

RICHMOND PLANNING COMMISSION
SCENIC VIRGINIA COMMENTS RE: AGENDA ITEM #8
January 21, 2020

Re: CPR.2019.119, To Declare an Intent to Amend the Official Zoning Map and Text for the Purpose of Creating a Historic Viewshed Protection Overlay District to Protect The View Of The James River From Libby Hill Park

Esteemed Planning Commission members –

My name is Leighton Powell, and I have the privilege of serving as Executive Director of Scenic Virginia, the only statewide organization dedicated solely to the preservation, protection, and enhancement of the scenic beauty of our Commonwealth, with a particular focus on the preservation of significant views and vistas.

For many years, the preservation of Richmond's historic panorama of the James River from Libby Hill Park – known as The View That Named Richmond – has been a priority project for us. We are therefore pleased to support the pending Planning Commission Resolution that would study the creation of an overlay district for this internationally important vista.

In addition to my work with Scenic Virginia, I serve as the Vice-Chair of the Falls-of-the-James Scenic River Advisory Committee, a Governor-appointed group whose purview is the designated stretch of State Scenic River in Richmond, the accompanying area of riverfront, and the associated views of and from the river.

On January 16, the Falls Committee met with Planning Director Mark Olinger to discuss the proposed Resolution. We shared our enthusiasm for an overlay district, as well as a suggestion that the currently proposed viewshed area should be expanded to include the entirety of The View That Named Richmond. We are grateful to Mr. Olinger for taking the time to update us on the process and hear our concerns.

We have scheduled a site visit with Mr. Olinger at The View in Libby Hill Park for Friday, January 31. We will take the opportunity to invite representatives of other organizations that have signaled an interest in The View to attend that meeting and to be a part of the public process as it moves forward.

With that in mind, we want to indicate our support for moving the Resolution forward with a note that the area of the viewshed overlay district will be determined in a public process.

Thank you for your time. I apologize that I'm not able to attend today's meeting due to Scenic Virginia's current work in the 2020 Virginia General Assembly Session.

Sincerely,

Leighton Powell
Executive Director, Scenic Virginia