



## CITY OF RICHMOND

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

**Ord. No. 2021-116:** To rezone the property known as 4401 East Main Street from the RF-2 Riverfront District to the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

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**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** May 17, 2021

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#### **PETITIONER**

Lory Markham – Markham Planning

#### **LOCATION**

4401 East Main Street

#### **PURPOSE**

To rezone the property known as 4401 East Main Street from the RF-2 Riverfront District to the TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District.

#### **SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The applicant is requesting to rezone the property to TOD-1 Transit Oriented Nodal District, which allows for dense, walkable transit oriented mixed use development whereas the current RF-2 Riverfront District has yard and open space requirements that significantly restrict the buildable area on the property.

Staff finds that the proposed rezoning is consistent with the recommendations of Richmond 300. The recommended future land use of Corridor Mixed-Use includes commercial, multi-family residential, cultural and open space uses. While the proposed zoning permits a height of up to twelve stories and the Corridor Mixed-Use land use category generally calls for heights ranging from two to ten stories, the subject property's location within the Rocketts Landing Priority Growth Node and along East Main Street, which is designated as a "major mixed-use street" "Great Streets and Street Typologies Map," support the additional height. Additionally, the current RF-2 Riverfront District permits building heights of up to 13 stories, one story taller than what is permitted under the proposed TOD-1 Transit-Oriented Nodal District.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the rezoning request.

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#### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

##### **Site Description**

The subject property contains a lot area of 81,173 square feet, or 1.86 acres, and is currently improved with an office trailer on stilts, with parking underneath. The property is located in the Shockoe Bottom neighborhood and is part of the Rocketts Landing Master Plan.

## **Proposed Use of the Property**

The proposed rezoning would accommodate development allowable within the TOD-1 Transit-Oriented Nodal District.

## **Master Plan**

The Richmond 300 Master Plan recommends a future land use of “Corridor Mixed Use” for the property and also places the property within the vicinity of the Rocketts Landing Priority Grown Node. The primary uses envisioned for Corridor Mixed Use are retail/office/personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space. Secondary uses are single family houses, institutional and government uses. The development style envisioned varies depending on historic densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement the existing context. New developments continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity. Ground floor uses are envisioned to engage with and enliven the street through windows, doors, storefronts and other features that allow transparency and interaction between building and street. The recommended intensity is generally two to ten stories, based on street widths and historic context and stepping down in height adjacent to residential areas. New buildings taller than the existing context should step back from the build to line after matching the height of the predominant cornice line of the block. Pedestrian, bicycle and transit access must be prioritized.

The Rocketts Landing Priority Grown Node is envisioned as being a dense, walkable destination for workers, residents and visitors, particularly in and around the Pulse stations. The area around the terminus of the Pulse is envisioned to become a major mixed use area featuring active ground floor uses and a walkable environment. The portion of East Main Street that abuts the property is designated as a “Major Mixed-Use Street” in Richmond 300’s “Great Streets and Street Typologies Map.”

## **Zoning**

The property is currently located within the RF-2 Riverfront Zoning District.

The City’s Zoning Administration reviewed the application and provided the following comments:

### **ZONING AND USE:**

CURRENT: The current zoning district (RF-2) permits a variety of residential and commercial uses, including retail, offices, personal service businesses and restaurants.

PROPOSED: The proposed zoning district (TOD-1) permits a variety of residential and commercial uses, including retail, offices, personal service businesses and restaurants.

### **YARDS:**

CURRENT: The RF-2 district has the following yard requirements for this location:

Front yard: No front yard shall be required. In no case shall a front yard with a depth greater than ten feet be permitted, except that:

- a. A front yard with a depth greater than ten feet shall be permitted when such front yard is improved for purposes of an outdoor dining area as permitted by section 30-447.11(2) and is approved subject to a plan of development. Except where the property is within an old and historic district, the city urban design committee shall review the application and plans and submit a recommendation to the Director of planning and development review prior to approval of such plan of development by the Director.
- b. A building entrance feature that is set back from the street a greater distance than the primary building facade along the street and that is no greater than two times the width of the building entranceway and no greater than 50 feet in width shall be permitted, and shall not be subject to the provisions of this subsection.
- c. The prohibition of a front yard with a depth greater than ten feet shall not be applicable within a designated floodplain.

Side and rear yards: No side or rear yard shall be required, except where a side or rear lot line abuts a property, other than the James River or other public open space that is not included within the development site:

- a. A side or rear yard of not less than 25 feet shall be provided.
- b. No building shall penetrate an inclined plane originating at such lot line and extending over the lot at an inclination of one foot horizontal for each three feet vertical.

Riverfront setback: No building or structure shall be located within 50 feet of the mean lowwater level along the shore of the James River, provided that the following shall be exempt from this requirement when permitted by the regulations of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas.

PROPOSED: The TOD-1 district has the following yard requirements for the property:

Front yard.

- a. For dwelling units located on the ground floor:

A front yard of at least ten feet shall be required. In no case shall a front yard with a depth greater than fifteen feet be permitted, except for pedestrian plazas, outdoor dining areas and other features.

- b. For all other uses:

No front yard is required. In no case shall a front yard with depth greater than ten feet be permitted, except for pedestrian plazas, outdoor dining areas and other features.

*There are front yard requirements for the property along the E Main Street and Nicholson Street frontages.*

Side yards. None  
Rear yard. None

**LAND AREA COVERAGE:**

**CURRENT:** In the RF-2 riverfront district, portions of buildings over four stories in height shall occupy not more than 35 percent of land area and shall be situated on the lot in such manner as to maximize to the extent practical, as determined through the plan of development review process, views of the James River from public parks as identified in the master plan.

