

Saunders, Richard L. - PDR

From: Bollin Millner <bmillner2@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 1:45 PM
To: Saunders, Richard L. - PDR
Subject: 5 North Colonial

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Dear Mr. Saunders,

I am writing to express my opposition to the SUP for 5 North Colonial. I have several concerns.

The current owners of 5 North Colonial think the property is too far gone to be renovated. It is true that the current building is in a serious state of disrepair. The fact that this was allowed to happen raises serious questions. Either the City does not have effective regulations regarding upkeep of properties, or those regulations were not enforced. I would welcome more clarity around this. Regardless, it is too bad that this historic building from the 1890s, which was noted in the application for Museum District designation, is being torn down. (In some City records the building at 5 North Colonial is listed as early 20th Century, but the photographic evidence argues otherwise.)

The current building is, in my opinion, very beautiful. And over the years I've lived here, it has also provided affordable housing to a number of people.

I have other questions about the proposed plans for that location. The building is too tall, has too many units, and does not improve parking. A letter from the Johannas Group to the neighborhood in December 2021 talks about the new plan creating two parking spaces and states that the current site has no on-site parking. That is inaccurate. The site, as it currently stands, could accommodate two, possibly three parking places. All that is needed is to open the back, chain linked fence.

Speaking of parking, contrary to the 300 Plan, the proposed building has a parking garage with a side entrance. The Plan clearly states that it should be in the rear of the property.

In addition, the proposed plan has three, probably four units in it. (At first, a unit on the second floor was billed as an Airbnb. It is not clear now in the plans, whether this unit will be designated as a separate unit. Johannas Designs is no longer calling it that, but the drawings are the same.) Regardless, the property is zoned for single family and at the most, a duplex. We already have a mix that has higher density levels than other blocks in the Museum District since Arthur Ashe Boulevard, with mostly multi-family units, fronts one side of the block.

The Johannas Group argues that their plans for 5 North Colonial are in line with the newly adopted Richmond 300 plan, especially where density is concerned. But our block is quite densely populated already, as noted.

In addition, the proposed new building actually conflicts with parts of the 300 Plan, not the least because section 3.2 of the Plan (page 95) states the objective: "Reduce the demolition of historical buildings." The Plan also supports maintaining the character of our neighborhoods and this proposed apartment building does not do that.

The proposed building plans also ignore ideas regarding lighting, stormwater, landscape, materials, and scale, that are promoted by the Richmond 300 Plan.

Finally, I am concerned that the proposed building is taller than allowed. This is because there is a party deck on the roof with its own room (a partial fourth floor). Approval of this project will set a dangerous precedent and encourage developers to buy houses, scrape them and replace them with four story, if not even more higher, buildings. The character of the neighborhood is at stake.

For these reasons, I oppose the SUP. Thank you very much your time and for your efforts on behalf of the people of Richmond.

Bollin Millner

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