

**From:** Patience Armstrong [mailto:patience4creativity@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 5, 2023 9:12 AM  
**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: 708 China street SUP

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----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Patience Armstrong <patience4creativity@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Tue, Apr 4, 2023 at 2:17 PM  
**Subject:** 708 China street SUP  
**To:** <matthew.ebinger@rva.com>, <latesha.holmes@rva.gov>

Hello Ms Holmes and Mr Ebinger,

I own a home in Oregon Hill and I am writing to ask you to DENY the Special Use Permit that is being requested for the property on 708 China Street. My historic neighborhood is the home of many long term residents who work to restore the integrity of the 100+ year old building including my own. We already have a number of students renting here and a number of historic buildings that have been destroyed in order to build large money making rental properties that congest our neighborhood with traffic and noise.

Please do not continue to allow developers to tear build rental properties in Oregon Hill. This is our home and not a business district. I have paid property taxes for ten years here and own my small lot outright, many of my neighbors on this block have lived here for decades and raised their children here. This is not a neglected, deteriorating rental district.

Thank you for your attention and consideration in this matter,  
Patience Armstrong  
304 S Cherry St,

**From:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: 708 China Street  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 9:31:54 AM

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**Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP**

Principal Planner - Land Use Administration | Department of Planning & Development Review | City of Richmond | [Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov) | 804-646-6308

**From:** Mary Beane [mailto:mvb599@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 2, 2023 2:44 PM  
**To:** Holmes, LaTasha S. - Council Chief of Staff <LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov>; Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>  
**Subject:** 708 China Street

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Dear Mr. Ebinger and Ms. Holmes:

This is in response to an application for a Special Use Permit to demolish 708 China Street in order to build a mini-dorm for VCU students. As a 20 year resident of Oregon Hill, I object VERY STRONGLY to this proposal.

Our community is composed of young families, professional couples, and many senior citizens. We value our culture, homes, and quality of life. Oregon Hill is not, nor was it ever intended to be, an extension of VCU.

This developer and others of like mind seem to be willfully, bit by bit, turning this historic community into a college campus. Many of these students are rude, disruptive and disrespectful to the older generations. And, like this developer, they don't give a damn about Oregon Hill's history and culture; the streets are littered, buildings plastered with hideous graffiti, and broken whiskey bottles fill the alleys.

So much of our once beautiful city of Richmond has been disfigured and decimated by political radicals and money grubbers.

By the way, where are the administrators of the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register? Are they in the pockets of these developers as well?

Finally, who does this SUP benefit? Certainly it is not the Oregon Hill Community. Oh yes, it will be a financial windfall for both the developer and VCU. The developer gets loads of cash, and it saves VCU from building a dormitory on other property they already own. Maybe VCU should consider the demolition of that hideous Fine Arts Building on Belvidere, and construct a dormitory, which is where its students should be.

Sincerely,

Mary Virginia Beane  
806 China Street

**From:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#)  
**Cc:** [Vonck, Kevin J. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Neighbor against the demolition of 708 China Street  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 29, 2023 12:10:26 PM

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Please include in agenda.

**Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP**

Principal Planner - Land Use Administration | Department of Planning & Development Review | City of Richmond | [Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov) | 804-646-6308

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**From:** Scott Burger [mailto:[scottburger@mac.com](mailto:scottburger@mac.com)]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 29, 2023 12:03 PM  
**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <[Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov)>; Holmes, LaTasha S. - Council Chief of Staff <[LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov](mailto:LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov)>  
**Subject:** Neighbor against the demolition of 708 China Street

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Mr. Ebinger, please distribute this email to all members of the Planning Commission.  
Ms. Holmes, please distribute this email to all members of City Council.

Dear City officials,

My name is Scott Burger, and I have been a citizen of the City of Richmond for over thirty years now.

I own the house at 711 China Street, diagonally across from a small house threatened with demolition, 708 China Street.

I miss my former neighbor who lived for decades there, Cliff, who would often greet me while I walked my dogs. Cliff died a few years ago.

I am disturbed that the current owner of 708 China Street is so hellbent on demolishing it when the neighborhood's pleaded for cooperation in saving and restoring it, at least in some form.

I am further disturbed that the current owner of 708 China Street is not willing to comply with the current R-7 zoning of the neighborhood, something that we treasure greatly.

According to the plans I have seen, the replacement plan is cheap student apartments with very little positives for both the new tenants and the neighborhood at large.

The disregard is shameful and worrisome.

Is the only future treatment that my neighbors and I can expect?

While that small house may not look like much, it is of historic value to my neighborhood and to Richmond.

I have shared it's history on the [oregonhill.net](http://oregonhill.net) website:

<https://www.oregonhill.net/2023/03/01/708-china-threatened-with-demolition/>

I will note that, according to State code, the Planning Commission is explicitly tasked with

protecting Virginia landmarks. This small house is, officially, a Virginia landmark. Why is the Planning Commission disregarding its public duty?

