

Planning Commission
City of Richmond
900 E. Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23219

June 12, 2025

Re: 2618 Rear West Main St. Special Use Permit Application

Dear Commissioners,

We are writing to renew our opposition to the special use permit (SUP) application for 2618 Rear West Main Street. After registering our initial opposition, we engaged in several productive discussions with the applicant, fellow neighbors, Councilor Jordan's office, and the Fan District Association. While design changes have been proposed by the applicant, our original concerns stand. The proposed design remains unreasonably large and is inconsistent with the requirements of the City Charter, the nature and character of the surrounding neighborhood, and the quality of life of neighboring residents.

To be clear, we do **not** oppose development of the parcel, and we understand the need for additional housing in Richmond. We request that the Planning Commission reject the current design, but we certainly support a continuance to allow the applicant to propose modifications that reduces the overall size of the development and address other concerns.

1. The proposed design and application has not provided a sufficient basis to grant an SUP.

Richmond's City Charter § 17.11(b) requires that a decision to grant an SUP be based on various findings, including that the special use will not interfere with adequate light and air. The Virginia Supreme Court has ruled that a decision to grant an SUP must be based on at least some evidence of reasonableness supporting the decision. *Town of Leesburg v. Giordano*, 701 S.E.2d 783, 787-88 (2010).

The proposed structure is 3 stories and 35 feet high, covering 89% of the available lot. While this height is a reduction of the original plans proposed by the applicant, it remains a massive structure in the middle of the block that will completely obstruct the eastern sun exposure of neighbors to the south and southeast. Therefore, there is a clear basis to assert that this proposed development will interfere with adequate light. The burden is on the applicant to provide the Planning Commission and City Council with all information to make the required findings, but the application does not address this issue beyond simply asserting in its Findings of Fact section that "[t]he light and air available to the subject and adjacent properties will not be affected." There is no evidence provided to support this assertion and, in fact, those of us who live adjacent to the parcel can attest that this is completely untrue. There are obvious problems with a structure this size in this location.

Further, there was no information provided with the proposed redesign that indicates that the design changes address the primary concerns of residents. In fact, while the third story was technically removed, the roof "access structure" previously included was expanded in the redesign to include living space and take up a large portion of the building's footprint.

2. The 3-story, 35-foot proposed structure, covering nearly 90% of the lot, is unreasonably large.

Beyond the clear inconsistencies with City Charter requirements, the fact remains that this proposed design is absurdly large when considered in the context of the existing neighborhood. It covers 89% of the lot and will be one of the tallest structures compared to the surrounding properties.

While the developer has made efforts to reduce the height of the building, discussions about reducing the overall size were not entertained. If the development is reduced from 4 units to 3, the desired square footage of each unit could be preserved while eliminating the need for third-story living space. A reduction to 3 units would also allow for more significant setbacks, which would help mitigate the lot coverage issue and provide space for staging construction materials and equipment and allow future owners space to maintain the property without disruption to surrounding neighbors. While a larger development certainly improves the developer's financial position, the consideration of this SUP cannot simply be about profit maximization.

Ultimately, this infield lot is too small to accommodate four units of the size currently planned. A smaller development is much more appropriate for this lot and would most certainly gain broad neighbor support, including from all of us.

+ + +

We appreciate the clear need for more housing in Richmond, including in our neighborhood. Our concern with this project is not based on blanket opposition to development, and we appreciate the importance of a growing, vibrant city (though we believe that the availability of affordable housing should be prioritized when considering development). The interests of existing residents must be considered and balanced when attempting to address any housing issues. We have engaged in good-faith discussions with the developer to achieve a reasonable scale for this development, but the design remains problematic. We respectfully request that you reject this application as presented.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jason Snider
1 N. Mulberry St.

Cassidy Cabrera
2622 W. Main

Alex Ward
1 N. Mulberry St.

Sharon Sullivan
2624 W. Main St.

Richard Poyner
3 N. Mulberry St.

Karis Roberts
2630 W. Main St.

