

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
September 27, 2016 Meeting**

10. CAR No. 16-135 (J. Bolton)

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

Project Description: **Construct two new multifamily structures and rehabilitate an existing structure to include new windows.**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval of the rehabilitation of an existing structure to accommodate multifamily units and the construction of two multifamily structures on adjacent 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 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.

The proposed rehabilitation is of a three-story, brick Colonial Revival structure which was constructed in 1923 as a Baptist community center. The applicant proposes to convert the structure into 12 residential units. To facilitate this adaptive reuse, the applicant is proposing to install new windows in the existing window openings to match the historic windows, repair elements including the masonry with in-kind material, and paint the trim.

The remainder of the lot to the west of the existing structure is vacant from Venable Street to Carrington Street. The applicant is proposing to construct a three-story, 36 unit building which will face Jessamine Street with an additional 4th story roof top element on the Carrington Street elevation. The proposed structure will extend from Carrington Street to approximately 60 feet from Venable Street. The proposed Jessamine Street façade is organized in 19-bays, broken-up by changes in materials from dark gray bricks to gray and blue and light blue Hardipanel, and recessed elements. The applicant is proposing to construct a surface parking lot immediately to the east of the proposed structure.

Adjacent to the existing structure to the east, there are three vacant lots, fronting on Venable Street. The applicant proposes to develop these lots with a three story building with community space on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors. The upper floors are proposed to be clad primarily in a gray brick

with portions of recessed Hardipanel. The front façade ground floor will primarily be composed of commercial storefront.

This proposal was conceptually reviewed by the Commission at the June 28, 2016 meeting. The Commission generally agreed with staffs concerns regarding the incompatible details of the proposed project such as the stairs, circular windows, bay configuration, and how the project addresses Carrington Street. The Commission additionally expressed concerns that the overall scale of the buildings.

The plans have been altered since conceptual review by the following:

- On the Jessamine Street Building:
 - The diagonal stairs, circular windows, and small balconies have been removed.
 - The Jessamine Street elevation has consistently been organized into blocks made up of three sections with the center section inset. The fenestration pattern has been modified in this application.
 - On the Carrington elevation, additional windows have been added in a previously blank bay.
 - On the ground floor units, the solid wall to the porches has been replaced with glass or a horizontal railing.
 - A cornice detail and a belt course have been added.
 - The porch railings alternate between horizontal metal railings and glass railings.
- On the Venable Street Building
 - The windows align vertically.
 - The storefront has been reconfigured.
 - A cornice with a parapet wall above has been added.
 - The façade is staggered with the unit containing the two western bays set back from the other unit.
- A small brick structure with a metal garage door to accommodate the dumpsters has been added along Carrington Street
- A contextual elevation and material details have been provided.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the design. Commission staff reviewed the alterations to the Citadel of Hope building through the lens of the “Standards for Rehabilitation: Commercial” on pages 54 of the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*. The Guidelines for Rehabilitation note that original features should be maintained and when replacing elements, the replacement should match the original in materials and design. Staff finds the proposed rehabilitation conforms to these guidelines as the proposed metal clad, simulated divided lite, replacement windows will match the historic windows in appearance. Staff recommends approval of this portion of the work.

Commission staff reviewed the two 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 utilizing the checklist below.

S=satisfies

D=does not satisfy

NA=not applicable

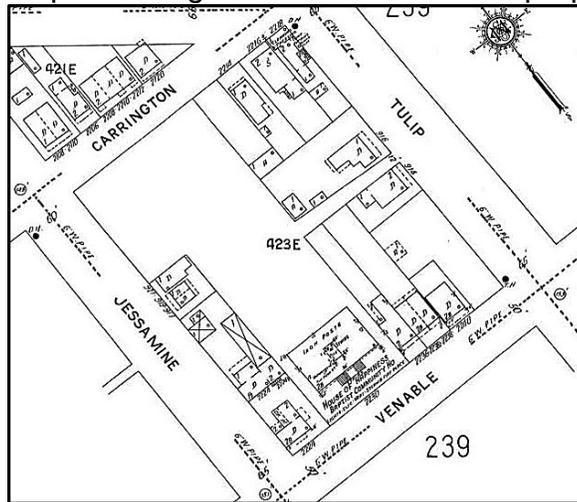
S D NA

New infill construction should respect the prevailing front and side yard setback patterns in the surrounding district

The structures respect the prevailing setbacks in the surrounding district.

Where the adjoining buildings have different setbacks, the setback for the new building should be based on the historical pattern for the block

Per the 1924 Sanborn map, the structures that addressed Jessamine were minimally setback from the street which is consistent with the proposed setback. The Sanborn map also indicates that the structure to the east of the Citadel of Hope building sat proud of the Citadel of Hope building which is similar to the proposed setback.



