



## CITY OF RICHMOND

### Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

**Ord. No. 2024-015:** To authorize the special use of the properties known as 1200, 1202, 1204, 1206, 1208, 1210, 1212, and 1220 North 26th Street for the purpose of ten single-family attached dwellings and ~~ten~~ six garages which may also be used as six accessory dwelling units as an accessory use, upon certain terms and conditions.

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**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** March 5, 2024

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#### **PETITIONER**

Tarvaris McCoy

#### **LOCATION**

1200, 1202, 1204, 1206, 1208, 1210, 1212, and 1220 North 26th Street

#### **PURPOSE**

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to authorize 10 single family attached dwellings, as well as six garages which may also be used as six accessory dwelling units within a R-6 Single-Family Attached District. The proposed use does not meet the current lot area requirements or the maximum density within the R-6 zone. A Special Use Permit is, therefore, required.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It should be noted that since the February 6, 2024 Planning Commission meeting, the applicant has met with staff and prepared updated plans that are amenable to staff and the applicant.

Staff finds that the updated plans are aligned with the goals of the Neighborhood Mixed-Use Development Style, in addition to several objectives within the Richmond 300 master plan.

Staff finds that the Church Hill North neighborhood was originally designed as a streetcar suburb, where private vehicles did not determine the scale or density of the neighborhood. As the City grows in population it will be critical to recognize those areas, such as Church Hill North, in which mass transit and walkability should be prioritized over private vehicular use when designing infill development. The Richmond 300 seeks to re-introduce this important neighborhood type whenever possible, as mentioned within Goal 4: Urban Design. “While auto-oriented residential neighborhoods continue to flourish in and around the city, newer neighborhoods that are closer to the city’s core have been built with greater focus on the pedestrian experience. The City has sought to encourage this trend by eliminating parking minimums, removing parking lots as a principal use in several zoning districts, and requiring sidewalks and other amenities, such as street trees, with new developments.” (p. 98)

Staff recognizes that the applicant has submitted new plans that fully align with the Richmond 300 Master Plan including the objectives referenced below.

Staff finds that the proposed supports the physical objectives of the Neighborhood Mixed-Use land use. The proposal adheres to this category’s objective that “future development should generally complement existing context”. The pattern of alleyway design throughout Church Hill

North is one of single, mid-block alleys. Staff finds the proposed is supportive of Objective 1.4a, which seeks to “Implement urban design and architecture strategies that maintain and enhance the unique character of Richmond’s residential districts” (p. 86) What’s more, the use of an existing alley for vehicle storage aligns with Objective 1.1e, which seeks to limit drive-way entrances. (p. 84)

Staff also finds that the modification of the plans to which remove additional alleys and driveways is supported by Objective 4.1n, which calls to “Prohibit driveways for new small-scale residential buildings on blocks that have alley access.” (p. 100) This objective is aligned with Objective 8.1c which seeks to “Reduce the creation of driveways and car access curb cuts, especially if there is alley access to the parcel and/or multiple parcels can utilize the same car access curb cut to access their sites.” (p. 115)

Staff also finds that the new site design is supported by Objectives 15.1a and 15.1f, which calls to “Increase the number of Richmonders living in a development pattern that encourages density and reduces dependency on single-occupancy vehicles” and “Increase use of mass and active transportation options,” respectively. (p. 159)

Staff finds that the proposed site design increases opportunities to re-establish a healthy tree canopy due to larger rear yards which supports Objectives 17.3e and 17.5f, which state “Increase the tree canopy and overall green spaces throughout the city” and “Reduce impervious surfaces”, respectively.

In summary, staff finds that, while incorporating off-street parking from existing alleys, the option for adaptive re-use of garages into single- or two-story accessory dwelling units, rear garages connected to alleys, and additional infill housing are all characteristics of the proposed and receive frequent support from staff.

Staff finds that due to all findings summarized above, the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of Special Use Permits, are now met.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit request, with an amendment to incorporate the updated plans and authorize up to six accessory dwelling units.

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## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **Site Description**

The property is located in the Church Hill North neighborhood on North 26th Street between R and S Streets. The properties are currently a combined 23,958 sq. ft. (.55 acre) area of land.

### **Proposed Use of the Property**

Ten single-family attached dwellings with six detached garages and the option for six accessory dwelling units.

### **Master Plan**

The City’s Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Neighborhood Mixed Use, which is defined as the “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.”

