



CITY OF RICHMOND

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

Ord. No. 2022-336: To authorize the special use of the property known as 801 East Main Street for the purpose of a mixed-use building without operable windows, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: December 5, 2022

PETITIONER

Lee A. Shadbolt, Commonwealth Architects

LOCATION

801 East Main Street

PURPOSE

To authorize the special use of the property known as 801 East Main Street for the purpose of a mixed-use building without operable windows, upon certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is proposing to convert an existing multi-story office building into multifamily dwelling units with ground-floor non-residential uses. While the proposed uses are permitted the property would not meet the current fenestration requirements within the B-4 District which call for operable windows for dwelling uses. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that the proposed mixed-use building, to include residential units and ground-floor commercial uses, is well aligned with the goals of the Downtown Mixed-Use Development Style within the Richmond 300 master plan.

Staff finds that installing operable windows would adversely impact the historic integrity of the building.

Staff also finds that the mixed-use building satisfies the goals of the Downtown Core Priority Growth Node within the Richmond 300 master plan which is an area which will see "...the most significant growth in population and development over the next 20 years." The Downtown Core node is envisioned to be a "...center with significant cultural, entertainment, government, and business destinations as well as shopping, housing, and unique place-based attractions." (p. 24) The proposed application aligns well with the above vision.

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 property is located downtown on East Main Street at the corner of East Main Street and South 8th Street. The property is currently a 17,645 sq. ft. (.41 acre) parcel of land improved with a multi-story office building.

Proposed Use of the Property

Conversion of the office building into multifamily dwelling units with ground-floor non-residential uses.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Downtown Mixed Use, which is defined as the "Central business district of the Richmond region features high-density development with office buildings, residential buildings, and a mix of complementary uses, including regional destinations in a highly walkable urban environment."

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.

Secondary Uses: Not applicable.

The proposed density of the project is approximately 731 units per acre.

Downtown Core Priority Growth Node: A Node that is encouraging for growth in residents, jobs, and commercial activity over the next 20 years. (p. 25)

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The proposed use does not conform to section 30-440.7, concerning building façade fenestration, which requires that, for dwelling uses, windows shall be double-hung, single-hung, awning, or casement type and fixed windows shall be permitted only as a component of a system including operable windows within a single wall opening.

The special use permit would impose conditions on the property, including:

(a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as a mixed-use building without operable windows, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(b) Operable windows as required by section 30-440.7 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, shall not be required for the Special Use.

(c) All mechanical equipment, including heating, ventilation, and air conditioning units, serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.

4(c) Facilities for the collection of refuse shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Director of Public Works. Such facilities shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from adjacent properties and public streets.

Surrounding Area

The area is primarily commercial offices, retail shops, and institutional uses, with some multi-family residential present in the vicinity.

Affordability

The median household income for the Richmond region is currently \$71,223 per year.* The affordability threshold is 30% of household income towards housing costs, which equates to \$21,367 per year, or \$1,781 per month, or less, to avoid a housing cost burden. Based upon the median household income for the Richmond region, and the estimated pricing provided by the applicant, the proposed units are projected to be priced at current market rates.

**(U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates)*

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents, property owners, and the Downtown Neighborhood Association of the proposed Special Use Permit. Staff has not received a letter of support or opposition for this application.

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