

March 17, 2021

BY ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Mr. Matthew Ebinger
City of Richmond DPDR
Land Use Administration Division, Room 511
City Hall, 900 East Broad Street

Mark J. Kronenthal
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Richmond, Virginia 23219

Re: Special Use Permit Amendment: 2516 East Leigh Street (E0000382006, E0000382006B)

Dear Mr. Ebinger:

This letter shall serve as the Applicant's Report accompanying the application for a Special Use Permit Amendment (the "SUP Amendment") for the above referenced property known as 2516 East Leigh Street (the "Property"). The SUP Amendment would authorize (a) the reconfiguration of the parking area devoted to serving the sixty-two (62) multifamily dwellings in the existing building located on the Property, containing affordable senior dwelling units, as shown on the enclosed conceptual site plan (the "Plan"), (b) altering the lot area devoted to serving those sixty-two (62) multifamily dwellings, and (c) permission for nine (9) parcels for single-family dwelling units shown on the Plan (the "Single-Family Lots"), situated along M Street and North 26th Street, such parcels to be predominately developed according to R-63 district standards .

The applicant, Bowler Housing LP (the "Applicant"), proposes that the existing sixty-two (62) affordable senior units on the Property would be renovated but would stay in substantially the same configuration. The Applicant expects to renovate the interior finishes of the existing units. In regards to the nine (9) Single-Family Lots, being able to develop these parcels better enables the Applicant to continue offering the level of affordability currently being provided in the existing sixty-two (62) dwellings.

The requests in this SUP Amendment are narrowly limited to the parking and access with respect to existing building and dwelling units and permitting the Single-Family Lots. Any new development on the Single-Family Lots would be otherwise developed in the future pursuant to R-63 zoning standards, except the required lot area needed for some of the Single Family Lots and a slight deviation from the number of required parking spaces applicable to them (nine required, seven proposed). Future development would otherwise be subject to the normal review process for properties in the R-63 district—particularly the quality control measures required by virtue of being located in the Church Hill North City Old & Historic District, which necessitates CAR review for new construction. Further, the

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Applicant would propose that the dwellings located on the two (2) Single-Family Lots abutting North 26th Street would be workforce dwellings.

By way of background, the Property is subject to a previous SUP and SUP amendment (Ordinance Nos. 1991-028-31 and 1995-151-153) (collectively, the “Original SUP”). The Original SUP permitted the current sixty-two (62) units, the related lot area, and the parking configuration.

Properties surrounding the Property are generally zoned in the R-63 Multifamily Urban Residential District, with the exception of one lot located at the corner of M Street and North 25th Street that is zoned in the UB PE-4 Urban Business Jefferson Avenue Parking Exempt Overlay District. The Building is a former school building that has been used as multifamily affordable senior housing at the current density since at least the mid-1990s.

This SUP Amendment would locate the parking closer to the Building as would be appropriate for senior housing, and any parking spaces shown on the concept plan are approximate in number but will reflect the accurate demand and use for parking spaces for senior housing in the experience of the Applicant’s long management of the Property. The entry point along M Street would be closed and relocated to North 26th Street, thereby enabling the Single-Family Lots to largely front onto M Street. In doing so, it would enable new development to mimic the historic development pattern that existed prior to the construction of the existing building in 1914. According to 1905 Sanborn Fire and Insurance maps, the original school on the Property was significantly smaller and occupied the southern portion of the Property. The northern portion of the Property was occupied by at least nine residential structures. With that, these structures were over time acquired—sometimes by eminent domain—to enable the construction of the existing building and the outdoor space then desired for the students of the former school. The more urban alley network being proposed in part helps restore the fabric of the neighborhood that once existed, and moreover decommissions an over-built parking lot that is quasi-suburban in nature.

The Richmond 300 plan (the “Master Plan”) recommends Community Mixed-Use (“CMU”) for the Property. The CMU designation generally contemplates that new residential uses be added to bolster viability of existing and future commercial uses nearby. Stylistically, new development in CMU areas should contemplate the context of the neighborhood and should continue or [re]introduce a gridded street pattern. Suggested primary uses in CMU areas include the multifamily use, and secondary uses include the single-family use. More specifically, the Property lies within the 25th/Jefferson National/Regional Node. This additional geographical designation in the Master Plan suggests the Property is particularly important in achieving the goals of the City. This Node suggests that it is strengthened by future development of vacant parcels and increased connectivity; it also understands that the opportunities to do so are limited, as the Node is mostly built-out. The “primary next steps” for properties in this Node include “rezone the CMU areas of this node...to allow for a mix of uses and increased residential density,” (C-26). While this is not a rezoning request, the SUP Amendment is similar in its intent.