It's understandable that the City is pressed and concerned about affordable housing (at a time when it is tearing down public housing!) but many Richmond residents such as myself are alarmed at what is being done to our neighborhoods in the name of so-called 'affordable housing'.

I will further note, that myself and many of my neighbors have donated and volunteered with the neighborhood's Oregon Hill Home Improvement Council, which has a proud history of creating REAL affordable housing and, at the same time, furthering historic preservation goals. It's sad to see how that community history is now being ignored and undone. In its rush to please wealthy developers, Richmond is in danger of losing its real historic value, natural environment, and greatly depleting its quality of life for its own longterm residents.

On behalf of my neighbors and Richmonders in general, I urge you to examine this situation further and rectify it - not allowing this house demolition to proceed and making sure that the current owner adheres to the R-7 zoning.

Sincerely,  
Scott Burger  
612 S. Laurel Street  
Richmond, VA 23220  
8047145444

**From:** "caroline" <carolion1@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Matthew Ebinger Secretary Planning Commission"  
<matthew.ebinger@richmondgov.com>, "latasha.holmes@rva.gov"  
<latasha.holmes@rva.gov>

**Cc:**

**Sent:** Mon, Apr 3, 2023 at 1:43 PM

**Subject:** Deny special use permit 708 China St ( ordinance 2023-090)

Dear Planning Commission and City Council:

Please deny special use permit 708 China St ( ordinance 2023-090).

Every time a house is demolished in Oregon Hill it detracts from our status on the National Historic Registry.

The developer could preserve the existing building and get city tax abatements to make it worth his while.

Please don't let developers think our neighborhood is a VCU dormitory by allowing them to knock down rare examples of architecture that make our neighborhood special.

Yours,

Caroline Cox  
430 S. Laurel St.  
Richmond VA 23220

**From:** Mike Culver [mailto:mikeculver@verizon.net]

**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 7:01 PM

**To:** Holmes, LaTasha S. - Council Chief of Staff <LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov>; Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>

**Subject:** Planning commission ordinance 2023-090

**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms. Holmes, Mr Ebinger,

I am writing to ask that you deny the special use permit proposed for the 6-bedroom multi-family structure at 708 China St. in Oregon Hill for the following reason:

Oregon Hill is a residential community of a 19th century scale with an infrastructure that reflects that. It is not meant for higher density. The already dangerous traffic in the neighborhood, the disregard for private property and pedestrians bears this out. Oregon Hill has its historic designation because it is an intact single-family Victorian working-class neighborhood. Student dormitories are not in keeping with that designation.

I recall that City Code states that no more than 3 unrelated people may live together in a single family house. A 6-bedroom house is not multi-family; it is a single residence used as a dormitory. The code exists to prevent overcrowding, transience and rentals as boarding houses. (Grace Street 'Nursing Homes') . Students have a history of being disruptive and destructive in this community. The V.C.U. Police blotter will confirm this. Trash and refuse collection will tell a more detailed story. Landlords typically do not address any of these issues until the City cites them for violations.

Building it would require the destruction of an existing home that is original to the neighborhood and therefore part of the fabric that gives the neighbor its historic designation. If the Planning commission balks at a mural in Jackson Ward, then it follows that it would balk even more at housing destruction.

The proposed tenants have no investment in the community. They are not here to do so. Neither does the developer. This is merely commercial intrusion, not communal contribution. A more appropriate setting such as the apartment developments that are being built in the areas North of V.C.U. would be appropriate and likely safer, with similar lifestyles, values and behaviors for students. Let their frontal cortices develop in a suitable setting more subject to public inspection.

Lest I be dismissed as anti-student, I am a graduate of the V.C.U. School of Social Work. I have worked in housing for decades and understand goodness of fit for all types of client bases. Oregon Hill is not a 'goodness of fit' for this proposed population. In fact it is too often detrimental due to lack of supervision. This is not a supportive housing community, though we are caring, friendly and generous. Further, I am the 5th generation of my family on Cherry Street and my Russian adopted sons are the sixth in the neighborhood. I worked for many years as a volunteer for affordable, low income home ownership in this Community. I worked actively for the racial integration of what used to be a dangerous neighborhood for people of color. I administered the City HOPWA grant for AIDS patients for several years as well. I can't be dismissed as simply not wanting 'those people' in my neighborhood.

Perhaps to be more blunt, we are tired of being babysitters and law enforcement for absent parents and V.C.U. More to the point, we are tired of the destruction and misuse of the community we have helped create, maintain and preserve. The 2023-090 proposal is out of place and ill-suited to the setting. It is contrary to City codes and Federal designations. It is contrary to the professed values of Richmond.

Thank you for your kind and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

John Michael (Mike) Culver

307 South Cherry St.



**From:** Katie Jones [mailto:joneskatie@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, March 31, 2023 8:44 AM  
**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Oppose SUP Ordinance 2023-090, 708 China Street

**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

**From:** Katie Jones <joneskatie@verizon.net>  
**Date:** March 30, 2023 at 10:46:41 AM EDT  
**To:** [Matthew.Ebinger@rva.com](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@rva.com), [Latesha.Holmes@rva.gov](mailto:Latesha.Holmes@rva.gov),  
[stephanie.lynch@rva.gov](mailto:stephanie.lynch@rva.gov)  
**Subject: Oppose SUP Ordinance 2023-090, 708 China Street**

Hello Planning Commission and City Council. Please Help.