#### Development Style:

These areas feature a variety of building types that are close to one another and create a unified street wall. The building size, density, and zoning districts for these areas vary depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement existing context. Setbacks, plazas, and parks create a sense of place and community gathering areas. New developments on larger parcels continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity within the neighborhood and to adjacent neighborhoods. In historic neighborhoods, small-scale commercial uses exist today or should be allowed to reestablish. In new neighborhoods, small scale commercial buildings should be introduced.

#### Ground Floor:

Regardless of use, buildings should engage the street with features such as street-oriented façades with windows and door openings along street frontages. Appropriate setbacks, open space, front porches, elevated ground floors, and other features that provide a sense of privacy should be provided for residential uses.

#### Mobility:

Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. New driveways are prohibited on Priority and Principal Street frontages. Vehicular access to parcels should use alleys wherever possible. Parking areas should be located to the rear of street-facing buildings.

#### Intensity:

Building heights are generally two to four stories. Buildings taller than four stories may be found along major streets. Parcels are generally between 1,500 and 5,000 sq. ft.

#### Primary Use:

Single-family houses, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), and open space.

#### Secondary Uses:

Large multi-family buildings (10+units), retail/office/personal service, institutional, cultural, and government.

The proposed density of the project is 10 units upon 0.55 acres or approximately 18 units per acre.

The proposal is also within the East End, 25<sup>th</sup> and Nine Mile Neighborhood Node. Neighborhood Nodes are defined as "...local crossroads typically within or next to larger residential areas that offers goods and services to nearby residents, employees, and visitors." (p. 24) According to the Richmond 300 Master Plan, this node has a "medium" growth potential. The recommended primary next steps are:

- Rezone the Community Mixed-Use areas of this Node along N. 25th Street and Nine Mile Road, which are currently zoned "B-2 Community Business District", in alignment with the Future Land Use Plan to allow for a mix of uses and increased residential density by-right.
- Implement design standards to create a high-quality and well-designed neighborhood Node and explore the creation of signature public art.
- Implement high-frequency transit along N. 25th Street and Nine Mile Road.
- Improve pedestrian and bike infrastructure to/from this Node – specifically improving the streetscape along Nine Mile Road to tie in more seamlessly with the existing streetscape along N. 25th Street. (C-25)

## Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this parcel is R-6 Single-family attached District. The proposed use does not conform to the following sections of the Zoning Ordinance:

Sec. 30-412.4 (a): The average density within a development site shall not exceed ten dwelling units per acre.

*The proposed density of the development is 18 dwelling units per acre;*

Sec. 30-412.4 (b): Single-family attached dwellings shall be on lots of 2,200 sq. ft.

*The proposed lot sizes are between 1,444 sq. ft. and 1,374 sq. ft.*

The special use permit would impose conditions on the property, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as ten single-family attached dwellings and ~~ten~~ six garages which may contain accessory dwelling units, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- ~~Each separated garage structure and lot shall only be transferred with its respective single-family attached dwelling lot, substantially as shown on the Plans.~~
- The height of the Special Use shall not exceed three stories, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- All building materials, elevations, and site improvements shall be substantially as shown on the Plans.
- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.
- Prior to the issuance of any building permit for the Special Use, the establishment of ten residential lots ~~with accompanying garage lots~~, substantially as shown on the Plans, shall be accomplished by obtaining the necessary approvals from the City and recording the appropriate plats and deeds among the land records of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the City of Richmond.
- 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

The area is primarily single-family residential with some commercial uses along North 25<sup>th</sup> Street. Some multi-family residential and institutional uses are present in the vicinity. The properties are within walking distance to the 25<sup>th</sup> and Nine Mile Neighborhood Node.

## Affordability

Median Family Income Richmond region = \$109,400 per year.\*

Affordability threshold = 30% of household income towards housing costs.

= \$32,820 per year

= \$2,735 per month

Est. price provided by Applicant: \$425,000

Est. monthly payment = \$ 2,262\*\* = 83% of Median Family Income Richmond Region

\*(U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023)

\*\* (Virginia Housing, assuming 7% interest, 20% down payment, 30-year term)

**Neighborhood Participation**

Staff notified the Church Hill Central North Civic Association of the proposed Special Use Permit. The Association is reaching out to the applicant. Staff has received opposition from a nearby neighbor.

**Staff Contact:** Jonathan Brown, Senior Planner, Land Use Administration, 804-646-5734