



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2022-205: To amend Ord. No. 2000-410-2001-10, adopted Jan. 8, 2001, as most recently amended by Ord. No. 2017-242, adopted May 29, 2019, which approved the “Shops at Stratford Hills Community Unit Plan,” for the purpose of increasing the area subject to the community unit plan by 3.6 acres to 67.86± acres and modifying the development standards, under certain terms and conditions.

CPCR.2022.083: RESOLUTION OF THE RICHMOND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE SHOPS AT STRATFORD HILLS PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY UNIT PLAN, FOR THE PURPOSE OF INCREASING THE AREA SUBJECT TO THE COMMUNITY UNIT PLAN BY 3.6 ACRES TO 67.86± ACRES AND MODIFYING THE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: May 7, 2024

PETITIONER

T. Preston Lloyd, Jr., Williams Mullen
Representative of the Property Owner

LOCATION

6933 and 6945 Forest Hills Avenue

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant intends to develop a portion of the Shops at Stratford Hills Community Unit Plan (CUP) with a development consisting of a commercial use with a drive-through and single family attached dwellings, using property within the CUP as well as additional acreage to be added to the CUP. An amendment to the Preliminary Community Unit Plan is needed to accomplish this. A further “Final Plan,” as defined in Sec. 30-456 of the City Code, will be required to be approved by the Planning Commission.

This application has been continued from the July 18, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting. Plans and Ordinance have received amendments as requested by the Applicant.

Richmond 300 recommends a future land use of “Corridor Mixed Use” for the front portion of the property, where the new commercial building is proposed. Primary uses recommended for this land use category include commercial (retail/office/personal service) – Staff finds that the

proposed restaurant with drive-thru use is consistent with listed Master Plan uses. The development style for this land use category is based on the historic densities and neighborhood characteristics of the surrounding area; the surrounding area consists of primarily auto-oriented commercial uses – Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with surrounding areas

Richmond 300 recommends a future land use of “Neighborhood Mixed Use” for the rear portion of the property, where the new single family attached dwellings are proposed. The primary uses recommended for Neighborhood Mixed Use are single family houses – Staff finds that the proposed single family attached dwellings are consistent with the Master Plan. The Master Plan states that ground floors should engage the street with features such as street oriented facades – Staff finds the proposal does not face the main entrance to the shopping center, Cherokee Road, but significant grade changes would make doing so difficult. The residential section address the proposed residential street, however, with front doors, garages, and sidewalk to enliven the street. The Master Plan states that appropriate setbacks, open space, front porches, elevated ground floors and other features that provide a sense of privacy should be provided for residential uses – Staff finds that the proposed dwellings will be setback from Cherokee Road with a landscape buffer to lessen impact from vehicular traffic.

The property falls within the “Shops at Stratford Hills” Regional Priority Grown Node. The future of the node is envisioned as a “walkable, mixed use neighborhood center with a diverse mix of uses including unique shopping, service and entertainment establishments, as well as residential units.” Staff finds that the inclusion of residential uses within the context of the larger shopping area will facilitate the suggested mix of uses.

The portion of Forest Hill Avenue that abuts the property is designated as both a “Major Mixed Use Street” and “Great Street” on the “Great Streets and Street Typologies Map.” As such new development should pay special attention to the beautification of the Forest Hill Avenue streetscape. The project provides enhanced landscaping along Forest Hills Avenue.

Staff finds that with the ordinance conditions the safeguards contained within the Zoning Ordinance, relative to Community Unit Plans, are met. Specifically, staff finds the proposal does not create parking or traffic congestion due to onsite parking, has been reviewed for public safety considerations, will not cause overcrowding, is served by adequate public services and utilities, and has been reviewed for adequate air and light.

Therefore staff recommends approval of the proposed resolution and ordinance, with amendments to incorporate the updated plans and the additional amendments included in the updated ordinance.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The proposed development pertains to the Shops at Stratford Hills Community Unit Plan, located at the southeast corner of Forest Hill Avenue and Chippenham Parkway within the City's Gravel Hill neighborhood. The subject property being added to the CUP area is comprised of approximately 3.6 acres, and the existing CUP area is approximately 64.5 acres. The subject properties are primarily undeveloped.

Proposed Use of the Property

The proposed use of the property include a commercial restaurant use with a drive-thru and 36 single-family attached dwellings.