I'm writing to express my opposition and grave concerns about SUP Ordinance 2023-090, regarding the proposed demolition of 708 China Street in Oregon Hill, Richmond, VA

I am a home owner and resident in Oregon Hill since 2014. The property in question is one block away from me and literally across the street from Open Hill School. It is not conducive for college student housing...in fact there is already way too much student housing in the neighborhood, off VCU campus, which is negatively impacting the neighborhood. There's been a sharp and steady increase in noise ordinance violations, trash, junk and debris in streets and sidewalks, and vehicular traffic associated with student population increases since I moved to the neighborhood. Additionally, while some landlords take care of their properties, many do not, and several houses have seriously declined, and landlords are not addressing bad behavior by tenants.

Further, with the pressures and staffing shortages affecting the Richmond Police Department, adding more student housing which increases incidents and service needs of police officers, is just not a logical or safe option.

This particular structure is registered as a National and historic landmark, and should be respected as such. It should not be converted to a multipurpose housing complex, which is not in keeping with Oregon hill neighborhood association guidelines or established rules.

VCU and developers should partner together to upgrade, repair, and modernize existing on-campus dwelling for students and not be permitted to continue to cut away from the Oregon Hill neighborhood which is intended to serve full time residents and small businesses in the community.

Enough is enough.....we don't need or want any more student housing off campus of VCU. Please support and protect the voice and rights of the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association which opposes this SUP Ordinance 2023-090 708 China Street.

Thank you,

Nancy C Jones  
613 S Pine Street  
Richmond, VA 23220

Sent from my iPad

April 2, 2023

To: Richmond City Council

I am a Richmond City resident and homeowner in the Oregon Hill Historic District. I am very familiar with the neighborhood. I live a half a block from 708 China St. I am writing to file the strongest possible objection to grant a special use permit for building a large, six bedroom multi-family home for students at the above address. Following are my concerns which support the rejection of this permit.

Parking is a serious problem here. Open High School is across the street and about a third of the students drive to school and park in the neighborhood every school day. L'Opossum restaurant brings additional parking. Most evenings our street is full. People park in the alley's and anywhere they can find space. It's a real problem. During the Folk Festival and numerous events at the Virginia War Memorial our neighborhood fills up with cars. Literally there is no parking. Marathons and concerts at Brown's Island also contribute to heavy parking traffic. A lot of people park in our neighborhood and walk down to the river.

Garbage is also a problem. All the new buildings put their cans right on the street. How is that helping our property value? Sometimes the alleys are absolutely filthy. At the end of every school year, student renters pile all their throwaways on the street. It's just outrageous. Why should we think this building would be any different?

I personally would not oppose a single-family dwelling. But a multi-family, student apartment housing is an absolutely terrible idea for this neighborhood. It is totally unnecessary. VCU has built hundreds of apartments around the university in the last several years. There is no student housing crisis here. As with plenty of America, we have a single-family housing problem, especially affordable single-family housing.

Last but not least, we're a neighborhood. We want a neighbor, an enduring member of our community. I have nothing against students, they comprise about 40 to 50% of the renters in Oregon Hill. For the most part they are very welcome but some party too much and nobody wants that anymore. The Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association (OHNA) voted to oppose this ordinance. I hope you seriously consider our request. Please respect the wishes of the neighborhood, and the people who live here as homeowners. The money generated by this rental will leave our neighborhood and do nothing for us. Please do not grant this permit.

Thank you,

Robert Kaputof  
609 South Pine St  
Richmond, VA 23220  
[robertkaputof@gmail.com](mailto:robertkaputof@gmail.com)

**From:** [PDR Land Use Admin](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Monday: 708 China Street SUP opposition  
**Date:** Monday, April 17, 2023 9:43:06 AM

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**From:** Valerie L'Herrou [mailto:vlherrou@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 16, 2023 6:44 PM  
**To:** PDR Land Use Admin <PDRLandUseAdmin@rva.gov>; Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>; Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office <Stephanie.Lynch@rva.gov>  
**Subject:** Monday: 708 China Street SUP opposition

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Dear Chair Poole and Vice Chair Greenfield; Planning Commission Members; and Councilmember Lynch:

We are writing to express our opposition to the Special Use Permit requested for the antebellum building located at 708 China Street in our neighborhood, Oregon Hill. The Department of Historic Resources nomination report for the Oregon Hill Historic District dates the house to the 1850s. This one-story wood frame, gable-roofed home is rare not only in our historic district but within the entire city of Richmond.

We are not opposed to new structures that respect the existing zoning and character of the neighborhood. The neighborhood has worked with other builders and come to acceptable compromises for new construction. We do oppose the plan to tear down this historic building, listed as a contributing structure to the federal and state historic designation for the neighborhood.