Elizabeth Throckmorton
5 N. Mulberry St.

Kelsey Bulger and Tyler Perkinson
2607 Floyd Ave.

Daniel Estrada and Steve Koski
7 N. Mulberry St.

Elena Ferranti and Daniel Houston
2615 Floyd Ave.

Emma Young and Caroline Barrera
2614 W. Main St.

Cheryl Territo and Arnaldo Vega
2619 Floyd Ave.

Geneva Travis
2620 W. Main St.

Mark Rodriguez
2619 1/2 Floyd Ave.

From: mackeymo17@earthlink.net
To: [PDR Land Use Admin](#)
Subject: Ordinance No. 2025-081 Special Use Permit - 2618 Rear West Main Street
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 2:27:28 PM

[You don't often get email from mackeymo17@earthlink.net. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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I was writing to contact Alyson Oliver, Secretary to the Planning Commission in regards to Ordinance No. 2025-081 Special Use Permit - 2618 Rear West Main Street.

I am a current resident at 3 North Mulberry Street and have resided there for over 30 years. I am very concerned with the proposed design at 2618 Rear West Main Street. The height and overall footprint on the plot would have a significant impact blocking direct sunlight to my property. I feel it will affect traffic in the 2 alleys, especially access to the parking behind our properties on Mulberry Street. In addition, the alley along the front of the proposed lot already floods with heavy rain and I am not sure if the footprint of the building will affect overall rain absorption into the ground or cause heavy runoff into the alley and our properties. I am unable to attend the open public hearing on Tuesday, June 17, 2025 and wanted to make sure my concerns were noted. Many of us have met with the representatives from City Council and the developers, but I feel that further consideration is warranted. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Richard Poyner
3 North Mulberry Street

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Dear Planning Commission,

We live at 5 North Mulberry Street, and we're very concerned about the development being considered at 2618 Rear West Main Street. The construction of a very tall building in the alley behind our house will block a lot of light from reaching the property. We're in an attached row house with no other sources of light until mid-afternoon. If you come here and look at this tiny area you will shake your head no-way this is healthy. There is no room for 40 trash cans OR any available parking. Please don't ruin our house values. Please do not trust photos-come look at this situation.

We all want Richmond to grow, and I usually support new developments in our neighborhood. But I'm worried about the quality of life implications for our family and our neighbors in the way this project is currently planned. The developers said in their permit application that the construction won't create these kinds of problems, but they don't show any analysis or evidence to support that.

I respectfully request that you consider these impacts before approving this project.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Throckmorton

5 N Mulberry St, Richmond, VA 23220

(directly adjacent to VERY SMALL garages)

I am writing to formally express my vehement objection to the proposed special use property build located in the alley of 2618 W. Main St which is currently under consideration. As a 28-year Fan district resident, I am, along with many of my neighbors, are deeply concerned about the negative impact this decision **will have** on our neighborhood.

The primary reasons for my objections are as follows:

1. **PARKING** – During peak evening hours, competing with 7 local restaurants and current residents for extremely limited on-street parking results in often having to park several blocks away from my residence, spending additional 15 to 20 minutes hunting and burning precious fuel. Many residents experience this same daily issue. The current proposal does **NOT** address the additional parking requirements for a structure of this size. Although, No parking signs are in place, cars continuously park illegally, with no consequences. Blocked alleys, parking to the curb, blocking fire hydrants, and the constant double parking, blocking on-coming traffic. This only would increase with an additional large dwelling in our neighborhood which has NO visible parking.
2. **Infrastructure** – With the current state of Richmond City water and sewer how is it possible to accommodate additional overcrowding in this area? Nothing in the current proposal indicates significant upgrades and/or enhancements to plumbing and sewage. Significant downpours cause flooding in the alley and the parking area behind the buildings resulting in flooding to basements and crawlspaces.
3. **Additional traffic** – the proposed dwelling has **NO** street access. This will force vehicles in the alley access only available from Robinson, an already heavily traveled street and Mulberry. The increase traffic is a major safety concern. Blocking visibility, also interfering with trash and recycling collections.
4. **Blocking sunlight** – the proposed 4 story structure will **BLOCK** sunlight to existing homes, seriously impacting landscaping and backyard gardens.
5. **Quality of LIFE** - Consideration for current property owners AND residents. The proposed build will have severe negative impact on an already overcrowded neighborhood. Richmond City life is expensive and stressful. What does this proposed build add to our neighborhood? **NOTHING**

