



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

COA-091741-2021	Final Review	Meeting Date: 6/22/2021
Applicant/Petitioner	Evolve Development, Inc.	
Project Description	New construction of 9 single-family attached and detached dwellings.	
Project Location		
Address: 2516 E. Leigh St.		
Historic District: Church Hill North		
High-Level Details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant proposes new construction of nine single-family attached and detached dwellings on a vacant portion of the Bowler School parcel. Seven of the units will face M Street, the other two will face N. 26th Street. The proposed buildings are a mix of configurations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two stories above a crawl space with an attic level (618 & 620 N. 26th Street) Three stories above a full English basement (2501, 2507, 2509 M Street) Three stories with a full English basement with a mansard roof with a single, central dormer (2503, 2505, 2511, 2513 M Street) The applicant proposes a mix of brick and lap siding, one-over-one double-hung windows, and standing seam metal for the mansard roofs and membrane for the porch roofs. 		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Rich Saunders, Richard.saunders@richmondgov.com	
Previous Reviews	<p>The Commission previously conceptually reviewed this application at the April 27, 2021 meeting. The Commission deferred a final review application at the May 26, 2021 meeting in order to allow the applicant to incorporate comments from the conceptual review. During the conceptual review, in terms of the proposed siting, the Commission suggested that greater separation between the historic school building and the proposed buildings be provided and referenced a recently approved similar project as an example. The applicant has revised the plan to provide 13' 8.5" from the building closest to the historic school building and the proposed property</p>	

	<p>line between that property and the property with the historic school building. In terms of the overall design, form, and massing the Commission recommended joining the two dormers, consideration of front porches, and a design element that turns the corner such as a brick course. A single dormer is now provided on the M Street-facing elevations of 618 and 620 N 26th Street and elevated front porches are provided for all dwellings. The Commission also discussed the windows and shutters and suggested that the windows on the lower level should be taller than the ones on the upper level, and that in general the proportions should be addressed for consistency. The color of the brick was also discussed. The lower level windows have been lengthened and the shutters have been removed.</p> <p>The Commission also addressed the issue of the green space currently on the lot, and whether this was historically open space for the school. The Commission expressed concern about that open space adjacent to the school, stated that it appears to have been there for about 100 years, possibly used as a playground, and discussed whether the Commission should preserve it.</p> <p>Finally, the Commission discussed with the applicant the need for a special use permit. The applicant responded that the permit was necessary to address reconfiguring the lot, which will change the by-right use of the number of units in the former school building, and that the applicants wanted one extra unit for lower-income residents, which also requires a special use permit.</p> <p>During the May 26, 2021 meeting, prior to voting to defer, the Commission expressed continued concern over the loss of green space that has been available to the community.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>In response to Commission feedback the applicant has: relocated the 620 M Street unit, shifted the 618 M Street unit north to provide more separation from the school, added a horizontal element at the first-floor level, changed the porches to a one-story full-width pattern and removed the metal screening, removed the shutters and incorporated large windows on the first floor, removed the second dormers and updated the roofing materials.</p> <p>The applicant submitted a copy of a Sanborn map showing the original school and dwellings on the site. Staff notes that the school shown on this Sanborn map was demolished in order to construct the current building on the site. Staff could not confirm if the dwellings were also demolished to accommodate the new school building and playground spaces.</p>
Staff Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A complete window schedule be submitted. • The final material specifications be submitted for review & approval. • Any changes required on account of the special use permit be approved by the Chair and Vice Chair.

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Siting, pg. 46, #s2-3	<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>	<p>Currently there are no buildings facing M Street on the subject block. Staff notes the applicant proposes to set the façades back five feet on both M and North 26th Streets.</p> <p>The applicant has revised the plan to provide 13' 8.5" between 618 N 26th Street and the</p>

