



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2023-175: To rezone the properties known as 500 Commerce Road and 520 Commerce Road from the M-2 Heavy Industrial District to the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: June 20, 2022

PETITIONER

Andrew Stone, Tessera Development

LOCATION

500 Commerce Road and 520 Commerce Road

PURPOSE

To rezone the properties known as 500 Commerce Road and 520 Commerce Road from the M-2 Heavy Industrial District to the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting to rezone two contiguous properties, 500 and 520 Commerce Road, from the M-2 Heavy Industrial District to the Transit Oriented Nodal District (TOD-1).

Staff finds that the proposal would be consistent with the recommendations of the City's Richmond 300 Master Plan pertaining to the Destination Mixed Use land use category, as well as the pattern of development that is prevalent in the vicinity along Commerce Road. The Destination Mixed Use land use category encourages characteristics that align with the TOD-1 zone such as mixed-uses, higher densities, building setbacks and heights, and access management.

Staff also finds that the ordinance aligns with the Richmond 300 Plan's goals for creating "Great Streets". The property is along a dedicated Major Mixed-Use Street and therefore is well suited toward TOD-1 characteristics such as building size and massing, site design, and public right-of-way amenities.

Staff finds that the proposed rezoning is consistent with changing conditions in the area, in which vacant or underutilized parcels, many of which have historically been used for industrial or warehousing purposes, continue to be redeveloped for residential and mixed-use purposes, based on market demand. The existing M-2 zoning designation of the property is not consistent with the Master Plan and development of the property according to M-2 requirements would not be appropriate for the transitioning community.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the rezoning request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The properties together consist of approximately 90,295 SF, or 2.072 acres, of land. The properties are located in the Old Town Manchester neighborhood between Maury and Marx Streets.

Proposed Use of the Property

The proposed rezoning would accommodate existing uses and infill development allowable within the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates these parcels as Destination Mixed Use. Such areas are intended to include "Key gateways featuring prominent destinations, such as retail, sports venues, and large employers, as well as housing and open space. Located at the convergence of several modes of transportation, including Pulse BRT or other planned transit improvements."

Development Style:

Higher-density, transit-oriented development encouraged on vacant or underutilized sites. New development should be urban in form, may be of larger scale than existing context, and, where relevant, should pay special attention to the historic character of the existing context. Development should enhance the public realm and create a sense of place. Many buildings are vertically mixed-use. Developments continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity.

Ground Floor:

Ground floor uses engage with, and enliven, the street. Monolithic walls are discouraged, while windows, doors, storefronts, and other features that allow transparency and interaction between building and street are encouraged. Active commercial ground floor uses are required on street-oriented commercial frontages.

Mobility:

Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. Driveway entrances are required to be off alleys whenever possible; new driveways are prohibited on priority and principal street frontages. Surface parking is prohibited as a principal use; when surface parking is provided as an accessory use, it should be located to the rear of buildings and screened. Parking requirements are reduced to allow more market-based parking strategies, including shared parking.

Intensity: Buildings typically a minimum height of five stories.

Primary Uses: Retail/office/personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Institutional and government.

The subject properties are located adjacent to a designated “Great Street” under the typology of “Major Mixed-Use Street” which is characterized by the following:

- 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 (p. 72)

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is M-2 Heavy Industrial District. The proposal is to rezone the property to the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

Surrounding Area

Adjacent and nearby properties are primarily zoned M-2, with some B-3 General Business and TOD-1 zones nearby. The surrounding land uses include primarily industrial with some residential uses to the north and northwest.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents, property owners, and the Blackwell Historic Community Civic Association of the proposed Rezoning. As of this date, staff has not received any correspondence regarding the application.

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