



## CITY OF RICHMOND

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

**Ord. No. 2017-018:** To amend and reordain Ord. No. 82-7-16, adopted Feb. 8, 1982, as previously amended by Ord. No. 2007-98-69, adopted Apr. 9, 2007, which authorized the special use of the property known as 301 West Franklin Street for the purpose of a motel, together with accessory off-street parking, to authorize the installation of two canopy signs, upon certain terms and conditions.

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**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** March 20, 2017

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#### **PETITIONER**

Russ Cummings, Image Innovation Group

#### **LOCATION**

301 West Franklin Street

#### **PURPOSE**

To amend and reordain Ord. No. 82-7-16, adopted Feb. 8, 1982, as previously amended by Ord. No. 2007-98-69, adopted Apr. 9, 2007, which authorized the special use of the property known as 301 West Franklin Street for the purpose of a motel, together with accessory off-street parking, to authorize the installation of two canopy signs, upon certain terms and conditions.

#### **SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The subject property is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of West Franklin Street and North Madison Street and contains approximately 16,360 square feet of lot area. The subject property is currently occupied by a 15-story hotel that contains approximately 128,700 square feet of floor area and 141 parking spaces in three underground parking levels. The subject property is zoned RO-3 Residential Office and is subject to an existing special use permit adopted by Ordinance No. 82-7-16 on February 8, 1982 and amended by Ordinance No. 2007-98-69 on April 9, 2007. This Ordinance would amend the existing special use permit to authorize the addition of two canopy signs.

The applicant is proposing to add two signs to a canopy that covers a one-way drive between the building and West Franklin Street. The addition of these sign requires an amendment to the special use permit ordinance approved in 2007.

The RO-3 Residential-Office district requires a fifteen (15) foot front yard. Any structure located within the required front yard cannot exceed three (3) feet in height. The canopy authorized by the 2007 special use permit is approximately twenty (20) feet and six (6) inches in height. The canopy is located over a one-way drive in front of the hotel for guest drop-off and pick-up.

The RO-3 Residential-Office district does not allow signs to be located within five (5) feet of the property line and does not allow signs to exceed eight (8) feet in height. The 2007 special use permit authorized a freestanding sign and sign flagpole located approximately one (1) foot from the property line and a flag sign of approximately twenty (20) feet and six (6) inches in height. The proposed amendment would authorize two signs on the canopy. One thirty-seven (37) square foot sign would be authorized on the front of the canopy facing West Franklin Street and one twenty (20) square foot sign would be authorized on the side of the canopy facing west.

The surrounding properties are zoned RO-3 Residential-Office and B-3 General Business. A mix of uses, including multifamily apartments, offices, and various commercial uses, currently occupy the surrounding properties. The Two-Hundred Block of West Franklin Street City Old and Historic District is directly adjacent to the subject property to the east.

The Richmond Master Plan designates this property as Downtown Urban Center Area. Characterizations of this district include a higher density, mixed use development, typically arranged on a fine-grained street network with wide sidewalks, regular tree planting, and minimal setbacks. Typically this land use category depicts apartments with no more than four stories in height. In addition, buildings are set back from the street behind a narrow yard. Parking is located on-street, or at the rear of the lot. (p. 3.25).

Staff finds that the proposed development would be in conformance with the Master Plan as it pertains to Downtown Urban Center Areas. Staff further finds that with the proposed use of the property, the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of Special Use Permits, are met. Specifically, staff finds that the proposed use would not be detrimental to the general welfare of the community involved and would not create congestion in the streets in the area involved.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the special use permit amendment request, with the amendment shown on the plan sheet with a revision date of February 23, 2017, eliminating the internal illumination of the proposed signage along West Franklin Street.

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## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **Site Description**

The subject property is improved with a 15 story, 170,690 square foot hotel situated on a 0.423 parcel of land located at 301 West Franklin Street between West Franklin Street to the north, North Madison Street to the east, a public alley to the south and a multi-family residential tower to the west. The proposed canopy signage would be visible from West Franklin and West Madison Streets.

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

The applicant is proposing to add two signs to a canopy that covers a one-way drive between the building and West Franklin Street. The addition of these sign requires an amendment to the special use permit ordinance approved in 2007.

### **Master Plan**

The Richmond Master Plan designates this property as Downtown Urban Center Area. Characterizations of this district include a higher density, mixed use development, typically arranged on a fine-grained street network with wide sidewalks, regular tree planting, and minimal setbacks. Typically this land use category depicts apartments with no more than four stories in height. In addition, buildings are set back from the street behind a narrow yard. Parking is located on-street, or at the rear of the lot. (p. 3.25).

### **Zoning & Ordinance Conditions**

The RO-3 Residential-Office district requires a fifteen (15) foot front yard. Any structure located within the required front yard cannot exceed three (3) feet in height. The canopy authorized by the 2007 special use permit is approximately twenty (20) feet and six (6) inches in height. The canopy is located over a one-way drive in front of the hotel for guest drop-off and pick-up.

The RO-3 Residential-Office district does not allow signs to be located within five (5) feet of the property line and does not allow signs to exceed eight (8) feet in height. The 2007 special use permit authorized a freestanding sign and sign flagpole located approximately one (1) foot from the property line and a flag sign of approximately twenty (20) feet and six (6) inches in height. The proposed amendment would authorize two signs on the canopy. One thirty-seven (37) square foot sign would be authorized on the front of the canopy facing West Franklin Street and one twenty (20) square foot sign would be authorized on the side of the canopy facing west.

### **Surrounding Area**

All surrounding properties are also located in the R-O3 and B-3 districts. The predominant land uses on the 300 block of West Franklin Street is multi-family residential. Multi-family residences are located directly to the north, west and east of the subject property. Directly to the south is surface parking lot.

### **Neighborhood Participation**

Staff notified former Councilman Charles R. Samuels and the Downtown Neighborhood Association regarding the request.

Staff has received a letter of support dated March 1, 2017, from neighborhood residents in support of the removal of the internal illumination of the proposed signage.

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