
Support for Ordinance No. 2026-183

From Christie Thompson <christie@campfireandco.com>

Date Wed 8/12/2026 12:46 PM

To Wilson, Madison E. - PDR <Madison.Wilson@rva.gov>; Trump, Shaianna L. - PDR <Shaianna.Trump2@rva.gov>; Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR <Alyson.Oliver@rva.gov>

Cc Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office <Stephanie.Lynch@rva.gov>

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Hi there,

I am a 5th district resident and I would like to voice support for Ordinance No. 2026-183 and the plan to preserve the historic Virginia Home structure and convert the use to multifamily apartments once the current residents relocate to their new facility. The plan maintains and expands existing parking options, preserves the current structure, and adds individual entrances along Meadow Street to further integrate the building with the existing street grid.

The proposed use as a 131-unit rental apartment building is a less intensive use than the current use as a residential care facility housing 130 individuals with special needs, 260 staff members, a commercial kitchen, medical facility and pharmacy, and more consistent with the residential nature of the existing neighborhood.

The proposed use of the site requires fewer parking spots, generates fewer trips, and decreases the amount of large vehicle deliveries to the site, all while offering to historically preserve a significant building in the history of the City of Richmond.

Thank you,
Christie Thompson
1903 Georgia Avenue

—



Christie Thompson

Partner, Growth & Strategy

[Campfire & Co.](#) | 757.344.1886

2219 W Main St. Richmond, VA 23220

Claire Guthrie Gastañaga
1127 South Meadow Street
Richmond, VA 23220
Cg2cnx@gmail.com

August 7, 2026

The Honorable Stephanie A. Lynch
Councilmember, Richmond City Council
Richmond Central 5th Voter District
BY EMAIL: stephanie.lynch@rva.gov

Re: Ordinance 2026-183

Special Use Permit (SUP) for the Virginia Home building and adjacent parking lot

Dear Councilwoman Lynch:

As you know, the ordinance that would permit the special use of the long-standing Virginia Home building on Hampton Street that backs up on South Meadow Street was introduced by Mayor Avula (By Request) on July 27, 2026, with Planning Commission consideration to take place on August 18, 2026, and a public hearing scheduled before the Council on September 14, 2026. The ordinance was requested to be placed on the "consent" agenda.

An intraoffice memo to you and other members of the Council from the Director of Planning and Development Review dated March 6, 2026, which is appended to the draft ordinance, indicates that only the Byrd Park Civic Association was notified of the application and that "additional community notification will take place after introduction." While there has been significant attention given to the corollary townhome development proposed by developers working with the Virginia Home for the vacant block at 900 South Meadow, little discussion has been had with neighbors about the specifics of the much larger proposed development as indicated by the application itself. For example, while representatives of the developers and the Virginia Home did attend a regular meeting of the Randolph Community Association on September 25, 2025, to "tell" not "ask" people what they were going to do, the focus of the presentation was on the development of the 900 block of South Meadow rather than the Virginia Home itself. The same was true of the "open house" held on the empty block at 900 South Meadow on October 4, 2025. It is significant that despite this instruction

on the form for applying for a Special Use Permit (SUP) – “Letters from the associations and property owners stating their position in regard to the request should be submitted with the application.” --- no such letters accompanied the developer’s filing. The November 2025 letter from Markham Planning simply asserted that they had received “mostly positive feedback” with “several neighbors expressing concerns around traffic, speed along South Meadow Street, and parking.”

It is unclear why, given the developer’s apparent plans to proceed with the redevelopment of the Virginia Home building only after the townhome project at 900 South Meadow Street is well underway or complete, the consideration of the Special Use Permit for the Virginia Home property is being calendared for consideration over the summer holidays, with limited public notice or community engagement specifically about this SUP vs. the 900 S Meadow Street SUP.

For this reason, we ask that the introduced Ordinance 2026-183 be removed from the Council’s agenda until a number of questions about the proposed redevelopment of the Virginia Home building itself can be answered and specific discussion and consideration given to mitigating the impact of this proposed new nonconforming use on the neighborhood surrounding the property, including Byrd Park itself.

