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Sent: Monday, October 5, 2020 2:12 PM
To: PDR Land Use Admin <PDRLandUseAdmin@richmondgov.com>
Subject: Richmond 300 Concerns

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My husband and I reside at 7400 and 7401 Riverside Drive, next to and above Pony Pasture. We are relatively new to the neighborhood, moving in February of 2017. We chose our residence because it afforded us a wonderful natural environment in a relatively quiet setting. Much of our decision to purchase here involved owning private access to the James River. As I am sure you know, the property taxes on the homes in our neighborhood are steep. We were committed, however, to the high assessment and taxes in that it promised use of the wonderful public park areas of the James River Park System. This was important to our family with five children.

In the last two years, the maintenance of the public park areas has declined. Whether this is due to increased visitor numbers or a decrease in staff and funding, I do not know. What I do know is that I see members of our neighborhood with trash bags, walking down Riverside Drive, picking up trash on a daily basis. These kind neighbors remove litter visitors have left from both the public and private land. They pick up where the park system leaves off.

Should the city close Riverside Drive from Pony Pasture to Rockfalls, I have specific concerns.

1) The intersection of Rockfalls and Riverside Drive is precarious. If you look on the map you sent regarding the cyclovia, you will notice the sharp angle of Rockfalls where it meets Riverside Drive. My biking daughter was hit by a car on Riverside at this intersection. My son was involved in a two car crash that almost pushed his vehicle into the river at this same intersection. Should the road be closed at this juncture, traffic would be entering Riverside Drive from Rockfalls- at this dangerous spot. Is the city prepared to have police officers directing traffic from surrounding streets?

2) Overall parking and traffic. Where does the city propose the additional cars to park? Both Pony Pasture and Flatwater parking lots are full every weekend. The areas along Riverside are no parking zones. I would also like to point out that the no parking sign at the round about before Pony Pasture has been overgrown with vines for more than six months. On the private property areas of Riverside, neighbors have posted their own no parking signs. Interestingly, the signs we posted on our own property were removed by someone (city?), one even being taken from our tree and put on a post further down the street. Does the neighborhood surrounding the proposed cyclovia deserve additional traffic and parking? Will there be shuttles from remote parking locations? Will parking violations be ticketed? And, do those residents whose driveway access is on Riverside Drive lose their access on these days?

3) Trash and sanitation. If the city is not currently tending to trash removal along Riverside Drive, does it make sense to welcome more? And what about bathrooms? Is the city planning to install port-a-potties on the street surface? Every 200 yards? I know we don't want one on our property. Will trash cans be replaced along Riverside? Or will there be a megaphoned "Leave No Trace" education piece?

4) Bikes and pedestrians. The bike path markings along Riverside Drive are almost invisible now. If pedestrian traffic is to increase, the city should also clearly mark bike lanes. I am sure you are aware of the e-bike and racing bike popularity in Richmond. These bikes travel at beyond the specified 25mph speed limit on this road. A well marked bike path would be helpful, especially as the EcoCorridor through University of Richmond is near completion.

5) Liability. To enjoy a closed street, visitors will want to sit by the river and enjoy the view. Much of the riverfront property is intentional kept "natural" by owners to discourage foot traffic. Should visitors slip or fall, the owners of this property are liable. The riverfront property is also tended by owners. Foot traffic and picnicking may jeopardize the health of the trees and plants and overall river health. Hammocks above rocks are a problem. Also, the Rockfalls/Riverside intersection has two corner lot residences (perfectly maintained) with natural hillsides. I worry that these neighbors will be overrun with guests wanting to spread a blanket.

All in all, I think it is truly wonderful that the city is thinking of ways to promote the wonders of the river. I also think that the city should carefully review the public owned areas and think how these can be improved, maintained, and become hosts for gatherings like cyclovia. The city has public spaces that could be magnificent magnets for weekend visitors. However, it concerns me that eyes are traveling towards privately maintained stretches of private land rather than the maintenance needs of what the city does own.

Laurie Petronis