



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review

Staff Report

Ord. No. 2023-208: To conditionally rezone the property known as 15 West Grace Street to remove the priority street frontage designation for the portion of the property along North Adams Street.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: July 17, 2022

PETITIONER

Lory Markham – Markham Planning
Representative of the Property Owner

LOCATION

15 West Grace Street

PURPOSE

To conditionally rezone the property known as 15 West Grace Street to remove the priority street frontage designation for the portion of the property along North Adams Street.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting a rezoning with proffered conditions to remove the Priority Street designation for the portion of North Adams Street adjacent to the property, within the B-4 Central Business District.

The B-4 District states “Areas devoted to the parking or circulation of vehicles shall not be located between the main building on a lot and the street line nor shall such areas be located closer to the street than the main building on the lot. On a lot having more than one street frontage, this subsection shall apply along both the principal street frontage and the priority street frontage.”

Priority Street is defined by the Zoning Code as “that portion of a lot abutting a street designated as a priority street on the official zoning map established and maintained pursuant to Section 30-200 and situated between lot lines intersecting such street.”

Removal of the Priority Street designation at this location is intended to allow future development to include areas of circulation of vehicles between the main building and street line. The subject property is a small corner lot and both street frontages currently have a priority street designation. This makes it difficult to fit ground floor uses with access to structured parking contained within the building.

The Applicant has proffered architecture plans for the building to ensure a high quality pedestrian realm, the goal of the Priority Street designation.

Staff finds that the rezoning meets recommendations of the City's Richmond 300 Master Plan pertaining to Downtown Mixed-Use and allows high-density development on a site that otherwise might not be feasible without parking.

Therefore staff recommends approval of the rezoning request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property consists of approximately 13,024.5 square feet, or 0.299 acres, of land and is improved with a paved parking lot. The property is located in the Monroe Ward Neighborhood between North Adams Street and North Foushee Street.

Proposed Use of the Property

Allowed uses within the B-4 Central Business District

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates this parcel as Downtown Mixed Use.

The central business district of the Richmond region features high-density development with office buildings, residential buildings, and a mix of complementary uses, including regional destinations in a highly-walkable urban environment.

Development Style: Higher density pedestrian- and transit-oriented development encouraged on vacant or underutilized sites. Historic buildings are adapted for new uses. Future development should be urban in form and may be of larger scale than existing context. Plazas and setbacks create an engaging street life. Many buildings are vertically mixed-use. New developments continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity.

Ground Floor: 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 required on street-oriented commercial frontages.

Mobility: 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. Parking requirements are substantially less in these areas than other areas of the City and are largely eliminated. Intensity: Buildings typically a minimum height of five stories.

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

Secondary Uses: Not applicable.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The property is zoned B-4 and is in the Arts District Station/Monroe Ward Plan of Development Overlay district. There are Priority Street Frontages along North Adams Street and West Grace Street frontages of the property.

The request is to remove the Priority Street Frontage from the North Adams Street frontage. The Priority Street Frontage designation was adopted on July 22, 2019 (Ord. No. 2019-172) to apply to this property, but it is not known why this segment was created as there are no lots that front this street frontage for such a designation to be applicable.

Along with this request, the applicant has proffered the following, which is detailed in the Proffer Statement dated March 1, 2023:

1. The ground floor shall be arranged substantially as shown on the attached Sheet A101 of the plans entitled "15 W Grace" prepared by Walter Parks Architects and dated January 12, 2022.

The existing use of the property is a surface parking deck. There are no non-conformities created by this request.

Surrounding Area

Adjacent properties are zoned the same B-4 District to the north, west, and east with RO-3 Residential-Office District to the south. Surrounding land uses include parking lots, residential, and commercial.

Priority Street are designated along Grace Street, North Adams Street, North Foushee Street, West Franklin Street, and West Broad Street nearest the subject property.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents, property owners, and the Downtown Neighborhood Association of the proposed Rezoning. Staff has not received any comments on this request to date.

Staff Contact: Ray Roakes, Planner, Land Use Administration, 804-646-5467