Today as we walked through our neighborhood, we saw several examples of how original structures have been incorporated into new structures, allowing the streetscape to retain its original and unique character. The house at 708 China is not only of historical significance; it is also quite small and would not be difficult to renovate into useable space that could be incorporated into a new structure (to house students--the use to which so many houses in Oregon Hill are put. As homeowners who live here, this is not a problem for us; but destruction of our neighborhood's character and historic homes is).

We are thankful that our home was restored--not torn down--over 20 years ago. We hope future residents of 708 China will be inspired to connect with the history and unique character of Oregon Hill as we have.

To reiterate: we are not opposed to a new building that complies with current zoning regulations. We are opposed to destroying this historic building—and to the piecemeal destruction of one of the neighborhoods that contribute to making Richmond a city of unique flavors that draws people from all over.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Valerie L'Herrou  
Michael Mathews  
315 S Pine Street  
Richmond, VA 23220

**From:** mary normile [mailto:normilehomes@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 29, 2023 6:50 PM

**To:** Holmes, LaTasha S. - Council Chief of Staff <LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov>; Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>

**Subject:** 708 China ordinance 2023-090

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**PLEASE DENY!!!**

We do not want any more student housing here. I purchased a year ago and am upgrading my home at 603 1/2 S Laurel and I want to see everyone here upgrade and keep this place for families! We have enough housing for VCU!!!!

We need to preserve the historic homes here.

Mary Normile

**From:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Please oppose SUP ORDINANCE 2023-090  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 9:30:59 AM

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**Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP**

Principal Planner - Land Use Administration | Department of Planning & Development Review | City of Richmond | [Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov) | 804-646-6308

**From:** Meredith Makhoul [<mailto:meredithmakhoul@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 2, 2023 9:10 PM  
**To:** Holmes, LaTasha S. - Council Chief of Staff <[LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov](mailto:LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov)>; [matthew.ebinger@rva.com](mailto:matthew.ebinger@rva.com); Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <[Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov)>  
**Subject:** Please oppose SUP ORDINANCE 2023-090

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Hello,

I'm an Oregon Hill resident asking you to deny the SUP Ordinance 2023-090. Oregon Hill is a wonderful community because of the diverse, passionate and kind people who choose to make this neighborhood their home. The 6 bedroom multi family home for students goes against what makes this neighborhood special and livable.

I'm happy to welcome in new people to the neighborhood, if those people want to make Oregon Hill their primary residence for the long term. That is how you build community. Not through overdeveloping and renting property to students who leave in under a year.

Please deny this ordinance and allow Oregon Hill to flourish without the interference of developers who want to extract profit without contributing to the community.

Thank you,

Meredith Makhoul  
Resident of Oregon Hill

**From:** Clem Martin [mailto:clemartindesign@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 3:56 PM  
**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: PLEASE DENY SUP ORDINANCE 2023-090

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----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Clem Martin <clemartindesign@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Thu, Mar 30, 2023 at 3:38 PM  
**Subject:** PLEASE DENY SUP ORDINANCE 2023-090  
**To:** <matthew.ebinger@rva.com>  
**Cc:** <latesha.holmes@rva.gov>

Hello,

I am the owner of one of the only retail establishments in the Oregon Hill neighborhood. My name is Clem Martin and I own CobbleStore Vintage located at 324 S Pine St, Richmond, VA 23220. I am writing to voice my opposition to the Special Use Permit to demolish the building located at 708 China Street, which is widely known in the neighborhood as a Historic Monument because of it's listing on the National Register of Historic Place and the Virginia Landmarks Register.

As an enthusiast for all things old and historical, I must say it is very disheartening that the city would even consider tearing down a historical landmark in the neighborhood to make way for new developments. I ask you to please DENY this ordinance.

Thank you,

Clem Martin

**From:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Opposition to SUP for 708 China Street  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 9:32:42 AM

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**Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP**

Principal Planner - Land Use Administration | Department of Planning & Development Review | City of Richmond | [Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov) | 804-646-6308

**From:** Kelli Makhoul [<mailto:kelli.makhoul@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Friday, March 31, 2023 10:14 PM  
**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <[Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov)>; [Latesha.Holmes@rva.go](mailto:Latesha.Holmes@rva.go)  
**Cc:** [amy.robins@rva.go](mailto:amy.robins@rva.go)  
**Subject:** Opposition to SUP for 708 China Street

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I am writing to vehemently oppose the SUP to demolish 708 China Street and replace it with new, multifamily construction designated for students.

Oregon Hill is a family centered neighborhood that embraces its historic homes and respects the designation of National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. Wholesale destruction of one of the homes that contributes to these designations is detrimental to the neighborhood. Plans to replace this historic and important home with student housing is completely unacceptable.

I support the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association's (OHNA) positing to OPPOSE the SUP (Ordinance 2023-090) and urge you to vote against the proposed destruction of 708 China Street.

