



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2020-041: To amend and reordain Ord. No. 2017-129, adopted Oct. 9, 2017, which authorized the special use of the property known as 1704 Arlington Road for the purpose of illuminated canopy signage, to modify the permitted uses, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: March 2, 2020

PETITIONER

3200 N. Boulevard Property Management LLC

LOCATION

1704 Arlington Road

PURPOSE

To amend and reordain Ord. No. 2017-129, adopted Oct. 9, 2017, which authorized the special use of the property known as 1704 Arlington Road for the purpose of illuminated canopy signage, to modify the permitted uses, upon certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The subject property is located at 1704 Arlington Road and was developed with a service station with a convenience store. There is currently a sign structure on the property that is 77 feet tall, which exceeds the maximum sign height of 45 feet allowed in the M-2 Heavy Industrial District. The proposed amendment to Ord. 2017-129 would authorize an exception to the maximum sign height requirement and would authorize a considerable increase in the square footage of signage on the property.

Ord. 2017-129 was brought before the Planning Commission as a request to authorize an illuminated canopy with canopy signage, pertaining to the fueling canopy over the gasoline pumps of the service station. Staff recommended denial of the request due to findings that the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of Special Use Permits, were not met. Specifically, staff found the proposed use to be detrimental to the general welfare of the community in that it would not contribute to the Master Plan's goal to help revitalize and improve the appearance of the corridor. The Planning Commission concurred and recommended denial at its July 17, 2017 meeting.

Staff finds that the proposed signage included in the requested amendment is contrary to providing an attractive gateway into the City and would not enhance the pedestrian

environment. The proposed amendment to increase signage exacerbates the concerns of staff relevant to the 2017 special use permit ordinance.

Staff finds the proposed amendment to the special use permit would be detrimental to the general welfare of the community in that it would not contribute to the Master Plan's goals to help revitalize and improve the appearance of the corridor and provide an attractive gateway to the City, for those entering the City as well as those travelling by on the Interstate.

Therefore, staff recommends denial of the Special Use Permit Amendment request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The .656 acre subject property is located on the corner of Arlington Road and N. Arthur Ashe Boulevard, and adjacent to Interstate 95. It is located in the M-2 Heavy Industrial District and contains a motor vehicle fueling station with a convenience store.

The property is located in the Near West Planning District. This area is considered by the Master Plan to be a gateway into the City.

Proposed Use of the Property

The proposed amendment to the special use permit would authorize a freestanding sign with an overall height of 85 feet. The two opposing, internally illuminated sign faces would be contained in a sign cabinet with an area of 140 SF.

Master Plan

The City of Richmond's current Master Plan designates a land use category for the subject property as General Commercial. Primary uses for this category are "...a broad range of office, retail, general commercial, wholesale and service uses, typically located along major transportation corridors and serving large portions of the City, the region or the traveling public. Land uses in this category are typically of larger scale and intensity than Community Commercial uses, and may not always be highly compatible with residential areas." (Richmond Master Plan, Chapter 10, Land Use, p. 135)

The City's Master Plan makes further recommendations for that portion of the Arthur Ashe Boulevard where the above referenced property is located. "The commercial designation is meant to serve highway traffic as well as visitors to the Diamond and Sports Backers stadiums... (and) ...to support linkages to the Museum and tourist activities on the Boulevard, Hermitage Road and Broad Street. Streetscape, design and traffic circulation improvements should be implemented to help revitalize and improve the appearance of the corridor providing an attractive gateway into the City, and enhanced pedestrian

environment.” (Ibid. p. 240)

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The subject property is located in the M-2 Heavy Industrial District. The property contains an approximately 77 foot high sign structure that was installed in the 1960s. City records show that the signage on the structure was removed in 2007. This abandonment of the use caused the legally nonconforming status of sign to expire and subjecting any new signage to meet the standards of the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance states that structures, including freestanding signs, in the M-2 Heavy Industrial District shall not exceed 45 feet in height. The proposed sign would be 85 feet in height.

Should the City Planning Commission choose to recommend approval of the requested amendment, staff has provided recommended modifications to the conditions that were imposed on the property by ordinance No. 2017-129. New language is shown as underlined text and language to be removed is shown as strikeout. The new conditions as amended under Ord. 2020-041 are:

(a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as illuminated canopy signage, substantially as shown on the ~~[Plans]~~ plans attached to Ordinance No. 2017-129, adopted October 9, 2017, and a freestanding sign substantially as shown on the Plans attached to and made a part of this amendatory ordinance.

(b) The dimensions of the illuminated canopy signage shall not exceed the dimensions shown on the ~~[Plans]~~ plans attached to Ordinance No. 2017-129, adopted October 9, 2017, and the dimensions of the freestanding sign shall not exceed the dimensions as shown on the Plans attached to and made a part of this amendatory ordinance.

(c) Illumination of the canopy signage shall be substantially as shown on the ~~[Plans]~~ plans attached to Ordinance No. 2017-129, adopted October 9, 2017, and illumination of the freestanding sign shall be internal. The lettering and logo on the freestanding sign shall be translucent and the background shall be opaque.

(d) The freestanding sign shall not exceed a height of 85 feet.

(e) The structural integrity of the freestanding sign shall be verified by a certified professional engineer prior to the issuance of a building permit for the freestanding sign and evidence of such verification shall be provided to the Director of Planning and Development Review.

(f) The freestanding sign structure and base shall have all loose and peeling paint removed after which it shall be painted black.

Surrounding Area

The properties adjacent to the west of the subject property are located in the M-2 Heavy Industrial District. The properties located to the south and east are in the M-1 Light Industrial District. The properties to the north, across the Interstate 95 corridor, are located in the B-2 Community Business District. The Diamond baseball stadium, Parker Field Annex, and the Arthur Ashe Junior Athletic Center are also in close proximity.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified adjacent property owners, residents, and the Scott's Addition Boulevard Association. A letter of no opposition was received from the Scott's Addition Boulevard Association. A mix of commercial, industrial, vacant, office, and public-open space land uses are present in the vicinity of the property.

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