

First-time developers planning ‘mini dorm’ near VUU campus

 [Mike Platania](#) August 16, 2024 1

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Ronald Semel and Claudia del Valle at the project site. (Mike Platania photo)

The sizable changes planned for Virginia Union University’s campus as part of its recently unveiled master plan have also caught the eye of a first-time development duo looking to get in on the college’s growth.

Local couple Claudia del Valle and Ronald Semel are planning to build a 20-bed “mini dorm” at 1800 Bath St. The new structure would rise on a vacant lot near the southwest corner of the VUU campus, which is in the early stages of a [\\$500 million long-term master planning](#) effort.

Del Valle and Semel’s backgrounds are in occupational therapy and architecture, respectively. Del Valle said they recently decided to get into real estate on the side and saw the VUU area as a good location.

“We started studying the master plan and they needed institutional (housing) there. Ideas came to mind and we ended up with that dorm,” del Valle said. “(VUU is) going to be revamping their campus and we’re happy to be a part of it.”

The parcel is less than a tenth of an acre and had gone on and off the market in recent months. Del Valle said they’d pursued it for a while before it eventually went up for auction.

“I’d reached out and made an offer, and the seller just would not take it. So I thought, ‘Okay that’s that, it’s not meant for us,’” del Valle said. “The next day I saw it was up for auction.”

Del Valle and Semel wound up winning the auction and closed on the land in May for \$74,000.



A conceptual drawing of the proposed building. (City documents)

They’re now seeking a special-use permit to allow for the three-story building that would also include basement units. Each unit would span a whole floor with five bedrooms.

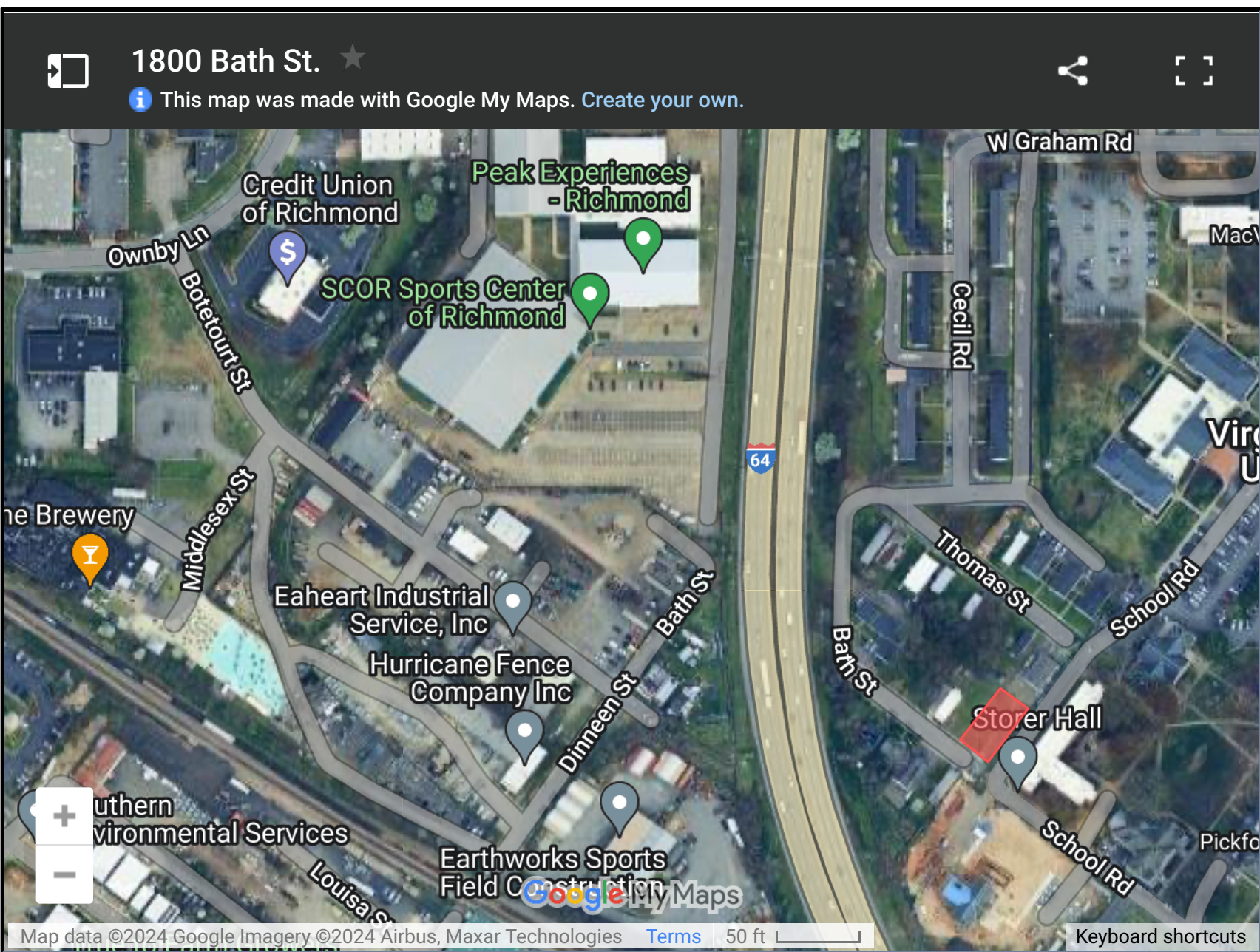
“It’ll be exclusively for students,” del Valle said. “We’ve been in communication with VUU to see how we’ll work together with the campus.”

Semel is the project architect. Del Valle said they’re hoping to be able to break ground in early 2025 and have it ready for the fall 2026 school year.

“It’s a little tight but we’re going for it,” del Valle said of the timeline.

Del Valle said they’re also pursuing other parcels in the VUU area and in Manchester.

VUU itself is planning to bring much more density to its campus. It recently announced plans to [redevelop the old Richmond Community Hospital](#) near the intersection of Brook and Overbrook roads into hundreds of apartments.



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
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