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Secretary to the Planning Commission
Department of Planning & Review
City of Richmond
Via email: PDRLandUseAdmin@richmondgov.com

RE: Special Use Permit Request: 3415A Ellwood Avenue (Property ID: W0001596050)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing you regarding a proposal to develop the center of a block in our neighborhood. I do not believe this proposal is in keeping with the character and design of the Museum District and will ultimately result in reducing the value – monetarily and culturally – of this area.

There is currently a proposal up for consideration to develop the property at 3415A Ellwood Avenue. This property sits in the middle of the block bounded by Floyd Avenue, N. Nansemond Street, Ellwood Avenue and N. Crenshaw Avenue.

While I am a big proponent of bringing income and progress to the city, I urge you to deny this Special Use Permit because I do not think it helps this neighborhood nor, by extension, our city. There are many problems with this proposal. Here are a few for your review and consideration:

- **INTENDED USE:** There is no frontage on this property to primary roads. It's true that the land is zoned residential. However, the city also has a Master Plan that recommends Single Family, Medium Density usage here. It does not recommend multiple family, high density usage. The Master Plan is in place for a reason and I believe we should follow it unless extreme circumstances dictate another course. A private development interest hardly meets the standard of extreme circumstances.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS:** There are alleyways around the property, however, they are narrow with limited access for emergency vehicles. I have no doubt that in some cases this limited access will prevent access by fire and EMS. Even if vehicles could reach this property in an emergency, there is no access to fire hydrants on this property since there is no frontage to primary streets. Lastly, these alleyways would also require additional work and maintenance that currently is not a priority for the city. With so many city streets in poor shape, I'd prefer the city spend our money on fixing major thoroughfares experiencing high traffic such as Thompson Street or Nansemond Street.
- **UTILITIES:** Construction will very likely require movement of power lines and telephone lines currently in the alleyway (please see image below from City of Richmond web site). In our neighborhood we have seen how time consuming and costly this work can be. In

2020 we saw City Utilities and their subcontractor, HMI Utilities, at work for 6-8 months to try to update water lines on Floyd, Nansemond and Ellwood in preparation for shopping development anchored by Publix in the 3500 block of Cary Street. There are so many infrastructure projects that desperately need attention, I do not believe now is the time to divert attention to a small private development.

- **PARKING:** While parking spots may be planned for these homes, we know from experience that increased density increases use of street parking. We have learned that from the experience from the 10 N. Nansemond Street development and the new development in the 3500 block of W. Cary Street.
- **DESIGN & NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACT:** Per the city's Master Plan, increasing density in this location is not in keeping with the designs of the neighborhood as a vast majority of homes are single family, two-story buildings. Adding 3-story buildings will tower over surrounding homes. This height differential, the fact that the plan calls for zero setbacks on two sides, and the inclusion of an elevated porch on the north side of the property will infringe upon the privacy of the current residences.

As you can see there are plenty of problems with this proposal. In addition to the above mentioned issues, I am concerned that these problems will drive people out of the neighborhood and deter future home buyers. Just walking around our neighborhood for a few minutes you can see how people have invested in their homes and their community. I really do not want to see that community fervor decline.

For that reason, I ask you to deny this Special Use Permit request. Thank you for your consideration of these issues and review of their likely impact.

Best Regards,

Mary Heather Parch

Image from City of Richmond, Real Estate Assessor's web site

(<https://apps.richmondgov.com/applications/propertysearch/Detail.aspx?pin=W0001596050>):

