



Loving God by caring for and serving others.

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November 1, 2020

Matthew J. Ebinger, AICP
Department of Planning and Development Review
City of Richmond

Dear Mr. Ebinger:

This letter is in support of the necessary changes the Branch Museum of Architecture & Design is seeking to modify their current Special Use Permit (SUP). As the pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Richmond which is directly behind the museum, and a resident of the Fan District I know firsthand everything the Executive Director and staff of the Branch Museum have done to comply with the severe restrictions and limitations of the current SUP. These restrictions were sought in large part by complaining neighbors who have also tried to have the same restrictions placed on the church's ministries.

The Branch Museum has sought to do everything possible to satisfy the limited street parking by placing signs around the museum for event patrons to park in the lot at Park and Robinson which is owned by First Baptist Church. They have also done an excellent job of keeping the noise level appropriate and ending events at a reasonable hour. Yet, four neighbors living within one block of the Branch Museum who spearhead the consistent complaints regarding noise, events and parking continue to complain about these things. I know this is true because these same four neighbors do everything within their power to complain and harass the church regarding these same issues. Due to the history and severity of their complaints regarding church activities and ministries, we have created a log record of every complaint, allegation and threat. I have also taken many pictures of free parking spaces, lacks of crowds to substantiate their false claims and police reports supporting the lack of cause for the complaints. It does not appear that the neighbors understand street parking is public parking not their assigned private parking.

It is clear, that no attempt to work with the neighbors will ever satisfy them. They are simply intolerant, self-centered and self-seeking individuals. The question is: why did they choose to purchase property knowing the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design and the church were part of this community? The church building was built in 1911 and has housed an active congregation since that time. The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design has been at their current location since the early 1900's, long before any of the current neighbors purchased their homes in the Fan District. Neither the church or the Branch Museum have parking therefore street parking is necessary. Even so, both organizations coordinate using First Baptist Church's overflow lot in an attempt to satisfy the neighbors ... which is never appreciated by the neighbors or satisfactory on their part.

I could easily list many other unfortunate experiences with the neighbors. Instead I ask you to please grant the modification to the SUP the Branch Museum is seeking to allow them to expand their excellent programs in an attempt to thrive as a museum within Richmond.

If I can be of any other assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.


Rev. Kenny Callaghan

Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR

From: Walter Dotts <walter@oldhouseauthority.com>
Sent: Monday, November 2, 2020 10:32 AM
To: Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR
Cc: Gray, Kimberly B. - City Council; Penny Fletcher
Subject: Support for Ordinance 2020-226 / 2501 Monument Avenue

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I am writing in support of Ordinance 2020-226, the proposed Special Use Permit for 2501 Monument Avenue (The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design).

As a city resident and member of the board of trustees at The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design, I feel the current SUP is too complicated and restrictive to allow the museum the freedom necessary to operate properly. Moreover, the proposed MOU arrangement with MAPS seems like the best way for this SUP to be managed. The oversight that MAPS can provide along with the sensitivity to the neighborhood appears to be a good combination for the future success of both entities.

Walter Dotts