Master Plan

1) Richmond 300 recommends a future land use of "Corridor Mixed Use" for the front portion of the property, where the new commercial building is proposed.

The development style: based on the historic densities and neighborhood characteristics of the surrounding area. The street grid should be introduced or reinforced where possible. Ground floor uses should engage with, and enliven, the street. Windows, doors, storefronts and other features should be utilized to allow transparency and interaction between the building and street. Pedestrian, bicycle and transit access must be prioritized and accommodated. Parking areas should be located in a structure or to the rear of buildings and require screening. Buildings typically range from two to ten stories, depending on street widths and the historic content. New buildings that are taller than the existing content should step back from the build to line after matching the height of the predominant cornice line of the block.

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 are required on street-oriented commercial frontages.

Intensity: Buildings generally ranging from two to ten stories, based on street widths and depending on the historic context and stepping down in height adjacent to residential areas. New buildings that are taller than historical buildings should step back from the build-to line after matching the height of the predominant cornice line of the block

Primary uses: commercial (retail/office/personal service), multi-family residential, cultural and open space.

Secondary: single family, institutional and government.

2) Richmond 300 recommends a future land use of “Neighborhood Mixed Use” for the rear portion of the property, where the new single family attached dwellings are proposed.

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.

Intensity: Building heights are generally two to four stories. Buildings taller than four stories may be found along major streets (see Street Typologies Map). Parcels are generally between 1,500 and 5,000 sq. ft.

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

Secondary Uses: Large multifamily buildings (10+units), retail/office/personal service, institutional, cultural, and government.

3) “Shops at Stratford Hills” Regional Priority Grown Node

The future of the node is envisioned as a walkable, mixed use neighborhood center with a diverse mix of uses including unique shopping, service and entertainment establishments, as well as residential units. The existing suburban style development that focuses around large parking lots in the future could be developed into a more urban, gridded pattern with buildings that address the street. Forest Hill Avenue needs to be improved to reduce vehicle and pedestrian conflicts and improve pedestrian, bicycle and transit access. New development should have a cohesive, high quality design and include street trees and other open space. Any new development in the area to the south and east of the Node which are designated as Neighborhood Mixed Use should complement the design of the Node and be connected by both streets and sidewalks.

4) The portion of Forest Hill Avenue that abuts the property is designated as both a “Major Mixed Use Street” and “Great Street” on the “Great Streets and Street Typologies Map.”

New development should pay special attention to the beautification of the Forest Hill Avenue streetscape.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The front portion of the project area is zoned B-2 Community Business District and the rear portion of the project is zoned R-2 Single Family Residential.

The Zoning Department offers the following comments:

The proposal is to amend the existing CUP ordinance to (a) add certain additional property to the Community Unit Plan and (b) amend certain terms and conditions of the CUP ordinance, including permitted uses, additional signage, buffer removal and access.

Please be advised of the following changes with the proposed amendments:

The CUP Expansion Area of the Community Unit Plan

The CUP Amendment proposal is to expand the area by 11 parcels (3.6 acres) on the eastern portion of the existing CUP area. The proposed expansion area would allow for the development of a restaurant (with a drive-up facilities) & retail building and the development of not more than thirty-six (36) attached dwelling units.

Surrounding Area

Surrounding properties are zoned B-2 Community Business District and R-2 Single Family Residential.

The project is located on the Forest Hills Avenue commercial corridor; a shopping center is located immediately to the west, religious use to the east, commercial uses to the north along Forest Hills Avenue, and land to the south is undeveloped. In the larger neighborhood, residential multifamily is located in the east, residential single family is located to the north and east, and the Chippenham Parkway is located to the west.

Affordability

The median household income for the surrounding census tract is \$ 101,414.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Census Tract)

The median family income for the Richmond region is currently \$109,400 per year.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Regional)

The affordability threshold is 30% of household income towards housing costs, which equates to \$32,820 per year, or \$2,735 per month, or less, to avoid a housing cost burden.

Neighborhood Participation

The City notified area residents and property owners along with the Southhampton Citizens Association and Cherokee Area Neighbors civic association about this application. The Chesterfield County Planning Office was also notified, as required by City Code due to proximity to the City line.

City Staff received several inquiries for information on the project by area citizens and a letter of support from the representative of an adjacent property owner.

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