



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2023-122: To authorize the special use of the properties known as 600 Tredegar Street and 501 South 5th Street for the purpose of wall signs, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: May 1, 2023

PETITIONER

Jeff Geiger, Hirschler Fleischer

LOCATION

600 Tredegar Street and 501 South 5th Street

PURPOSE

To authorize the special use of the properties known as 600 Tredegar Street and 501 South 5th Street for the purpose of wall signs, upon certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit that would allow for signage within a B-4 - Central Business District. While the signage is a permitted use with the B-4 - Central Business District, the proposed wall signs exceed the maximum square footage permitted. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that the proposal would be consistent with the recommendations of the City's Master Plan pertaining to the future land use designation of Downtown Mixed-Use.

Staff further finds that the proposed use would be consistent with Objective 4.1 k. to, "Promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion caused by a proliferation of signage, ensuring that public and private signage is appropriately scaled to the pedestrian experience" (Richmond 300 p. 100). The proposal reduces the number of signs permitted at the tops of the buildings while meeting the aggregate area requirement of the B-4 District. Moreover, the proposed signage would not dominate the building façades.

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 subject properties total approximately 2,398 square feet (0.05 acres). The properties are located between 5TH Street and 7TH Street.

Proposed Use of the Property

The proposal will authorize wall signage, as shown on the plans.

Master Plan

The Richmond 300 Master Plan designates the subject property as Downtown Mixed-Use. Primary uses are retail/office/ personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, institutional, government, and open space.

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.

The Richmond 300 Master Plan also includes Objective 4.1 k. to, "Promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion caused by a proliferation of signage, ensuring that public and private signage is appropriately scaled to the pedestrian experience" (Richmond 300 p. 100). Although these signs are not scaled to the pedestrian experience, staff finds that the proposed signage is appropriate given the scale of the building and height of the proposed wall signs.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is B-4 Central Business District. The following conditions of the proposed development do not comply with the current zoning regulations:

Sec. 30-516(2)(b)...One wall sign not exceeding 300 square feet may be located on each face of a building above a height of 100 feet when no other signs are located on such face above a height of 35 feet, provided that the permitted sign area for any building face may be increased by up to 25 percent by transferring permitted sign area from another face of the same building.

The proposed signage is as follows:

Building One: North Façade: ~834 sq. ft. South Façade: ~834 sq. ft.

Building Two: North Façade: ~224 sq. ft. South Façade: ~506 sq. ft.

Total: ~2398 sq. ft.

While the area of three of the four proposed signs exceed the 300 sq. ft. maximum, the aggregate area of the signage remains within the 2,400 sq. ft. maximum imposed on B-4 properties. Also, the proposal limits the number of signs at the tops of the buildings to two per building, rather than the four signs per building allowed on B-4 properties.

This special use permit would impose development conditions, including:

- (a) The Special Use of the Property shall be wall signage, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- (b) In addition to the signage permitted in Section 3(a) of this ordinance, (i) signage permitted in all zoning districts, pursuant to Sec. 30-505 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, and (ii) signage permitted in the B-4 Central Business District, pursuant to Sections 30-516(1), (2)(a), (3), and (4) of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, shall also be permitted on the Property.

Surrounding Area

The surrounding land uses consist of commercial, government, institutional, residential and outdoor recreation uses.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents, property owners, and the Gambles Hill Civic Association. Staff has received no letters or calls regarding this application.

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