



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review

Staff Report

Ord. No. 2020-226: To amend Ord. No. 2013-156-154, adopted Sept. 9, 2013, as previously amended by Ord. No. 2013-208-197, adopted Oct. 28, 2013, which authorized the special use of the property known as 2501 Monument Avenue for the purpose of a museum for architecture and design and a lodging unit and imposed as a condition on the special use of such property a 150-person attendance limit for all reception events, to permit a dwelling unit and retail space and to impose as a condition on the special use of such property a 300-person attendance limit for all reception events instead of a 150-person attendance limit for all reception events.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: November 2, 2020

PETITIONER

Jennifer D. Mullen, Roth Jackson Gibbons Condlin, PLC

LOCATION

2501 Monument Avenue

PURPOSE

To amend Ord. No. 2013-156-154, adopted Sept. 9, 2013, as previously amended by Ord. No. 2013-208-197, adopted Oct. 28, 2013, which authorized the special use of the property known as 2501 Monument Avenue for the purpose of a museum for architecture and design and a lodging unit and imposed as a condition on the special use of such property a 150-person attendance limit for all reception events, to permit a dwelling unit and retail space and to impose as a condition on the special use of such property a 300-person attendance limit for all reception events instead of a 150-person attendance limit for all reception events.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The subject property consists of a 38,060 SF (.87 acre) parcel of land located at the corner of Monument Avenue, North Davis Avenue, and Park Avenue, in the Fan District neighborhood. The property is improved with a building known as the Branch House (which houses the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design) constructed, per tax assessment records, in 1918. The property is also located within the Monument Avenue City Old & Historic District.

The applicant wishes to amend and reordain the current special use permit ordinance for the museum, to allow for a dwelling unit for an artist-in-residence and accessory retail space, and changes to hours of operation. Modifications to the regulations pertaining to the use of the property for events are also proposed, including an increase in the permitted number of events, increase of the attendance limit for receptions to 300 persons, and to include the requirement that the owner provide a special event management plan to the Monument Avenue Preservation Society in place of certain regulations currently contained within the ordinance pertaining to special events.

Staff finds that the Branch House is a culturally, historically, and architecturally significant building that contributes to the high-quality, distinctive, and well-designed neighborhood in which it is located. Further, the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design is an established institution with the mission to “develop an understanding of architecture and design and their influence on our lives, our communities and our world.” Such an institutional use is consistent with the land use recommendations of the current Master Plan and final version of the Richmond 300 Master Plan.

Staff finds that the proposed amendments regarding event use of the property would allow added flexibility for such event use, thereby increasing revenue opportunities for the museum, which would enable continued operations of the museum and proper historic preservation of the property. Moreover, the Master Plan accounts for non-residential use of property within the neighborhood, provided they are contained within isolated parcels.

Staff finds that the proposed amendments would not pose an undue burden on the availability of on-street parking in the area due to the provisions of the Management Plan regarding use of the adjacent parking area at 2551 Monument Avenue and satellite parking areas.

Staff finds that with the ordinance conditions the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of Special Use Permits, are met.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit amendment request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The subject property consists of a 38,060 SF (.87 acre) parcel of land located at the corner of Monument Avenue, North Davis Avenue, and Park Avenue, in the Fan District neighborhood. The property is improved with a 21,462 SF building known as the Branch House (which houses the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design) constructed, per tax assessment records, in 1918. The property is also located within the Monument Avenue City Old & Historic District.

Proposed Use of the Property

Continued operation as a museum with accessory lodging unit and retail space, as well as office space. A dwelling unit for an artist-in-residence would also be permitted. Accessory museum events and special events would continue to take place, with modified regulations.

Master Plan

The City of Richmond’s current Master Plan designates the subject property for Single-Family (Medium Density) land use. Primary uses are single-family and two-family dwellings, both detached and attached, at densities of 8 to 20 units per acre. Includes residential support uses such as schools, places of worship, neighborhood parks and recreation facilities, and limited public and semi-public uses. Typical zoning classifications that may accommodate this land use category: R-5A, R-6 and R-7. (City of Richmond, Master Plan, p. 133)

Specifically for The Fan neighborhood, the Master Plan states “The Fan is a neighborhood which exists much as it has since the early 1900’s. It is identified on the Land Use Plan map as appropriate for the continuation of a wide range of urban residential uses (with varying housing styles and residential densities) and commercial uses to serve the area. While the Land Use Plan map does not provide specific details regarding the exact location of each type and density of residential and commercial uses, it is intended to reflect the importance of maintaining such a mix in this urban residential neighborhood” (p. 233).

The final version of the City of Richmond’s Richmond 300 Master Plan designates the property for Neighborhood Mixed-Use land use. Such areas are 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... 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...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 Use [are] Single-family houses, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), and open space. Secondary Uses [are] large multifamily buildings (10+units), retail/office/personal service, institutional, cultural, and government” (pg. 56).

Objective 3.1 of Richmond 300 is to preserve culturally, historically, and architecturally significant buildings, sites, structures, neighborhoods, cemeteries, and landscapes that contribute to Richmond's authenticity (p. 94)

Objective 4.1 of Richmond 300 is to create and preserve high-quality, distinctive, and well-designed neighborhoods and Nodes throughout the city (p. 100).

