



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review

Staff Report

Ord. No. 2021-210: To rezone the property known as 1003 Commerce Road from the M-2 Heavy Industrial District to the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: August 16, 2021

PETITIONER

Lory Markham – Markham Planning

LOCATION

1003 Commerce Road

PURPOSE

To rezone the property known as 1003 Commerce Road from the M-2 Heavy Industrial District to the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting to rezone the property to the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District, which allows a greater range of uses than the current M-2 Heavy Industrial District, and does not allow for industrial and auto-oriented uses currently permitted under the M-2 District.

Staff finds that the TOD-1 District is generally consistent with the recommendations of the City's Richmond 300 Master Plan pertaining to Industrial Mixed-Use, as well as the recommendations for the Manchester node, the Great Streets typology and Major Mixed-Use Street characteristics.

Staff finds that the property's close proximity to the Destination Mixed-Use areas directly across Commerce Road, which are recommended for a minimum height of five stories with no recommended maximum, aligns well with the proposed twelve story maximum of the TOD-1 district. These complimentary heights have the ability to ultimately create attractive street walls and frame Commerce Road with much improved massing and pedestrian experience consistent with what is envisioned for the Manchester node.

Staff finds that the intent of the TOD-1 district is consistent with several characteristics of the current Industrial Mixed-Use designation including street-oriented facades, active ground floor uses, and rear off-street parking.

Staff finds that the proposed rezoning is consistent with changing conditions in the area, in which vacant or underutilized parcels, many of which have historically been used for industrial or warehousing purposes, continue to be redeveloped for residential and mixed-use purposes, based on market demand.

Therefore staff recommends approval of the rezoning request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property consists of approximately 151,153 SF, or 3.47 acres, of land and is improved with five buildings constructed between 1952 and 1970, totaling 67,492 sq. ft. The properties are located in the Oak Grove Neighborhood between Gordon and Dinwiddie Avenues.

Proposed Use of the Property

Uses allowable within the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates these parcels as Industrial Mixed Use. Such areas are defined as "formerly traditional industrial areas that are transitioning to mixed-use because of their proximity to growing neighborhoods and changes in market conditions. These areas may still retain some light industrial uses." The development style consists of a mix of building types with low-scale, post-industrial buildings that are adapted for a new use are adjacent to new taller residential and/or office buildings. These areas allow "maker uses" to continue while encouraging more individuals to live, work, and play in the area. Buildings should have street-oriented façades with windows and door openings along street frontages. New light industrial uses are compatible with residential and office uses, and are attractively buffered. New developments continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity. 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 are required on street-oriented commercial frontages. Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. New driveway entrances are prohibited on priority and principal street frontages and minimal driveway entrances are allowed on secondary streets. Vehicular access to parcels should use alleys where possible. Loading for trucks must be provided off-street. Parking lots and parking areas should be located to the rear of street-facing buildings. Intensity: Medium- to high density, three to eight stories. Primary Uses: Retail/office/personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space. Secondary Uses: Institutional and government. (p. 62)

The property is also a part of the City's designated Great Streets typology and categorized as a "Major Mixed-Use Street", which are intended to:

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, through commercial and mixed-use areas
- Prioritize use and density-scaled sidewalks and crosswalks
- Require form elements, such as buildings to the street with parking in the rear, as well as building windows and entrances on the street
- Incorporate streetscape features, such as trees, benches, and trash receptacles

- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops
- Prioritize the curbside for walking, bicycling, transit, and short-term parking access and loading for local shops and restaurants (Ibid. p. 72)

Great Streets are significant entrances to the city and serve as major connectors between city destinations. Great Streets are roadways that require robust attention to make them prominent promenades to the city.

The property is also located within the Manchester Node. The Vision for this node is: Manchester continues to increase in population and economic activity to support a thriving business corridor along Hull Street. The formerly industrial part of Manchester provides jobs as well as housing. Manchester is connected to South Richmond and the Downtown Core by a network of greenways along former railways, along roads, and along Manchester Canal. A variety of housing options in Manchester are available to low-, moderate-, and high-income individuals. Manchester's interconnected street grid is enhanced with street trees and improved infrastructure to support pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

Primary next steps for the Node are:

- Corridor Plan: Develop a corridor plan for Commerce Road with recommendations on how to transform the road into a Great Street with amenities such as buildings addressing the street, a greenway (the Ashland to Petersburg Trail), street trees, underground utilities, lighting, and other amenities and encourage redevelopment and business growth (Goal 1, Goal 8, Goal 9).
- Rezone: Rezone areas of Manchester in alignment with the Future Land Use Plan to allow residential development in the Industrial Mixed Use areas that do not currently allow residential uses (Goal 1, Goal 14).
- Design: Implement design standards to create a high-quality, well-designed urban realm, including elements such as street lights and exploring the creation of signature public art (Goal 4).
- Riverfront Plan: Implement the Phase 1 recommendations identified in the Riverfront Plan for Manchester (Goal 4, Goal 17).
- Ped/Bike Infrastructure: Improve pedestrian and bike infrastructure to/from this Node, specifically

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is M-2 Heavy Industrial District. The City's Zoning Administration reviewed the application and provided the following comments:

The proposal is to rezone one parcel totaling 3.47 acres at 1003 Commerce Road from M-2 (Heavy Industrial) to TOD-1 (Transit-Oriented Nodal). No detailed plans for development were submitted but the proposal is to "facilitate future development that would be permitted under the regulations of the TOD-1 district". No proffers are proposed with the rezoning. Please be advised of the following changes with the rezoning:

ZONING AND USE: The current zoning district (M-2) permits many commercial uses, including manufacturing, wholesaling and distribution establishments.