Here are some initial questions that need to be answered so that the community can participate meaningfully in discussions regarding the redevelopment of the Virginia Home building site and adjacent parking lot:

- 1) What entity actually owns the properties to be developed at this time (both the 900 South Meadow lot and the Hampton Street building)? Is it the Virginia Home or the Virginia Home Foundation? If the latter, when was the ownership of the property transferred? The answer to this question may be relevant to any future effort to develop either property using the new Faith in Housing law that goes into effect on January 1, 2027.
- 2) What is the status of and impact of the ongoing efforts to designate the Virginia Home building on Hampton Street as historic? Would the designation apply to the entire building, including the undistinguished nonconforming use additions added in the 70’s and 80’s or only to the portions of the building constructed before 1971. Is this relevant to the “economics” of the development by making local, state or federal tax credits available? A Department of Historic Resources preliminary information form from August of 2025 includes this information:

The Virginia Home property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an excellent example of Art Deco architecture designed by the renowned Richmond firm Baskervill and Lambert. The Byrd Park building's design predated Baskervill's grander vision for the West Hospital building on East Broad Street, but incorporates many of the same stylistic qualities. Their continued work at the Virginia Home property speaks to the enduring legacy of one of the nation's oldest continually operating architectural firms. The proposed Period of significance is 1930-1971, ending in the year of the last historic construction at the site.

The historic use of the site to provide life and health care for people with disabilities also could meet the criteria for historic designation, but would that continue to be the case if the use changes?

The organization's model of providing care is the only one of its kind to date in the Commonwealth, and its founding by Mary Tinsley Greenhow provides important insight into the role of women and individuals with disabilities in advocating for quality healthcare.

- 3) What is the actual scope of the proposed redevelopment of the Virginia Home building? The March staff memo says that the proposal is for 161 units. A November 4, 2025, letter from MarkamPlanning to the Director of the Department of Planning and Development Review and the proposed ordinance refer to 131 dwelling units.
- 4) How many of the proposed units will be made available as affordable housing for how many people? Although the developer has represented in public meetings that the proposed redevelopment will include such units, there is no language in the proposed ordinance requiring such nor is there any reference to affordable units in the November 4, 2025, letter about the proposed development from MarkhamPlanning to the Director of the Department of Planning and Development Review.

As you know, the City Charter requires that, prior to City Council approval, it must be shown that the proposed special use will not: 1. Be detrimental to the safety, health, morals and general welfare of the community involved; 2. Create congestion in streets, roads, alleys and other public ways and places in the area involved; 3. Create hazards from fire, panic or other dangers; 4. Tend to cause overcrowding of land and an undue concentration of population; 5. Adversely affect or interfere with public or private schools, parks, playgrounds, water supplies, sewage disposal, transportation or other public requirements,

conveniences and improvements; or 6. Interfere with adequate light and air. This review should be particularly exacting, where, as here, the proposed special use is not in conformance with the Richmond 300 Master Plan which designates these parcels for residential use, primarily single family homes, accessory dwelling units and open space.

The current proposal to redevelop the Virginia Home fails to meet the City Charter requirements in at least the following ways:

- 1) The development of 131 residences (with up to two bedrooms) on two acres will create additional congestion in the streets and roads of the surrounding community. This is true regardless of the parking plan proposed by the developers projected to include a total of 169 spaces including 62 spaces in the flat lot on South Meadow, 5 spaces off a new drop off loop, 49 “existing” on street spaces on Hampton, Powhatan, and Appomattox Streets, and especially the 53 “new” on-street parking spaces the developer proposes to work with the Department of Public Works to “allow” on Lake Road in Byrd Park. The expected number of vehicles for the residents of 131 apartment units would be **130 to 180 cars** overall (averaging roughly 1.0 to 1.3 cars per apartment unit or ~0.7 to 0.9 per resident). This does not include the cars of people staffing the facility. Even assuming that the City would agree to allow overnight parking on Lake Road in Byrd Park, the developer’s conclusion that the traffic and parking demand would “noticeably decrease” from the demand placed on the community by the 260 staff currently working at the Virginia Home is not supported by the facts of real life. The staff at the Virginia Home work in shifts so not all park at the Home all the time, 24 hours a day and they don’t all come and go at the same time. The cars of people who live in the building may be parked 24 hours a day without moving for people who work from home or who are away on business or vacation. Since there is no plan to offer an amenity in the building like a market or snack shop and no walkable access from the building to buy a quart of milk, other residents could be coming and going from the building using their cars (possibly multiple times a day) to run errands or commute to work. In addition, people living in 131 units are likely to have more frequent individual deliveries of packages, meals, and groceries than the kinds of once-a-day large deliveries received by the Virginia Home of needed supplies, provisions for the food prep, etc.

