



## CITY OF RICHMOND

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

**Ord. No. 2015-249:** To authorize the special use of the properties known as 8 West Cary Street and 10 West Cary Street for the purpose of offices and up to two accessory dwelling units, upon certain terms and conditions.

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**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** December 7, 2015

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#### **PETITIONER**

David Johannas - Johannas Design Group

#### **LOCATION**

8 and 10 West Cary Street

#### **PURPOSE**

To authorize the special use of the properties known as 8 West Cary Street and 10 West Cary Street for the purpose of offices and up to two accessory dwelling units, upon certain terms and conditions.

#### **SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The subject property consists of a 0.098 acre (4,285 SF) parcel (8 West Cary Street) improved with a minimally-screened surface parking lot, and a 0.103 acre (4,468 SF) parcel (10 West Cary Street) improved with a two story brick structure currently used as an office. The property is located on West Cary Street between South Adams Street and South Foushee Street, in the Monroe Ward neighborhood of the Downtown planning district.

The subject property is located in a B-3 General Business Zoning District. The applicant has proposed office and accessory dwelling unit use on the property, which would exceed the maximum building height permitted in the B-3 district and would not meet the minimum number of off-street parking spaces. A special use permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that the proposed uses are consistent with the underlying zoning of the property and the recommendations of Downtown Plan.

Staff further finds that the subject property is located within a pedestrian-oriented area and the proposed uses would not pose an undue burden on the neighborhood's on-street parking capacity due to the general availability of on-street parking and access to mass transit. Moreover, though pedestrian-oriented, there is a high prevalence in the area of parcels containing surface parking areas as the primary use. Staff does not wish to encourage the expansion of such uses.

Staff further finds that with the conditions of the ordinance, the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of special use permits, are met. Staff therefore recommends approval of the proposed special use permit.

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## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **Site Description**

The subject property consists of a 0.098 acre (4,285 SF) parcel (8 West Cary Street) improved with a minimally-screened surface parking lot, and a 0.103 acre (4,468 SF) parcel (10 West Cary Street) improved with a two story brick structure currently used as an office. The property is located on West Cary Street between South Adams Street and South Foushee Street, in the Monroe Ward neighborhood of the Downtown planning district.

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

The building at 10 West Cary Street will continue to contain 3,602 SF of office space and a 406 SF accessory dwelling unit. The surface parking lot at 8 West Cary Street will be replaced by a three-story building containing 8,266 SF of office space and a 518 SF accessory dwelling unit. The uses in the existing building and new building will be provided with an aggregate of two on-site surface parking spaces.

Under normal zoning requirements, this type of development would require 31 parking spaces, based on the square footage of office space. The applicant conducted a parking study from Saturday, October 31, 2015 through Friday, November 6, 2015 which encompassed three blocks of Cary Street and two blocks of South Adams and South Foushee Streets, respectively. The study indicates the general availability of on-street parking. Furthermore, the subject property is in close proximity to mass transit lines, including the future bus rapid transit line. A large quantity of surface parking is also prevalent in the area.

Though the overall height of the proposed building exceeds the B-3 height limitations, the third story of the building is stepped back from the main façade and will not be intrusive to the streetscape.

### **Master Plan**

The subject property falls within an Urban Center Area of the Monroe Ward district, as established by the Richmond Downtown Plan. Such areas are “characterized by higher density, mixed use development, typically arranged on a fine grained street network, with wide sidewalks, regular tree planting, and minimal setbacks.” Moreover, the Urban Center Area demonstrates “a dense mix of office space, apartments, and retail located in four to six story brick buildings that front the street. Pedestrians have an active presence in these neighborhoods” (pp. 3.25 3.26). The Downtown Plan’s illustrative plan suggests that 8 West Cary be improved with a building, rather than a surface parking lot (p. 4.16).

The Downtown Plan provides general principles for infill development within the Downtown area and states, “At all times buildings should relate to...the scale and height [of traditional buildings in the area], even if this means stepping the building back where it rises above

neighboring buildings. Infill development should respect the material and architectural vocabulary of nearby historic structures, and should address the street with entrances and windows that are consistent with the historic streetscape.” The Downtown Plan goes on to state, however, that “it is essential that all infill be appropriate to its particular urban condition” (pp. 3.16 17).

Specifically for Monroe Ward, the Downtown Plan emphasizes the need to encourage compatible infill. “Monroe Ward has a high proportion of vacant lots and surface parking lots. These vacant properties should be the highest priority for Downtown infill development. All new development should respect the existing mix of uses, and include office buildings, residential apartment buildings, and retail. Buildings should respect the scale and character of the existing block...Parking in Monroe Ward can be accommodated in mid-block surface parking lots, in mid-block parking garages lined with habitable buildings, and in underground parking garages. It is important that the historic character of Monroe Ward be preserved. This can be encouraged through the creation of a local Old and Historic District or design overlay district.” (p. 4.18).

### **Zoning & Ordinance Conditions**

The subject property is located in a B-3 General Business Zoning District. The applicant has proposed office and accessory dwelling unit use on the property, which would exceed the maximum building height permitted in the B-3 district and would not meet the minimum number of off street parking spaces.

The special use permit ordinance conditions limit the use of the property to offices and up to two accessory dwelling units served by no fewer than two on-site parking spaces. The accessory dwelling units shall not be available for occupancy by the general public.

Outdoor lighting shall be located, directed or shielded so as not to shine directly on adjoining properties or to create a traffic hazard by means of glare or similarity to or confusion with traffic signals, warning lights or lighting on emergency vehicles.

The height of the building constructed for the Special Use shall not exceed 50 feet.

Permitted signage on the property includes signage that meets the zoning requirements for signage in the B-5 district and signage on the western wall of 10 West Cary Street, substantially as shown on the document entitled “Building Graphics” (attached).

Refuse facilities shall not be visible from adjacent properties and public streets.

The following improvements to the right-of-way will be completed: the installation of new street trees, a new tree well, a new granite curb, and a new brick walk, as well as the removal of an existing apron.

### **Surrounding Area**

All surrounding properties are located within the same B-3 zoning district as the subject property. A mix of commercial, office, mixed use, institutional and residential land uses are present in the area.

**Neighborhood Participation**

Staff sent notice of the application to the Downtown Neighborhood Association and received a letter of support for the proposal. Staff also sent notice to Councilwoman Robertson.

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