



## CITY OF RICHMOND

### Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

**Ord. No. 2021-261:** To authorize the special use of the property known as 105 South Laurel Street for the purpose of up to three single family attached dwellings, upon certain terms and conditions.

---

**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** October 4, 2021

---

#### **PETITIONER**

Mark Baker – Baker Development Resources

#### **LOCATION**

105 South Laurel Street

#### **PURPOSE**

To authorize the special use of the property known as 105 South Laurel Street for the purpose of up to three single family attached dwellings, upon certain terms and conditions.

#### **SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The proposal is to construct three single-family attached dwellings, with off street parking. Under current R-7 Single and Two Family Urban Residential zoning standards, the proposal would not meet the lot area and width, front yards, lot coverage, and height requirements. Additionally, the units are proposed to have four bedrooms. The applicant is requesting that each unit be permitted to house up to four unrelated individuals, whereas the zoning ordinance limits a dwelling unit to three unrelated residents. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that the proposal would be consistent with the recommendations of the City's Richmond 300 Master Plan pertaining to the Community Mixed-Use Category, its proximity to a Major Mixed-Use Street, as well as its proximity to the VCU National/Regional Node. The massing, site design, off-street parking, height, and complementary nature of its architecture, all align well with the aforementioned Master Plan recommendations.

Staff further finds that the proposal would not pose an undue burden on the availability of on-street parking in the area due to the addition of four off-street parking spaces included in the Plan.

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, with an amendment to include a condition that each dwelling unit to be occupied by not more than four unrelated persons or a combination of related and unrelated persons.

---

---

---

---

## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **Site Description**

The property is located in the Oregon Hill neighborhood within a block that is bounded by West Cary Street to the north and Cumberland Street to the south. The property is currently a 3,750 sq. ft. (.086 acre) unimproved parcel of land.

### **Proposed Use of the Property**

The applicant is proposing a Special Use Permit which would authorize three single family attached dwellings on newly created lots.

### **Master Plan**

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Community Mixed Use which is defined as a "Cluster of medium density, walkable commercial and residential uses that provide neighborhood services to nearby residential communities and sometimes feature regional attractions." 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 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. Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. Driveway entrances are required to be of 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. 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. (p. 58)

The Property is adjacent to the VCU National/Regional node. These nodes are defined as centers "...with significant cultural, entertainment, government, and business destinations as well as shopping, housing, and unique place-based attractions." (p. 25)

The Property is categorized as a Major Mixed Use Street within the designated Great Streets typologies. Major Mixed Use Streets are intended to:

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, through commercial and mixed-use areas

- Prioritize use and density-scaled sidewalks and crosswalks
- Require form elements, such as buildings to the street with parking in the rear, as well as building windows and entrances on the street
- Incorporate streetscape features, such as trees, benches, and trash receptacles
- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops
- Prioritize the curbside for walking, bicycling, transit, and short-term parking access and loading for local shops and restaurants.

## **Zoning and Ordinance Conditions**

The current zoning for this property is R-7 Single and Two Family Urban Residential.

The City of Richmond Zoning Administration has reviewed plans and has submitted the following comments:

The subject property is located within an R-7 (Single- and Two-Family Urban Residential) zoning district, which permits single-family attached development by-right. Single-family attached dwellings require a minimum lot area of not less than two-thousand two hundred square feet (2,200 SF) and a minimum lot width of not less than eighteen feet (18'), except the width of any lot at the end of a series shall be not less than twenty-one feet (21'). The minimum lot area and lot width requirements are not met for two (2) of the three (3) lots.

The special use permit would impose conditions on the property, including:

3(a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as up to three single-family attached dwellings with off-street parking, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(b) The height of the Special Use shall not exceed the height as shown on the Plans.

(c) All building materials, elevations, and site improvements, including landscaping, shall be substantially as shown on the Plans.

(d) No fewer than four off-street parking spaces shall be provided for the Special Use, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(e) Prior to the issuance of any certificate of occupancy for the Special Use, the Property shall be subdivided into up to three residential lots, substantially as shown on a survey entitled "Plat Showing Proposed Improvements on #105 S. Laurel Street in the City of Richmond, Virginia," prepared by Frederick A. Gibson & Associates, P.C., dated May 7, 2021, and last revised June 5, 2021, a copy of which is attached to and made a part of this ordinance, shall be accomplished by obtaining any necessary subdivision approvals from the City and recording the appropriate plats and deeds among the land records of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the City of Richmond.

4(c) Facilities for the collection of refuse shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Director of Public Works. Such facilities shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from adjacent properties and public streets.

4(c) Facilities for the collection of refuse shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Director of Public Works. Such facilities shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from adjacent properties and public streets.

## **Surrounding Area**

Adjacent properties located to south are within the same R-7 Single- and Two-Family Urban Residential Zone with R-63 Multifamily Urban Residential to the north. The area is a mix of single-

two- and multi-family residential, with some commercial, and institutional uses present in the vicinity.

### **Affordability**

The median household income for the Richmond region is currently \$68,529 per year. The affordability threshold is 30% of household income towards housing costs, which equates to \$20,559 per year, or \$1,713 per month, or less, to avoid a housing cost burden.\* Based upon the median household income for the Richmond region and the estimated price of the fee simple units provided by the applicant, the two housing units are projected to be affordable to households making 100% of, or at the Area Median Income (AMI).\*\* The estimated rents are projected to be affordable to households making approximately 150% of the regional AMI. However, the application calls for the possibility of renting to four individuals which would bring the monthly affordability to individuals making 38% of the regional AMI.

*\*(U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)*

*\*\* (Based upon VHDA fixed-rate, 30-year mortgage, with 20% down and 4% interest)*

### **Neighborhood Participation**

Staff notified area residents, property owners, the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association, and the Fan Area Business Alliance of the proposed Special Use Permit. Staff has received a letter of support from the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association.

**Staff Contact:** Jonathan Brown, Senior Planner, Land Use Administration, 804-646-5734