



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2024-125: To authorize the special use of the properties known as 3301 Maplewood Avenue and 800 Freeman Road for the purpose of a stadium, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: May 21, 2024

PETITIONER

Rob Ukrop, RVA Sports Foundation

LOCATION

3301 Maplewood Avenue & 800 Freeman Road

PURPOSE

The existing stadium use was permitted in 1928 through a decision of the Board of Zoning Appeals. The use is now nonconforming and any expansion or increased intensity of the use requires a special use permit. The applicant is requesting authorization for additional signage pertaining to the stadium, including replacing the existing scoreboard, which was installed in 1994, with a larger LED scoreboard. Therefore, a special use permit is required.

In addition to establishing new standards for signage on the property, the special use permit will specify uses that would be permitted on the property (see Proposed Use of the Property below for more detail).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the stadium use, while not contemplated within the Master Plan's Residential land use designation, is an established, historic use within the neighborhood. Continued use of the property as a stadium with limited accessory uses, including a new scoreboard, would not pose an undue burden on the neighborhood.

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.

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

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The subject parcels are located in the Stadium neighborhood west of McCloy Street. The parcels total approximately 20 acres and are improved with a stadium at 3301 Maplewood Avenue and a gravel surface parking lot at 800 Freeman Road.

The current zoning for the property is R-4 – Single-Family Residential. Adjacent properties are within that same zoning district.

Proposed Use of the Property

The special use permit would allow the following uses on the property:

A Stadium and customarily incidental and clearly subordinate accessory uses, structures, and improvements, including:

Playing fields; concourses; seating; a press box; lighting; scoreboards; signage; irrigation; restrooms; locker rooms; concessions and the sale of alcohol; parking lots; landscaping; fencing; tool and storage buildings; food truck courts; farmers markets; artisan markets; city-sponsored events (including concerts as described in the Deed of Ground Lease between the City of Richmond and operator of the Stadium); swimming pools, tennis courts and similar recreational facilities; temporary structures, trailers and storage of equipment and materials incidental to construction activities taking place on the premises, provided that such shall be removed upon completion or abandonment of construction; and wireless communications facilities, microwave relay facilities, and radio broadcast antennas, on alternative support structures.

Residential use of the property would not be permitted by the special use permit.

The new scoreboard proposed by the applicant shall be no more than 80 feet in width and 50 feet in height, and the overall height of the scoreboard (including support structures) shall not exceed 60 feet. The scoreboard will not be located within 46 feet of the stadium property line, and animated signage shall not be permitted on the rear of the scoreboard. A plan of development shall be required for the scoreboard prior to the issuance of building permits.

The applicant has indicated that the new scoreboard would sit at an elevation that is approximately 30 feet lower than the current scoreboard.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Residential, which is defined as, "Neighborhood consisting primarily of single-family houses on large- or medium-sized lots more homogeneous in nature." (Richmond 300, p. 54, 2020).

Development Style: Houses on medium-sized and large-sized lots in a largely auto-dependent environment. Homes are setback from the street. Future developments continue and/or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity. Future single-family housing, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and small multi-family residential buildings are built to a scale and design that is consistent with existing buildings.

Mobility: Bicycle and pedestrian access are prioritized and accommodated. Low residential density means that it is not possible to provide frequent transit within these areas; however, frequent transit may be found at the edges of these areas within more intense future land use designations. Many homes have driveways and/or garages, which are located off an alley behind the home if an alley is present.

Intensity: Buildings are generally one to three stories. Lot sizes generally range up to 5,000 to 20,000+ sq. ft. Residential density of 2 to 10 housing units per acre.

Primary Uses: Single-family houses, accessory dwelling units, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Duplexes and small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), institutional, and cultural. Secondary uses may be found along major streets.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is R-4 Single Family Residential District. This special use permit would impose development conditions on the property, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as a stadium, substantially as shown on the Plans. Permitted accessory uses to the Special Use shall include both those permitted by the applicable underlying zoning regulations and playing fields, concourses, seating, a press box, lighting, scoreboards, signage, irrigation, restrooms, locker rooms, concessions and the sale of alcohol, parking lots, landscaping, fencing, and customarily incidental and clearly subordinate accessory uses, structures, and improvements, as well as food truck courts, farmers markets, artisan markets, and city-sponsored events including concerts as described in the Deed of Ground Lease between the City of Richmond and operator of the Special Use
- The height of the Special Use, including the scoreboard, shall not exceed 60 feet, with the exception of stadium lighting, which shall not exceed 100 feet.
- A scoreboard shall be permitted on the Property, no less than 46 feet from the Property line. The width of the scoreboard shall not exceed 80 feet and the height of the scoreboard, not including support columns or structures, shall not exceed 50 feet.
- Signs on the Property shall be limited to (i) signs permitted in all districts pursuant to section 30-505 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, and (ii) signs permitted in the TOD-1 Transit-Oriented Nodal District*, pursuant to section 30-518.4. of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, with the exception that animated signage shall not be permitted on the rear of the scoreboard.
- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.
- Prior to the issuance of any building permit for a scoreboard, concourse, seating, press box, restroom, locker room, concessions, or parking lot, a plan of development, or an amendment of the existing plan of development, for the Special Use, shall be approved by the Director of the Department of Planning and Development Review, or designee, pursuant to Article X, Division 4 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended.

*NOTE: Pursuant to TOD-1 Signage requirements, signs on a lot containing a stadium structure with at least three thousand seats (such as City Stadium or the Diamond) shall be exempt from normal TOD-1 sign regulations. However, this Special Use Permit ordinance will limit the height and area of the scoreboard, and prohibit animated signage on the rear of the scoreboard.

Surrounding Area

The surrounding area is primarily residential.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents and property owners and has discussed the proposed special use permit with members of the community.

Staff Contact:

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