

**From:** [Joe Yates](#)  
**To:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Ordinance 2020-226/2501 monument Avenue  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 21, 2020 3:21:05 PM

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Mr. Ebinger:

I am writing in support of Ordinance 2020-226, the proposed Special Use Permit for 2501 Monument Avenue (The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design).

I speak as both a tenant of The Branch House, and a member of the Branch Advisory Council.

The Branch house is the largest building constructed as a single family residence on Monument Avenue, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Register of Historic Places. It is the only cultural institution on the street and the only museum of architecture and design in the Commonwealth.

The house has received limited maintenance and repairs over the last fifty years and consequently we are now faced with significant repairs to the roof, windows, and masonry as well as needed major up grades to the mechanical and plumbing systems.

The current SUP does not allow us to increase revenues that are critical to the preservation of the structure. The museum lends itself well to weddings, lectures and special events. In years prior to the current SUP being in place the garden at the rear was used by the Richmond Symphony for outdoor concerts that were wildly popular.

It is my understanding that some residents are concerned about parking. But we now have an agreement with First Baptist Church to be able to use their parking lot at the corner of Robinson and Monument Avenue, which can easily handle most events, and is next door to The Branch. We also monitor parking by placing signs on the surrounding streets whenever there is an event planned.

In summary a revised SUP is critical to The Branch Museum being able to continue to provide a space for local functions that enhance and benefit the city.

Thank you for your consideration.

Joe Yates

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[joe@jfyarchitects.com](mailto:joe@jfyarchitects.com)

**From:** [Julie Weissend](#)  
**To:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Support for Ordinance 2020-226 / 2501 Monument Avenue  
**Date:** Friday, October 23, 2020 9:54:06 AM

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Mr. Ebinger,

I am writing in support of Ordinance 2020-226, the proposed Special Use Permit for 2501 Monument Avenue (The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design).

As a resident of Monument Avenue (2710), a board member of MAPS and a board member of Historic Richmond, I have been thrilled to call The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design a neighbor. They have been conscientious, proactive and accountable in every regard. They have been sensitive as stewards of their historic building and supremely empathetic with residents in the neighborhood. They need to be able to be sustainable and more resilient going forward; I am in total support of this SUP as a means to help them do just that.

Sincerely,

Julie

[Julie W. Weissend](#), LEED AP ID+C  
Managing Partner  
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**From:** [Sam Daniel](#)  
**To:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Ordinance 2020.226--2501 Monument Av  
**Date:** Monday, October 26, 2020 9:02:33 AM

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Good Morning Mr Ebinger,

I am writing to you to express my support for Ordinance 2020.226—2501 Monument Avenue, which is the Revision of the Special Use Permit—SUP-- for the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design.

I am Sam Daniel, a long-time resident of Richmond, more than 20 years of which residing on Monument Ave in the Museum District. I have been on the Board of Trustees of the Branch Museum for about 10 years, and now serve as the Chair of the Advisory Council. In addition, I am on the Board of the Monument Avenue Preservation Society--MAPS, serving as its Treasurer. I also own and operate a local General Contracting Company, whose emphasis is Historic Restoration and Preservation.

I wish to express my support for the enhanced and expanded SUP for the Branch Museum.

In all of my years on the Board of The Branch, I have attended many events held there. I have also been the Host for at least a half dozen events at the Branch. In all of these events—and especially for the events where I have been the host-- I witnessed and experienced the upmost attention being given to following the operating rules of the SUP in all respects, and especially as it relates to parking. I know The Branch has been a good steward and a good neighbor to all in the area as they managed the events held at The Branch under the present SUP, and I am confident the same level of dedication to the details of the SUP will be followed to the letter once the new, improved and enhanced SUP goes into effect.

Being granted the enhanced SUP is also very important to the very survival of The Branch as it moves forward in today's environment of uncertainty brought about by the Coronavirus. The Branch needs the additional ability to host events that the enhanced SUP will provide, and very much needs the additional revenue stream the additional events will provide.

Daily operating expenses for a facility such as The Branch are substantial, and further, to maintain a 101 year old Historic Landmark such as The Branch is a daunting task consuming considerable resources. As a Contractor specializing in Historic Restoration, I am very aware of the cost to maintain such a Architecturally Detailed structure.

For all the reasons stated, I hope you will support the enhanced SUP for the Branch—outlined in Ordinance 2020.226, as it is crucial to the continued success of The Branch.

