



## CITY OF RICHMOND

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

**Ord. No. 2021-365:** To authorize the special use of the property known as 8 Rear South Plum Street for the purpose of a multi-family building containing up to four dwelling units, upon certain terms and conditions.

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**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** January 18, 2022

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#### **PETITIONER**

Lory Markham – Markham Planning

#### **LOCATION**

8 Rear South Plum Street

#### **PURPOSE**

To authorize the special use of the property known as 8 Rear South Plum Street for the purpose of a multi-family building containing up to four dwelling units, upon certain terms and conditions.

#### **SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The proposal is to authorize a multi-family use within an UB - Urban Business District. The proposed use does not satisfy the improved public street frontage requirements of Section 30-610.1 of the City's Zoning Ordinance in that the property fronts only an alley, not a public street. The property has been used for an office use, and a change to a more intensive use is not permitted. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that the proposed adaptive reuse of an historic structure would be consistent with the recommendations of the City's Richmond 300 Master Plan pertaining to the Community Mixed-Use Category. The density, site design, height, and complementary nature of its architecture, all align well with the aforementioned Master Plan category, including the recommended Primary Uses of "retail/office/personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space." (p. 58)

Staff also finds that the proposed redevelopment is supported by Objective 1.3f which states "Implement housing strategies that increase housing at all income levels along corridors and at Nodes". The proposed use is located within a designated Micro Node.

Staff further finds that the proposed addition of four dwelling units would not pose an undue burden on the availability of on-street parking in the area due to the provision of four off-street parking spaces, and four bicycle parking spaces.

Staff also finds that the proposed development supports Objective 15.1a which states "Increase the number of Richmonders living in a development pattern that encourages density and reduces dependency on single-occupancy vehicles" The four proposed units are within walking distance

to daily needs and services which offers greater opportunities for walkability and less automobile dependency. (p. 159)

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.

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## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **Site Description**

The property is located in the Fan neighborhood on 8 Rear South Plum Street, between South Plum, South Lombardy Streets, West Main Street, and West Cary Street. The property is currently a 3,300 sq. ft. (.076 acre) parcel of land and is improved with a two story, 4,273 sq. ft. commercial building constructed in 1890 that has most recently been used as offices.

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

The application calls for adapting an existing office building for a 4-unit, multi-family building with off street parking. The density of the proposed development would be approximately 53 units per acre.

### **Master Plan**

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Community Mixed Use. This designation 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.

Intensity: 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 located within a designated “Micro Node” which are defined by the Richmond 300 as notable places “...within a neighborhood that generally provides goods and services to the immediate residents but may attract visitors.” (p. C-1)

### **Zoning and Ordinance Conditions**

The current zoning for this property is UB-PO3 (Urban Business Parking Overlay). The proposed use does not satisfy the improved public street frontage requirements of Section 30-610.1 of the City’s Zoning Ordinance.

Sec. 30-610.1. Public street frontage and access easements.

Except as provided in Sections 30-610.2 and 30-610.3, every building erected and every use established shall be located on a lot having frontage on an improved public street or access thereto by means of a recorded permanent easement, provided that such easement is approved by the Director of Public Works, the Chief of Police and the Chief of Fire and Emergency Services as to its suitability for all-weather travel by public and emergency vehicles and provided, further, that appropriate agreements or covenants approved by the City Attorney provide for continued maintenance thereof. For single-family detached development, no more than two lots which do not have public street frontage shall be served by any such easement unless the easement shall have been recorded prior to June 10, 1960.

This special use permit is conditioned on the following special terms and conditions:

(a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as a multifamily dwelling containing up to four dwelling units, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(b) No fewer than four off-street parking spaces shall be provided for the Special Use.

(c) No fewer than four bicycle parking spaces shall be provided for the Special Use.

(d) All elevations shall be substantially as shown on the Plans. Building siding materials shall consist of masonry.

(e) The height of the Special Use shall not exceed two stories, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(f) The Property shall not be eligible for any permit implementing the Special Use until the Owner has submitted written evidence to the Zoning Administrator that the Director of Public Works, the Chief of Police, and the Chief of Fire and Emergency Services have confirmed that there is alley access to the Property for all-weather travel by public and emergency vehicles in accordance with applicable laws and regulations

(g) Prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the Special Use, the Owner shall submit a request to name the primary alley access to the Property in accordance with sections 8-7 through 8-10 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, and such alley shall be named in accordance with sections 8-7 through 8-10 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended.

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 are generally in the UB-PO3 Zoning District to the north and west and the R-7 Single- and Two-Family Urban Residential District to the east and south. The surrounding land uses include a mix of single-, two-, and multi-family residential, commercial, office, mixed-use, industrial, and institutional uses. The residential densities present on the block range from 23 to 65 units per acre.

### **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 affordability threshold, the median household income for the Richmond region, and the estimated price of the rental units provided by the applicant, the units are projected to be affordable to households making approximately 64% of the Area Median Income (AMI) affordability threshold.

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

### **Neighborhood Participation**

Staff notified area residents, property owners, the Uptown Association, and the Fan Area Business Alliance of the proposed Special Use Permit. Staff has not received any correspondence to staff regarding the application.

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