



CITY OF RICHMOND

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

Ord. No. 2025-273 To authorize the special use of the properties known as 1201 West Franklin Street and 1205 West Franklin Street for the purpose of signage, upon certain terms and conditions. (2nd District)

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: January 6, 2026

PETITIONER

Edmund McElroy on behalf of St. James' Episcopal Church

LOCATION

1201 and 1205 West Franklin Street

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting authorization for additional signage in a R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential District. Underlying feature requirements cannot be met. A Special Use Permit is therefore necessary to proceed with this request.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that proposed signage is compatible with the existing use at the property and will not be disruptive to the character of the neighborhood.

Staff concludes that the proposed ordinance conditions substantially satisfy the safeguards established in the City Charter concerning the granting of Special Use Permits. 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 property is located in the Fan neighborhood on the corner of West Franklin Street and Birch Street. The property is home to St. James' Episcopal Church.

Proposed Use of the Property

Church with signage.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Neighborhood Mixed-Use, which is defined as existing or new highly walkable urban neighborhoods that are predominantly residential with a small, but critical, percentage of parcels providing retail, office, personal service, and institutional uses.

Development Style: These areas feature a variety of building types that are close to one another and create a unified street wall. The building size, density, and zoning districts for these areas vary depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement existing context. Setbacks, plazas, and parks create a sense of place and community gathering areas. New developments on larger parcels continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity within the neighborhood and to adjacent neighborhoods. In historic neighborhoods, small-scale commercial uses exist today or should be allowed to reestablish. In new neighborhoods, small scale commercial buildings should be introduced.

Ground Floor: Regardless of use, buildings should engage the street with features such as street-oriented façades with windows and door openings along street frontages. Appropriate setbacks, open space, front porches, elevated ground floors, and other features that provide a sense of privacy should be provided for residential uses.

Mobility: Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. New driveways are prohibited on Priority and Principal Street frontages. Vehicular access to parcels should use alleys wherever possible. Parking areas should be located to the rear of street-facing buildings.

Intensity: Building heights are generally two to four stories. Buildings taller than four stories may be found along major streets. Parcels are generally between 1,500 and 5,000 sq. ft.

Primary Uses: Single-family houses, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), and open space.

Secondary Uses: Large multifamily buildings (10+units), retail/office/personal service, institutional, cultural, and government.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is R-6 Single-Family Attached District. The following features of the proposed development do not comply with the current zoning regulations:

Section 30-506.

-Signs are not permitted to be taller than eight feet

The proposed sign is nine feet in height

-Signs cannot be located within five feet of any street line or within 15 feet of any other property line.

The proposed sign is located closer than five feet to the street line

This special use permit would impose development conditions, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as signage, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- No parking shall be required for the Special Use.

- The height of the Special Use shall not exceed nine feet, two and three-quarters inches, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- All building materials, elevations, and site improvements shall be substantially as shown on the Plans, subject to the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Commission of Architectural Review.
- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.

Surrounding Area

The surrounding area is a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified the Fan District and Monument Avenue Civic Associations, area residents and property owners. Staff has received no letters to date regarding the proposal.

Staff Contact:

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