I implore the Richmond City council to Vote NO and block this money grabbing build. PLEASE for once respect the residents and listen to the voices of community members who will be directly impacted.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sharon Popa Sullivan 28-year Fan District Resident

2624 W. Main Street

804-205-2401

Mark Rodriguez | 2619 ½ Floyd Avenue | Richmond, VA 23220 | cpllc2004@gmail.com

May 12, 2025

City of Richmond Planning Commission

c/o Madison Wilson, Land Use Administration

Department of Planning & Development Review

900 E. Broad Street, Room 511

Richmond, VA 23219

Councilmember Katherine Jordan

Second District, Richmond City Council

c/o Sven Philipsen, Second District Liaison

900 E. Broad Street

Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Objection to Ordinance No. 2025-081 – Special Use Permit for 2618 Rear West Main Street

Dear Commissioners and Councilmember Jordan,

I am writing as the owner and full-time resident of 2619 ½ Floyd Avenue, and as a partial owner of a private parking lot directly adjacent to the alley where the proposed development at 2618 Rear West Main Street is planned. After careful review of the application, supporting documents, and staff report, I must respectfully but firmly object to the approval of this Special Use Permit (Ordinance No. 2025-081).

As a stakeholder in the immediate vicinity of the subject property, I have significant concerns about the potential impacts of this project on public safety, infrastructure, neighborhood character, and equitable zoning enforcement. I urge the Planning Commission and City Council to consider the following objections:

Key Objections to Ordinance No. 2025-081 – Proposed Multifamily Development at 2618 Rear West Main Street

1. Alley-Only Access Creates Unsafe and Inadequate Ingress/Egress

The proposed development would front solely on an alley with no direct public street access. This violates standard planning principles for multifamily development, which typically require street frontage for safe emergency access, deliveries, and refuse collection.

Impact: Emergency vehicle and service access will be compromised. Alley traffic will increase significantly, creating congestion and raising safety concerns—particularly in the event of fire, medical emergencies, or utility disruptions.

2. Overreliance on Limited Alley Infrastructure

The alley behind 2618 W. Main is narrow, cobblestone, and not designed to handle the sustained vehicular load associated with four new townhomes, each with attached garages.

Impact: This will likely result in damage to shared infrastructure, reduced maneuverability for adjacent lot owners (including your parking lot), and the deterioration of historic alley surfaces. The applicant fails to address maintenance responsibility or potential liability for damage.

3. Unjustified Departure from R-7 Zoning Standards

The proposal disregards multiple R-7 zoning standards, including lot coverage, public street frontage, and required setbacks. The lot coverage is proposed at 89%—well above the 55% permitted.

Impact: Granting a special use permit with such significant deviations undermines the integrity of the zoning code and encourages overdevelopment in contexts where it is inappropriate or incompatible.

4. Lack of Parking Exacerbates Existing Deficit

The proposed development includes no off-street parking requirements despite the likelihood that each unit will be occupied by a multi-car household.

Impact: The project will further strain already limited on-street parking and may result in spillover into private lots, including the lot owned by the residents of the Citizen 6 development. This burden is not addressed or mitigated in the application.

5. Construction Staging Will Obstruct Adjacent Properties

The subject parcel is extremely constrained with no space for staging. Construction equipment, materials, and debris will necessarily spill into shared alleyways and adjacent private properties.

Impact: This could temporarily impede access to mine and my neighbors private parking lot, create legal exposure for damages, and cause unnecessary disruption to tenants and neighbors.