Sanborn Map 1924

New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site

Both structures address the most prominent streets. Additionally, the applicant has altered the plans to include more glazing on the Carrington Street elevation to better address that street though staff still has concerns that the project at the pedestrian level does not adequately address Carrington.

Parking within the building is strongly encouraged with vehicle entry doors located on non-primary elevations

The proposed parking will be accommodated through a surface parking lot which is accessible on Carrington Street.

- New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the district. Form refers to the combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building.**

The proposed large scale apartment complex is not a residential building form typically found in the Union Hill neighborhood. Though large institutional buildings and converted factory buildings are found within the district, the typical residential development pattern found in the district consists of approximately 20 feet wide, 3 bay structures that are 2 to 2 ½ stories in height. Though dimensions have not been provided, the proposed three part units appear to be approximately 40 feet in width which is double the scale of residential buildings found in the district, and the fenestration pattern does not reflect the 3-bay (3 window) ranked organization that lends a consistent scale to buildings in the district. Staff recommends the three bay units be reduced in width to break up the massing of the elevations in a manner compatible with the residential character of the Union Hill neighborhood.

- New construction should incorporate human-scale elements at the pedestrian level. Street level elevations should not have expanses of blank walls**

The applicant incorporates human scale elements including porches, storefronts, direct entrances to units, cornices, and a belt course. Staff recommends the belt course be lowered to a traditional placement at the floor line.

- New storefronts should be compatible with historic storefronts within the district. Storefronts are traditionally defined by simple piers, large storefront windows, a cornice, a signboard and/or attached signage and awnings**

In the Union Hill neighborhood, commercial uses are primarily located on corners with corner entrances and storefront which wrap the corner. Applicant proposes to locate a commercial storefront mid-block on a residential portion of Venable Street which is not consistent with the pattern of development for the neighborhood. Though the design of the storefront is consistent with traditional storefront design, staff encourages the applicant to consider a design which would address the residential character of Venable Street.

- New construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings**

The applicant has provided a contextual elevation which was not reviewed during the conceptual review. Though the structures are lower than the Citadel of Hope building, the structures are considerably taller than historic structures on the surrounding streets. This height discrepancy is further exaggerated as the subject parcels are at a higher elevation than the surrounding streets. The typical height of the residential buildings in the neighborhood is 2 to 2 ½ stories though there are institutional building that are taller. Staff finds the 3 to 4 story buildings' height to not be in keeping with the surrounding residential buildings and recommends the applicant consider stepping back the third stories to minimize the building height.

- New construction should respect the typical width, organization of bays, vertical alignment and symmetry of surrounding buildings. For larger buildings, bays should be employed as an organizational device but the building should read as a single piece of architecture**

The project does respect the vertical alignment and the symmetry of the surrounding buildings. The width of the proposed project does not respect the typical width of the surrounding buildings. The applicant has employed bays in groups of three as an organizational device. Staff has concerns as these units of three are considerably wider than the typical residential structure found in the district. Additionally, the Venable Street elevation building employees groups of two bays as an organizational device which is not typically in the district.

- The size, proportion, and spacing patterns of doors and window openings should be compatible with patterns established in the district.**

The proposed groupings of three windows is not a pattern found in the district.

- Porch and cornice heights should be compatible with adjacent buildings**

The first floor porches are at a height consistent with that of the porches on the residential buildings in the surrounding streets. The proposed cornice heights relate to the cornice of the Citadel of Hope building.

- Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district. Vinyl, asphalt, and aluminum siding are not permitted.**

The proposed construction utilizes brick, fiber cement siding, aluminum storefront glazing, and metal and glass guardrails. The proposed use of brick is consistent with the district as it is a prevalent building material in the district including the structures on Venable Street which include varying colors of brick and multiple structures with painted brick. The proposed dark brick is not consistent with the brick found in the neighborhood, but the color reinforces the contemporary design of the building. The proposed Hardipanel helps to break up the massing of the predominantly brick structure though staff has concerns that the proposed blue color is not a color historically found on the body of structures in the district.

Staff recommends partial approval of this project. Staff recommends approval of the rehabilitation of the Citadel of Hope building and does not recommend approval of the two new buildings. Staff recommends the Commission defer the application to allow the applicant the opportunity to address staff concerns regarding the height and massing of the new buildings. Staff has concerns regarding the compatibility of the project's proposed height which is considerable taller than the surrounding residential neighborhood. The width and massing, especially of the

Jessamine building, is considerably larger than the majority of the buildings found in the district and the three part organization is largely out of scale with the width of three bay dwellings in the area. Staff recommends the applicant consider ways to minimize the height of the structure and organize the elevations to be more compatible with the residential development of the neighborhood.

It is the assessment of staff that application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 30.930.7(b) of the City Code and not 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; and therefore staff recommends the Commission approve the rehabilitation of the Citadel of Hope and defer the requests for approval of the construction the two new buildings to allow the applicant to provide more information about how they will address the above mentioned concerns