



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2022-263: To authorize the special use of the properties known as 3215 Stuart Avenue, 3215 Rear Stuart Avenue, 311 Tilden Street, 311 Rear Tilden Street, and 306 Rear Cleveland Street for (i) a multifamily dwelling containing up to 39 dwelling units and (ii) two single-family attached dwellings, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: October 3, 2022

PETITIONER

Lory Markham,
Representative of the Property Owner

LOCATION

501 North Allen Avenue

PURPOSE

To authorize the special use of the properties known as 3215 Stuart Avenue, 3215 Rear Stuart Avenue, 311 Tilden Street, 311 Rear Tilden Street, and 306 Rear Cleveland Street for (i) a multifamily dwelling containing up to 39 dwelling units and (ii) two single-family attached dwellings, upon certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit which would allow for a multifamily dwelling containing up to 39 dwelling units and two single-family attached dwellings within R-6 Single-Family Attached zone on a group of lots with an overall size of 2.171 acres and an existing building of roughly 69,000 square feet. The project will be an adaptive re-use of a previously private educational building, including historic preservation elements of the original chapel building. Multi-family uses are not permitted within the R-6 Single-Family Attached zone; a Special Use Permit is therefore requested.

Staff finds that the proposal would be consistent with the recommendations of the City's Master Plan future land use designation of Institutional. The designation includes multi-family as an appropriate secondary use. The land use designation further states that "Residential uses may be permitted on the ground floor in certain sections of the area. Regardless, ground floor residential units should still have street-oriented façades with setbacks, front yards, and balconies where appropriate." The proposed project includes street oriented facades and balconies where appropriate.

Staff further finds that the proposal would not pose an undue burden on the availability of on-street parking in the area with the inclusion of onsite parking.

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

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property is located in the Museum District neighborhood at 3215 Stuart Ave, 3215 Rear Stuart Ave, 311 Tilden St, 311 Rear Tilden St, and 306 Rear Cleveland Street, between North Cleveland and Tilden Streets. The property is currently a roughly 95,000 sq. ft. (2.171 acre) parcel of land that contains an existing building formerly known as St. Gertrude's High School, a private educational use. The first building on the site was the chapel, which was constructed around 1913 and remains onsite. The applicant has applied for State historic tax credits with the intention to maintain the historic nature of the building. The site subsequently received a number of additions to its current layout and size of roughly 69,000 square feet. The private education and religious users vacated the building in 2020 and the site is currently vacant.

Proposed Use of the Property

The applicant is requesting to renovate the existing building to include 39 residential units and construct 2 new townhouses. The exterior façade of the building will be renovated to reflect the new residential nature of the use, including new balconies, window and doors locations, and additional square footage with the expansion of several upper stories; however the footprint of the existing building will remain largely the same. Exterior landscaped spaces on the site will be updated as amenity space for the residents. 58 parking spaces will be provided onsite to the rear of the building in the existing, but redesigned, parking area.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Institutional. This designation is defined as a "Public and quasi-public entities, such as local, state, and federal government, hospitals, universities, schools, and religions institutions."

Development Style: Several buildings owned by an institution are often connected by an engaging character that creates a campus-like environment.

Ground Floor: Active commercial ground floor uses are required on street-oriented commercial frontages. Residential uses may be permitted on the ground floor in certain sections of the area. Regardless, ground floor residential units should still have street-oriented façades with setbacks, front yards, and balconies where appropriate.

Mobility: Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. New driveway entrances are prohibited on priority and principal street frontages and minimal driveway entrances are allowed on secondary streets. Ground floor parking is prohibited on principal street frontages. Intensity: Varies.

Primary Uses: Institutional, cultural, government, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Retail/office/personal service and multi-family.

Zoning

In response to the SUP request for the above-referenced property, Zoning Administration offers the following comments:

- **Zoning and Use:** The subject property is zoned R-6 (single-family attached residential) district. This proposal is to convert the former school into multifamily use. A total of 39 one- to three-bedroom units are proposed with floor areas ranging between 767 to 3,791 square feet. In

addition, two townhome units are proposed on the parcels facing Tilden Street. Single-family attached dwellings are a permitted principal use in the R-6 district, while multifamily dwellings are not.

