



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2018-182: To rezone the properties known as 4910, 4920, and 4930 Forest Hill Avenue from the B-2 (POD-1) - Community Business District (Plan of Development Overlay District) to the UB-2 Urban Business District.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: July 2, 2018

PETITIONER

Mark Baker

LOCATION

4910, 4920, and 4930 Forest Hill Avenue

PURPOSE

To rezone the properties known as 4910, 4920, and 4930 Forest Hill Avenue from the B-2 (POD-1) - Community Business District (Plan of Development Overlay District) to the UB-2 Urban Business District.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is proposing a development containing a mix of residential and commercial uses. The proposed development would be restricted by the parking requirements and 25' minimum front yard setback of the existing underlying zoning district. The applicant is therefore requesting a rezoning to the UB-2 district, which allows more flexibility in site design with regard to parking, setbacks, and overall character.

Staff finds the proposed UB-2 District to be an appropriate zoning designation to accomplish the Community Commercial land use designation of the Master Plan.

Staff further finds that the proposed UB-2 District would enable the property to be developed in a manner that would address the challenges specified by the Master Plan regarding the Forest Hill/Westover Hills commercial area.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the rezoning request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The properties known as 4910, 4920, and 4930 Forest Hill Avenue consist of 57,670 SF (1.31 acres) of vacant land located on the south side of Forest Hill Avenue between Westover Hills Boulevard and Jahnke Road.

The properties are located in the City's Old South Planning District and the Forest View Neighborhood. This portion of Forest Hill Avenue is located within walkable proximity to well-established neighborhoods of Westover Hills, Forest View, and Forest Hills yet the commercial area has been slower to fully materialize. The properties in question were originally residential prior to 1960. Standard Drug and a parking lot occupied the parcels until 2007. The parcels have remained vacant and unimproved since 2008.

Proposed Use of Property

The applicant is proposing a development containing a mix of residential and commercial uses.

Master Plan

The City of Richmond's current Master Plan designates a future land use category for the subject properties as Community Commercial. Primary uses for this category "...include office, retail, personal service and other commercial and service uses, intended to provide the shopping and service needs of residents of a number of nearby neighborhoods or a section of the City. As compared to Neighborhood Commercial, this category includes a broader range of uses of greater scale and intensity, with greater vehicular access and orientation, but that are also compatible with nearby residential areas. Typical zoning classifications that may accommodate this land use category: B-2, UB, and UB-2." (City of Richmond Master Plan, p. 134.)

The Master Plan states that the Forest Hill/Westover Hills commercial area is "characterized by many conditions typical of older urban commercial centers. Specifically, businesses in these areas often are unable to expand due to site limitations; operate within functionally obsolete structures; present a negative image to the street; and are severely threatened by strong competition from newer, more successful suburban commercial centers" (p. 273).

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current Zoning District for the property is B-2 (POD-1) Community Business, (Plan of Development Overlay District). The rezoning of the property to the UB-2 Urban Business District would impose requirements regarding permitted uses, setbacks, screening, parking areas, height, and building façade fenestration.

The intent of the UB-2 Urban Business District is to encourage business areas with mixed uses and a densely developed pedestrian-oriented urban shopping character, compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods, and with minimal disruption from vehicle-oriented land uses and features that would detract from a safe, convenient and economically viable pedestrian environment. The district is intended to be more intensive and more mixed-use in character than the UB Urban Business District. It is intended to promote continuity of storefront character along principal street frontages, with minimum interruption by driveways and vehicle traffic across public sidewalk areas, and to promote continuity of building setbacks and heights and to encourage an active pedestrian environment by providing for windows in building facades along principal street frontages. The regulations within the district are intended to preserve the predominant scale and character of existing urban shopping areas, promote retention of existing structures and encourage that new development be compatible with such existing areas and structures.

Surrounding Area

Properties to the east, north, and west of the subject property are located in the same B-2 (POD-1) - Community Business District (Plan of Development Overlay District). Properties to the

south are located in the R-5 Single-Family Residential District. A mix of commercial, institutional, vacant, office, and single-family residential land uses are present in the vicinity.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff has received a letter of support from the Westover Hills Neighborhood Civic Association regarding this project.

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