

# Lavender Hill Owner's Statement

My name is **Nadia Anderson**, and I am a lifelong Richmonder—my family has called this city home for at least seven generations. After earning both my undergraduate and master's degrees in accounting from the University of Virginia and passing the CPA exam in 2000, I made the conscious decision to stay here in Richmond and build a life and career. I am a local resident who is deeply rooted in this community.

For the past ten years, I've been self-employed as both a **Certified Public Accountant** and a **Certified Wedding and Event Planner**. In 2015, I founded **Virginia Grace Event Management** to help busy professionals create stress-free, meaningful and memorable celebrations. In 2021, I purchased the building at **1705 Commonwealth Avenue**—now known as **Lavender Hill**—as a space where I could meet clients, store event supplies, and host intimate gatherings that reflect the grace and hospitality that define my brand.

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## The Land and Its Purpose

Although the structure at 1705 Commonwealth looks like a home, it hasn't been used as a residence since before 1985. For forty years, it's been classified as **commercial property**.

In 2022, the city rezoned the North side of Commonwealth to **TOD-1**, a transit-oriented district intended for walkable, mixed-use development. Another change to MX-7 is currently pending. This indicates that the area is expected to blend businesses and services with small-scale community activity.

The district regulations are also intended to safeguard the character of adjoining properties with buffering by setbacks and screening to lower intensity residential areas. The outdoor area at Lavender Hill is completely enclosed by private fencing, providing screening to the backyards of the neighboring houses across the alley.

Outdoor event usage at Lavender Hill aligns with many of the goals of the Richmond 300 Master Plan, along with the American Legion directly across the street at 1708 Commonwealth Avenue and Karina's Salon and Sip Societe at 1707 Commonwealth Avenue.

The intent of the TOD-1 district is to promote the enhancement of the character of development along principal corridors and at key gateways. Specifically, the Broad/ Malvern Node is four blocks East of Lavender Hill and the goal is that "This Node is no longer a "dead spot" between Scott's Addition and Willow Lawn." (Richmond 300 pg C-15)

Four blocks West of Lavender Hill is the intersection of W. Broad Street and Staples Mill Road where the city hopes "to capitalize on its proximity to Willow Lawn, Scott's Addition, Libbie Mill, and the Pulse BRT Staples Mill Station to redevelop underdeveloped parcels into a walkable Node with new, denser, mixed-use buildings, and streetscape improvements along Broad transform Broad Street into a truly Great Street." (Richmond 300 pg C-14)

Additionally, goal 11 of Richmond 300 points to growth of existing and new small businesses, "focusing on Nodes, Priority Neighborhoods, major corridors, and industrial centers." Specifically included in the plan are equitable economic development strategies and small businesses, start ups, and women owned and minority businesses. I'm a Black woman operating a small business in a geographic area outside of historically red lined districts, which directly impacts this equitable economic strategy.

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## What Happens at Lavender Hill

My plan for Lavender Hill has always been thoughtful and intentional:

- **During the week**, it operates as an office, coworking and meeting space for creative professionals and remote workers.
- **Occasionally**, it hosts intimate events—private celebrations like birthdays or weddings, or community gatherings such as meetings, workshops, book readings or wellness activities.

Sometimes these gatherings occur outside. Hosting outdoor events requires enough flexibility to accommodate clients' requests and the ability to reschedule for inclement weather.

The space is never open all hours or every day. Events are planned in advance and guests are provided with parking instructions. On average, I aim for two community programs per week and two private events per month—never hosting more than three events in a week or three weekends in a row. I have no plans to host events at Lavender Hill every day of the week and there is no evidence of daily indoor or outdoor gathering since I began operations in 2021.

Lavender Hill offers monthly meeting space to community organizations. As reflected in the letters of support, the Richmond Chapters of the National Association of Women Business Owners and CreativeMornings, The Jackson Ward Foundation, and InUnison have all benefited from use of the indoor and outdoor space.

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## Noise

There is no history of frequent outdoor musical entertainment. There is no documentation to support a violation of the citywide noise ordinance. In fact, the limitations on amplified sound included in the SUP ordinance are more restrictive than the city noise ordinance.

It is important to note that over the past four and a half years:

- 70% of gatherings at Lavender Hill have welcomed 50 guests or fewer
- only two events had more than 100 people in attendance. Both of those events were private.
- only four outdoor events were open to the general public
- only two outdoor events featured a live band that played for two 45 minute sets
- only two outdoor events featured a DJ
- No events with or without music have lasted more than three hours

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## Neighborhood Engagement

Since acquiring the property, I've tried to be a good neighbor and communicate openly.

I distributed brochures and door hangers, hosted a ribbon-cutting and open house, and earned the support of the **Sauer Garden Civic Association**, volunteering to host their holiday gathering in 2023. I've participated in civic association block parties, knocked on doors, and spoken directly with residents who reached out to engage in conversation—whether in agreement or dissent.

Conversely, I've sent emails to the four neighbors within 100 feet of Lavender Hill that have gone unanswered and I was turned away by two of the four households when I approached them for conversation.

My goal has always been **clarity and collaboration**, not conflict.

Ultimately, I think we all want the same thing:

To enjoy our properties in peace, to feel safe, and to enjoy a neighborhood that continues to thrive.

Lavender Hill contributes to that vision. Since I purchased the property, it has been beautifully renovated, carefully maintained, and has increased in value by 76% according to the city tax assessment.

I love this neighborhood. I live my values through my work—values of calm, beauty, and community care. My sincere hope is to continue using Lavender Hill in a way that enhances the character of this corridor.

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## **My Ask**

As you review the zoning code and all the letters of support and opposition for the SUP in an effort to make your recommendations, I ask that look closely in order to:

- Consider the nuance that doesn't allow Lavender Hill to fit squarely within the guidance provided in the zoning code. I'm not operating a restaurant, a theater, a museum, or a music and entertainment venue as the property has mistakenly been characterized. The SUP allows me to define my usage.
- identify neighbors who speak to their direct experience with Lavender Hill events, clients, guests, or staff, and separate their comments from statement that include hearsay, projection, and conjecture based on misinformation,
- see who is represented in the comments and statements submitted and who is not, and
- prioritize facts in your decision making process.