		proposed property line between 618 N 26 th Street and the property with the historic school building.
	<i>3. New buildings should face the most prominent street bordering the site.</i>	The proposed buildings face both M and N. 26 th Streets.
Form, pg. 46 #s1-3	<i>1. New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district.</i>	The applicant proposes three-bay, three-story buildings with one-story, full-width porches. Staff notes that there are a variety of building forms and heights in the surrounding area. The applicant proposes a variety of roof forms including mansard with dormers, shed, and front gable with side dormers. Staff finds there are a variety of roof forms in the immediately surrounding areas including stepped parapets, hipped, and shed.
	<i>2. New residential construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic residential construction in the district.</i>	The applicant proposes three-story buildings with different roof forms. Staff finds the majority of the purpose-built residential building are two stories in height with one-story porches. However, there are a number of taller buildings in the immediate area, including the former Bowler School and the funeral home.
	<i>3. New residential construction and additions should incorporate human-scale elements such as cornices, porches and front steps into their design.</i>	In response to Commission feedback, the applicant has changed the proposed porches. The applicant now proposes one-story, full-width porches. Staff finds that this is in keeping with the historic buildings found in the surrounding area.
Height, Width, Proportion, & Massing, pg. 47, #s1-3	<i>1. New residential construction should respect the typical height of surrounding residential buildings.</i>	Based on the elevation provided, it appears the buildings will be approximately 36'-6" on the corner of M Street and North 26 th Street and approximately 41 feet from grade for the end unit at 2501 M Street.
	<i>2. New residential construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of other residential properties in surrounding historic districts.</i>	The applicant proposes horizontally and vertically aligned openings in keeping with patterns found in the district. The applicant has updated the plans to include larger windows on the first story and smaller windows on the second and third story. A consistent window size has been used for the portion of the building at 620 N. 26 th Street that faces M Street, which addresses previous feedback from staff. Staff requests a <u>complete window schedule with the window sizes</u> be submitted.
	<i>3. The cornice height should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.</i>	The applicant proposes three-story buildings on M Street which will be a story taller than the neighboring building at 623 N 25 th Street, though as noted above there are a number of taller buildings in the surrounding area.

Materials and Colors, pg. 47, #s2-4	<i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i>	<p>In response to Commission feedback, the applicant has updated the roofing materials to be standing seam metal on the visible roof slopes, and lightened the color of the exterior brick veneer. Staff recommends <u>the final material specifications, including colors, be submitted for review and approval.</u></p> <p>Staff notes that in response to Commission feedback the applicant has removed the metal porch screens.</p>
New Construction, Standards for New Construction: Corner Properties – Residential, pg. 48	<p><i>1. Secondary elevations of corner properties should reference massing similar to other corner locations in the historic district.</i></p> <p><i>2. The material used in the primary elevation should be continued along the second, corner elevation.</i></p> <p><i>4. Windows and doors on the secondary, corner elevation should be organized following the principals of the primary elevation: windows should be proportioned appropriately, aligned vertically, and arranged as though designing a primary elevation.</i></p>	<p>The applicant proposes a unit facing M Street and a freestanding unit facing North 26th Street. The applicant proposes brick material and horizontally and vertically aligned windows along both elevations.</p> <p>In response to Commission feedback, the applicant has added a stringcourse at the level of a raised foundation. Staff notes the new porch roofs also add a continuous horizontal element along M Street.</p> <p>Staff notes that the buildings proposed for 2501 – 2507 M Street follow an A-B-B-A pattern while the buildings at 2509 M -620 N 26th Street follow an A-B-B-C pattern. Staff notes that the corner building faces N. 26th Street; however, staff also finds that it does not relate to the neighboring buildings that face M Street.</p>
New Construction, Doors and Windows, pg. 56, #5	<i>5. With larger buildings, applicants are encouraged to develop multiple entry points (doors), in keeping with historic precedent for the building type in question. Single entry points - such as a single garage entrance accompanied by single pedestrian entrances are not in keeping with historic precedent, which demonstrates that most large buildings had multiple pedestrian entry points.</i>	The applicant proposes detached interior garages accessed by a newly-created alley. Staff finds that the freestanding garages located off the alley replicate the historic form.
Mechanical Equipment, pg. 68	<i>The visual impact of new mechanical equipment should be minimized to protect the historic character of the district.</i>	In response to staff comments, the applicant has updated the 1 st Level Plan to show that all HVAC units will be located behind the brick wall of each unit and will be completely concealed from public view.
Shutters, pg. 70	<p><i>21. Wood shutters must be functional (mounted on hinges) and not nailed or fixed to the wall surface...</i></p> <p><i>22. Metal and vinyl shutters are not recommended, particularly for the front façades of buildings.</i></p>	The applicant has removed the shutters from the proposed plans.
Fences & Walls, pg. 51	<i>1. Fence, wall, and gate designs should reflect the scale of the historic structures they surround, as well as the character of nearby fences, walls, and gates.</i>	Brick walls are proposed between the two N 26 th Street detached houses, between the house at 618 N 26 th Street and the Bowler School property, and between the two groups on M Street. Staff finds that they are in scale

