



## CITY OF RICHMOND

### Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

**Ord. No. 2020-124:** To declare that a public necessity exists and to authorize the acquisition by gift, purchase, condemnation, or otherwise of the property known as 1201 Porter Street for the public purpose of implementing a Spot Blight Abatement Plan adopted in accordance with Va. Code § 36-49.1:1 for such property.

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**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Director's Office, Department of Planning and Development Review  
**Date:** June 1, 2020

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#### **PETITIONER**

Mark A. Olinger, Director, Dept. of Planning & Development Review

#### **LOCATION**

1201 Porter Street

#### **PROPERTY OWNER(S)**

Mr. David B. Williams  
Ms. Elma G. Williams  
5270 Sheridan Lane  
Richmond, VA

#### **PURPOSE**

Section 5-118, et seq. of the Richmond City Code authorizes the City to acquire or repair blighted property in accordance with the provisions enumerated therein. In order to proceed under the authorized spot blight abatement program, the local governing body must declare the property as blight and adopt a spot blight abatement plan.

#### **SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The spot blight abatement program is designed to address individual properties that are not maintained and have deteriorated in such a manner as to negatively affect the neighborhood. Under the program, the City is authorized, pursuant to a plan approved by City Council following a public hearing, to repair or acquire a property designated as blighted under the program. The City may recover the costs of repairing the property either from the owner or from the proceeds from the sale of the property. The program allows an owner of a blighted property to avoid any repair or other action by the City if an acceptable work plan for the elimination of blighted conditions is prepared and implemented.

The property at 1201 Porter Street is a two-story residential structure of 3,456 square feet of floor area constructed in 1876. This building has been unoccupied, neglected and left in a deteriorating condition for a number of years. Since 2016, the City has issued a number of violation notices and has attempted to work with the owners to develop an acceptable plan to repair the blighting conditions at this property, but the problems persist. Due to inaction by the owners, the exterior of the property has been compromised and exposed openings have had to be boarded by City contractors.

By letter dated 12/09/2019, the property owners David Williams & Elma G. Williams were notified of the following conditions of blight:

1. Property has been vacant since 1997;
2. The property has been designated as a derelict building since 2016;
3. Violations at the property have been abated by City contractors on three different occasions;
4. The chimney in the rear has collapsed and bricks are missing from the exterior of the structure;
5. Extensive roof damage exists allowing infiltration of water into the structure;
6. The headers on the structure are rotten, mortar is loose and falling out of the joints;
7. Cornices are rotten and falling away from the building;
8. Interior of the structure has sustained long term weather exposure; and
9. Windows and doors are missing from the structure, and structure is open to the weather, people and animals.

The standard for designating a property as blighted is found in Section 5-85 et seq. of the Richmond City Code. These provisions state that the “blighted” designation may be made if a property “endangers the public’s health, safety or welfare because the structure or improvement upon the property is dilapidated, deteriorated, or violates minimum health and safety standards.”

By Resolution CPCR.2020.009, adopted May 4, 2020, the City Planning Commission determined the property located at 1201 Porter Street is blighted.

Staff finds that the property at 1201 Porter Street is blighted under Richmond City Code 5-120 and finds further that:

1. The owner of the blighted property has failed to present or implement an acceptable blight elimination work plan;
2. The work plan presented by staff for correcting the blighted conditions is consistent with city and state laws, reasonably designed to eliminate blighting conditions, and should be implemented; and,
3. The City’s work plan should be implemented as follows:
  - a. The property at 1201 Porter Street shall be acquired by the City.
  - b. The City shall either demolish the property or alternatively; renovate the property by either using contractors or by selling the property so that it is restored to a condition that it can be fully occupied.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of Ord. No. 2020-124.

## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **Site Description**

The property at 1201 Porter Street is a 7,095 SF (0.163 acre) parcel improved with a two-story residential structure of 3,456 SF of floor area constructed in 1876. The property is located at the southwest corner of West 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Porter Street, in the Manchester neighborhood.

### **Master Plan, Zoning, and Historic Designation**

The subject property is zoned in the R-8 Urban Residential District, which allows single-family and two-family detached and attached dwellings. The intent of the R-8 Urban Residential District is to preserve and enhance the established character of older urban residential neighborhoods in the inner areas of the City by ensuring that infill development, as well as redevelopment, will be consistent with the predominant existing development pattern of such neighborhoods.

The Downtown Plan includes the subject property in a General Urban Area. “The General Urban Area is characterized by medium-density, mixed-use development, distributed along medium-sized blocks. Old Manchester is an example of the general urban condition in Richmond. This district is characterized by single-family homes, sideyard houses, rowhouses, and small multifamily buildings, such as duplexes, triplexes, and quads. These buildings have variable setbacks and landscaping, and a limited mix of commercial and civic uses (p. 3.23).”

The property is located within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Commission of Architectural Review voted at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 25, 2020, to encourage the preservation of the Ingram House at 1201 Porter Street using historic rehabilitation tax credits and/or the tax abatement program.

### **Surrounding Area**

Properties to the west, north, and east of the subject property are located within the same R-8 Urban Residential District as the subject property. Properties to the south are located in the R-63 Multi-Family Urban Residential District. A mix of single-family, two-family, multi-family, institutional land uses, as well as vacant land are present in the immediate vicinity of the subject property.

### **Neighborhood Participation**

Staff notified adjacent property owners, residents, and the Manchester Alliance of the proposed ordinance. Letters of support have been received from individuals and Historic Richmond Foundation. Representatives of the property owner have expressed opposition.

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