Respectfully,

Kelli Massey-Makhoul  
615 South Laurel Street  
Richmond, VA 23220  
(804) 347-2431



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**From:** Nicole Normile [mailto:NikkiNatnat5@hotmail.com]

**Sent:** Friday, March 31, 2023 9:23 AM

**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>; Holmes, LaTasha S. - Council Chief of Staff <LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov>

**Subject:** 708 China Street

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Good morning, I am a resident in Oregon Hill asking that the Special Use Permit for 708 China Street be DENIED (Ordinance 2023-090).

Thank you,

-Nicole Normile



# Oregon Hill

## Neighborhood Association

30 March 2023

Jonathan Brown  
Senior Planner, Land Use Administration Division  
Dept. of Planning & Development Review  
City of Richmond, VA  
Phone: 804-646-5734  
Email: [Jonathan.Brown@rva.gov](mailto:Jonathan.Brown@rva.gov)

Re: OHNA comments on SUP Application for 708 China Street, Richmond VA, Ordinance 2023-090

Dear Mr. Brown:

708 China Street (tax parcel W0000140025) is located on the north side of China Street between South Pine Street and South Laurel Street. The property is currently vacant, roughly 7529 feet wide by 120 feet in depth, and contains approximately 3480 square feet of lot area.

### Existing Zoning

The lot at 708 China Street is:

- within the Oregon Hill Historic District listed on the VA Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places
- within the R-7 Single- and Two-Family Urban Residential zoning designation

### Applicant's Proposal

The applicant proposed to demolish 708 China Street, a contributing resource to in the state and national Oregon Hill Historic District, in order to construct a new two-story two-family detached dwelling. Each unit would contain three bedrooms and two bathrooms, totaling approximately 1,400 square feet of floor area per unit. Three parking spaces would be provided on the property.

### Impact

The proposed project with three dwelling units at 105 S. Laurel:

- does not meet the requirements of City Code Sec. 30-413.5 for minimum lot size, which states: "Two family attached dwellings shall be located on lots not less than 4,400 sq. ft." The lot at 708 China Street is 3,480 sq. ft.
- does not meet the requirements of City Code Sec. 30-413.6 for minimum yard setbacks, which states: "There shall be side yards of not less than 3 feet." Less than 3 feet setback is proposed between the existing dwelling at 710 China Street.
- does not meet the requirements of City Code Sec. 30-413.7 for maximum lot coverage, which states: "Lot coverage shall not exceed 55%." The proposed development would be about 2,800 sq. feet which exceeds 1,914 sq. feet or 55% of the square footage of the 3,480 sq. foot lot

### OHNA Actions

Richmond, Va  
[OHNArva@gmail.com](mailto:OHNArva@gmail.com)

The OHNA planning and zoning committee met with the applicant multiple times to discuss the project, specifically requesting that the applicant approach the project in such a way that the existing historic residence was retained and incorporated into the new larger project. The applicant subsequently declined to adjust the proposal. The applicant's proposal was brought to the 28 March 2023 monthly OHNA meeting, at which the body voted to oppose the project as presented, due to the following issues:

- The project significantly exceeds what is currently allowed under the existing R7 zoning.
- 807 China Street is a contributing building in the Oregon Hill Historic District and one of the few remaining single-story buildings in the neighborhood. Its loss damages the integrity of the historic district, and its demolition is a significant detriment to the historic fabric of the neighborhood.

In light of this, the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association asks that the Planning Commission not support the SUP application as submitted for 708 China Street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. C. Green", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Bryan Clark Green, President  
Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association

\*\*\*NOTE: Each location within the Oregon Hill neighborhood is unique and will have its own unique requirements for development or redevelopment. Applications will be evaluated on an individual basis and in consideration of each property's specific needs. Applicants should not assume that the conditions applied to one proposal will be applicable to any subsequent proposal.\*\*\*

**From:** Charles Pool [mailto:Charles\_Pool@msn.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, March 31, 2023 2:15 PM  
**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov>  
**Subject:** 708 China SUP (2023-090)

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Mr. Ebinger, Please distribute the letter below to Planning Commission members in advance of Monday's meeting. Thanks!

Dear Members of the Richmond City Council and Members of the Richmond Planning Commission,

I urge you to **reject** the Special Use Permit (SUP) for the property in the Oregon Hill Historic District at 708 China Street (Ordinance 2023-090).

According to the staff report, the size of the lot and lot frontage are deficient by about a third from the Lot Area and Lot Width requirements for a two-family detached dwelling within the R-7 zoning:

Lot Area and Lot Width

Sec. 30-413.5(3). Two-family detached dwellings shall be located on lots of not less than **4,400 square feet in area with a width of not less than 42 feet.**

**The lot has an area of 3,480 square feet with a width of 29 feet.**

I urge you to **reject** the SUP for 708 China Street for the following reasons:

**Adversely affect or interfere with public or private schools ...**

Neither the SUP application, nor the staff report, even mentions that the property at 708 China Street is directly across the street from the City of Richmond Open High School at 600 South Pine Street. Anyone who lives nearby or who attends the school is aware that there is already traffic congestion and a shortage of parking near the school.

