



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2025-166: To amend and reordain Ord. No. 2014-226-207, adopted Nov. 10, 2014, as previously amended by Ord. No. 2017-187, adopted Oct. 9, 2017, which authorized the special use of the property known as 707 East Main Street for the purpose of the installation of one new roof sign, to authorize residential uses, upon certain terms and conditions. (6th District)

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: August 19, 2025

PETITIONER

Jennifer D. Mullen

LOCATION

707 East Main Street

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting to amend Ord. 2017-187 authorizing the special use of the property known as 707 E. Main Street to facilitate the redevelopment of the existing office building into hotel and multi-family residential uses. The B-4 Central Business District, where the property is located, allows hotel and multi-family residential as permitted uses. The proposed redevelopment requests relief from the zoning requirement for operable windows for residential uses, as well from the restrictions regarding residential uses on the ground floor.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to authorize a mixed-use building within a B-4 Central Business District. While the use is permitted the property does not meet the current fenestration requirements within the B-4 zone which call for operable windows. This application is also proposing residential and hotel uses on the ground floor, which does not meet the zoning requirement for ground-floor commercial. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that the proposed mixed-use building is well aligned with the goals of the Downtown Mixed-Use Development Style within the Richmond 300 master plan.

Staff also finds that the mixed-use building satisfies the goals of the Downtown Core Priority Growth Node within the Richmond 300 master plan which is an area which will see "...the most significant growth in population and development over the next 20 years." The Downtown Core node is envisioned to be a "...center with significant cultural, entertainment, government, and business destinations as well as shopping, housing, and unique place-based attractions." (p. 24) The proposed application aligns with the above vision.

Staff finds that with the ordinance conditions the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of Special Use Permits, are met. Specifically, staff finds that the proposed use would not be detrimental to the general welfare of the community involved and would not create congestion in the streets in the area involved.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property is located on the southwest corner of East Main Street and South 8th Street. The property is 131 feet wide and contains 30,362 square feet.

Proposed Use of the Property

Mixed-use

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Downtown Mixed Use, which is defined as the "Central business district of the Richmond region features high-density development with office buildings, residential buildings, and a mix of complementary uses, including regional destinations in a highly walkable urban environment."

Development Style: Higher-density pedestrian- and transit-oriented development encouraged on vacant or underutilized sites. Historic buildings are adapted for new uses. Future development should be urban in form and may be of larger scale than existing context. Plazas and setbacks create an engaging street life. Many buildings are vertically mixed-use. New developments continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity.

Ground Floor: Ground floor uses engage with and enliven the street. Monolithic walls are discouraged, while windows, doors, storefronts, and other features that allow transparency and interaction between building and street are encouraged. Active commercial ground floor uses required on street-oriented commercial frontages.

Mobility: Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. Driveway entrances are required to be off alleys whenever possible; new driveways are prohibited on priority and principal street frontages. Surface parking is prohibited as a principal use. Parking requirements are substantially less in these areas than other areas of the city and are largely eliminated.

Intensity: Buildings typically a minimum height of five stories.

Primary Use: Retail/office/personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, institutional, government, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Not applicable.

Downtown Core Priority Growth Node: A Node that is encouraging for growth in residents, jobs, and commercial activity over the next 20 years. (p. 25)

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The special use permit conditions on the property would be amended to include these additional conditions:

- Residential uses shall be a permitted principal use on the ground floor. No principal use other than residential uses shall be required on the ground floor of the building along the Main Street frontage, substantially as shown on the Plans.

- Operable windows shall not be required for the Special Use.

Surrounding Area

The area is primarily commercial offices, retail shops, and institutional uses, with some multi-family residential present in the vicinity.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified the Downtown Neighborhood Association of the proposed Special Use Permit. To this date, staff has not received a letter of support or opposition for this application from the Civic Association. One email from a nearby resident was received voicing objection to authorizing non-operable windows for residential uses.

Staff Contact: David Watson, Senior Planner, Land Use Administration, 804-646-1036