

Applicant's Report

The Richmond Housing and Redevelopment Authority (RRHA) and its development partner, the Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC) are applying for a Special Use Permit for the development of a vacant 2.52 acre site in the Jackson Ward neighborhood bound by North 1st Street, East Jackson Street, North Second Street and East Duval Street and is zoned both R-63 and R-53 multifamily. The site is currently vacant except for the former Franciscan convent, which was abandoned in 1993. The site has historical significance as it used to house the St. Joseph's Catholic Church, one of the first African-American Catholic churches in the South.

The proposed redevelopment of the site consists of the rehabilitation of the former convent and preservation of the historic bell garden as an accessible public space and the new construction of 182 dwelling units and 6000 square feet of commercial space in a three and four story building. 72 of the units will serve as replacement housing for the RRHA's Fay Towers senior development in the Gilpin neighborhood. These units will be located on the corner of East Duval and North 2nd and will be 1 Bedroom senior-restricted units. The remaining 110 units will be a mix of 1 to 3 bedroom units. The dwelling units wrap the 147 structured parking spaces, with 138 spaces dedicated for residents and 9 for the commercial space.

Two outdoor green plazas will be built on the top level of the structure parking and will be accessible through the building. The building incorporates numerous pedestrian-friendly components with direct access to the street, variation in the façade, landscaping surrounding the building and the installation of new street trees. In addition, the project will include the bell memorial garden adjacent to the former convent building. The memorial garden includes the steeple bell from the St. Joseph's church, which was the first Catholic Church for people of color in the segregated South. The church closed in 1969 and was subsequently demolished. The memorial bell garden is subject to an access easement to the bell, with open space extending between the existing convent building and the new construction with a glass curtain wall behind to screen the parking deck. The commercial space is located on the corner of North 1st and East Jackson Street to complement existing retail in the other side of North 1st Street and provide a strong urban feel to the building. The commercial uses permitted on a corner lot in the R-63 district pursuant to Section 114-419.3 of the Zoning Ordinance are the proposed uses to be permitted within the commercial space.

The building is designed to be compatible in materials and scale to the existing architecture and urban fabric of Historic Jackson Ward and enhance the pedestrian realm with reduced building setbacks, front stoops and direct access to the sidewalk where feasible to create a sense of scale similar to the neighborhood. The building will be 3 stories along North 1st and steps up to 4 stories towards the center of the lot. The building massing is broken up into three distinct sections to create the appearance of separate buildings along the street face of North 1st Street. The materials of brick and cementitious siding are complementary to the neighborhood and emphasize durability and quality. The building wraps the existing historic bell garden and

maintains green space with a glass curtain wall will divide the historic convent and the new development.

The proposed use is appropriate for the Property and it meets the criteria set forth in the Charter of the City of Richmond that the use will not (i) be detrimental to the safety, health, morals and general welfare of the community involved; (ii) tend to create congestion in streets, roads, alleys and other public ways and places in the area involved; (iii) create hazards from fire, panic or other dangers; (iv) tend to cause overcrowding of land and an undue concentration of population; (v) adversely affect or interfere with public or private schools, parks, playgrounds, water supplies, sewage disposal, transportation or other public requirements, conveniences and improvements; or (vi) interfere with adequate light and air.