



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

ORD. 2019-172: To amend the official zoning map for the purpose of designating certain street blocks as “priority streets” and certain street blocks as “street-oriented commercial streets” in the area bounded generally by Belvidere Street on the west, Broad Street on the north, the Downtown Expressway on the south, and 9th Street on the east.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Department of Planning and Development Review
Date: July 15, 2019

PETITIONER

City of Richmond
900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

LOCATION

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

PURPOSE

To amend the official zoning map for the purpose of updating Street-Oriented Commercial and Priority Street designations in an area bounded by Belvidere Street to the west, Broad Street to the north, the Downtown Expressway to the south, and Ninth Street to the east.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This Ordinance is one of a set of five, which together will revise the City’s official zoning map and ordinance text 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 while preserving the character of the neighborhood and rebuilding neighborhood context. Each Ordinance represents one of five 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 existing building patterns and intent of the adopted Pulse Corridor Plan;
2. Adding Street-Oriented Commercial and Priority Streets in the area to the official zoning map;
3. Creating a Plan of Development (POD) Overlay District for the area to ensure development is consistent with the six form elements of the Pulse Corridor Plan;

4. Amending the B-4 district to remove incompatible uses, add a three-story height minimum, and remove the option to break the inclined plane of 4:1 by 50% of the length of the building along the street; and
5. Amending the RO-3 district to remove incompatible uses and add form-based elements.

Staff recommends approval of the ordinance.

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, which the Pulse Plan Future Land Use map labels as "Downtown Mixed Use".

(Note: the Arts District Station Area also includes Jackson Ward, but the character of the neighborhoods and existing zoning already align with the Future Land Use map designation.)

Rezoning Monroe Ward to districts that align with the future land use map is the first recommendation for this study area (p.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" (p.84). The plan recommends that new zoning does not allow surface parking lots as a principal 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 complementing the historic character of the neighborhood. Staff has also responded to citizen comments and concerns.

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

1. Rezoning the area from either light industrial (M-1) or auto-oriented commercial (B-3), to transit-oriented development (TOD-1) or downtown mixed-use (B-4);
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. Amending the B-4 district; and
5. Amending the RO-3 district to remove incompatible uses and add form-based elements.

This Ordinance is specific to updating the Street-Oriented Commercial and Priority Street designations in the rezoning area.

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 attached summary 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 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.

In November 2018, staff once again sent notices in postcard form to 444 individual property owners, and received one inquiry of concern regarding parking, and twelve letters or emails from Historic Richmond Foundation and members regarding height and protection of historic buildings on Franklin Street. Because of this concern, staff altered the proposal to keep the current zoning on Franklin Street and make alterations to the district to ensure future uses and form are compatible with the existing character of the street.

Staff has received letters and emails of support from large property owners, developers and one affordable housing expert. Staff continues to regularly discuss the rezoning with property- and business-owners in the neighborhood, who are largely supportive of the rezoning and positively anticipate its effects on the neighborhood.

Staff Contact:

Anne W. Darby, AICP, Planner III – Zoning Specialist
Planning and Development Review

Anne.Darby@richmondgov.com

646-5648