Replacing one single family home with multi-family housing with 6 bedrooms is sure to result in a large increase in parking needs for that one address. The vehicles of those occupying the proposed 6 bedrooms are sure to impact and interfere with traffic and parking at the Open High School.

**Tend to create congestion in streets, roads, alleys and other public ways and places in the area involved ...**

As mentioned above, because the property at 708 China is located directly across the street from Open High School, it will tend to create further congestion in the streets where there is already congestion and inadequate parking for the school.

**Be detrimental to the ... general welfare of the community ...**

The Planning Commission is tasked by the City Charter with protecting Va. Landmarks and the existing building at 708 China Street is listed on the Va. Landmarks Register. According to the nomination report for the Oregon Hill Historic District, 708 China dates from the 1850s. The demolition of 708 China will be to the detriment of the Oregon Hill Historic District and detrimental to the general welfare of the community.

The 6-bedroom multi-family building, proposed by the applicant for the site, is an ad hoc dormitory for VCU students. This will not be affordable, inclusionary or equitable housing and will not help achieve the goal of preventing involuntary displacement as cited in the applicant's report:

Page 155 (Inclusive Housing Chapter), Objective 14.8 to “Develop inclusionary and equitable housing options for our gentrifying neighborhoods to prevent involuntary displacement.

According to the staff report the proposed units will not be affordable units: **“Based upon the regional median income these units are projected to not be affordable.”**

**The Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association (OHNA) voted to oppose the SUP for 708 China Street (Ordinance 2023-090) at its meeting on March 28, 2023. OHNA objected to the destruction of a contributing building to the Oregon Hill Historic District, on the National Register of Historic Places and the Va. Landmarks Register, and objected to the non-compliance with our R-7 zoning.**

Please deny the SUP for 708 China Street (Ordinance 2023-090).

Sincerely,

Charles Pool  
421-1/2 S. Laurel Street  
Richmond, VA 23220  
(804) 252-1441

**From:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Request for SUP for 708 China Street DENIAL  
**Date:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 9:10:58 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)

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**Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP**

Principal Planner - Land Use Administration | Department of Planning & Development Review | City of Richmond | [Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov) | 804-646-6308

**From:** Sasha Smolkin [<mailto:aleksandersmolkin@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 29, 2023 7:52 PM  
**To:** [matthew.ebinger@rva.com](mailto:matthew.ebinger@rva.com); Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <[Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov)>; Holmes, LaTasha S. - Council Chief of Staff <[LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov](mailto:LaTasha.Holmes@rva.gov)>  
**Subject:** Request for SUP for 708 China Street DENIAL

**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Hello Matthew and Latesha,

I hope this email finds you well. I am reaching out as a resident of Richmond and Oregon Hill. I was concerned to find out that the planning commission is considering an SUP and demolition of a building in my neighborhood. As someone who loves my community and its historic status, this plan is unsettling. I believe this SUP should be denied for multiple important reasons. Oregon Hill is one of the most beautiful places in Richmond. It is rich in Reconstruction Era history, and that is noted in its architecture. It is paramount, as a planner, to preserve this quality.

Oregon Hill has a history of being developed against the wishes of its community. In the early 2000s, when the neighborhood was still a primarily working-class neighborhood, the houses in front of the river were to be demolished. Residents protested against this, as the houses could have been rehabilitated. The land has since been developed into high-income housing. You can learn more about this [here](#) (found towards the bottom). This article also highlights the protests against VCU's expansion into Oregon Hill.



These protests prevented VCU from developing into Oregon Hill for quite some time, until recently with the demolition of the historic livery stables on Cary Street to make room for the new rec center. Clearly, Oregon Hill has a history of being developed against the strong wishes of its residents, a theme not uncommon to areas of gentrifying Richmond.

Additionally, the construction of a large, 6-bedroom home would be inappropriate for the area. As you can see in this Google street view image, the lot (center) is sandwiched between a large and beautiful stuccoed duplex and a smaller home.



A modern built and large 6-bedroom house would not only look out of place, but suffocate the two other households. Additionally, demolition and construction of the new building would likely result in the removal of the beautiful tree that sits in front of the lot. Oregon Hill is known for its forested and natural look. As planners, I am sure you are aware of the importance of trees and greenery in a community. Greenery reduces noise pollution, temperature, improves air quality (an important consideration since Richmond is high in asthma cases!), increases mental-well being, and provides habitats for important animals like insects and birds. Allowing for development that jeopardizes the green quality of this neighborhood is a bad precedent to set, considering all the values greenery provides.

