



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2022-100: To authorize the special use of the properties known as 6 West 21st Street and 20 West 21st Street for the purposes of a community center, office use, and special events, upon certain terms and conditions.

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

PETITIONER

Reverend Garry M. Callis, Sr. – Children of Light Foundation

LOCATION

6 West 21st Street and 20 West 21st Street

PURPOSE

To authorize the special use of the properties known as 6 West 21st Street and 20 West 21st Street for the purposes of a community center, office use, and special events, upon certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit which would allow for a community center, office use, and special events within an R-7 Single- and Two-Family Urban Residential District. The proposed uses are not permitted within this district. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that the proposal for a community center, office use, and special events is generally consistent with the Primary Uses recommended by the Richmond 300 Master Plan for the Community Mixed-Use land use designation of 6 West 21st Street. While the parcel located at 20 West 21st Street has a Residential land use designation, it is abutting the larger Community Mixed-Use area that encompasses 6 West 21st Street and the non-residential parcels fronting the Hull Street corridor.

Staff finds that the proposed adaptive reuse of an historic structure is consistent with the Swansboro Neighborhood Node recommendations, which envision existing, empty historic storefronts to be “rehabilitated and filled with neighborhood-serving businesses.” The proposed use assists in achieving this vision as the existing building has been vacant for many years.

Staff finds that the proposal includes provisions for use of the property by community members, which is a primary next step for the Swansboro Node: “Explore the creative opportunities for developing open space for a neighborhood gathering location including the development of a pocket park or parklets.”

Staff finds that the proposed project aligns with the Richmond 300 Plan’s Objective 11.2a. which aims to “Encourage a range of employment opportunities that provide on-the-job training and facilitate upward mobility through investment in workforce development initiatives and collaboration with employers to create a pipeline of employees for existing and future positions.” (p. 138)

Staff finds that the proposed use of the property would not pose an undue burden on the availability of on-street parking in the area, due to the provision of bicycle parking and access to mass transit.

Staff finds that with the amended 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, with the following amendments to the ordinance conditions:

- The operations of the Special Use shall cease by 8:00 p.m. daily.
- The number of employees located in the building on the Property shall not exceed five employees.
- Special events taking place on the Property on a Saturday or Sunday shall be limited to a maximum of 15 special events annually; The number of special events taking place on the Property on a Monday-Friday shall not be limited.
- Special events on the Property may be unrelated to the community use of the Property.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The properties are located in the Swansboro neighborhood on West 21st Street, between Hull and Bainbridge Streets. The contiguous properties are a combined 15,042 sq. ft. (.35 acre) of land and improved with a 3,872 sq. ft., two-story building at 6 West 21st Street.

Proposed Use of the Property

Community center, office use, and special events

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject properties as Residential (20 West 21st Street) and as Community Mixed-Use (6 West 21st Street). The properties are also within the Swansboro Neighborhood Node.

The Community Mixed-Use land use 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. 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 Residential land use designation is defined as "Neighborhood consisting primarily of single-family houses on large- or medium-sized lots more homogeneous in nature." The development style includes "Houses on medium-sized and large-sized lots in a largely auto-dependent environment. Homes are setback from the street. Future developments continue and/or introduce

a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity. Future single-family housing, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and small multi-family residential buildings are built to a scale and design that is consistent with existing buildings. Bicycle and pedestrian access are prioritized and accommodated. Low residential density means that it is not possible to provide frequent transit within these areas; however, frequent transit may be found at the edges of these areas within more intense future land use designations. Many homes have driveways and/or garages, which are located off an alley behind the home if an alley is present.

Intensity: Buildings are generally one to three stories. Lot sizes generally range up to 5,000 to 20,000+ sq. ft. Residential density of 2 to 10 housing units per acre.

