



## CITY OF RICHMOND

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

**Ord. No. 2024-179:** To authorize the special use of the property known as 1400 School Road for the purpose of student housing, containing up to three stories and up to four student housing units, that will individually house more than three unrelated persons, upon certain terms and conditions. (3rd District)

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**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** August 19, 2025

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#### **PETITIONER**

Claudia Del Valle and Ron Semel

#### **LOCATION**

1400 School Road (previously 1800 Bath St.)

#### **PURPOSE**

The applicant is requesting approval to construct a three-story student housing building. The proposed use cannot meet underlying zoning regulations concerning lot area and width, yard setbacks, as well as the definition of family. Therefore, a Special Use Permit is required.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff finds that the subject property is an adjacent parcel to Virginia Union University and that the proposed off-campus dormitory is intended to serve the university's student population. As a result, the proposed student housing is an appropriate secondary use to institutional land uses, making this proposal consistent with the City's Master Plan future land use designation of Institutional.

Staff finds that the applicant is proposing that the building's entrance to face School Road, which better accommodates both students and surrounding neighbors and reduces potential impacts to Bath Street.

Staff finds that the development supports the growing need for high-quality student housing associated with Virginia Union University and helps to address population density increases in the City of Richmond and Northside neighborhoods.

Staff concludes that the proposed use would maintain proximity to the university, encourage walking and biking, and mitigate potential traffic congestion on interior neighborhood streets such as Bath Street, which substantially satisfies 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.

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## FINDINGS OF FACT

### Site Description

The property is located in the Virginia Union neighborhood on the corner of School Road and Bath Street, in an R-53 Multi-family zoning district. The property is 2,600 sq. ft. and .06 acre lot.

### Proposed Use of the Property

The proposed use would allow up to 45 students to live in the building.

### Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Institutional, which is defined as, "Public and quasi-public entities, such as local, state, and federal government, hospitals, universities, schools, and religions institutions.

Development Style: Several buildings owned by an institution are often connected by an engaging character that creates a campus-like environment.

Ground Floor: Active commercial ground floor uses are required on street-oriented commercial frontages.

Residential uses may be permitted on the ground floor in certain sections of the area. Regardless, ground floor residential units should still have street-oriented façades with setbacks, front yards, and balconies where appropriate.

Mobility: 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. Ground floor parking is prohibited on principal street frontages.

Intensity: Varies.

Primary Uses: Institutional, cultural, government, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Retail/office/personal service and multi-family.

### Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is R-53 Multi-family Residential District. The following section of the zoning ordinance is not met:

#### 30-418.4, Lot area and width

Multifamily dwellings shall be located on lots of not less than 5,000 square feet in total area and not less than 1,250 square feet in area for each dwelling unit.

*The parcel is 2,600 square feet in total area.*

#### 30-418.5, Yards

(1) Front yard. There shall be a front yard with a depth of not less than 15 feet (see Article VI, Division 4 of this chapter).

(2) Side and rear yards. Side and rear yards shall be as follows:

a. Side and rear yards for single-family and two-family dwellings and buildings accessory thereto shall be as required in the R-7 district and set forth in Section 30-413.6 (see Article VI, Divisions 3, 4 and 9 of this chapter).

b. Side and rear yards for uses and buildings other than single-family and two-family dwellings and buildings accessory thereto shall be not less than 15 feet in depth.

*Side-yard distance is 7' on one side.*

30-1220.33(2), Definition of the term "family,"

.33 Family shall consist of persons living together as a single housekeeping unit and shall include any of the following: ....

(2) Not more than three unrelated persons or a combination of related and unrelated persons;

*This dwelling is proposed to have up to 45 unrelated or a combination of related and unrelated persons in the entire building.*

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

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as student housing, containing up to three stories and up to four student housing units, that will individually house more than three unrelated persons, substantially as shown on the Plans. For the purpose of this ordinance, the term "student housing unit" shall mean a room or group of rooms within the building constituting a separate and independent unit occupied or intended for occupancy by one to twelve students and containing one kitchenette. Student housing units shall be occupied exclusively by individuals that are or have been registered, whether full-time or part-time, within the previous 12 months at a post-secondary educational institution, including, without limitation, a two-year community college, a specialty education center, a four-year public or private institution, or a post-graduate program. In no case shall the normal common area of the units, such as the living room, family room, or dining room, be used as sleeping areas or not be available on an equal or common basis to all occupants.
- No more than 45 total tenants shall live on the Property, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- No more than 12 unrelated persons or combination of related and unrelated persons shall reside within the individual student housing units.
- No fewer than 20 bicycle parking spaces shall be provided on the Property.
- All building materials, building colors, and site improvements, including landscaping, shall be substantially as shown on the Plans.
- The height of the Special Use shall not exceed three stories, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- Interior doors to bedrooms within dwelling units may contain exterior locking mechanisms.
- Leases of occupancy shall be 30 days or greater in length and may include separate rental agreements for different occupants of the same unit.
- 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**

All adjacent and nearby residences are located within the same R-53 zone. Across school road, the zoning changes to I-Institutional. The area is primarily single-family residential and uses associated with the Virginia Union University campus.

**Neighborhood Participation**

Staff notified area residents and Edgehill Chamberlayne Court Civic Association of the proposed Special Use Permit. Staff has not received any feedback from neighbors since introduction.

**Staff Contact:** Madison Wilson, Planner, Land Use Administration, 804-646-7436