I urge you to consider the sociopolitical factors that are highlighted by this plan to demolish and build. The expressway. The Cary St. Gym. The Overlook. Oregon Hill was once a working class community, threatened by the encroaching VCU. While this development

would not be perpetrated directly by VCU, it will serve as student housing. This is directly caused by the existence of VCU and thus should be considered to be an indirect extension of VCU into Oregon Hill. This continues the deeply troubling pattern of development in Oregon Hill, one that goes against the wishes of the residents, whose opinions should be of principal concern to any development plan. Short term student housing does nothing to serve the community, as most people will sign one year leases and move out. Please do not set a precedent which allows third parties to develop the land of our community, who do not care about our community, and are concerned more with profit than with history. Please do not wear the same hat those cold developers wear. Please consider the wishes of our communities.

You have the opportunity to send a message of respect and compassion to the residents of Oregon Hill. You have the opportunity to set a standard of care and consideration for preserving Richmond's history, and prevent further gentrification of areas which have been long protesting against it.

Thank You,  
Sasha Smolkin



Scott Staton  
P.O. Box 13922  
Richmond, VA. 23225

July 20, 2022

Baker Development Resources  
530 East Main Street, Suite 730  
Richmond, VA. 23219

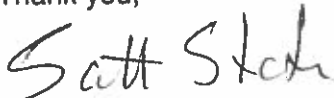
Dear Mr. Baker,

I am a neighbor of 708 China Street in the Oregon Hill section of Richmond Virginia. I have been a property owner since 1978 and I am very concerned with your proposed demolition of 708 China Street. I feel that the existing structure is a contributing structure to the Oregon Hill district. It is part of the listed inventory of Historic Oregon Hill building in the Neighborhood. I disagree with the proposed demolition of the structure. I also disagree with you stating that it is in considerable state of disrepair because this home was completely renovated less than a year ago.

Further I would not like and disagree with the increase in size of the proposed building and the large increase in the number of bedrooms and making this property change from a single family home to a large duplex. There is also parking requirements that would be difficult to meet the requirements for this type of project. I would like to see a minimum of 2 parking spaces for each bedroom.

Once again I do not agree with the proposed plan for your change to this property. If you should have any questions please feel free to give me a call at (804) 334-3750.

Thank you,



Scott Staton

**From:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Letter regarding 2023-090  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 29, 2023 12:23:55 PM

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Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP  
Principal Planner - Land Use Administration | Department of Planning & Development Review | City of Richmond |  
[Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov) | 804-646-6308

-----Original Message-----

From: Charles Woodson [<mailto:candylandmusic@earthlink.net>]  
Sent: Wednesday, March 29, 2023 12:14 PM  
To: Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <[Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov)>  
Cc: Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office <[Stephanie.Lynch@rva.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Lynch@rva.gov)>; Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office <[Amy.Robins@rva.gov](mailto:Amy.Robins@rva.gov)>  
Subject: Letter regarding 2023-090

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Dear Honorable Members of Richmond Planning Commission,

I am writing you today on behalf of the Oregon Hill Home Improvement Council asking that the Planning Commission NOT support an SUP (2023-090) submitted by the developer of the property known as 708 China Street. Our R7 zoning designation is appropriate and compliments our historic street scape and should be heeded for all development in the neighborhood where a hardship does not exist. The size of the building presented in the SUP is inappropriate and inconsistent with other dwellings on the block and would distract from the historic nature and scope of the Oregon Hill neighborhood, which is listed on both the State and National Historic Registers.

We respectfully ask that you deny the SUP application and that the applicant abide by the provisions listed in the applicable R7 zoning. The applicant has provided us no evidence that a hardship exists with the lawful development of this property. The developer is only attempting to maximize his investment potential by overbuilding.

We thank you for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Charles T. Woodson, Executive Director  
Oregon Hill Home Improvement Council, inc  
302 S Cherry Street  
Richmond Va 23220

**From:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Richmond Planning Commission Consideration of Ordinance 2023-090  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 9:31:12 AM

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**Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP**

Principal Planner - Land Use Administration | Department of Planning & Development Review | City of Richmond | [Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@RVA.gov) | 804-646-6308

**From:** Mary Zintner [mailto:[maryzintner@gmail.com](mailto:maryzintner@gmail.com)]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 2, 2023 8:04 PM  
**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR <[Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ebinger@rva.gov)>  
**Subject:** Richmond Planning Commission Consideration of Ordinance 2023-090

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Greetings!

As a 40 year resident of Oregon Hill, I was concerned when I heard about an application for a Special Use Permit that was under consideration by the Richmond Planning Commission (Ordinance 2023-090). The proposal calls for the demolition of the house at 708 China Street and replace it with a "large 6 bedroom multi-family home for students". I am **not** in favor of the approval of this Special Use Permit for three reasons.

1) 708 China Street is a structure located in a neighborhood that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. It is a protection for buildings with **historical value** and should not be destroyed because some developer has a "better idea". 708 China is a small piece of land which is bound by a street on one side and residences on the other three. The only way that a 6 bedroom structure could be constructed on that site would be to go up. A building that size (a mini-dormitory) would be aesthetically and historically out of character with the neighborhood.