- 2) Rather than “creating a sense of community” along the 1100 block of South Meadow Street, the plan to create units in what is now a gym that would face and open onto South Meadow without a bump in for parking in front of the units will create a traffic safety hazard on South Meadow when folks stop in front of these new doorways to drop off residents or pull over along South Meadow for deliveries to these units or to run inside with their groceries. In addition, increased demand for parking on Appomattox will create additional safety hazards for the two way traffic on the narrow part of the street next to the Virginia Home building and on the portion of the street across from the Virginia Home where parking on both sides or too close to the intersection of Appomattox and Meadow can prevent fire trucks and school buses from making the turn from Appomattox onto South Meadow and vice versa.
- 3) The plan to include 131 residences in the redevelopment of the Virginia Home will tend to cause overcrowding and undue population. Currently, as the developer’s November letter points out, there are 130 residents at the Virginia Home. A realistic expected population for a development with 131 units (including studios, one bedroom/one bath, and two bedroom/two bath units) would be between 175 and 210 individuals (related or unrelated). A peak or full capacity range could be 320 to 350 residents. Particularly given the recent reductions in bus service in the neighborhood, these new residents would be largely dependent on their private vehicles to attend to the basics of daily life, like buying a quart of milk, going to the grocery store, commuting to work, or going out to dinner or to the movies since no other option is available within walking distance in the neighborhood.
- 4) The plan to park 53 cars on Lake Road in Byrd Park would interfere with the ability of the public to enjoy the park and with the safety of residents adjacent to the park. Currently, to address previously expressed safety and traffic concerns by neighboring property owners, Lake Road is part of the Park which is open only from sunrise to sunset. If parking is allowed along Lake Road that would be a currently unpermitted 24-hour use of the park road. How would the park closure be enforceable along Lake Road if the new spaces are not “permitted” in some way? And, if the “new” parking is “permitted” for residents of the building only and allowed to be used 24 hours a day without limit, that will interfere with the public’s access to the park. In addition, the addition of as many as 200 or more residents with the

park at their front door will increase utilization of the Park (which is good) but may require greater maintenance and trash pickup.

Some of these concerns could be alleviated somewhat in the following ways:

- 1) Limit the redevelopment of the Virginia Home building by limiting residential units to the original footprint of the historic building, possibly requiring the later one-story nonconforming addition to be torn down and replaced with a neighborhood friendly entrance with parking facing South Meadow. This change in the proposed redevelopment would reduce the number of units to around 100 from 131, and would not affect any historic designation, but could enhance it by returning the building to its original historic art Deco design and footprint. It could also allow for some space now taken up by the nonconforming one story addition now backed up on South Meadow Street to be converted to green space including space for building residents to have gardens.
- 2) If the redevelopment is not limited to the original footprint as described above, require a bump in for parking on the west side of the 1100 block of South Meadow regardless of whether any apartment units in the redevelopment have entrances on South Meadow Street.
- 3) Make Appomattox Street one way from Hampton to South Meadow and restore the no parking sign (run over by a truck making a wild turn and not replaced) on the north side of Appomattox between the alley behind the 1100 block and the intersection of Appomattox and South Meadow so that turns by cars, school buses, firetrucks and delivery vehicles can be made safely from South Meadow onto Appomattox and vice versa.
- 4) Add publicly accessible amenities like a market (like Stella's), coffee or ice cream shop on the first floor of the development facing the park that would benefit the residents of the building, neighbors, and park visitors keeping residents from having to get in their cars to buy milk or get a morning coffee and giving neighbors walkable access to amenities that exist in other city neighborhoods. Contrary to representations by the developers, this would tend to reduce rather than increase traffic by, among other things, limiting the number of times a day that residents require deliveries or must use their cars to run errands.

There may be other questions that need to be answered and issues to be resolved, but what is clear is that the proposal to redevelop the Virginia Home building should not and need not be fast tracked for approval in September. Ordinance

2026-183 should be removed from the Council's agenda until these questions and concerns can be addressed to the satisfaction of the residents of the Randolph and Byrd Park neighborhoods most directly affected.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Claire Guthrie Gastañaga". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large, connected loops.

Claire Guthrie Gastañaga

Toni and Dale Mounce

Paula de Carvaho

Support for Ordinance No. 2026-183

From Maria McCauley <mccauleym1967@gmail.com>

Date Tue 8/11/2026 12:01 PM

To Wilson, Madison E. - PDR <Madison.Wilson@rva.gov>; Trump, Shaianna L. - PDR <Shaianna.Trump2@rva.gov>; Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR <Alyson.Oliver@rva.gov>

Cc Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office <Stephanie.Lynch@rva.gov>

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Hello,

I am a 5th district resident and I would like to voice support for Ordinance No. 2026-183 and the plan to preserve the historic Virginia Home structure and convert the use to multifamily apartments once the current residents relocate to their new facility. The plan maintains and expands existing parking options, preserves the current structure, and adds individual entrances along Meadow Street to further integrate the building with the existing street grid. The proposed use as a 131-unit rental apartment building is a less intensive use than the current use as a residential care facility housing 130 individuals with special needs, 260 staff members, a commercial kitchen, medical facility and pharmacy, and more consistent with the residential nature of the existing neighborhood. The proposed use of the site requires fewer parking spots, generates fewer trips, and decreases the amount of large vehicle deliveries to the site, all while offering to historically preserve a significant building in the history of the City of Richmond.