6. Height and Massing Disrupt Light, Air, and Views

The proposed 44-foot height exceeds the contextual norms of surrounding structures and will significantly obstruct light and air for neighboring properties, including your own.

Impact: Reduced solar access, potential adverse impacts to rooftop solar installations, solar powered parking lot lighting and diminished property values for adjacent owners. These concerns are well-documented in public comments but are inadequately addressed by the applicant.

7. No Supporting Evidence for Light/Shadow Impacts

The applicant's assertion that light and air will not be affected is unsupported by a shadow study, rendering the claim speculative.

Impact: Without evidence, the City Council cannot make a "fairly debatable" determination, as required under Virginia law. The lack of objective analysis opens the decision to legal challenge.

8. Unaddressed Infrastructure and Drainage Impacts

The proposal lacks meaningful planning for utility upgrades, stormwater management, and trash collection logistics.

Impact: Given known issues with flooding and aging infrastructure, the development could worsen water runoff and sewer capacity challenges. These risks are not offset by mitigation efforts or developer contributions.

9. Strong Neighborhood Opposition and Procedural Concerns

Numerous nearby residents and property owners have submitted thoughtful, documented objections. There is also concern that findings of fact in the application are unsupported.

Impact: Approving the SUP in the face of widespread, reasoned opposition undermines public trust, and weakens the collaborative foundation of the Richmond 300 Master Plan. It also creates a precedent for circumventing zoning without meaningful evidence or mitigation.

I respectfully request that the Planning Commission and City Council deny this Special Use Permit until a more appropriately scaled, better-integrated, and context-sensitive proposal is submitted—one that meets zoning standards and reflects the values of the neighborhood it seeks to join. Please note that I am unable to attend the planned meeting in the alley on May 14, 2025, due to previously scheduled out-of-town business travel.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Rodriguez

2619 ½ Floyd Avenue

Richmond, VA 23220

Planning Commission
City of Richmond
900 E. Broad St..
Richmond, VA 23219

April 30, 2025

Dear Commissioners,

We are writing to express our concern regarding the special use permit application for 2618 Rear West Main St and to request a delay on action until all necessary information and evidence is provided to enable the Planning Commission and City Council to make their findings.

Richmond City Charter § 17.11(b) requires that a decision to grant a special use permit be based on various findings, including that the special use will not:

- tend to create congestion in streets, roads, alleys and other public ways and places in the area involved; nor,
- interfere with adequate light and air.

The Virginia Supreme Court has ruled that a decision of a locality to grant a special use permit is a legislative act entitled to a presumption of validity. *Town of Leesburg v. Giordano*, 701 S.E.2d 783, 787 (2010). The presumption of validity is a presumption of reasonableness; in order for the decision to be considered reasonable it must be “fairly debatable.” *Id.* at 787-88. For a decision to be fairly debatable, there must be at least some evidence of reasonableness supporting the decision. *Id.*

With the construction of a 40+ foot structure blocking the eastern sun exposure of our home and that of our neighbors to the south and southeast, there is a clear basis to assert that this proposed development will interfere with adequate light (see attached slides). The burden is on the applicant to provide the Planning Commission and City Council with all information to make the required findings. The application does not address this issue beyond simply asserting in its Findings of Fact section that “[t]he light and air available to the subject and adjacent properties will not be affected.” There is no evidence provided to support this assertion. Therefore, a finding that this special use will not interfere with adequate light, without some evidence of reasonableness, is not a fairly debatable decision and not one that can withstand a challenge.

A similar argument exists regarding parking and traffic concerns. The application's Findings of Fact section asserts, without evidence, that

The proposed special use permit will not result in significant traffic impacts. The negligible traffic generation will create no congestion on streets, roads, alleys or any other public right of way.

While these proposed residences are currently planned to have a single-stall garage, it is very likely that those with the means to purchase these homes will be multi-car households. With no parking available on the section of Robinson Street closest to the development, any excess parking needed for the units will likely be served by Mulberry Street. Based on our experience as residents of that street, this section of Mulberry already experiences heavy demand for parking, with it being impossible to find a place to park on most evenings. Again, assertions in the application regarding impacts on street congestion are not supported by any evidence. Findings by the Planning Commission and Council must be supported by at least some evidence.