Contained in other chapters of the Master Plan are more objectives that are echoed by this request. In the High-Quality Places chapter, Objective 4.1: “to create and preserve high-quality, distinctive, and well-designed neighborhoods and Nodes throughout the City,” is met by this request

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implementing a number of the policy suggestions from that Objective. In the Inclusive Housing Chapter, there are also a number of policy suggestions that are implemented in this request, such as Objective 14.1: “to increase city-wide awareness of the importance of integrating housing at all income levels,” Objective 14.5: “to encourage more housing types throughout the City and greater density...at Nodes,” and Objective 14.9: “to assist households that desire to age in place in their neighborhoods.” The existing building containing the sixty-two (62) affordable senior housing units approaches an age where renovation is imminent and the Applicant desires to renovate the senior units so residents can stay in the community as they age in place.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The request addresses the following factors indicted in Section 17.11 of the Charter and Section 30-1050.1 of the Zoning Ordinance relative to the approval of special use permits by City Council. The proposed SUP Amendment will not:

- ***Be detrimental to the safety, health, morals and general welfare of the community involved.***

The proposed SUP Amendment will not impact the safety, health, morals and general welfare of the surrounding community. The proposed SUP Amendment is consistent with the recommendations of the Master Plan related to the Property. It would contribute to the general welfare of the community by, among other things, providing an opportunity to renovate the existing senior dwellings.

- ***Tend to create congestion in streets, roads, alleys and other public ways and places in the area involved.***

The proposed SUP Amendment will not result in significant traffic impacts in the area involved, again, owing to its consistency with the Master Plan and its design principals. The special character of the Property as senior housing causes significantly reduced demand for a large parking area and similarly requires parking to be located near main entrances. The proposed Single-Family Lots would contain a number of devoted parking spaces that is not a significant departure for what the R-63 district would traditionally require for new single-family dwellings. The Property also lies within walkable distance to a number of GTRC bus routes, namely the “7” routes, the “12,” and the “13”, each of which operate on 30-minute timetables and in unison simulate high-frequency service. These routes not only connect to downtown and the Pulse, but also parts of the greater East End and the Richmond International Airport. Therefore, the SUP amendment will not tend to create congestion in streets, roads, alleys, and other public ways and places in the area involved.

- ***Create hazards from fire, panic or other dangers.***

The existing building is constructed in a manner consistent with the requirements of the building code and in accordance with the requirements of Fire and Emergency Services. The City’s codes applicable to this development are designed to eliminate such hazards. Existing fire hydrants are located within the safe, appropriate distance established by the Fire Department for the Property. Future Single-Family Lot development will adhere to applicable building and fire code(s).

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- ***Tend to overcrowding of land and cause an undue concentration of population.***

The proposed SUP Amendment will not tend to over crowd the land or create an undue concentration population. The development is consistent with the pattern of development in the surrounding area block and is consistent with the Master Plan.

- ***Adversely affect or interfere with public or private schools, parks, playgrounds, water supplies, sewage disposal, transportation or other public requirements, conveniences and improvements.***

The proposed SUP Amendment would not adversely affect the above referenced City services. The open areas where the Addition and the Single-Family Lots would be located are not open to the general public.

- ***Interfere with adequate light and air.***

The proposed SUP Amendment will not interfere with adequate light and air.

In summary, the Applicant enthusiastically seeks approval of the construction of the SUP Amendment. This proposal represents an optimal opportunity for small scale residential infill development that would be reviewed under existing zoning review requirements. In exchange for approval, the revitalization of the existing made possible through the SUP Amendment would guaranty the renovation of higher quality affordable senior dwelling units in the building for the benefit of current (and future) residents of the Building and the community at large. The proposal would contribute to the vibrancy of the block through the provision of an appropriate urban form that is consistent with the historic development pattern of the surrounding neighborhood.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request, please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mark J. Kronenthal

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Cynthia Newbille

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