**PROPOSED:** There is not a similar land area coverage requirement in the proposed TOD-1 zoning district.

**BUILDING DIMENSIONS AND SPACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS:**

**CURRENT:**

- (a) Ground level. In the RF-2 riverfront district, no building or combination of multiple buildings, whether such buildings are on the same lot or on multiple lots within the same development site, shall exceed a total dimension of 300 feet along a lot line, street, public space or riverfront without an intervening uncovered open space at ground level of not less than 50 feet in width along such lot line, street, public space or riverfront, or without an intervening street of not less than 50 feet in width and having no building space above the surface of the street, provided that uncovered open space may contain gazebos and similar structures intended to accommodate or provide amenities for pedestrians. The purpose of this subsection is to provide for river view corridors between buildings.
- (b) Over four stories in height. Portions of a building over four stories in height or combinations of portions of multiple buildings over four stories in height, whether such buildings are on the same lot or on multiple lots within the same development site, shall not exceed a total dimension of 300 feet along a lot line, street, public space or riverfront without an intervening uncovered open space of not less than 100 feet in width along such lot line, street, public space or riverfront. For purposes of this subsection 30-447.14(b), the number of stories in a building shall be determined by application of the definition of “story” set forth in article XII of this chapter and shall be measured at the building facade along the street frontage of the lot or, in the case of a corner lot, shall be measured at the building facade along the principal street frontage of the lot. The purpose of this subsection is to provide for river view corridors between portions of buildings over four stories in height.

**PROPOSED:** There are no building dimensions and space between buildings requirements in the proposed TOD-1 zoning district.

**USABLE OPEN SPACE:** In the existing RF-2 zoning district and the proposed TOD-1 zoning district, a usable open space ratio of not less than 0.10 shall be provided for newly constructed buildings or portions thereof devoted to dwelling uses.

## HEIGHT:

**CURRENT:** In the RF-2 district, no building shall exceed 13 stories in height. Every main building hereinafter constructed shall have a minimum height of not less than two stories, except that porches, porticos and similar structures attached to a main building may be of lesser height.

**PROPOSED:** In the TOD-1 zoning district, no building shall exceed twelve stories in height. Every main building hereinafter constructed shall have a minimum height of not less than two stories, except that porches, porticos and similar structures attached to a main building may be of lesser height.

**BUILDING FAÇADE FENESTRATION:** There are no major differences in the building façade fenestration requirements between the RF-2 and TOD-1 zoning districts.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR AREAS DEVOTED TO PARKING OR CIRCULATION OF VEHICLES:** The current RF-2 district and proposed TOD-1 district do not permit areas devoted to the parking or circulation of vehicles to be located between the main building on a lot and the street line, nor shall such areas be located closer to the street than the main building on the lot. On a lot having more than one street frontage, this subsection applies only along the principal street frontage of the lot. In addition, both districts do not permit a driveway intersecting a street which constitutes the principal street frontage of a lot shall be permitted when other street frontage or alley access is available to serve such lot.

## PARKING:

**CURRENT:** The parking requirement in the RF-2 district is determined by the use listed in Sec. 30-710.1(a) of the Zoning Ordinance. One off-street parking space is required per dwelling unit in the RF-2 district. Shared parking, credit for on-street parking, and limitations on parking requirements are permitted in the RF-2 zoning district.

**PROPOSED:** In the proposed TOD-1 zoning district, off-street parking spaces shall not be required for uses other than dwelling uses, hotels and motels. For multifamily dwelling units, no parking spaces are required for 1 to 16 dwelling units. One parking space is required per 2 dwelling units over 16 units.

## SIGNAGE:

**CURRENT:** The RF-2 zoning district permits two square feet of signage for each linear foot of lot frontage along the street with a maximum of 300 square feet for each street frontage. Wall signs, projecting signs, suspended signs, awning signs, canopy signs, and freestanding signs shall be permitted shall be permitted. One freestanding sign not exceeding 50 square feet in area or ten feet in height shall be permitted along each street frontage of 150 feet or more, provided freestanding signs not exceeding 60 square feet in area or 12 feet in height shall be permitted in addition to other signs permitted by this section, and shall not be included in calculation of aggregate sign area permitted on any lot.

**PROPOSED:** Signage in the TOD-1 zoning district shall not exceed two square feet for each linear foot of lot frontage along the street nor in any case 200 square feet for each street frontage. Wall signs, projecting signs, suspended signs, awning signs, canopy signs, and freestanding signs shall be permitted. One freestanding sign not exceeding 20 square feet in area or 5 feet in height shall be permitted.

### **Surrounding Area**

Properties to the north and west are located within the M-2 Heavy Industrial District. The property to the east is located within the B-7 Mixed Use Business District. The property to the south is also located within the RF-2 Riverfront District.

The property is located at the northern edge of the Rocketts Landing development, which is a dense mixed use community that is in both the City of Richmond and Henrico County. Directly to the east of the property is a vacant piece of property that was recently rezoned, conditionally, from M-1 Light Industrial to B-7 Mixed Use Business to allow for the construction of a five story mixed use building. To the west is a one story office building and volleyball courts that is planned for future commercial development in the Rocketts Landing Master Plan. To the north is vacant property owned by the applicant and a parking area owned by the City of Richmond Economic Development Authority that serves Stone Brewery.

### **Neighborhood Participation**

There are no civic associations within city limits in proximity to the subject property, however staff notified the Master Association of Rocketts Landing (which is Henrico County) and area residents and property owners of the proposed rezoning. Staff has not received any letters of support or opposition regarding the proposed rezoning.

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