



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

CPCR 2018-087: TO DECLARE AN INTENT TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL ZONING ORDINANCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF REMOVING THE INCLINED PLANE FROM THE B-4 (CENTRAL BUSINESS) DISTRICT

To: City Planning Commission
From: Department of Planning and Development Review
Date: October 15, 2018

PETITIONER

City of Richmond
900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

LOCATION

The study area, Monroe Ward, is bounded by Belvidere Street to the west, the Downtown Expressway to the south, Broad Street to the north, and Ninth Street to the east.

PURPOSE

To amend the official zoning ordinance text for the purpose of removing the inclined plane from the B-4 (Central Business) district, as well as adding Priority Streets to the district text.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This Resolution is one of a set of four, which together will revise the City's official zoning map for the purpose of rezoning certain properties in Monroe Ward, bounded by Belvidere Street to the west, Broad Street to the north, the Downtown Expressway to the south and Ninth Street to the east, in order to increase density and accommodate growth and development pressure while preserving the historic character of the neighborhood. Each Resolution represents one of four elements to this process, a combination of which will reach the desired outcome:

1. changing zoning classification of certain parcels from light-industrial or auto-oriented designations to those more in keeping with the historic building patterns and intent of the Pulse Plan;
2. adding Street-Oriented Commercial and Priority Streets in the area to the official zoning map;
3. creating a Plan of Development Overlay District for the area to ensure development meets the six design elements of the Pulse Plan; and
4. removing the inclined plane requirement from the B-4 (Central Business) District.

Staff supports the resolution.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Background

These amendments arise out of the recommendations of the adopted Pulse Corridor Plan, an analysis of the existing zoning ordinance and its application across the City, and an extensive public engagement process, both for the plan and for this area rezoning. There is significant building activity in the Central Business District which continues to move west into Monroe Ward and expansion of VCU's Monroe Park campus has stretched east of Belvidere into Monroe Ward. While Monroe Ward is home to an array of historic structures, there are also a significant number of surface parking lots, several of which take up entire blocks. This proactive rezoning process is in order to ensure that new development is in keeping with the principles of the Pulse Plan.

Master Plan

The area for this rezoning is part of the Arts District Station Area in the Pulse Corridor Plan.

(Note: the Arts District Station Area also includes Jackson Ward, but the character of the neighborhoods are significantly distinct enough to proceed with each area separately. Furthermore, the R-6 designation in most of Jackson Ward is appropriate to the character and future land use of the neighborhood, and it is not a rezoning priority at this time.)

Rezoning Monroe Ward to districts that align with the future land use map is the first recommendation for this study area (84). The plan envisions a strong transit-oriented node at each station area along the corridor, and describes Monroe Ward's future land use as high-intensity pedestrian- and transit-oriented development", with tall signature buildings, active commercial ground floors, few driveways cutting through sidewalks, and little to no setbacks for commercial building, adding that new buildings will add to the already "incredibly dynamic and diverse building stock, creating a truly eclectic urban neighborhood" (84). The plan recommends that new zoning does not allow surface parking lots as a principle permitted use.

Existing and Proposed Zoning

Staff has completed an extremely thorough analysis and vetting of exactly the tools needed to accomplish the plan vision and spur development while preserving the historic character of the neighborhood.

As a result, there are four elements to this rezoning process:

1. Rezoning the area from either light industrial (M-1), auto-oriented commercial (B-3), or outdated residential/office (RO-3) to downtown mixed-use (B-4) and transit-oriented development (TOD-1);
2. adding Priority and Street-Oriented Commercial designations in the area to the official zoning map;
3. creating a Plan of Development Overlay District for the area to ensure that new development meets the six design elements of the Pulse Corridor Plan;

4. removing the inclined plane from the B-4 district.

This Resolution is specific to removing the inclined plane requirement from the B-4 district. The B-4 district does not specify a maximum height, as long as no “portion of a building shall penetrate an inclined plane originating at the centerline of each abutting street and extending over the lot at an inclination of one foot horizontal for each four feet vertical and provided, further, that such inclined plane may be penetrated by a building wall adjacent to a street for a horizontal distance not exceeding 50 percent of the length of the property line alone the street” (Sec. 30-440.6).

The unintended consequence of the inclined plane is that it pushes buildings back on the lot in order not to break the inclined plane, which runs contrary to the values of transit-oriented development.

This Resolution also inserts Priority Streets into requirements regarding parking structures in Sec. 30-440.1(26).

Attached Summary Document

In order to convey the ideas and reasoning behind this rezoning process clearly and thoroughly, staff created a summary document complete with explanatory text, maps of existing and proposed zoning, exact zoning changes, and explanation of each recommendation. Please see summary (attached) for further details.

Public Engagement

As the Pulse Corridor Plan was developed over the course of 2015-2017, City Staff held numerous public forums, set up online surveys, attended standing civic association meetings, and tracked public feedback.

In July of 2017, staff held two public open houses at the Main Library to discuss the Monroe Ward rezoning, and provided informational maps and comparisons of zoning districts. In addition, a letter was sent to each property owner of over 400 addresses which will be affected by the rezoning. Of the 400 property owners affected, PDR received only two letters expressing concern or opposition, and has subsequently engaged with both parties.

Because more than a year has elapsed between those meetings and now, staff will convene meetings again before presenting to City Council.

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