



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2023-352: To authorize the special use of the property known as 1210 Westover Hills Boulevard for the purpose of a vocational school on the ground floor, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: December 4, 2023

PETITIONER

LB Beauty Academy

LOCATION

1210 Westover Hills Boulevard

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to authorize a ground floor vocational school, which use, among other things, is not currently allowed by section 30-436.1, concerning permitted principal and accessory uses, of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Community Mixed-Use. Staff has reviewed the application and finds the proposal is generally consistent with the Community Mixed-Use recommendations and neighborhood context. A Community Mixed-Use designation supports institutional uses, such as vocational schools, as a secondary use. The proposed change to vocational use compliments the existing context by providing neighborhood services and training to nearby residential communities. No exterior changes are proposed as part of this request, and primary access to the site occurs via a driveway leading to a main parking area at the rear of the property. Given the existing building is a vacant underutilized space, staff believes the vocational use will help enliven the existing property and better compliment the surrounding context.

The proposed vocational school is within the Westover Hills Neighborhood Node and is in close proximity to public transit including GRTC bus route 20 which connects the node to Carytown, Museum District and Highland Park neighborhoods. Staff finds that this proposal contributes to Objective 6.1 to "Increase the number of residents and jobs at Nodes and along enhanced transit corridors in a land development pattern that prioritizes multi-modal transportation options." (Richmond 300, p. 109).

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.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property is in the Forest View neighborhood situated on a block bounded by Clarence Street, Forest Hill Ave, Jahnke Road, and Westover Hills Blvd. The property is currently a 26,902 sq. ft. (0.6 acre) parcel of land, occupied by an existing 4,514 square foot building with parking.

Proposed Use of the Property

Ground floor vocational school

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land for the subject property as Community Mixed-Use, which is defined as "Cluster of medium-density, walkable commercial and residential uses that provide neighborhood services to nearby residential communities and sometimes feature regional attractions" (p. 58)

Development Style:

The building size, density, and zoning districts for these areas may vary significantly depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement existing context. Uses may be mixed horizontally in several buildings on a block or vertically within the same building. 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.

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 streets. Parking areas are located within the structure and to the rear of buildings and require screening; shared parking requirements are encouraged.

Intensity:

Buildings generally ranging from two to six stories, based on street widths and depending on the historic context and stepping down in height adjacent to residential areas, as necessary. New buildings that are taller than historical buildings should step back from the build-to line after matching the height of the predominant cornice line of the block.

Primary Uses:

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

Secondary Uses:

Single-family houses, institutional, and government.

Zoning

As summarized above, vocational school uses are not permitted principal uses within the B-2 Community Business District under section 30-436.1 of the Code of the City of Richmond; therefore, a Special Use Permit is required to authorize this use.

Ordinance Conditions

If adopted, the Special Use Permit would impose conditions on the property, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as a vocational school on the ground floor, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.

Surrounding Area

The current zoning for the property is B-2 Community Business District and is situated within the Westover Hills neighborhood node, which is made up of B-2, UB-2, RO-2 and R-5 districts. The Westover Hills node includes a mix of commercial and institutional uses and is primarily surrounded by residential single-family uses. The node is intersected Forest Hill Ave and Westover Hills Blvd, which are identified as major mixed-use streets.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents and property owners, as well as the Forest View Civic Association. Staff has received two written public comments supporting the proposed vocational use at this location.

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