	2. Fence, wall, or gate materials should relate to building materials commonly found in the neighborhood.	with the proposed buildings, though notes that there are not many brick walls in the surrounding area.
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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

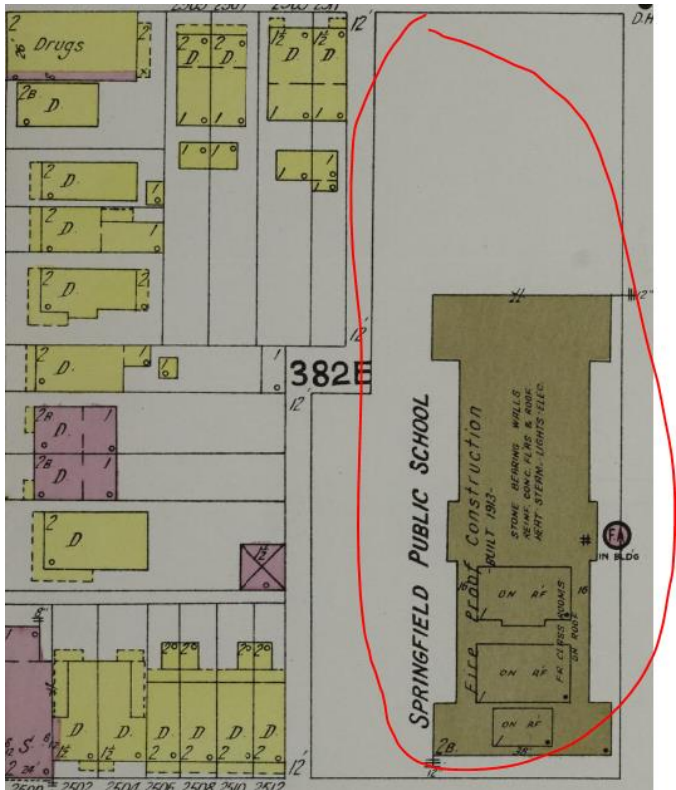


Figure 1. 1924-1925 Sanborn Map



Figure 2. Project location, view east on M Street.



Figure 3. Project location, view north from N. 26th St.



Figure 4. Former Bowler School.



Figure 5. 623 N. 25th St., building adjacent to the project site.

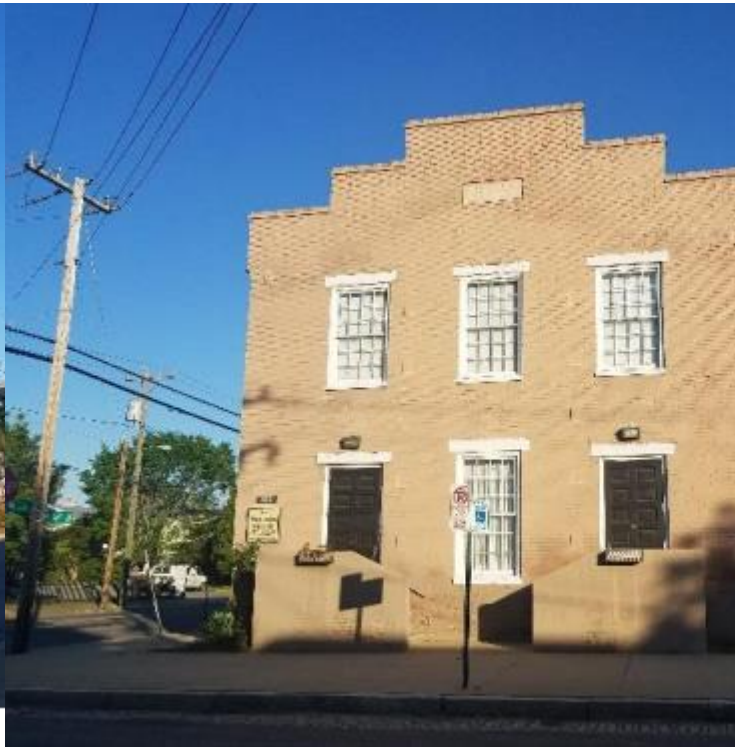


Figure 6. 700 N. 26th St., located across M. Street from project site.



Figure 7. 617-624 N. 26th St., across N. 26th St. from the project site.