We appreciate the clear need for more housing in Richmond and in our neighborhood. Our concern with this project is not based on a blanket opposition to development, and we appreciate the importance of a growing, vibrant city (though we believe that the availability of affordable housing should be prioritized when considering development). However, the interests of existing residents and property owners must be considered and balanced when attempting to address any housing issues. In this case, there are too many outstanding questions to move forward with this project at this time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Daniel Estrada and Steve Koski
7 N. Mulberry St.

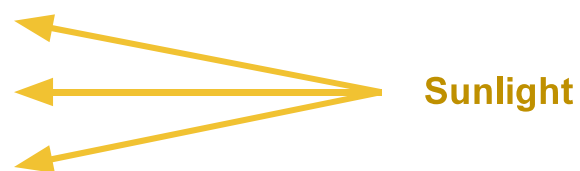
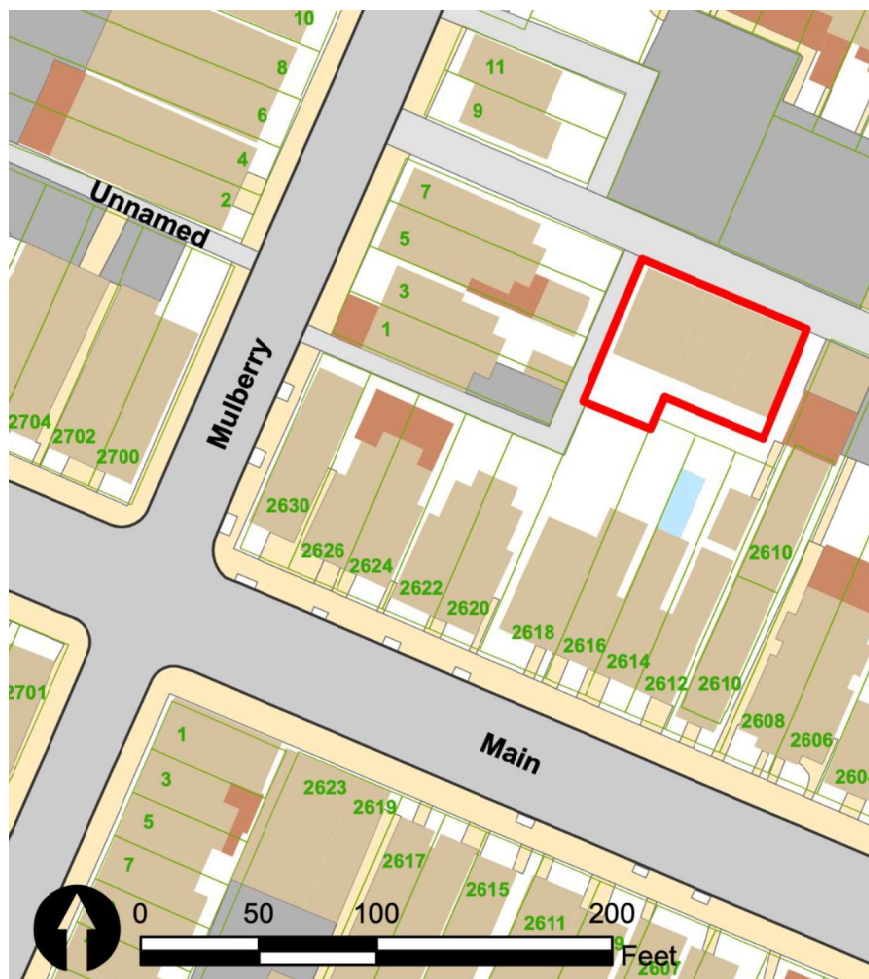
Feedback Regarding Proposed Special Use Permit at 2618 Rear West Main

Prepared by:
Daniel Estrada and Steve Koski
7 N. Mulberry St.