- R-6 Feature Requirements: Lot area, lot width, lot coverage, height, and yard requirements are only applicable to permitted principal and accessory uses.
 - Single-family attached dwellings shall be located on lots of not less than 2,200 square feet in area with a unit width of not less than 16 feet.
 - Front yard. There shall be a front yard with a depth of not less than 15 feet adjacent to public streets, private streets, parking areas and common spaces
 - Side yard. There shall be side yards of not less than three feet in width except where buildings are attached.
 - Rear yard. There shall be a rear yard with a depth of not less than five feet.
 - Lot coverage. Lot coverage in the R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential District shall not exceed 55 percent of the area of the lot.
 - Height. No building or structure in the R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential District shall exceed 35 feet in height
- Parking: A multifamily dwelling with one main building on a lot of record should provide one off street space per dwelling unit. 53 parking spaces are proposed.
- Bicycle Parking: 1 Long-term bicycle parking space is required for every 3 dwelling units (multi-family).
 - Parking space, long-term bicycle, means a bicycle parking space in a secure, weather-protected facility intended for use as long-term, overnight, and work-day bicycle storage by dwelling unit residents, nonresidential occupants, and employees.
- Additional comments: The dumpsters shown on the plans should meet screening standards per Sec. 30-660.1.

Historic Review

As stated previously, the applicant has applied for Virginia State Historic tax credits for the original chapel. The credits include a number of requirements related to renovation work on the chapel to preserve its historic character.

The applicant has stated that the previous religious users have officially de-sanctified the space and will remove a majority of the religious iconography within and on the façade of the chapel.

Staff has provided a condition of approval that ensures the framing of the large stain glass window facing Stuart Avenue will remain in place and will be protected during construction. This condition is intended to maintain a primary feature of the buildings historic character that is visible from the street.

Similarly, Staff has provided a condition of approval that the applicant repair and maintain the existing brick retaining wall that encloses the site. This condition is intended to maintain a primary feature of the streetscape that contributes most to the current neighborhood character.

West of the Boulevard Design Guidelines

The project is located within the West of the Boulevard Design Overlay. The West of the Boulevard design guidelines are not applicable to the proposed renovation of the multifamily building

because the changes to the building do not include architecture features that are included in the guidelines. That stated, the proposed design is sensitive to the guideline requirements for cornice height, column width, and roof form and to the neighborhood character in the adjacent block. The new façade on the west elevation is the primary façade change that is most residential in nature. Cornice height and roof form on this façade closely relate to that on other single-family residential uses on the same street.

The proposed new construction of two single-family attached dwellings will be required to follow the guidelines, but the final architecture and design of those buildings will be approved separately from the current Special Use Permit application.

Ordinance Conditions

Development conditions will be imposed by the amended ordinance, including:

- (a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as (i) a multifamily dwelling containing up to 39 dwelling units and (ii) two single-family attached dwellings, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- (b) The existing stained glass windows in Unit 23, as shown on the Plans, shall be protected during construction, and the wood trim and frame around the circular stained glass window in the existing chapel (Unit 23) shall remain in their current position, extent, and condition.
- (c) The existing brick retaining wall shall be protected during construction and any damage shall be repaired with like materials. The existing brick retaining wall may be modified, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- (d) Up to 51 parking spaces shall be provided on the Property for use by the multifamily dwelling and two parking spaces shall be provided for use by the single-family attached dwellings.
- (e) Elevations, building materials, and site improvements pertaining to the multifamily dwelling shall be substantially as shown on the Plans, subject to the applicable regulations of the West of the Boulevard Design Overlay District, pursuant to sections 30-940 through 30-940.9 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended. Elevations, building materials, and site improvements pertaining to the single-family attached dwellings shall meet the standards of the underlying zoning district, subject to the applicable regulations of the West of the Boulevard Design Overlay District, pursuant to sections 30-940 through 30-940.9 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended.
- (f) The height of the multifamily dwelling shall not exceed the height shown on the Plans, and the height of the single-family attached dwellings shall not exceed three stories.
- (g) All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.
- (h) In addition to signs permitted in all districts, pursuant to section 30-505 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, the existing freestanding sign, not exceeding 45 square feet in area, may be used for the Special Use.

Surrounding Area

The subject property is zoned R-6 Single-family Attached. The surrounding properties are also zoned the same R-6 zone.

The subject property is located approximately three blocks from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and four blocks from the Carytown commercial corridor.

Neighborhood Participation

The City notified area residents and property owners along with the Museum District Association and Fan Area Business Association. Staff has received comment letters from area residents.

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