



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2025-178 To authorize the special use of the property known as 400 North Robinson Street for the purpose of a three-story mixed-use building, upon certain terms and conditions. (2nd District)

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: August 19, 2025

PETITIONER

Nathan March

LOCATION

400 North Robinson Street

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to authorize a mixed-use building in a B-1 – Neighborhood Business District. The proposed use exceeds the height maximum for the district. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the requested use is consistent with the City's Master Plan future land use designation of Neighborhood Mixed-Use, where buildings are described as being two to four stories. The proposed structure is three stories.

Staff finds that the subject property is located along Robinson Street, which is identified as a Major Mixed-Use Street in the City's Master Plan.

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 in the Fan neighborhood on North Robinson Street between Kensington Avenue and Stuart Avenue. The property is currently a 14,521 square foot (0.33 acre) parcel of land improved with one-story building.

Proposed Use of the Property

Mixed-use building.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates the subject area as Neighborhood Mixed-Use which is defined 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 multifamily buildings (10+units), retail/office/personal service, institutional, cultural, and government.

Major Mixed-Use Street

Robinson Street is identified as a Major Mixed-Use Street in the City's Master Plan. The following elements are those found along this Street Typology.

- 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-1 Neighborhood Business District. The following features of the proposed development do not comply with the current zoning regulations:

Sec. 30-434.5 – Height

- No building or structure in the B-1 Neighborhood Business District shall exceed 25 feet in height

The proposed structure is approximately 44 feet tall.

This special use permit would impose development conditions, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as a three-story mixed-use building, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- No fewer than thirteen off-street parking spaces shall be provided for the Special Use.
- 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 uses are a mix of residential and commercial.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified the Highland Park Plaza and North Highland Park Civic Associations, area residents and property owners. Staff has received no letters to date regarding the proposal.

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