



Preservation Virginia

15 May 2020

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

BY EMAIL

RE: Proposed ordinance revisions impacting B-4 zoning districts

Dear Mark:

On behalf of Preservation Virginia's trustees, staff and members, I would like to submit the following comments on three ordinances introduced to City Council on 27 April 2020 (Ordinances Nos. 2020-103, 2020-104 and 2020-105) dealing with rezonings consistent with the Pulse Corridor Plan. These ordinances are scheduled to be heard by the Planning Commission on 18 May 2020.

Recognizing the importance of Monroe Ward and Franklin Street, City Council voted last year to preserve the historic fabric of Franklin Street from an inappropriate rezoning. Consistent with that decision, and in light of the significant resources that would otherwise be put at risk, **we ask that you strike the proposed changes to B-4 zoning district from Ordinance 2020-105.**

Our statewide offices are located in the Cole Digges House at 204 West Franklin Street, a significant historic structure in the Old & Historic District. We have stewarded this property since the mid-1990s after undertaking an extensive rehabilitation effort. We chose this location because of its location within the District and its proximity to other significant historic structures, including the Jefferson Hotel, Kent-Valentine House, and the Bolling Haxall House.

As a property owner and statewide historic preservation leader, we support revitalization efforts in Monroe Ward. The neighborhood has been revived by extensive efforts to restore and to adaptively reuse the historic fabric. Well-considered and appropriately planned infill can continue and further enhance these efforts. As the owners of the Cole Digges House, we know that what draws people to this neighborhood is the walkability, canopy of trees, and refreshing spots of green in front yard gardens and lawns.

For these reasons, we do not support the proposed new yard requirements in the B-4 district, which would adversely affect the fabric of Franklin Street, which is zoned RO-3.

Our concerns are heightened by the fact that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently in a fast-changing and uncertain environment where attitudes and provisions regarding measures such as setbacks are being re-considered. We believe that:

1. Retaining legally required setbacks in this area is desirable to not only retain the historic streetscape but that such setbacks are even more important to retain in our current health conscious environment of social distancing.
2. Front setbacks can be a good planning practice that provides future generations with opportunities to plan and reconfigure underground utilities, plant trees, make pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, and provide various amenities,

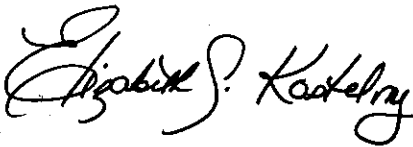
PRESERVATION VIRGINIA

3. Retaining front yard setbacks, in particular, provides the essential green space, light and air circulation proven to have environmental and health benefits.

We appreciate the efforts of the Planning Commission and of the Planning and Development Review Department to evaluate and plan for Richmond today and in the future.

Thank you for considering our comments, and I would be glad to answer any questions concerning these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth S. Kostelny". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth S. Kostelny
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Ann Darby, Planner III, City of Richmond
Matthew Ebinger, Senior Planner, City of Richmond