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The property is currently located in the R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential zoning district and is subject to special use permit Ordinance No. 2013-208-197 which currently regulates the museum and special event use of the property. Nonconforming office use is also permitted in the Building.

The applicant wishes to amend and reordain the current special use permit ordinance for the museum, to allow for a dwelling unit for an artist-in-residence and accessory retail space, and changes to hours of operation. Modifications to the regulations pertaining to the use of the property for events are also proposed, including an increase in the permitted number of events, increase of the attendance limit for receptions to 300 persons, and to include the requirement that the owner provide a special event management plan to the Monument Avenue Preservation Society in place of certain regulations currently contained within the ordinance pertaining to special events.

Provisions for parking in the current ordinance pertain to use of the adjacent parking area at 2551 Monument Avenue and satellite parking for event use of the property. The proposed Management Plan also contains provisions for the use of 2551 Monument Avenue for special events, and if the parking area is not available, satellite parking if possible.

The following table is a summary of the proposed amendments to the 2013 special use permit ordinance. All proposed changes to the ordinance are included in the attached Ordinance No. 2020-226. Please also see the provisions of the attached special event management plan.

2013 Ordinance	Proposed Amendments
<p>Regarding uses (Sec 1, p. 1): "...for the purpose of a museum for architecture and design and a lodging unit..." [and nonconforming office use]</p>	<p>Regarding uses (Sec 1, p. 1): "...for the purpose of a museum for architecture and design and a lodging unit, as well as a dwelling unit for an artist-in-residence, and retail space..." [and nonconforming office use]</p>
<p>Regarding hours of operation (Sec 3(C), p. 3): (1) 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Wednesday and Friday through Saturday. (2) 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Thursday. (3) 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.</p>	<p>Regarding hours of operation (Sec 2(C), p. 3): (1) 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday (2) 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. (3) 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Sunday.</p>
<p>Regarding event use of the property (Sec 3(d)(6&7), p. 5):</p> <p>12 reception events and 40 museum-related events are permitted per year, once a certificate of zoning compliance is issued.</p> <p>No limit to number of museum-related events held on Easter or held during normal business hours with an attendance limit of fifty persons. (These events are not permitted if the parking area located at 2551 Monument Avenue is not available.)</p>	<p>Regarding event use of the property (Management Plan):</p> <p>Certificates of Zoning Compliance are no longer required for events and there is no maximum number of museum-related events. Notification of events no longer required.</p> <p>Special events are limited by the management plan as follows: -105 events (5 events with 200-300 guests; 50 events with 150-200 guests, and 50 events with 75-149 guests) -Unlimited number if less than 75 guests</p>
<p>Regarding reception event attendance limits (Sec §3(d)(6)(b)1.(iii), p. 6): "All reception events shall have an attendance limit of 150 persons."</p>	<p>Regarding reception event attendance limits (Sec 2(h), p. 11): "All reception events shall have an attendance limit of no more than 300 persons."</p>
<p>Regarding outdoor lighting (Section 3(d)(11), p. 8): "Temporary lighting attached to the rear of the building shall not be permitted. Temporary lighting located in the terrace and garden areas shall not be placed higher than ten feet above ground level."</p>	<p>Regarding outdoor lighting (Section 2(d)(3), p. 8): Temporary lighting attached to the rear of the building shall not be permitted. Temporary lighting located in the terrace and garden areas shall not be placed higher than 12 feet above ground level.</p>
<p>Regarding ending time for events (Section 3(d)(5), p. 5): "Events held outside of normal business hours shall conclude no later than 10:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 7:00 p.m. on Sunday."</p>	<p>Regarding ending time for events (Management Plan): "No event shall extend beyond 10:30 pm. No personnel associated with the event shall work on the property beyond 11:30 pm."</p>
<p>Regarding amplified music, etc. (Section 3(d)(8), p. 8): "No amplified music, public address or loudspeaker system shall be operated outside of the building. Whenever there is amplified music within the building or whenever a public address or loudspeaker system is operated within the building, the doors and windows shall be maintained in a closed position."</p>	<p>Regarding amplified music, etc. (Management Plan): "No amplified music shall be operated outside of the building."</p>

The Zoning Administration Office reviewed the proposed amendments and management plan and is supportive of the proposal, offering no adverse comments.

Surrounding Area

All adjacent properties are located within the same R-6 Single-Family Residential District as the subject property. A mix of single-, two- and multi-family residential, commercial, mixed-use and institutional land uses are present in the vicinity.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area civic associations, residents, and property owners of the application. Staff has received a letter of no opposition from the Fan District Association, letters of support from the Robinson Street Association, Monument Avenue Preservation Society, Historic Richmond Foundation, and Fan Area Business Alliance, and letters of support from individuals. Staff has also received letters of opposition and calls of opposition from nearby residents.

Staff Contact:

Matthew Ebinger, Principal Planner, PDR, Land Use Administration, 804-646-6308

Jonathan Brown, Senior Planner, PDR, Land Use Administration, 804-646-5734