



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Res. 2017-017: To update the City's Master Plan to include the recommendations of the Pulse Corridor Plan.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: May 15, 2017

PETITIONER

City of Richmond
900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

LOCATION

The neighborhoods and commercial corridors stretching from the eastern border with Henrico County on E Main Street, along E Main Street, up N 14th Street, and along Broad Street until the western border with Henrico County at Staples Mill Road around 14 Pulse BRT stations.

PURPOSE

To update the City's Master Plan to include the recommendations and results of the Pulse Corridor Plan to guide future transit-oriented development, public realm and infrastructure investment, and policy recommendations.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This Resolution would amend the City's Master Plan to include the recommendations and results of the recently-completed Pulse Corridor Plan. The Plan supports a walkable urban environment around soon-to-open Pulse BRT Stations through the adoption of principles, goals, and recommendations. At its April 17, 2017 meeting, the Planning Commission deferred this item for 30 days in response to a request from Councilwoman Gray to work with neighborhood associations, specifically the West Grace Street Association, on their concerns over building height. Staff worked with the Councilwoman and association representatives since that date to revise language in that chapter, language that has since been endorsed by association as satisfactory.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Resolution.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Background

This plan began in late 2015 through a combined effort of the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission and Department of Planning & Development Review.

The Plan establishes three main goals: that development be compact and mixed; connected; and thriving and equitable. Compact and mixed development around Pulse stations has a rich mix of uses and is compact, sustainable, and high-quality. Connected station areas allow pedestrians and cyclists to access homes, jobs, entertainment, everyday needs, and transit in a safe, pleasant, and engaging public realm. Thriving and equitable new development includes housing for all income levels and new jobs. Increased development in the Corridor supports Pulse ridership with a goal of over \$1 billion in additional assessed value over the next 20 years.

Six basic principles guide transit-oriented development in the corridor: mixed-use development; viable transportation options; dense, compact development; historic preservation; transit access; and connectivity. There are 35 corridor-wide recommendations to achieve these principles for a transit-oriented future and highly-walkable corridor. These recommendations apply across the entire corridor area.

The plan establishes new categories for Future Land Use as well as a Future Land Use map for the Pulse Corridor. The Downtown Mixed-use area is the central business district of the Richmond region featuring high-density development with office buildings, apartments, and a mix of complementary uses, including regional destinations. Nodal Mixed-use areas are transit-oriented districts located immediately adjacent to the Pulse BRT or other frequent transit service at key gateways and prominent places in the city in order to provide for significant, urban-form development in appropriate locations. Corridor Mixed-use areas are found along major, traditionally commercial corridors like Broad and E. Main Streets, and are envisioned to provide for medium-density pedestrian- and transit-oriented infill development to fill “missing teeth” of the corridor fabric. Neighborhood Mixed-use areas are cohesive districts that provide a mix of uses, but with a larger amount of residential uses than other mixed-use districts. Industrial Mixed-use areas are traditionally-industrial areas that are transitioning to mixed-use due to their proximity to growing neighborhoods but still retain industrial uses. Transitional areas provide a gradual transition between intense commercial areas and primarily single-family residential areas. Industrial areas feature easy highway access, large parcels, and separation of residential areas to allow light and heavy industrial uses. Institutional uses are public and quasi-public entities, such as local, state, and federal government, hospitals, and universities.

The Plan also identifies significant nodes, or key intersections and discusses street-oriented commercial and priority street designations to require buildings to have ground-floor commercial uses, be oriented towards the street, and prohibit new driveway entrances along these frontages. A number of opportunity areas, or large tracts of land that are ideal for redevelopment, are identified for future study by way of a small area plan.

But the Plan’s primary focus is on the individual station-areas themselves. It analyzes the existing conditions and market-readiness of each of the 14 station areas. Each station area then has its own vision statement, as well as detailed descriptions of future land use and future connections in each station area. This means that the land use and connectivity recommendations are tailored to each station area, its surrounding context, and its unique redevelopment opportunities to seamlessly integrate the Pulse Corridor with surrounding areas. These station areas collectively have an additional 71 detailed recommendations to achieve the three plan goals of compact and mixed; connected; and thriving and equitable.

Master Plan

The Pulse Corridor Plan offers recommendations for a number of neighborhoods and commercial corridors, including Scott's Addition and West Broad Street, which have not been part of amendments to the City's Master Plan since its 2001 adoption. The recommendations here provide the greatest departure from the out-of-date Master Plan, particularly in terms of setting Future Land Use.

A number of areas in the Pulse Corridor Plan, including the Jackson Ward, Broad Street, Downtown, City Center, Monroe Ward, and Shockoe Bottom areas received close study as part of the 2009 Downtown Plan. The Riverfront Plan, adopted in 2012, speaks to some issues of Downriver development and connectivity. The Pulse Corridor Plan incorporates new development and updates that have occurred since these two Master Plan amendments, and provides a more forward-looking framework for the future of these areas, particularly regarding future land use. The Plan also incorporates major elements of these two planning efforts, particularly as it relates to viewshed preservation and character.

The Pulse Corridor Plan also incorporates adopted elements of the City's Strategic Multi-modal Plan and Bicycle Master Plan into connectivity recommendations.

Public Participation

The Pulse Corridor Plan was guided by a Technical Advisory Committee of design professionals, development experts, and policy stakeholders. The Plan began with a public kick-off meeting and charrette, and included over two years of meetings with neighborhood and community associations and stakeholder groups, as well as workshops. An online survey collected further feedback, and the Historic Fulton neighborhood was the focus of a week-long charrette effort. There were two city-wide draft plan review meetings in November 2016, with multiple drafts of the document released for public comment over the following months as well as multiple presentations to the Planning Commission and neighborhood associations.

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