

APPLICANT'S REPORT

February 17, 2022

*Special Use Permit Request
421 N 33rd Street, Richmond, Virginia
Map Reference Number: E000-0884/028*

Submitted to:	City of Richmond Department of Planning and Development Review Land Use Administration 900 East Broad Street, Suite 511 Richmond, Virginia 23219
Submitted by:	Baker Development Resources 530 East Main Street, Suite 730 Richmond, Virginia 23219

Introduction

The property owner is requesting a special use permit (the "SUP") for 421 N 33rd Street (the "Property"). The SUP would authorize the conversion of the ground floor of the existing two-family dwelling for use as an office. While the ground floor office use is permitted by the underlying R-8 Urban Residential zoning district, some of the applicable feature requirements are not met and therefore, a SUP is required.

Existing Conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION AND EXISTING LAND USE

The Property is located on the eastern side of North 33rd Street between E Marshall and E Clay Streets. The Property is referenced by the City Assessor as tax parcel E000-0884/028. The Property is roughly 32 feet wide by 124 feet in depth and contains approximately 4,145 square feet of lot area. Access is provided at the rear of the Property by means of a north-south alley.



The Property is currently improved with a two-story, two-family masonry dwelling originally constructed in 1930. According to City Assessor's records, the building includes 4,056 square feet of finished floor area. The second-story dwelling unit is currently occupied by the Property owner.

Properties in the area consist of a range of uses. Along with single- and two-family dwellings, within two blocks of the Property multifamily, commercial, institutional, and government uses can be found.

EXISTING ZONING

The Property is currently zoned R-8 Urban Residential. The surrounding properties are also zoned R-6 with properties further to the south, at the intersection of N 33rd and E Marshall Streets, being zoned R-63 Single-Family Residential and UB Urban Business. B-1 and R-6 zoning districts can also be found within the neighborhood.

MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The Richmond 300 Master Plan recommends “Neighborhood Mixed-Use” for the Property. The Master Plan describes this land use category as follows: “Existing or new highly-walkable urban neighborhoods that are predominantly residential with a small, but critical, percentage of parcels providing retail, office, personal service, and institutional uses...” which supports this request.

In addition to the Property-specific guidance offered by the Vision and Core Concepts chapter, there are a number of other goals elsewhere within the Master Plan that support this request, including:

- Historic Preservation, Objective 3.1, Preserve culturally, historically, and architecturally significant buildings, sites, structures, neighborhoods, cemeteries, and landscapes that contribute to Richmond's authenticity.
- High Quality Places, Objective 4.1, to “create and preserve high-quality, distinctive, and well-designed neighborhoods and nodes throughout the City,” as the request introduces thoughtfully-designed new construction in a manner not otherwise assured by-right.
- Equitable Transportation Chapter, Objective 6.1 to “Increase the number of residents and jobs at Nodes and along enhanced transit corridors in a land development pattern that prioritizes multi-modal transportation options.”
 - b. Develop housing at all income levels in and near Nodes and along major corridors (see strategies Goal 14).
- Thriving Environment Chapter Objective 15.1 to “Reduce air pollution related to transportation.”
 - a. Increase the number of Richmonders living in a development pattern that encourages density and reduces dependency on single-occupancy vehicles (see Goal 1, Goal 8, Goal 14).
- High Quality Places Chapter, Objective 4.1, to “create and preserve high-quality, distinctive, and well-designed neighborhoods and nodes throughout the City,” as the request introduces thoughtfully designed new construction in a manner not otherwise assured by-right.

Proposal

PROJECT SUMMARY

The SUP would authorize the use of the ground floor for office use, which does not conform to the underlying R-8 Urban Residential district zoning requirements applicable to the Property.

PURPOSE OF REQUEST

The proposed ground floor office use is not a permitted principal use in the R-8 district. The R-8 district does permit ground-floor office use by Conditional Use Permit. However, it must be demonstrated that the building was originally designed for commercial use or converted for that purpose prior to 1943. As the office use is not permitted as a principal use and the building was never occupied for commercial uses in the past, a SUP is necessary in order to authorize the proposed use.

PROJECT DETAILS

Per the City of Richmond Assessor's records, the Property was originally developed in 1930 as a two-story masonry dwelling. The building is currently occupied as a two-family dwelling with a ground floor rental unit and the Property owner occupying the second floor of the building. The owner is now proposing to occupy the ground-floor of the building as an office for a real estate development company. More specifically, they are proposing to convert the existing ground floor unit into three office spaces, a meeting area, and a showroom area to display samples and product options for clients. While no changes are proposed to the exterior of the existing dwelling, an accessible entrance route will be added to the rear of the dwelling which will be accessed from the parking in the rear. Two parking spaces will be provided in the existing garage at the rear of the dwelling.

In exchange for the SUP, the intent of this request is to retain and restore a historical neighborhood building. It would create an appropriately-scaled commercial use which would function as a live-work opportunity for the owner. The project would retain the existing floor plan and would not modify the building's exterior. As a result, it would remain consistent with historical layout and design of the building which is part of the neighborhood fabric. The quality assurances conditioned through the SUP would guarantee a higher quality development than might otherwise be developed by right. They would also ensure an appropriately scaled use that is compatible with and complementary to the surrounding residential neighborhood.

Findings of Fact

The following are factors indicted in Section 17.11 of the Charter and Section 114-1050.1 of the Zoning Ordinance relative to the approval of special use permits by City Council. The proposed special use permit will not:

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

The proposed special use permit will not impact the safety, health, morals and general welfare of the nearby neighborhoods.

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

The proposed special use permit will not result in significant traffic impacts to nearby residential neighborhoods. The proposed office use would be limited in size, type and scale to avoid any traffic or parking concerns.

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

The property will be developed 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.

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

The proposed special use permit will not tend to over crowd the land or create an undue concentration of population.

- ***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 special use permit would not adversely affect the above referenced City services. To the contrary, the proposal would provide positive fiscal (tax) benefits that would enhance the City's ability to provide these services to the proposed development.

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

The light and air available to the subject and adjacent properties will not be affected.

Summary

In summary we are enthusiastically seeking approval of the SUP in order to authorize the office use for the ground floor of the existing building. The office would be appropriately scaled for its context and would provide a live-work opportunity for the owner. The conversion would be respectful to the existing building's historical design and interior layout as it would not require extensive modification.

The request offers compatibility with goals contained within the City's Master Plan. The request would contribute to the ongoing revitalization of the neighborhood, upgrading the Property while encouraging a pedestrian friendly urban streetscape in the vicinity. Finally, the quality assurances and improvements and conditions related to the renovation and commercial tenant space as defined by the SUP would guarantee a higher quality development than might otherwise be developed by right.