



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2024-282: To authorize the special use of the property known as 1321 Porter Street for the purpose of a multifamily dwelling containing up to four dwelling units, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: December 3, 2024

PETITIONER

Emily Pinchbeck – 1321 Porter Street, LLC

LOCATION

1321 Porter Street, Richmond, VA

SUMMARY

The applicant seeks a Special Use Permit to legitimize a multifamily dwelling containing four units located at 1321 Porter Street. This request arises from a violation that uncovered an unpermitted third floor containing a fourth dwelling unit that had been added to the rear of the building.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that a four-unit multifamily dwelling is consistent with the recommendations of the Richmond 300 Master Plan, which designates a future land use for the subject property as Neighborhood Mixed-use and recommends small multi-family buildings as a primary use.

Staff finds that the requested special use permit would serve as zoning authorization pertaining to the use of the property, but would not waive any building code requirements. Moreover, all building code violations shall be remedied before full use of the building can take place.

Staff concludes that the proposed ordinance conditions substantially satisfy the safeguards established in the City Charter concerning the granting of Special Use Permits, provided that all outstanding building code violations are resolved.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit request, with the understanding that all outstanding building code violations must still be resolved.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property is located in the Manchester neighborhood on the west line of Porter Street near the corner of W 14th Street. The property is currently a 4,693.2 square foot (.108 acre) parcel of land.

Proposed Use of the Property

The proposed use would legitimize four dwelling units in a multi-family dwelling, which is not currently allowed in the zoning code concerning principal uses. The special use permit would also bring the side-yard setback into compliance.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Neighborhood Mixed-Use, which is defined as, "Existing or new highly-walkable urban neighborhoods that are predominantly residential with a small, but critical, percentage of parcels providing retail, office, personal service, and institutional uses."

Development Style: These areas feature a variety of building types that are close to one another and create a unified street wall. The building size, density, and zoning districts for these areas vary depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement existing context. Setbacks, plazas, and parks create a sense of place and community gathering areas. New developments on larger parcels continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity within the neighborhood and to adjacent neighborhoods. In historic neighborhoods, small-scale commercial uses exist today or should be allowed to reestablish. In new neighborhoods, small scale commercial buildings should be introduced.

Ground Floor: Regardless of use, buildings should engage the street with features such as street-oriented façades with windows and door openings along street frontages. Appropriate setbacks, open space, front porches, elevated ground floors, and other features that provide a sense of privacy should be provided for residential uses.

Mobility: Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. New driveways are prohibited on Priority and Principal Street frontages. Vehicular access to parcels should use alleys wherever possible. Parking areas should be located to the rear of street-facing buildings.

Intensity: Building heights are generally two to four stories. Buildings taller than four stories may be found along major streets. Parcels are generally between 1,500 and 5,000 sq. ft.

Primary Uses: Single-family houses, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), and open space.

Secondary Uses: Large multifamily buildings (10+units), retail/office/personal service, institutional, cultural, and government.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is R-8 Urban Residential. The following zoning regulations are not being met by the proposal, warranting special use permit approval.

Sec. 30-413.12.- Principal uses permitted by conditional use permit.

Multifamily dwellings, not to exceed four dwelling units, are permitted on lots of not less than 1,500 square feet in area for each dwelling unit. With fourth units, 6,000 square feet of lot area is required; the subject property is 4,693 square feet in area.

Sec. 30-413.15(2)a – Yards; Side yards; Dwelling uses and buildings accessory thereto.

There shall be side yards of not less than three feet in width except where buildings are attached or where the zero-lot-line option is utilized.

Additional conditions will be imposed by the ordinance, including:

- The special use of the Property shall be as a multi-family dwelling containing up to four dwelling units, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- No fewer than two off-street parking spaces shall be provided for the Special use, substantially as shown on the Plans.

- No fewer than two bicycle parking spaces shall be provided on the Property.
- The height of the Special Use shall not exceed three stories.
- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as to not be visible from any public right-of-way.
- The application for the building permit shall be made in compliance with the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, and the Virginia Statewide Building Code.

Surrounding Area

The current zoning for this property is R-8 Urban Residential District. Adjacent properties are located primarily within the R-8 and R-63 Multi-Family zoning districts. The area is generally multi-family residential with some single-family homes and institutional uses.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents and property owners and the Manchester Alliance. Staff has received a letter of no objection from the Manchester Alliance.

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