



July 16, 2026

TO:

Raymond Roakes
Secretary to the Urban Design Committee
Department of Planning and Development Review
900 E. Broad Street, Room 510
Richmond, VA 23219

FROM:

Christian Larsen
Ci Design
1000 Lancaster Street, Suite 430
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: Urban Design Committee Application for Pedestrian Plaza Consideration – 201 Orleans Street, Richmond, Virginia

Our team is representing Zimmer Development Company (the "Developer") in its application for Urban Design Committee ("UDC") review of a proposed pedestrian plaza associated with the redevelopment of 201 Orleans Street, Richmond, Virginia. The Property is identified by the City Assessor as Parcel ID – E0001145001 and contains approximately 5.96 acres.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The proposed pedestrian plaza has been thoughtfully incorporated into the design of a new 357-unit multifamily residential community to create an active and inviting public realm along Orleans Street. Rather than presenting a continuous building façade at the property line, the ground floor has been intentionally recessed to establish a generous pedestrian plaza that serves as an extension of both the public sidewalk and the building's amenity spaces.

Located immediately adjacent to the plaza is the resident clubhouse, which includes a fitness center with yoga studio, great room/game room, business center, and other community gathering spaces. The fitness and yoga studio have been designed with the ability to open directly onto the plaza, creating opportunities for indoor-outdoor programming and activating the streetscape. The clubhouse's

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transparent façade and active interior uses provide visual engagement throughout the day while encouraging interaction between residents and the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed pedestrian plaza is intended to function as more than simply an open setback. Through enhanced landscaping, seating areas, architectural detailing, and direct connections to active building uses, the space creates a welcoming pedestrian environment that contributes to the vitality of the public realm. The design enhances walkability, promotes social interaction, and supports the City's vision for high-quality urban development.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The proposed development is currently undergoing Site Plan review under SITE-186566-2026. As part of that review, the Zoning Division is evaluating the project for compliance with the requirements of the underlying B-5 zoning district.

The applicable zoning regulations permit a maximum front yard setback of ten (10) feet; however, additional setback may be approved where it functions as a pedestrian plaza upon approval by the Urban Design Committee pursuant to Section 30-446.4(1)(a) and (b) of the City of Richmond Zoning Ordinance.

As shown on the submitted site plan, the majority of the building frontage complies with the required setback while a portion of the ground-floor façade is intentionally recessed to accommodate the proposed pedestrian plaza. This design approach allows the building to better engage the public realm while preserving the architectural character of the project and creating meaningful outdoor space directly connected to active ground-floor uses.

The requested pedestrian plaza is an integral component of the overall site design and is not merely an increase in setback. The plaza has been carefully planned to enhance pedestrian circulation, provide opportunities for gathering and recreation, strengthen the relationship between the building and the public sidewalk, and activate the streetscape through transparent frontages and resident amenity spaces. While the building could be redesigned to eliminate the need for UDC approval, doing so would reduce the quality of the pedestrian experience and result in a less dynamic and engaging streetscape.

Zimmer Development Company respectfully requests the Urban Design Committee's approval of the proposed pedestrian plaza. The design advances the City's urban design objectives by creating an attractive, active, and publicly engaging streetscape that contributes positively to both the neighborhood and the broader pedestrian network.



Thank you for your consideration of this request. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Christian Larsen at 410.530.6072 or clarsen@ci-designinc.com.

Sincerely,

Christian Larsen, AIA
Associate Principal
Ci Design