

March 1, 2022

Kevin Vonck, Director  
Department of Planning & Development Review  
900 East Broad Street, Suite 511  
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Special Use Permit application at the former St Gertrude High School (3215 Stuart Ave, 3215 Rear Stuart Ave, 311 Tilden St, 311 Rear Tilden St)

Dear Mr. Vonck,

Please accept this letter as the Applicant's Report for the Special Use Permit application for the former site of St Gertrude High School. With this application, the property owner, Benedictine Sisters of VA Inc, is petitioning the City Council for a SUP to permit the rehabilitation of the former high school and chapel for multifamily use.

#### ***Existing Site Conditions***

The subject properties are located in the City's Museum District on the block bounded by Stuart Ave and Hanover Ave to the north and south, and N Cleveland St and Tilden St to the east and west. The five parcels combine for a total land area of 2.17 acres and comprise slightly more than half of the entire block. The original building on the site was constructed in 1913 as a home and chapel for the Benedictine Sisters. In 1922, the first classes were taught on the properties.

Over the years, the original building has been expanded and now contains approximately 68,797 square feet of floor area. A parking lot for the uses of the students and faculty is located behind the building in the middle of the block.

In the summer of 2020, construction began for a new site for the school located at the 50-acre Benedictine Abbey campus in Goochland County. The existing site on Stuart Ave is currently vacant.

#### ***Current Zoning***

The property is currently zoned R-6 Residential (Single Family Attached), which allows for single-family detached and attached dwellings, institutional, community and worship facilities and other primary uses. However, multifamily use is not permitted.

### ***Proposal***

Should this Special Use Permit be granted, the former school would be converted for multifamily use. A total of 39 one to three-bedroom units is proposed with floor areas ranging between 767 to 3,791 square feet. In addition, two townhome units are proposed on the parcels facing Tilden Street. A total of 53 parking spaces will be provided behind the main building and townhomes in the middle of the block.

The adaptive reuse of the property will be completed with the preservation of the historic nature of the site as a priority. The developer is working with the Department of Historic Resources to develop architectural plans that maintain the original exterior appearance of the original building and chapel, and improve the institutional appearance of the more recent expansions with the additions of windows, gabled-roofs, balconies, and doors. The overall footprint of the building will remain unchanged.

### ***Richmond 300 Master Plan***

Richmond 300 designates the property for Institutional land use. These areas call for public and quasi-public entities, such as local, state, and federal government, hospitals, universities, schools, and religious institutions. The plan states that residential uses may be permitted in certain sections of the areas designated as institutional and lists multi-family as a secondary use in these areas.

### ***Neighborhood Communication***

We have held preliminary meetings, virtually and on-site, with members of the Museum District. We have also contacted surrounding property owners and held a virtual meeting to discuss this proposal.

### ***City Charter Conditions***

Rehabilitating the former St Gertrude High School for multifamily use will not only bring new residents to this neighborhood, but will also preserve an important site that has been a part of Richmond history since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. We trust that you will agree with us that this proposed Special Use Permit meets the City Charter criteria for the granting of SUPs as the project will not

- (i) be detrimental to the safety, health, morals and general welfare of the community involved;
- (ii) tend to create congestion in streets, roads, alleys and other public ways and places in the area involved;
- (iii) create hazards from fire, panic or other dangers;
- (iv) tend to be overcrowding of land and cause an undue concentration of population;
- (v) adversely affect or interfere with public or private schools, parks, playgrounds, water supplies, sewage disposal, transportation or other public requirements, conveniences and improvements; or
- (vi) interfere with adequate light and air.

Thank you for your consideration of this Special Use Permit. Please feel free to contact me at [lory@markhamplanning.com](mailto:lory@markhamplanning.com) or (804) 248-2561 if you have any questions or require additional materials to process the application.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lory Markham".

Lory Markham

Enclosure: application form, existing survey, conceptual plans

cc: Richard Saunders, Secretary to the City Planning Commission  
The Honorable Andreas D. Addison, 1<sup>st</sup> District Representative



## Application for **SPECIAL USE PERMIT**

Department of Planning and Development Review

Land Use Administration Division

900 E. Broad Street, Room 511

Richmond, Virginia 23219

(804) 646-6304

<http://www.richmondgov.com/>

Application is hereby submitted for: (check one)

- ☐ **special use permit, new**  
☐ **special use permit, plan amendment**  
☐ **special use permit, text only amendment**

### Project Name/Location

Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Tax Map #: \_\_\_\_\_ Fee: \_\_\_\_\_

Total area of affected site in acres: \_\_\_\_\_

(See **page 6** for fee schedule, please make check payable to the "**City of Richmond**")

### Zoning

Current Zoning: \_\_\_\_\_

Existing Use: \_\_\_\_\_

### Proposed Use

(Please include a detailed description of the proposed use in the required applicant's report)

Existing Use: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this property subject to any previous land use cases?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If Yes, please list the Ordinance Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Applicant/Contact Person:

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_(\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_(\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Property Owner:

If Business Entity, name and title of authorized signee: \_\_\_\_\_

(The person or persons executing or attesting the execution of this Application on behalf of the Company certifies that he or she has or have been duly authorized and empowered to so execute or attest.)

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_(\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_(\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Property Owner Signature:

*Sister Joanna Butler, O.S.B.*

The names, addresses, telephone numbers and signatures of all owners of the property are required. Please attach additional sheets as needed. If a legal representative signs for a property owner, please attach an executed power of attorney. **Faxed or photocopied signatures will not be accepted.**

**NOTE:** Please attach the required plans, checklist, and a check for the application fee (see Filing Procedures for special use permits)