

From: Paul Rucker <paulrucker@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 16, 2021 8:26 AM
To: PDR Land Use Admin
Subject: 321 West Grace Street - Richmond City Planning Commission

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Dear Planning Commission,

I could not make it to the hearing today, unfortunately, but would like my strong concerns around the proposed development at 321 W. Grace Street to be heard. I'm a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University and I have class during today's meeting time. In addition to being a professor, I'm a Black business owner on property that's directly across from the new development at 321 West Grace. I'm at 312 West Grace and have owned the property for 4 years.

My concern with the development of 321 West Grace is that they are providing only 57 parking spaces. Since moving to the 300 block of West Grace, parking has become a major issue. There's simply not enough for the current density. My building is adjacent to an apartment complex and they have a shortage of spaces. The ones they have are paid.

The proposed, large 16 story building will be the tallest footprint in the neighborhood and it will have 177 dwellings that will contain 4 bedroom apartments. With single occupancy in each dwelling, that equals 708 new residents in this concentrated area. The 57 parking spaces is a far cry from what's needed in order to not negatively impact the current community.

I know the argument that "many students will not have cars"---this is true for many. I also know, as an artist and musician at the #1 public art school in the country, many VCU students need cars to move art supplies and musical instruments.

I'm emailing you today to request that the number of parking spaces be increased by adding lower level parking. 175-225 spaces would be a great range, and it would definitely generate revenue. There's a demand and a need for parking in this area. Please come in as a kind and considerate neighbor, and provide adequate parking.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Paul Rucker

Paul Rucker
312 W Grace Street
Richmond, VA 23220

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"...Character is not only structured by the choices we make, but by the range of choices we have to choose from—choices for which individuals alone are not responsible"

Michael Eric Dyson

From: Elizabeth Kostelny <ekostelny@preservationvirginia.org>
Sent: Monday, February 15, 2021 8:57 AM
To: Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR
Cc: Cyane Crump; Lloyd, Preston
Subject: Ordinance No.2021-016 321 West Grace Street SUP

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Good Morning,

On behalf of Preservation Virginia's Trustees, staff and members, I am writing with concerns about Ordinance No. 2021-016, the proposed SUP 321 West Grace Street, on the Planning Commission agenda scheduled for 16 February 2021.

As a property owner and as a statewide historic preservation leader, we support revitalization efforts in the Monroe Ward. The neighborhood has been revived by the extensive effort of restoration and adaptive reuse of the historic fabric including our headquarters office (Cole Digges House/204 West Franklin Street), as well as the Jefferson Hotel, Kent Valentine House, the Bolling Haxall House and other significant structures.

Occupying the Cole Digges House, we know that people are drawn to this neighborhood by the walkability of its sidewalks and alleys; the canopy of trees, refreshing spots of green in front yard gardens and lawns; and the interesting variations of scale and density of the quality buildings that characterize Monroe Ward. Well considered and appropriately planned infill should continue revitalization efforts to increase density and enhance the character of the neighborhood with quality design and construction.

Preservation Virginia met with the developers of the project at 321 West Grace Street. We appreciate their project goals to bring a mixed-use construction to the corner of Monroe and West Grace, as well as the effort that went into the design. We understand their need to ensure the financial viability of the project. They have generously listened to our concerns and made some adjustments to the design of the building.

The project at 321 West Grace Street is the first under the new zoning for Monroe Ward. As such it will set the precedent for all of those to follow. We have the following comments:

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- **The**
- **lack of setbacks on the front and rear yard.** The rear setbacks are
- particularly problematic since we are told that the regulations do not include properties located on corners. We understand that this was not the intent of the new zoning, but it is a result that will haunt many future projects. The neighborhood's alleys,