Thank you,
Mariaelena McCauley

Fw: Concerns Regarding the Proposed Special Use Permit for the VA Home Redevelopment

From Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office <Amy.Robins@rva.gov>

Date Mon 7/20/2026 3:50 PM

FYI - These bullet points are reflected in a few emails going to the various councilmembers.

From: elarso5@gmail.com <elarso5@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, July 19, 2026 9:40 AM

To: Breton, Andrew S. - City Council <Andrew.Breton@rva.gov>; Jordan, Katherine - City Council <Katherine.Jordan@rva.gov>; Abubaker, Sarah M. - City Council <Sarah.Abubaker@rva.gov>; Newbille, Cynthia I. - City Council <Cynthia.Newbille@rva.gov>; Trammell, Reva M. - City Council <Reva.Trammell@rva.gov>; Jones, Nicole - City Council Office <Nicole.Jones@rva.gov>; Gibson, Kenya J. - City Council <Kenya.Gibson@rva.gov>; Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office <Amy.Robins@rva.gov>; Robertson, Ellen F. - City Council <Ellen.Robertson@rva.gov>

Subject: Concerns Regarding the Proposed Special Use Permit for the VA Home Redevelopment

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Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Special Use Permit (SUP) for the redevelopment of the VA Home property.

As a nearby resident, I walk and run through Byrd Park every day. It is one of Richmond's greatest community assets, and I am deeply concerned that this proposal prioritizes maximizing development over preserving the quality of life for the surrounding neighborhoods.

While I appreciate that the developer reduced the proposal from 31 townhomes to 21, I do not believe this goes far enough. Without an SUP, the property would be limited to approximately eight homes (plus allowable accessory dwelling units). The current proposal still far exceeds what the zoning and Richmond Master Plan envisioned. Many neighbors have expressed support for a development of no more than 15 homes, which would be more compatible with the existing neighborhood.

My primary concerns include:

- **Insufficient neighborhood engagement.** Many residents in the immediate and surrounding neighborhoods were not adequately informed about this proposal until after it had already passed the Planning Commission, leaving the community with little opportunity to participate early in the process.
- **Parking impacts.** The proposal does not provide enough parking for the number of homes being built. The suggestion that residents could simply park in Byrd Park is not an acceptable solution. Overflow parking will inevitably spill onto surrounding residential streets, which already experience parking shortages.
- **Street capacity and safety.** Meadow Street is simply not wide enough to accommodate additional on-street parking, bump-outs, or increased traffic. Existing neighborhood streets are already constrained.
- **Public safety concerns.** The block has limited fire protection infrastructure, with only one fire hydrant that is difficult for fire trucks to access because of the narrow streets. After a home in the neighborhood burned down last year, this issue should not be overlooked.
- **Aging infrastructure.** Richmond's infrastructure is already under strain, as we all experienced during last year's water crisis. Adding significantly more housing without corresponding infrastructure improvements raises legitimate concerns about reliability and capacity.
- **Loss of mature trees.** The developer has stated they "hope to" preserve some of the existing trees, yet many have been allowed to become overgrown with ivy, making their removal easier to justify. These mature trees are an important part of the neighborhood's character and environmental health.
- **Lack of neighborhood-serving amenities.** The proposal increases residential density without adding amenities that would benefit both new and existing residents, such as neighborhood-scale retail, studios, or community gathering spaces.

- **Responsibility to the surrounding community.** The VA Home has long been part of this neighborhood and has benefited from the support of the surrounding community. It is disappointing that the sale and redevelopment process appears to have given so little consideration to the long-term impacts on the people who live here.

Growth is important, but it must be responsible and appropriate for the surrounding neighborhood. This proposal asks for a significant exception to existing zoning while creating foreseeable problems related to parking, traffic, public safety, infrastructure, and neighborhood character.

I respectfully ask that you oppose the Special Use Permit in its current form and encourage a development that better aligns with Richmond's Master Plan and the scale of the existing neighborhood.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Emily Larson