



## CITY OF RICHMOND

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

**Ord. No. 2022-095:** To authorize the special use of the property known as 933 West Grace Street for the purpose of a mixed-use building containing up to 21 dwelling units and commercial space, upon certain terms and conditions.

---

**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** April 4, 2022

---

#### **PETITIONER**

T. Preston Lloyd, Jr., Attorney, Williams Mullen

#### **LOCATION**

933 West Grace Street

#### **PURPOSE**

To authorize the special use of the property known as 933 West Grace Street for the purpose of a mixed-use building containing up to 21 dwelling units and commercial space, upon certain terms and conditions.

#### **SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The applicant wishes to construct a mixed use building including multi-family and commercial uses within a B-4 Central Business zoning district. While the proposed uses are currently permitted within the B-4 District, the use does not meet certain feature requirements within the B-4 District, including rear yard depth requirements. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that based upon the City's adopted Richmond 300 Plan for this area, the proposed use aligns with the future land use designation of Destination Mixed Use and is in keeping with the height and setbacks of other buildings found on the same block and in the immediate vicinity.

Staff finds that the proposal fulfills the Master Plan's Goal 4: Urban Design, Objective 4.1 high-quality, distinctive, and well-designed neighborhoods and Nodes. The proposed use and its design addresses several of the strategies within this Objective including the following: "Allow and encourage a variety of architectural styles", "...and "Increase building permeability by requiring new buildings to have functioning entrances from the sidewalk and restricting blank walls at ground level", among others.

The property is also on a designated Major Mixed-Use Street within the Great Streets typology. (p. 72) The application and design features of the proposed mixed-use building such as "Require

form elements, such as buildings to the street with parking in the rear, as well as building windows and entrances on the street”.

Staff also finds that the application supports the vision for the proposed uses located within the Plan’s VCU/Monroe Park Regional/National Node, including expanding opportunities “...to provide shopping, dining, and housing for students and neighborhood residents alike.” (p. C-19)

Staff finds that the proposed mixed-use building will not pose an undue burden on the availability of on-street parking due to its proximity to several university parking decks, provision of bicycle parking, and the availability of mass transit in the vicinity. Moreover, the underlying zoning of the property does not require parking spaces for this type of development.

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.

## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **Site Description**

The property is located in the VCU neighborhood on West Grace Street, between North Harrison and Shafer Streets. The property is 6,379 sq. ft. (.15 acre) in area and improved with a 4,150 sq. ft. building.

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

The application is for a four story, mixed use building

### **Master Plan**

The City’s Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Destination Mixed Use. This designation is defined as “Key gateways featuring prominent destinations, such as retail, sports venues, and large employers, as well as housing and open space.” The development style includes higher-density, transit-oriented development encouraged on vacant or underutilized sites. New development should be urban in form, may be of larger scale than existing context, and, where relevant, should pay special attention to the historic character of the existing context. Development should enhance the public realm and create a sense of place. Many buildings are vertically mixed-use. 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. Active commercial ground floor uses are required on street-oriented commercial frontages. Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. Driveway entrances are required to be off alleys whenever possible; new driveways are prohibited on priority and principal street frontages. Surface parking is prohibited as a principal use; when surface parking is provided as an accessory use, it should be located to the rear of buildings and screened. Parking requirements are reduced to allow more market-based parking strategies, including shared parking.

Intensity: Buildings typically a minimum height of five stories.

Primary Uses: Retail/office/personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Institutional and government. (p. 64)

The property is also located within the VCU/Monroe Park Regional/National Node. The Vision for the area state that the “VCU/Monroe Park continues to provide shopping, dining, and housing for students and neighborhood residents alike. VCU is a major job center and nexus of activity with services and cultural attractions for the region. The intersection of Belvidere and W. Broad Streets becomes a signature intersection with new development complementing the VCU Institute for Contemporary Art with prominent architecture. A new high-frequency transit line runs down Belvidere with a stop at Belvidere and W. Broad Street. VCU's campus evolves as VCU continues to modernize its buildings. W. Broad Street and Belvidere transform into a high quality urban avenues that are safe to cross, while becoming destinations in their own right for residential, office, retail and compatible entertainment uses.” (p. C-19)

The property is also located on a designated Great Street with a street typology of Major Mixed-Use Street. These streets are viewed to create and preserve specific qualities such as:

- 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 (p. 72)

## **Zoning and Ordinance Conditions**

The current zoning for the parcels is B-4 Central Business zoning district. The following zoning regulations are not being met by the proposal, warranting special use permit approval.

Sec. 30-440.3 (3) Rear Yard: In the B-4 zoning district, no rear yard shall be required except that where a rear lot line abuts or is situated across an alley from property in an R or RO district there shall be a rear yard of not less than 20 feet in depth.

*The property is across an alley from property in the R-73 district. A rear yard setback of 20 feet is required and zero feet (0') is proposed.*

Additional conditions will be imposed by the ordinance, including:

3(a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as a mixed-use building containing up to 21 dwelling units and commercial space, substantially as shown on the Plans. The first floor commercial space shall contain non-residential uses permitted by the underlying zoning district in which the Property is situated.

(b) No off street parking shall be required for the Special Use.

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

(d) All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.

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

(f) No fewer than seven bicycle parking spaces shall be provided, substantially as shown on the Plans.

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.

## **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.\* The applicant has informed staff that the units will be market rate.

### **Surrounding Area**

The surrounding land uses include mixed-use residential and commercial with some institutional uses to the in the vicinity, especially along Broad Street to the north. The current zoning for this property is B-4 Central Business zoning district. Adjacent properties to the east north, and west are located within the same B-4 District. Properties adjacent and directly to the south are zoned R-73 Multifamily Residential District.

### **Neighborhood Participation**

Staff notified area residents, property owners, and the Fan District Association about this application. Staff has received a letter of support from VCU Athletics as well as a joint letter of concern from area civic associations.

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