- particularly beginning with the 200 block of West Franklin and continuing east to Miss Scott's Alley on the 100 block of East Franklin are well traveled.
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- **Stepbacks**
- **that better articulate the façade and higher stories.** As
- other tall buildings in the area are constructed, there is the potential of creating a “wall” of facades up the West Grace Street corridor which would completely change the character of the street. Adding setbacks to open up the street to light and air would help alleviate this potential outcome and better distinguish the façade.
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- **Adding architectural**
- **interest and transparency on the east façade.** The east façade of the building faces the
- adjacent historic townhouse and is the approach seen by travelers headed west on Grace Street. While we would have preferred some windows, we appreciate the modest articulation on the overall façade to add visual interest and relief. Similarly, the added
- transparency on the first floor adds some respect to the neighboring historic townhouse. A stepback would have been preferable.
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To allow exemptions to setbacks, step backs at upper floors and façade articulation is concerning and will set a practice for the projects that follow. The mixed-use project at 321 West Grace Street is a valuable opportunity to enhance the Monroe Ward neighborhood and add additional residential units. It is however the first project under the new zoning regulations.

Thank you for consideration of our perspective.

Sincerely,

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Elizabeth S. Kostelny
 CEO
 Preservation Virginia
 204 West Franklin Street
 Richmond, VA 23220
 804.648.1889 ext. 306

From: Cyane Crump <ccrump@HistoricRichmond.com>
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2021 1:20 PM
To: Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR
Cc: Elizabeth Kostelny; Lloyd, Preston
Subject: ORD 2021-016 SUP for 321 W. Grace St

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Matthew –

We are writing to oppose ORD 2021-016, the proposed SUP for 321 W Grace Street, on the Planning Commission's agenda for February 16, 2021.

Historic Richmond supports 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. We have for many decades encouraged and advocated for mixed use development in the neighborhood. Historic Richmond also was very engaged in the recent rezoning of Monroe Ward, providing multiple comment letters and engaging in many discussions with planning staff to ensure adequate protections for the existing historic architectural fabric in Monroe Ward, to encourage appropriate new development that would enhance the neighborhood.

Please note that we do very much appreciate the applicant meeting with us twice to discuss the proposed project, as well as the design improvements they made to the project as part of this process. We support their efforts to develop housing on this site, currently occupied by a surface parking lot.

Our concerns are as follows: The rezoning of Monroe Ward was completed very recently - in July, 2019. As part of that rezoning, this portion of Monroe Ward remained in the B-4 Zoning District, multiple changes to the B-4 zoning district were adopted, and all of Monroe Ward was covered by a Plan of Development Overlay requiring new development to adhere to six form elements from the Pulse Corridor Plan. Notably, the amendments to the B-4 Zoning District strengthened the Inclined Plane Rule by removing the provision allowing buildings to break the inclined plane, while the POD Overlay's six form elements included a requirement for appropriate setbacks and stepbacks. All of these changes were intended to ensure that new development enhances this neighborhood by providing walkable spaces, streets that are open to light and air, and a human scale pedestrian friendly experience.

This SUP seeks a waiver of: (1) the front yard requirements of B-4; (2) the rear yard requirements of B-4; (3) the Inclined Plane Rule; and (4) the form elements associated with appropriate setbacks and stepbacks. All of these requirements and elements were factored into the recent rezoning and are important to ensure that any new development enhances the neighborhood. We oppose waiving these requirements.

In particular, we are concerned about the impact of waiving these requirements and elements for a project like this on the very important and rare historic fabric of Franklin Street. We note that, while the building on the 300 block of West Franklin Street directly behind this project is not significant historic architectural fabric, the historic architectural fabric on the surrounding blocks (especially the 400 block of West Franklin Street, 200 block of West Franklin Street, and 00 block of East Franklin Street) is particularly significant. The B-4 required rear yard setbacks across an alley from this RO-3 district, as well as the Inclined Plane Rule and POD Overlay form requirements, are critical to protecting this rare historic fabric. It is imperative that this proposed SUP not establish a precedent for waiving the requirements for the Inclined Plane Rule, rear yards, setbacks, setbacks and form elements of the POD Overlay for other parcels in Monroe Ward.

In addition, we note that the applicant has proposed a vast monolithic 15 story windowless wall on the east façade (the one most visible to the one-way westward heading street traffic), along with an alternate version with windows, and recommend that, to the extent possible, the use of the alternate version with windows be required.

Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Cyane



Cyane Crump
Executive Director

Historic Richmond

[Building on history](#)

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