



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2026-021: To authorize the special use of the property known as 4400 West Broad Street for the purpose of a multifamily dwelling, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: February 3, 2026

PETITIONER

Jennifer Mullen

LOCATION

4400 West Broad Street

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to authorize a four-story mixed-use building within a TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal zoning district. While mixed-uses buildings are permitted uses, the proposed plans do not meet the requirements for building frontage within section 30-433.15 of the Code of the City of Richmond, which requires the front façade of the building to extend across at least 80 percent of the lot frontage. The applicant is proposing a building that spans across 59 percent of the lot frontage. A Special Use Permit is therefore required to proceed with this request.

RECOMMENDATION

The proposed multifamily building is located within the Richmond 300 land use category of Corridor Mixed-Use and a street typology of "Major Mixed-Use Street". This portion of Broad Street is also currently zoned Transit-Oriented Nodal District (TOD-1), which allows for significant increases in building heights, densities, residential and commercial uses.

Staff finds that the property, and overall project, are geographically located between the City of Richmond and the County of Henrico. It is staff's understanding that the County, in May of 2025, approved a Plan of Development application that proposed no vehicular or fire access within the County portion of the property. The absence of this critical access feature has placed the City with the burden of requiring two access points in order to meet the standards of the City's Fire Department.

While the proposed limited building frontage, focus on automobile access, and parking configuration are not fully aligned with the stated objectives within City's Master Plan, the addition of a new multifamily building is an important part of the overall transformation of this portion of Broad Street. Several decades of low-density, automobile-oriented commercial development along this stretch of Broad Street have created several challenges to walkability. While not fully meeting all design goals, the proposal does provide proper building orientation, set-backs, street trees, vegetative screening of parking areas, and permeability through adequate first-floor glazing. Given the potential impact of the development, staff finds the proposed special use to be an acceptable step toward achieving the objectives for Corridor Mixed-Use and a more walkable, and active Broad Street.

In conclusion, while staff maintains that alternative site configurations are available that would satisfy lot frontage requirements without the need for a Special Use Permit, staff recognizes the fire-safety requirement for two access points to the site and acknowledges the applicant's effort to visually extend the building in order to convey the appearance of increased lot frontage. Based on these considerations, staff finds the Special Use Permit request acceptable.

Staff concludes that the proposed ordinance conditions continue to substantially satisfy the safeguards established in the City Charter concerning the granting of Special Use Permits. 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 proposed special use.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property is located in the Sauer's Gardens neighborhood, where Shenandoah Street connects with Broad Street.

Proposed Use of the Property

A four-story multifamily building with off-street parking

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Corridor Mixed-Use, which are defined as properties that are "Found along major commercial corridors and envisioned to provide for medium- to medium-high-density pedestrian- and transit-oriented development."

Development Style: The building size, density, and zoning districts for these areas may vary significantly depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement existing context. Uses may be mixed horizontally in several buildings on a block or vertically within the same building. Developments continue 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 are 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 streets. Parking areas are located within the structure and to the rear of buildings and require screening; shared parking requirements are encouraged.

Intensity: Buildings generally ranging from two to ten stories, based on street widths, and depending on the historic context and stepping down in height adjacent to residential areas. New buildings that are taller than historical buildings should step back from the build-to line after matching the height of the predominant cornice line of the block.

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

Secondary Uses: Single-family houses, institutional, and government.

Major Mixed-Use Streets:

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, through commercial and mixed-use areas
- Prioritize use and density-scaled sidewalks and crosswalks
- Require form elements, such as buildings to the street with parking in the rear, as well as building windows and entrances on the street
- Incorporate streetscape features, such as trees, benches, and trash receptacles
- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops
- Prioritize the curbside for walking, bicycling, transit, and short-term parking access and loading for local shops and restaurants

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for these properties is TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District. The following zoning regulations are not being met by the proposal, warranting special use permit approval.

Sec. 30-457.11(3) – Orientation to street, exterior entrances, and façades.

Building façades along street oriented commercial or principal frontages, other than buildings that exclusively contain one or more uses listed in section 30-457.2(18.1), (24), (28), (29.1), (30) or (31), shall have the front façade of the building extend across at least 80 percent of the lot frontage.

The front façade of the building in this request extends across 59% of the property.

If approved, additional conditions will be imposed by the amended ordinance, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as a multifamily dwelling, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- The height of the Special Use shall not exceed four stories.
- All site improvements, including landscaping, shall be substantially as shown on the Plans.
- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.
- Facilities for the collection of refuse shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Director of Public Works. Such facilities shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from adjacent properties and public streets.
- The Owner shall make improvements within the right-of-way, including the installation of new sidewalks along West Broad Street, and the installation of eight street trees along West Broad Street, substantially as shown on the Plans, which improvements may be completed in one or more phases as approved by the Director of Public Works.

Surrounding Area

The property is located in the Sauer's Gardens neighborhood, between Blacker and Westmoreland Streets.

Neighborhood Participation

The city notified the Sauer's Gardens Civic Association about this application. To this date, the city has received messages of support from nearby business and property owners.

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