



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2025-038 To authorize the special use of the property known as 1201 Haxall Point for the purpose of recreation and entertainment uses located outside of a completely enclosed building, upon certain terms and conditions. (6th District)

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: March 18, 2025

PETITIONER

Susan Smith, Hirschler Fleischer

LOCATION

1201 Haxall Point

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting a Special use Permit to authorize outdoor recreation and entertainment in a B-4 – Business District. Recreation and entertainment uses must be within a completely enclosed building in the B-4 District. As a result, a Special Use Permit is necessary to proceed with this request.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the requested use is consistent with the City's Master Plan future land use designation of Downtown Mixed-Use. One goal for this land use type is the adaptive reuse of historic buildings. The proposed use would give a second life to the site of the historic hydroelectric plant.

Staff finds that the outdoor recreation and entertainment use is compatible with the Canal Walk. It enlivens the path and gives pedestrians/bicyclists a destination.

Staff finds that the portion of the Canal Walk that passes through the Property is privately owned, however, the ordinance attached to this Special Use Permit request requires that a public access easement be obtained to ensure that the Canal Walk stays open to pedestrians/bicyclists.

Staff concludes that the proposed ordinance conditions substantially satisfy the safeguards established in the City Charter concerning the granting of Special Use Permits. 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 approval of the Special Use Permit request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property is located in the Central Office neighborhood on Haxall Point.

Proposed Use of the Property

Outdoor recreation and entertainment.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates the subject area as Downtown Mixed-Use; the central business district of the Richmond region features high density development with office buildings, residential buildings, and a mix of complementary uses, including regional destinations in a highly-walkable urban environment." (RVA 300, p. 92).

Development Style: Higher density pedestrian- and transit-oriented development encouraged on vacant or underutilized sites. Historic buildings are adapted for new uses. Future development should be urban in form and may be of larger scale than existing context. Plazas and setbacks create an engaging street life. Many buildings are vertically mixed-use. New developments continue or 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 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 street frontages. Surface parking is prohibited as a principal use. Parking requirements are substantially less in these areas than other areas of the City and are largely eliminated.

Intensity: Buildings typically a minimum height of five stories.

Primary Uses: Retail/office/ personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, institutional, government, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Not applicable

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is B-4 Business District. The following features of the proposed development do not comply with the current zoning regulations:

Sec. 30-440.1. – Permitted principal and accessory uses

Recreation and entertainment uses within completely enclosed buildings are permitted.

The proposed use is outside of a completely enclosed building.

This special use permit would impose development conditions, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as recreation and entertainment use located outside of a completely enclosed building, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- No off-street parking shall be required for the Special Use.
- All building materials, elevations, and site improvements shall be substantially as shown on the Plans.
- The outdoor use of the Property shall be substantially as shown on the Plans and shall only be in operation between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m.

- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.
- Prior to the issuance of any certificate of occupancy for the Special Use, the establishment of a public access easement in the location identified as “EASEMENT AREA” on the Plans, which shall be variable in width not to exceed 11 feet 1 inch, shall be accomplished by recording the appropriate plats and deeds among the land records of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the City of Richmond. The public access easement must provide that (i) it shall be open 24 hours per day for the purpose of public travel by pedestrians and bicyclists, and (ii) to the extent that the improvements are not otherwise maintained, the Owner, at its sole cost and expense, shall maintain the improvements within the public access easement.

Surrounding Area

The surrounding land uses are mixed.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified the Shockoe Partnership Civic Association, area residents and property owners. Staff has received no letters to date regarding the proposal.

Staff Contact: Shaianna Trump, Planner Associate, Land Use Administration, 804-646-7319