PROPOSED: The proposed zoning district (TOD-1) permits a variety of residential and commercial uses, including retail, offices, personal service businesses and restaurants.

YARDS: The M-2 district has the following yard requirements for this location:

- (1) Front yard. None
- (2) Side yards. None
- (3) Rear yard. None

PROPOSED: The TOD-1 district has the following yard requirements for these properties:

(1) Front yard.

a. For dwelling units located on the ground floor:

1. A front yard of at least ten feet shall be required. In no case shall a front yard with a depth greater than fifteen feet be permitted, except for pedestrian plazas, outdoor dining areas and other features.

b. For all other uses:

1. No front yard is required. In no case shall a front yard with depth greater than ten feet be permitted, except for pedestrian plazas, outdoor dining areas and other features.

(2) Side yards. None

(3) Rear yard. None

HEIGHT: In the M-2 district, no building or structure shall exceed 45 feet in height, provided that additional height shall be permitted, except for sign structures, when all portions of a building or structure over 45 feet in height are set back from side and rear lot lines a minimum of one foot for each two feet of height in excess of 45 feet and provided, further, that no portion of a building or structure shall penetrate an inclined plane originating at the centerline of an abutting street and extending over the lot at an inclination of one foot horizontal for each three feet vertical.

PROPOSED: In the TOD-1 zoning district, no building shall exceed twelve stories in height. Every main building hereinafter constructed shall have a minimum height of not less than two stories, except that porches, porticos and similar structures attached to a main building may be of lesser height.

PROPOSED USABLE OPEN SPACE: In the proposed TOD-1 zoning district, a usable open space ratio of not less than 0.10 shall be provided for newly constructed buildings or portions thereof devoted to dwelling uses.

PROPOSED PARKING: In the proposed TOD-1 zoning district, off-street parking spaces shall not be required for uses other than dwelling uses, hotels and motels. For multifamily dwelling units, no parking spaces are required for 1 to 16 dwelling units. One parking space is required per 2 dwelling units over 16 units. The parking requirement in the existing M-2 district is determined by the use(s) listed in Sec. 30-710.1(a) of the Zoning Ordinance.

PROPOSED REQUIREMENTS FOR AREAS DEVOTED TO PARKING OR CIRCULATION OF VEHICLES: The proposed TOD-1 zoning district does not permit areas devoted to the parking or circulation of vehicles to be located between the main building on a lot and the street line, nor shall such areas be located closer to the street than the main building on the lot. On a lot having more than one street frontage, this requirement applies only along the principal street frontage of the lot. In addition, the TOD-1 district does not permit a driveway intersecting a street which constitutes the principal street frontage of a lot shall be permitted when other street frontage or alley access is available to serve such lot. These requirements do not apply to the existing M-2 zoning district.

BUILDING FAÇADE FENESTRATION: There are no fenestration requirements in the existing M-2 zoning district. Building façade fenestration requirements, as listed in Section 30-457.10, apply to buildings in the TOD-1 zoning district.

SIGNAGE: The M-2 zoning district permits three square feet of signage for each linear foot of lot frontage along the street with a maximum of 300 square feet for each street frontage. Wall signs, projecting signs, suspended signs, awning signs, canopy signs, freestanding signs, roof signs and off-premises signs shall be permitted.

PROPOSED: Signage in the TOD-1 zoning district shall not exceed two square feet for each linear foot of lot frontage along the street nor in any case 200 square feet for each street frontage. Wall signs, projecting signs, suspended signs, awning signs, canopy signs, and freestanding signs shall be permitted. One freestanding sign not exceeding 20 square feet in area or 5 feet in height shall be permitted.

The intent of the TOD-1 district is to encourage dense, walkable transit-oriented development consistent with the objectives of the master plan and to promote enhancement of the character of this development along principal corridors, at key gateways, and at nodes of high activity located near transit service, bicycle infrastructure, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes. The district regulations are also intended to safeguard the character of adjoining properties by only being applied in areas that meet the criteria above, with buffering by setbacks and screening or transitional districts to lower intensity residential areas.

The district regulations are intended to encourage redevelopment and place-making, including adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings, to create a high-quality urban realm. They are intended to improve streetscape character by providing continuity of building setbacks, to enhance public safety by encouraging an active pedestrian environment consistent with the mixed-use character of the district by providing for windows in building façades along street frontages, and to promote an environment that is safe for walking and biking.

Surrounding Area

Properties the East are in the M-2 District. Properties to the North are in the TOD-1, B-3 General Business, and M-2 Districts. Properties to the West and South are in the M-2 and M-1 Light Industrial Districts.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents, property owners, and the Blackwell Historic Community, and the Oak Grove Civic Associations, of the proposed Rezoning. Staff has not received any letters of support or opposition for this application.

Staff Contact: Jonathan Brown, Senior Planner, Land Use Administration, 804-646-5734