added to the storefronts.

- The proposed brick color for the stairwell on the Jefferson Avenue elevation is darker than the brick that clads the remainder of the project.
- Immediately to the east of the stairwell on the Jefferson Avenue elevation, the cladding on the 1st and 2nd stories have been changed from brick to Artic White hardipanel, the balconies have been elongated, and a metal awning has been added over the 1st floor.
- A metal awning has been added to the 1st floor corner entry at Jefferson Avenue and M Street.
- The sidewalk has been improved to include vegetation, trees, and benches.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. Commission staff reviewed the project 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* and the resulting comments follow.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The proposed infill project appears generally to be in keeping with the Standards for New Construction outlined in the *Guidelines* as the project is largely compatible with the historic features that characterizes its setting and context. The setting and context is a mixture of one, two and 2 ½ story residential and commercial buildings. The building massing and size is significantly larger than the adjacent historic buildings but the design minimizes the impact by creating a transparent, human scale first story, stepping back the third story and roof top amenity, and using an alternative material on the third story to reduce the impact of the height. Staff recommends the color of the 3rd floor be changed to a color to be administratively approved by staff such as grey or tan as the proposed stark white calls attention to the upper story which is not the intent of recessing this level. The use of pilasters to organize and separate the bays also reduces the scale of the building. The use of brick for the lower two stories is compatible with the brick commercial buildings in vicinity. The simplification of the design and the lack of ornamentation compliments the nearby commercial buildings and does not conflict with the adjacent residential buildings.

The changes in design from the July review to this final review aid in creating a pedestrian friendly structure. This improved human scale is created by the introduction of storefront doors and awnings which call attention to the entrances. The applicant has responded to the concerns of Commissioners in regard to breaking up the massing by altering the building materials for portions of the Jefferson Avenue façade. Staff recommends the rooftop railing be returned to its previous location, 20 feet from the N. 24th Street elevation, to limit the impact of this element on the surrounding residential area. The applicant has responded to the Commission’s concerns regarding additional vegetation by adding planter boxes to the storefronts and rooftop and improving the sidewalks with trees and vegetation.

Staff recommends the approval be additionally conditioned on the following:

- Windows should be true or simulated divided light. Also, the proposed windows should be 2/2 windows as indicated on page 10 of the submittal not the 1/1 windows indicated on pages 7-9.
- Cementitious siding should be smooth and un-beaded.
- If the mechanical equipment screening is to be visible from the public right of way, details of the screening should be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.
- Brick colors are to be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.

It is the assessment of staff that with the acceptance of the stated conditions the application 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.