



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2024-059: To authorize the special use of the property known as 1103 West Franklin Street for the purpose of a four-unit multifamily building with an accessory dwelling unit, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: March 19, 2024

PETITIONER

David Johannas - Johannas Design Group

LOCATION

1103 West Franklin Street

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting authorization to convert an existing, two-story garage into an accessory dwelling unit that would be accessory to an existing four-unit multifamily dwelling within an R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential District. A Special Use Permit is needed for this authorization.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposed use, which is to include existing and new residential units, is aligned with the goals of the Neighborhood Mixed-Use Development Style, including the recommended Primary Uses.

Staff finds that the addition of multiple housing types near the VCU Regional/National Node 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) The new accessory dwelling unit is located within walking distance to the Broad Street VCU/VUU Pulse bus station, the VCU campus, as well several daily needs.

Staff also finds that the proposed use is supported by Objective 1.2f, which states: “Implement housing strategies that increase housing at all income levels along corridors and at Nodes” The proposed offers a different housing and market type within a portion of the City where housing demand is currently at a premium. (p. 86)

Staff finds that the proposed adaptive reuse of an existing garage and the reduction of an off-street parking requirement is supported by Objective 3.2a, which states: “Create flexibility in the Zoning Ordinance to encourage the adaptive reuse of historical buildings and deter demolition, such as allowing for compatible densities and uses in historical areas (e.g., reduce parking requirements for historical institutional buildings that are changing uses).” The proposed will continue to preserve the existing historic structures while incorporating a new dwelling unit. (p. 95)

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 met.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The property is located in the Fan neighborhood on West Franklin Street between North Harrison and North Lombardy Streets. The property is currently a 4,320 sq. ft. (.09 acre) improved parcel of land, with a 3-story, 5,487 square foot building, and a two-story, 528 square foot detached garage, constructed in 1920.

Proposed Use of the Property

A dwelling unit that would be accessory to an existing four-unit multifamily building.

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 property is adjacent to the VCU National/Regional Node. The vision for this Node within the Richmond 300 Master Plan is:

VCU/Monroe Park continues to provide shopping, dining, and housing for students and neighborhood residents alike. VCU is a major job center and nexus of activity with services and cultural attractions for the region. The intersection of Belvidere and W. Broad Streets becomes a signature intersection with new development complementing the VCU Institute for Contemporary Art with prominent architecture. A new high-frequency transit line runs down Belvidere with a stop at Belvidere and W. Broad Street. VCU's campus evolves as VCU continues to modernize its buildings. W. Broad Street and Belvidere transform into a high-quality urban avenue that are safe to cross, while becoming destinations in their own right for residential, office, retail and compatible entertainment uses. (p. C-19)

The proposed density of the parcel is 6 units upon .09 acres, or 66 units per acre.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential District. The proposed use does not conform to the following sections of the Zoning Ordinance:

Sections 30-412.1 and 30-412.2, Permitted principal uses and Permitted accessory uses and structures.

The proposed addition of an accessory dwelling unit, as well as the removal of one off-street parking space, does not fall within the current Board of Zoning Appeals determination from 1990.

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

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as a four-unit multifamily building with an accessory dwelling unit, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- No less than one off-street parking space shall be required for the Special Use, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- The height of the accessory dwelling unit shall not exceed two stories, 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.
- Resident bicycle storage shall be provided, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- 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 multi-family residential with some institutional uses in close proximity. The properties are within walking distance to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the VCU/VUU Pulse bus rapid transit station.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified the Fan District Association Civic Association and nearby residents of the proposed Special Use Permit. Staff has not received any letters of support or opposition for this application.

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