Thanks you for your help and assistance. If anything conveyed above raises any question, I hope you

will reach out and provide me the opportunity to further explain.

Respectfully,

Sam Daniel  
3203 Monument Ave

Samuel W. Daniel  
**Daniel & Company, Inc.**  
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**From:** [Edward Barlow, II](#)  
**To:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Ordinance 2020-226 / 2501 Monument Avenue  
**Date:** Thursday, October 22, 2020 5:14:18 PM

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Date: October 22, 2020  
To: Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP, Principal Planner – Land Use Administration  
From: Edward Barlow  
Re: Ordinance 2020-226 / 2501 Monument Avenue

Mr. Ebinger,

Good afternoon. My name is Edward Barlow. I am a resident of Monument Avenue and I also serve as Secretary of MAPS (Monument Avenue Preservation Society). I am writing you today as both a resident and a board member of MAPS in support of Ordinance 2020-226, the proposed SUP for 2501 Monument Avenue. The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design has been a good neighbor for many years. We understand from the Board's frequent meetings with Penny Fletcher in laying out our Memorandum Of Understanding that the current SUP doesn't allow the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design to increase revenues as needed. Knowing the level of care, maintenance and upkeep they provide in an effort to preserve and protect the architecturally significant building and knowing that they abide by the current regulations imposed on them, it is imperative that The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design have the flexibility addressed in Ordinance 2020-226 to allow them to prosper and stay healthy. Thank you for your attention to this matter and I hope that we can count on you to support this ordinance. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Respectfully,  
Edward Barlow  
Secretary, MAPS

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**From:** [Laura Cameron](#)  
**To:** [Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support for Ordinance 2020-226 / 2501 Monument Avenue  
**Date:** Friday, October 30, 2020 3:49:13 PM

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October 30, 2020

to: Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP, Principal Planner, Land Use Administration  
Secretary to the Planning Commission  
Department of Planning & Development Review  
City of Richmond

from: Laura Cameron, 1404 Floyd Avenue

Dear Mr. Ebinger,

I am writing in support of Ordinance 2020-226, the proposed Special Use Permit for 2501 Monument Avenue (The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design).

I served on The Branch board for a decade and now serve on its Advisory Council. I also lived across Davis Avenue from The Branch for most of the period from 1972 to 1990.

The history of the Branch House as a museum, which is certainly a “best use” of a unique and beautiful 100-year-old Richmond building on a prominent street, includes minimal but noisy opposition to its need for the events such as weddings that are necessary to sustain it financially. While the one-of-a-kind office spaces are generally fully leased, they do not provide the revenue needed to keep the building repaired and maintained, nor do contributions from individuals and foundations.

The museum has for several years had use of an adjacent parking lot, thanks to the generosity of First Baptist Church. They have been wonderful supporters, and we are very grateful. Parking is not an issue.

A recent National Public Radio story said that a survey of museum directors revealed that one-third of them feared they would not survive the impact of the pandemic as the typical sources of museum revenue have disappeared. Without a change in its onerous Special Use Permit, The Branch could be 28,000 square feet of empty, decaying space, after a fundraising effort that has finally put the building on the long road to being fully repaired.

The Branch strives to be respectful of all neighbors, but some would place so many restrictions that the museum could not have rental events at all, which is just not a viable financial model. We are very pleased to have obtained the Monument Avenue Preservation Society's support for this SUP change. After what those residents have experienced recently, they will not mind an occasional wedding band playing in the garden. During my years across Davis Avenue, when the Branch was owned by an insurance company that sometimes had events in the garden, my young daughter and I loved watching the brides coming and going and hearing live music on an occasional Saturday afternoon.

I don't know details of The Branch's planning for garden use, but I'm certain it will be respectful of the neighbors. We live in the lower Fan and have had live music from porches all through the pandemic. It has been so uplifting and enjoyable, and our few grumpy neighbors have been greatly outnumbered.

The Branch's current SUP holds us to no more than ONE museum-related event per week--several attorneys have told us it is the most restrictive one in the city--severely hampering not only our revenue potential but also our ability to attract quality programs and lectures and to function and grow as a museum.

It's time to give a museum with offerings unlike any other in the region and very few in the country the breath it needs to survive. Please allow for the expansion of The Branch's SUP as described in its request.

*Laura*