



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2025-215: To authorize the special use of the property known as 1705 Commonwealth Avenue for the purpose of a space for outdoor events, upon certain terms and conditions.

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

PETITIONER

Nadia Anderson

LOCATION

1705 Commonwealth Avenue

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to authorize outdoor events. Outdoor events are not permitted within the Transit Oriented Nodal District. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposed number and scale of weekly events would ~~not~~ be enforceable by the City's Zoning Administration.

Staff finds that the applicant has ~~not~~ agreed to the enforceable conditions recommended by the Zoning Administration that would allow for a positive recommendation to the Commission. These included:

- *A maximum of 52 outdoor event days per year, not to exceed ~~one (1) event per week~~ five (5) per month.*
- *Events shall be permitted between the hours of 9:00am through 10:00pm, Monday through Sunday.*
- *Any outdoor, amplified music shall conclude before 9:00pm, Monday through Sunday.*

Staff finds that with the ordinance conditions the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of Special Use Permits, are ~~not~~ 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 ~~denial~~ approval of the Special Use Permit request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property is located in the Sauer's Gardens neighborhood on Commonwealth Avenue between Westmoreland and Shenandoah Streets. The property is currently a 7,560 sq. ft. (.17 acre) improved parcel of land.

Proposed Use of the Property

Outdoor Events.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Corridor Mixed-Use, which is envisioned "...to provide for medium- to medium-high-density pedestrian- and transit-oriented development."

Development Style:

The building size, density, and zoning districts for these areas may vary significantly depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement existing context. Uses may be mixed horizontally in several buildings on a block or vertically within the same building. Developments continue 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 are 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 streets. Parking areas are located within the structure and to the rear of buildings and require screening; shared parking requirements are encouraged.

Intensity:

Buildings generally ranging from two to ten stories, based on street widths and depending on the historic context and stepping down in height adjacent to residential areas. New buildings that are taller than historical buildings should step back from the build-to line after matching the height of the predominant cornice line of the block.

Primary Uses:

Retail/office/personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space.

Secondary Uses:

Single-family houses, institutional, and government.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District. The proposed use is not permitted due to the following conflicting sections:

Sec. 30-457.2. - Permitted principal and accessory uses.

(24). *Recreation and entertainment uses, including theaters, except that if such use is situated within 100 feet of any property in any R district, such use shall be located within a completely enclosed building.*

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

(a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as a space for outdoor events, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(b) All site improvements shall be substantially as shown on the Plans.

(c) No less than two off-street parking spaces shall be provided for the Special Use, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(d) All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.

(e) A maximum of 52 outdoor event days per calendar year, not to exceed ~~three events per week~~ five (5) per month, shall be permitted.

(f) Events shall be permitted between the hours of ~~8:00~~ 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., Monday through Sunday.

(g) No more than ~~150~~ 120 attendees shall be on-site during outdoor events. There shall be no less than one staff member present on-site for every 50 attendees.

(h) Any outdoor, amplified music shall conclude before ~~10:00~~ 9:00 p.m., Monday through Sunday.

(i) Operation of the Special Use shall be conducted strictly in accordance with the document entitled "Special Use Permit Number: SUP-152014-2024, Property Address: 1705 Commonwealth Avenue, Applicant: Nadia Anderson/Lavender Hill, LLC," prepared by Lavender Hill, LLC, and dated April 29, 2025, a copy of which is attached to and made a part of this ordinance.

Surrounding Area

All properties to directly to north, west, and east are located within the TOD-1 zone. The properties directly adjacent to the south are zoned R-5 Single-Family Residential. The immediate area is primarily a combination of commercial along Broad Street and single family residential within the Sauer's Gardens Neighborhood.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified the Sauer's Gardens Civic Association of the proposed Special Use Permit (SUP). To this date, staff has received letters of support for the SUP from individuals and organizations, as well as letters of opposition from nearby residents.

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