2) **Traffic and Parking!** If anyone on the Planning Commission actually lived in Oregon Hill, this resulting parking problem would be grounds to deny the approval of Ordinance 2023-090 at once. The intersection of China and S. Pine Streets already is home to a functioning High School (Open High) and a restaurant (L'Opossum). On-the-street parking is already at a premium in that area. Open High has a number of students who drive to school and they have to park on the street. In addition, L'Opossum needs street parking for its patrons. Recently, two single family houses were completed on the 600 block of China Street. As a result, 2 - 3 parking spots are being used for those new residents. If the 6 bedroom unit were built, those occupants would probably need/want space on China and/or S. Pine Streets for 6 - 12 vehicles. (Students are known for trying to squeeze in an extra roommate or two to cut down on the amount of money they have to pay for their rent.) Where would those people find room to park without seriously impacting the parking needs of the current residents, patrons or high school students?

3) My biggest concern is that the developer wants to build the "mini-dorm" for **students**. If that happens, VCU may think they can get a toe-hold into acquiring land/houses in Oregon Hill by buying parcels here and there just like they did in the Fan and Downtown areas. VCU would think that all they would have to do is get a Special Use Permit to do what they want. That would surely destroy our supposedly "protected" neighborhood.

Richmond Planning Commission, PLEASE DO THE RIGHT THING. Preserve Oregon Hill's status on the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Landmarks Register and our quality of life in a safe, historic neighborhood by **DENYING** the Special Use Permit for 708 China Street (Ordinance 2023-090).

Thank you!

Mary Zintner  
328 S. Laurel Street  
Richmond, VA 23220

**From:** Leigh Kelley <vanbrian244@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 3, 2023 1:05 PM  
**To:** Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR; Mark Baker; William Gillette; Brown, Jonathan W. - PDR; rodney@thewiltonco.com  
**Subject:** Richmond Planning Commission April 3, 2023

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710 China Street  
Richmond Virginia, 23220  
[VanBillue.Properties@gmail.com](mailto:VanBillue.Properties@gmail.com)  
[Vanbrian244@gmail.com](mailto:Vanbrian244@gmail.com)  
804-892-0226  
April 3, 2023

Mr. Rodney Poole Chair, Richmond Planning Commission  
900 East Broad Street  
Richmond Virginia, 23220

Dear Mr. Poole,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. It's Leigh V. Kelley, and I am the owner of the property located at 710 China Street, which is adjacent to the property under consideration for demolition and redevelopment at 708 China Street. I am writing to express my support for the proposed project.

Mr. Mark Baker, the Special Use Permit applicant, was kind enough to provide my wife, Dr. Farren Billue, and me with a virtual tour of the existing home at 708 China Street. Based on what we observed, it is our opinion that the proposed construction of two single-family homes will not only add value to our neighborhood but also maintain the architectural continuity and reinforce the design elements that make the Organ Hill Neighborhood unique.

As our property stands to be the most impacted by the redevelopment, Mr. Baker has agreed to replace the existing siding on our home with cementitious siding and address the existing drainage issue along the shared property line. This demonstrates the applicant's commitment to ensuring that the project is a positive development for all parties involved.

I must admit that coming to this decision was not easy, given the long-standing presence of the home on the property. However, after witnessing the extent of disrepair within the existing structure, it has become apparent that the proposed solution is not only viable but also the most sound approach for revitalizing the property.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my support for the proposed demolition and redevelopment of 708 China Street. I believe that this project, carried out with the utmost consideration for the

neighborhood's architectural integrity and with the agreed-upon improvements for the adjacent properties, will be a valuable addition to the Organ Hill Neighborhood.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please do not hesitate to reach out if you require any additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Leigh V. Kelley

**From:** [PDR Land Use Admin](#)  
**To:** [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Concerns re; 708 China St Special Use Permit  
**Date:** Monday, June 5, 2023 9:30:46 AM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Cian Doyle [<mailto:ciandoyle@mac.com>]  
Sent: Saturday, June 3, 2023 12:09 PM  
To: PDR Land Use Admin <[PDRLandUseAdmin@rva.gov](mailto:PDRLandUseAdmin@rva.gov)>  
Subject: Concerns re; 708 China St Special Use Permit

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To Whom It May Concern,

I just signed a 2 year lease at 528 S Pine and moved in on Jun 1. My particular apartment faces the property at 708 China. The properties are separated by about 20 feet of open air.

I'd like to request that the special use permit is denied, as I'm extremely concerned about the demolition and construction that would likely result.

My principal concern is debris and contamination of the air quality — the house is quite old and I'm assuming uses lead based paint and asbestos. My house is also old and is not exactly hermetically sealed — so I'm concerned about the demolition of the house releasing these harmful substances toward / in my property and apartment and not being able to do anything about it, potentially causing adverse health issues.

My second concern is the noise level and commotion that will result from demolition and construction, for an indefinite period of time. I just signed on to live here for 2 years, and it's going to be really difficult to have jackhammers and trucks and shouting going on 20 feet away from my bed.

Basically these two concerns relate to extreme quality of life issues for immediately adjacent neighbors.

Thank you and please reach out if you have any questions!

Cian Doyle

Sent from my iPhone