



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

CPCR.2023.015: Resolution to amend the “Shops at Stratford Hills Community Unit Plan - Final Plan,” for the purpose of constructing an electric vehicle charging station, under certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: May 1, 2023

PETITIONER

Danielle Earich, Core States Construction Services
Representative of the Property Owner

LOCATION

6933 and 6945 Forest Hills Avenue

PURPOSE

To amend the “Shops at Stratford Hills Community Unit Plan, Final Plan” for the purpose of constructing an electric vehicle charging station, under certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant intends to construct an electric vehicle charging station on a portion of the Shops at Stratford Hills Community Unit Plan (CUP). An amendment to the Community Unit Plan – FINAL PLAN is needed to accomplish this.

Richmond 300 recommends a future land use of “Destination Mixed-Use” for the rear portion of the property, where the project is proposed. Staff finds that the proposal supports this land use designation and the Richmond 300 Goal 10.4 to “Support the expansion of the electric charging network for vehicles and bicycles on privately owned land” and Goal 15 “Improve air quality within the city and the region, achieve a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions within the city by 2030, and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions within the city by 2050 via RVAgreen 2050.”

Staff finds that the proposed Community Unit Plan Final Plan Amendment will continue to adequately safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the occupants of the adjoining and surrounding properties, will not unreasonably impair an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent properties, will not unreasonably increase congestion in streets and will not increase public danger from fire or otherwise unreasonably affect public safety and will not diminish or impair the established values of property in surrounding areas.

Therefore staff recommends approval of the Community Unit Plan – Final Plan Amendment request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The proposed development pertains to the Shops at Stratford Hills Community Unit Plan, located at the southeast corner of Forest Hill Avenue and Chippenham Parkway within the City's Gravel Hill neighborhood. The proposed electric vehicle charging station will be located in front of the existing Target, within the existing parking area.

Proposed Use of the Property

The project does not change the overall use of the property.

Master Plan

1) Destination Mixed Use

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.

2) "Shops at Stratford Hills" Regional Priority Grown Node

The future of the node is envisioned as a walkable, mixed use neighborhood center with a diverse mix of uses including unique shopping, service and entertainment establishments, as well as residential units. The existing suburban style development that focuses around large parking lots in the future could be developed into a more urban, gridded pattern with buildings that address the street. Forest Hill Avenue needs to be improved to reduce vehicle and pedestrian conflicts and improve pedestrian, bicycle and transit access. New development

should have a cohesive, high quality design and include street trees and other open space. Any new development in the area to the south and east of the Node which are designated as Neighborhood Mixed Use should complement the design of the Node and be connected by both streets and sidewalks.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The property is located in the B-2 Community Business District.

The Zoning Department offers the following comments:

Zoning and use: The subject property is zoned B-2 Community Business district and is subject to a Community Unit Plan (Shops at Stratford Hills Community Unit Plan) most recently Ord. No. 2017-242. This submittal is for a new Final Plan for the construction of a motor vehicle fueling area (EV charging stations) within an existing parking area.

The following condition of approval is proposed:

- *Application for a building permit shall be submitted within twenty-four (24) months of the date of Commission approval of the plan, otherwise, such approval shall be considered null and void. Plans submitted for building permit approval shall be substantially in conformance with the plans approved by the Commission.*

Surrounding Area

Surrounding properties are zoned B-2 Community Business District and R-2 Single Family Residential. The project is located on the Forest Hills Avenue commercial corridor.

Neighborhood Participation

The City notified area residents and property owners along with the Southhampton Citizens Association and Cherokee Area Neighbors civic association about this application. No correspondence has been received.

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