



4 East Main Street, Suite 1C  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Tel: 804.643.7407  
Fax: 804.788.4244

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Cyane B. Crump

May 14, 2020

**Via Electronic Mail: [mark.olinger@richmondgov.com](mailto:mark.olinger@richmondgov.com):**

Members of City of Richmond Planning Commission  
c/o Mark A. Olinger, Director  
Dept. of Planning & Development Review  
City of Richmond  
900 E. Broad Street, Room 511  
Richmond, VA 23219

**RE: Science Museum/Allison Street/VCU&VUU Station Area Rezoning and Related Amendments to B-4 Implicating Monroe Ward**

Mark:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Pulse Corridor Plan Rezoning Phase III – Science Museum, Allison Street and VCU & VUU station areas. Historic Richmond appreciates the thought that has gone into the proposed rezoning of Broad Street between Arthur Ashe Boulevard and Belvidere Streets. We have previously submitted comments based on the November 26, 2019 rezoning summary. We understand that three ordinances were introduced to City Council on April 27, 2020 (Ordinance Nos. 2020-103, 2020-104, and 2020-105) to implement this rezoning. **We request that you strike the proposed changes to the B-4 zoning district from Ordinance No. 2020-105.**

We note that Ordinance No. 2020-105 proposes new changes to the yard requirements in the B-4 Central Business District. These changes impact Monroe Ward and Franklin Street, in particular, but were not included in the recently completed rezoning of Monroe Ward in which Franklin Street residents and property owners were engaged and made aware.

The changes to B-4 zoning district: (1) remove the requirements for front yards to match setbacks of existing (and in many cases historic) buildings; and (2) remove the requirements for side and rear yards where the lot line abuts or is across an alley from an RO-3 or R-73 district. We are particularly concerned with the changes to these rear and side yard requirements and their impact on the historic architectural fabric of Franklin Street zoned as RO-3.

In general, we support the revitalization of Monroe Ward through a combination of infill on vacant lots and the preservation, restoration and adaptive reuse of Monroe Ward's significant existing historic structures. Monroe Ward's historic fabric is walkable, bike-friendly, transit accessible and its historic buildings provide fertile ground for the entrepreneurial businesses our City needs to grow and thrive. Monroe Ward's historic fabric is not just found on street frontages, but also along its alleys, which pedestrians routinely use for transit. Miss Scott's Alley, in particular, is a charming example with its restored cobblestones, brick garden walls and shade trees found in a number of the rear yards of the historic Franklin Street properties.

In connection with recent examples of development in and around alleys, we have noticed that the Pulse Corridor Principles give little thought to alleys or their impact on urban fabric or to the need for trees and greenery in the urban fabric of our city. We believe that eliminating the rear yard requirement where B-4 abuts RO districts will result in unsympathetic development in this area. The proposed B-4 changes will encourage development of structures to the alley, with no required step backs or set backs on upper stories, and such a tall wall along the alley face will mean that historic buildings will not have room to breathe, very little light or air will penetrate to an already narrow alley, and what few trees remain in Monroe Ward will suffocate.

We note that the Franklin Street residents and property owners who are most impacted have had very little opportunity to review the proposed changes and most likely are not aware of the proposed changes given the characterization of this rezoning as only impacting the area of the Pulse Corridor west of Belvidere and the ongoing impact of the pandemic on office closures and remote work situations.

Accordingly, we oppose the proposed changes to the B-4 Central Business District and ask the Planning Department to strike the changes to the B-4 zoning district. We believe that the urban fabric of Monroe Ward could be improved with a focus on its historic fabric, maintaining or increasing greenery/tree canopy, and improving walkability and human feel.

Historic Richmond thanks you for the care and attention you devote to matters impacting Richmond and we appreciate your efforts to make Richmond a better place. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



Cyane B. Crump  
Executive Director

CC: Harold Williams, President Historic Richmond Board of Trustees