April 30, 2025

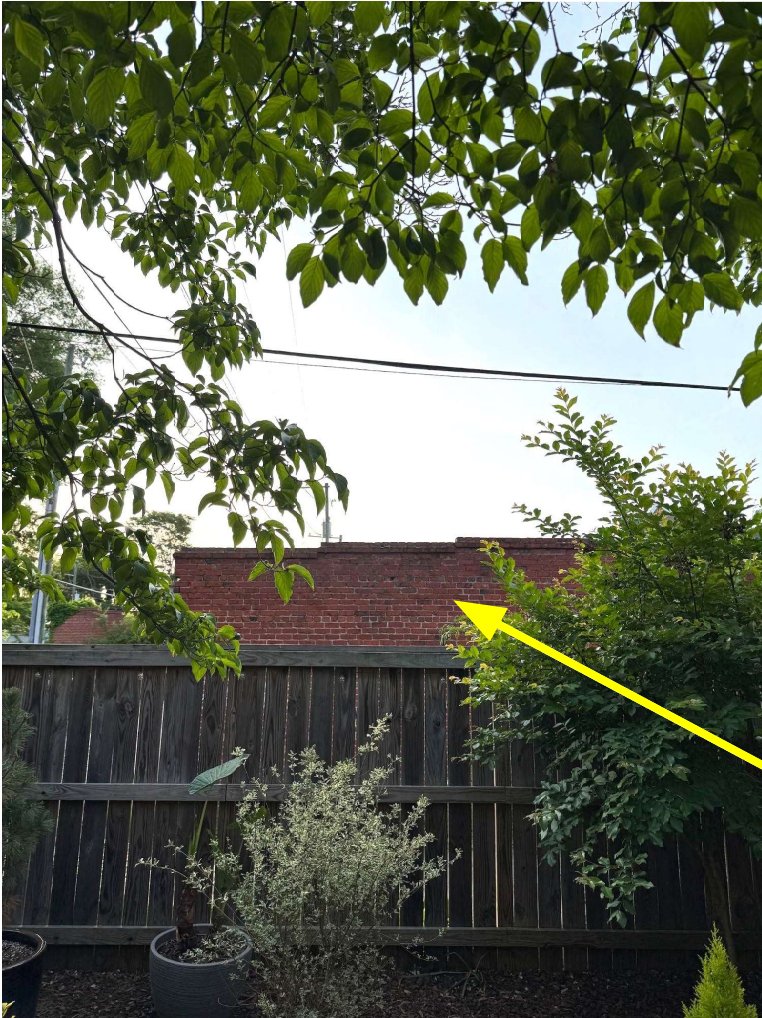
Impact on residents at:

- 1 N. Mulberry
- 3 N. Mulberry
- 5 N. Mulberry
- 7 N. Mulberry
- 2612 W. Main
- 2614 W. Main
- 2616 W. Main
- 2618 W. Main
- 2620 W. Main
- 2622 W. Main
- 2624 W. Main
- 2626 W. Main
- 2630 W. Main



The proposed development will be 4 stories in total (3 full stories plus roof structures).

The 40+ foot building will block most of the morning sun for residents living in homes along the corner of Mulberry and Main. The situation will be exacerbated in the winter, when the sun is lower, angled farther south, and when the days are already shorter.



Current structure (1 story)
where proposed building
will stand (4 stories)

7:15am

**Photo taken from rear of
7 N. Mulberry on 4/29/25**

Since the homes on this
part of Mulberry are row
houses, they rely on rear
sun exposure for all of
their morning light.



New structure will block
almost all morning light
(see next photo)

7:15am

**Photo taken from rear of
7 N. Mulberry on 4/29/25**

Current structure (1 story)
where proposed building
will stand (4 stories)



Sun would still be blocked completely for a few more hours by a 4-story structure

10:15am

**Photo taken from rear of
7 N. Mulberry on 4/29/25**