



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2025-015: To authorize the special use of the property known as 618 South Laurel Street for the purpose of an accessory dwelling unit located on the same lot as a two-family dwelling, upon certain terms and conditions. (5th District)

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: February 4, 2025

PETITIONER

Baker Development Resources

LOCATION

618 South Laurel Street

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to authorize the construction of an accessory dwelling unit to be located above a garage. Accessory dwelling units are permitted uses for residential properties that contain a single-family detached dwelling. However, the property is improved with a two-family dwelling. Therefore, a SUP is requested to authorize the use.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the City's Master Plan pertaining to the Neighborhood Mixed-Use land use category, in which two-family dwellings and small multi-family dwellings are considered appropriate primary uses.

Staff finds that the proposal fulfills Objective 14.1, which seeks to increase city-wide awareness of the importance of integrating housing at all income levels into every residential neighborhood, so every household has housing choice throughout the city (page 150.) Furthermore, the proposal meets Objective 14.5 which seeks to encourage more housing types throughout the city and greater density along enhanced transit corridors.

Staff concludes that the proposed ordinance conditions substantially satisfy the safeguards established in the City Charter concerning the granting of Special Use Permits. 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 on the western side of South Laurel Street between China and Holly Streets, in the Oregon Hill neighborhood and is zoned R-7 Single-and-Two-Family Urban Residential District. The subject property is 25 feet wide and 137 feet deep and contains 3,498

square feet of area. The two-family dwelling located on the property can be accessed via an alley running along the rear property lines.

Proposed Use of the Property

Garage with an accessory dwelling unit on the second level.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Neighborhood Mixed Use. This designation is described as existing or new highly walkable urban neighborhoods that are predominantly residential with a small, but critical, percentage of parcels providing retail, office, personal service, and institutional uses.

Development Style: These areas feature a variety of building types that are close to one another and create a unified street wall. The building size, density, and zoning districts for these areas vary depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement existing context. Setbacks, plazas, and parks create a sense of place and community gathering areas. New developments on larger parcels continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity within the neighborhood and to adjacent neighborhoods. In historic neighborhoods, small-scale commercial uses exist today or should be allowed to reestablish. In new neighborhoods, small scale commercial buildings should be introduced.

Ground Floor: Regardless of use, buildings should engage the street with features such as street-oriented façades with windows and door openings along street frontages. Appropriate setbacks, open space, front porches, elevated ground floors, and other features that provide a sense of privacy should be provided for residential uses.

Mobility: Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. New driveways are prohibited on Priority and Principal Street frontages. Vehicular access to parcels should use alleys wherever possible. Parking areas should be located to the rear of street-facing buildings.

Intensity: Building heights are generally two to four stories. Buildings taller than four stories may be found along major streets.

Parcels are generally between 1,500 and 5,000 sq. ft.

Primary Uses: Single-family houses, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), and open space.

Secondary Uses: Large multi-family buildings (10+units), retail/office/personal service, institutional, cultural, and government.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The property is currently zoned R-7 Single-and-Two-Family Urban Residential District. The applicant plans to construct a two-story accessory building at the rear of the property, with a two-car garage on the first floor and a 418 square-foot studio apartment on the second floor. Since the principal use of the property is a two-family dwelling, an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is not permitted by-right. As a result, a Special Use Permit (SUP) is required to proceed with the proposed development.

This special use permit would impose development conditions, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as an accessory dwelling unit located on the same lot as a two-family dwelling, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.

Surrounding Area

The surrounding land use is residential.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents, property owners, and the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association. Staff has received one letter of support for the request.

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