Primary Uses: Single-family houses, accessory dwelling units, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Duplexes and small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), institutional, and cultural. Secondary uses may be found along major streets. (p. 54)

The Richmond 300 plan provides the following information for the Swansboro Node:

Type: Neighborhood Node

Vision: Centered at a truly unique intersection of Midlothian Turnpike, Hull Street, and Clopton Street; the Swansboro Node contains a mix of historic commercial storefronts, warehouses, and suburban form commercial buildings surrounded by diverse residential neighborhoods. In the future, the empty historic storefronts will be rehabilitated and filled with neighborhood-serving businesses. On the vacant parcels, 2-to-3 story, mixed-use, infill development should occur in a building form similar to the historic structures that maintains the existing streetwall. The character of the surrounding residential neighborhoods should be preserved with investments targeted to programs that allow homeowners to remain in their homes in high-quality structures and traffic calming measures to slow vehicles on the residential streets. Open space opportunities should be considered, even in the form of smaller pocket parks or plazas, where the opportunity presents themselves, such as at the triangle formed by Hull Street and Midlothian Turnpike. Investments should be made to improve the pedestrian experience by planting street trees and expanding sidewalks.

Growth Potential: Medium - The vacant lots and underdeveloped strip commercial can be redeveloped to provide a mix of uses including residential units.

Primary Next Steps:

- Prioritize the rezoning of the B-3 zoned parcels along Hull Street in alignment with the Future Land Use Plan to encourage the economic revitalization of the corridor in a building form that improves the pedestrian environment (Goal 1 and Goal 11).
- Encourage the redevelopment of vacant structures while preserving the historic urban fabric (Goal 1, Goal 3).

- Explore designation as a National Register Historic District (Goal 3).
- Use the interesting grids and angles to create dynamic architecture (Goal 4).
- Improve pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure to/from this Node – specifically including streetscape improvements of street trees, wider sidewalks, and pedestrian amenities along the corridors and providing high frequency transit along Midlothian Turnpike and Hull Street (see Goal 4, Goal 8, and Goal 17).
- Explore the creative opportunities for developing open space for a neighborhood gathering location including the development of a pocket park or parklets (see Goal 4 and Goal 17).
- Implement high-frequency transit along Midlothian Turnpike and Hull St (see Goal 8).

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for the parcels is R-7 Single- and Two-Family Urban Residential. The following comments were provided by Zoning Administration.

Zoning and Use: The subject property is zoned R-7 Single- and Two-Family Urban Residential district, which does not allow an office uses as a permitted principal use.

R-7 Feature Requirements: Lot area, lot width, lot coverage, height, and yard requirements are only applicable to permitted principal and accessory uses.

Parking: The R-7 zoning district requires 2 off-street spaces per two-family dwelling unit.

Signage: The R-7 zoning district does not permit any type of sign by right for a non-dwelling use established through an SUP. Any signs for the property including window vinyl or painted signs will need to be authorized through the SUP.

The current ordinance conditions for the proposed special use permit include:

3(a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as a community center, office use, and special events, substantially as shown on the Plans and, except as provided in subsection (h) of this section, as described in the applicant's report, a copy of which is attached to and made a part of this ordinance. The office use of the Property may include professional and administrative offices, and studios of writers, designers, and artists engaged in the arts.

(b) The Special Use shall not include any social service delivery use, emergency housing use, or any dwelling use.

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

(d) No fewer than six bicycle parking spaces shall be provided on the Property, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(e) The operations of the Special Use shall cease by 10:00 p.m. daily.

(f) In addition to signs permitted in all districts, pursuant to section 30-505 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, signs meeting the requirements of section 30-507.1 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, shall also be permitted on the Property.

(g) Any outdoor use of the Property relating to the Special Use shall be limited to a maximum of 20 individuals, with the exception of special events, which shall be limited to a maximum of 40 individuals.

(h) The number of employees located in the building on the Property shall comply with the applicable regulations of the Virginia Statewide Building Code.

(i) Special events on the Property shall be limited to a maximum of 15 special events annually.

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

Surrounding properties to the west, north, and east are located in the same R-7 District as the subject property. Properties to the south are located in the B-3 General Business District.

A mix of commercial and industrial uses are present to the east, south and west of the subject property; residential land uses are present to the north and west of the subject property.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified the Swansboro Neighborhood Association and area residents and property owners about this application. Staff has received a letter of support from the Swansboro West Civic Association and a letter of opposition from a nearby resident.

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