



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review ***Staff Report***

Ord. No. 2023-317: To authorize the special use of the property known as 7 North 2nd Street for the purpose of a certain hostel use or emergency housing use, upon certain terms and conditions, and to repeal Ord. No. 2011-141-144, adopted Jul. 25, 2011.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: November 6, 2023

PETITIONER

Mandy Herbert – Home Again
Stephen Harms – City of Richmond, Office of the Chief Administrator

LOCATION

7 North 2nd Street

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting authorization for an emergency housing facility, which use is authorized within the underlying B-4 Central Business District. However, the proposed facility does not meet the zoning requirement that it be located at least 1,320 feet from any other property with an emergency housing, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing use. A current special use permit (Ord. No. 2011-141-144) authorizes a hostel use on the property and the property owner desires to retain authorization for the hostel use. The previous special use permit ordinance will be repealed and the applicable conditions pertaining to the hostel have been incorporated into the new special use permit ordinance, along with new conditions pertaining to the emergency housing use.

RECOMMENDATION

Individuals experience homelessness for a variety of reasons, including mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment or underemployment, lack of a living wage, a limited supply of affordable housing, and eviction. Some factors can make it difficult for individuals to secure and maintain a fixed, regular, and adequate residence.

In May 2020, Council adopted the City of Richmond Strategic Plan to End Homelessness 2020-2030, which recommended number of actions to better provide emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing in the City.

In March 2021, City Council amended the Zoning Ordinance to permit certain types of emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing options by right in a number of mixed-use zoning districts (B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, I, M-1, OS, R-73, and RO-2) and created supplemental regulations regarding housing types, locations, capacity, and the process for administrative approvals, which includes submission of a management or operational plan (ORD. 2020-261).

Staff finds that the proposed use is already a permitted use according to the underlying B-4 zoning, pursuant to ORD. 2020-261, and would be regulated as such. While it is located within 1,320 feet of an existing emergency housing facility, the existing facility is operated by the same operator intended to operate the proposed facility, essentially as an expansion of the services currently offered in the area.

Staff finds that the proposed use would address a critical need for homelessness services in the city and supports Objective 14.2b which sought to “create a minimum of 250 new emergency shelter units to provide additional housing for persons experiencing homelessness by 2021” (p. 151) The proposed shelter will provide up to 20 guest rooms.

Staff finds that the proposed use would not pose an undue burden on the availability of on-street parking in the area.

Staff finds that with the ordinance conditions, the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of Special Use Permits, are met. 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 Monroe Ward neighborhood between East Franklin and East Main Streets. The property is an approximately 4,930 sq. ft., (.11 acre) parcel of land improved with a 9,311 sq. ft. building constructed, per tax assessment records, in 1925.

Proposed Use of the Property

The proposed emergency housing use will be operated by Home Again as a facility for families experiencing homelessness. The City will be leasing the property from the owner and subleasing to Home Again and will be supporting operating costs of the facility. The proposed emergency housing use will be an extension of Home Again’s current family emergency housing facility, the Espigh Family Shelter, located at 2 E. Main Street in Richmond, which currently houses up to 35 individuals daily. In the past three years, Home Again has successfully helped 465 individuals and 126 households within the Espigh Family Shelter. Of these families, 91% have exited our shelter into permanent housing.

Master Plan

The City’s Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Downtown Mixed-Use which is defined as 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.” (p. 66)

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.

Mobility:

Bicycle and pedestrian access are prioritized and accommodated. Low residential density means that it is not possible to provide frequent transit within these areas; however, frequent transit may be found at the edges of these areas within more intense future land use designations. Many homes have driveways and/or garages, which are located off an alley behind the home if an alley is present.

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

The property is located within two National/Regional Priority Growth Nodes. Both the Downtown Core and the Monroe Ward nodes are seen as specific areas "...where the City is encouraging the most significant growth in population and development over the next 20 years." (p. 24)

The property is also located on a Major Mixed-Use Street. These streets have the following objectives for connecting the City's transportation networks in the future.

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, through commercial and mixed-use Areas
- Prioritize use and density-scaled sidewalks and crosswalks
- Require form elements, such as buildings to the street with parking in the rear, as well as building windows and entrances on the street
- Incorporate streetscape features, such as trees, benches, and trash receptacles
- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops
- Prioritize the curbside for walking, bicycling, transit, and short-term parking access and loading for local shops and restaurants

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is B-4 Central Business District. All adjacent properties are located within the same B-4 Central Business District. The proposed use does not meet the current zoning requirements:

Sec. 30-698.2(2). Regulations.

A property with an emergency housing, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing use shall be located no less than 1,320 feet from any property with an emergency housing, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing use.

The current property and emergency housing facility is not located within 1,320 feet from any other emergency housing, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing use.

The special use permit would impose conditions on the property, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as a hostel use, as defined herein, or an emergency housing use.
- The emergency housing use shall be authorized to operate on a year-round basis and house, at any one time, up to (i) 60 people or (ii) the maximum number of people permitted under applicable building, fire, and health codes, whichever is less.
- Except as otherwise provided by this ordinance, the emergency housing use shall be subject to and at all times in compliance with Article VI, Division 15 of Chapter 30 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), and amendments thereto.
- The capacity of the hostel use shall not exceed 80 guest beds in up to 20 guest rooms. For the purposes of this ordinance, a hostel shall be defined as a shared-room accommodation, intended to be rented for compensation for occupancy by the traveling public on a daily basis, with access to guestrooms provided exclusively from within the building. The hostel shall contain shared sanitation and laundry facilities and a shared kitchen, all for the use of guests. Occupants of any age shall be permitted; however, children less than 18 years of age shall be accompanied by an adult.

Surrounding Area

A mix of office, commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family residential land uses are present in the vicinity of the subject property.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified the Downtown Neighborhood Association and area residents and property owners of the proposed Special Use Permit. Staff has not received letters of support or opposition for this application from the Civic Association or any nearby residents.

Staff Contact: Jonathan Brown, Senior Planner, Land Use Administration, 804-646-5734