

Department of Planning & Development Review
Staff Report

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: April 21, 2014

Ord. No. 2014-75: To amend Ord. No. 90-15-31, adopted Feb. 26, 1990, as previously amended by Ord. No. 96-169-163, adopted Jun. 24, 1996, Ord. No. 99-428-2000-16, adopted Jan. 24, 2000, and Ord. No. 2003-246-253, adopted Sept. 8, 2003, which authorized a special use of the property known as 428 North Boulevard, to permit exterior and interior modifications for museum and library purposes and to permit mobile food businesses, upon certain terms and conditions.

PETITIONER

Steven P. Blashfield
Glavé & Holmes Architecture
2101 E. Main St.

LOCATION

428 North Boulevard

PURPOSE

To amend Ord. No. 90-15-31, adopted Feb. 26, 1990, as previously amended by Ord. No. 96-169-163, adopted Jun. 24, 1996, Ord. No. 99-428-2000-16, adopted Jan. 24, 2000, and Ord. No. 2003-246-253, adopted Sept. 8, 2003, which authorized a special use of the property known as 428 North Boulevard, to permit exterior and interior modifications for museum and library purposes and to permit mobile food businesses, upon certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The subject property is zoned R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential, which does not permit the existing museum/library because it is neither owned nor operated by a governmental agency. The original museum structure on the site was constructed in 1913. The museum became nonconforming in 1976 when the zoning ordinance was amended to remove the private museum use from the R-6 zoning district.

A special use permit and subsequent amendments authorized expansions to the museum/library in 1990, 1996, 2000 and 2003. The applicant has requested a new amendment to the special use permit to authorize additional exterior and interior modifications for museum and library purposes. The new amendment would also legitimize the use of the subject property by mobile food businesses currently taking place.

Staff finds that the museum and library use of the subject property is consistent with the Master Plan's institutional land use designation and that the proposed external and internal modifications would also be consistent.

Staff further finds that the exterior modifications shown in the attached plans, which have received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission of Architectural Review, would offer

improved accessibility to the facility and would replace surface parking with pedestrian-scale open space along Boulevard.

Staff further finds that the periodic use of the subject property by mobile food businesses would not be in conflict with museum and library use of the subject property and would provide an amenity for the neighborhood.

Staff further finds that with the conditions of the amended ordinance, the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of special use permits, are met. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the special use permit amendment request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The 6.3 acre subject property contains a private museum and library located within The Museum District neighborhood of the Near West planning district. It is also located within an R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential zoning district, and the Boulevard National Historic District and Boulevard City Old & Historic District.

Proposed Use of the Property

Previous amendments to the existing special use permit have authorized various modifications and additions to the Virginia Historical Society. The current amendment request would authorize modifications to the south entry and Boulevard entry and a new north entry that would provide access to a new education and classroom space to be used for museum and library programming.

Parking is provided on site with supplemental parking being provided at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art's parking garage. Staff parking is provided at a surface parking lot at 515 North Colonial Avenue.

The amendment request would also legitimize and create standards for the food truck court currently being operated periodically on the property.

Master Plan

The City of Richmond's Master Plan designates the subject property for institutional land use. Primary uses include institutional uses such as places of worship, private schools, universities, museums, hospitals, and other care facilities. Typically this land use category depicts larger scale uses, while small-scale uses of this type are incorporated within the predominant surrounding land use designations.

Ordinance Conditions

The conditions of the proposed amended ordinance pertain to the Virginia Historical Society's museum and library use of the property, as well as the mobile food business use of the property.

Museum/Library Use Conditions:

The amended ordinance would continue to allow the use of the building as a library and museum with accessory gift shop sales, with the option of non-accessory office space, archival storage space, and archival laboratory space, and would additionally allow accessory classroom and educational space.

The amended ordinance would allow parking for the museum and library use to be provided on-site (119 spaces), as well as off-site at the 500 block of North Colonial Avenue (70 spaces) and the Virginia Museum of Fine Art's parking garage.

Extensive landscaping is to be installed. Signage requirements are to remain the same.

Mobile Food Business Use Conditions:

The use of the subject property by mobile food businesses would be limited to the area described as "Food Truck Court" on the attached plans. This area would be used no more than twice a week by no more than ten mobile food businesses. The hours of operation would be from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Regulations for mobile food business in terms of items sold, power sources, signage, amplified sound, impact on traffic flow, site placement, provision of toilet facilities, and provision of trash receptacles are also contained in the conditions of the attached ordinance.

Surrounding Area

Parcels to the east of the subject property are zoned R-48, whereas parcels to the north are zoned R-6, R-48, and R-73. Parcels to the west and south are within the same R-6 district as the subject property. A mix of single-, two- and multi-family residential, commercial, office and institutional uses (including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts directly to the south) are found in the area.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff has notified The Museum District Association, The Boulevard Association, The Fan District Association, and Councilman Baliles of the application. Staff has received a notice of non-opposition from the Museum District Association (attached).

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