

## Saunders, Richard L. - PDR

---

**From:** Greg Lucyk <gglucy@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 16, 2021 10:10 AM  
**To:** Saunders, Richard L. - PDR  
**Cc:** Addison, Andreas D. - City Council  
**Subject:** Special Use Permit Application - 5605 Grove Avenue - SUP-086014-2121  
**Attachments:** 20201205\_155744.jpg; 20201221\_134750.jpg

**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Saunders,

This follows-up on our correspondence from February 4<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for sending me the drop-box link to the plans for the referenced SUP application. I have a few questions about the plans, however, I first want to address your comment below that because Glenburnie is on the other side of Grove you did not think to provide us with notice of the application. Please note our neighborhood has great interest in this proposal for several reasons. Parking has become a serious issue for our Tuckahoe Terrace and Glenburnie neighborhoods because of the Westhampton Theater project. Many employees of the Continental restaurant and Mango salon are not permitted to use the lot behind the development, and many customers choose not to, so they now park on Grove, Westview and Seneca alongside our properties. It appears the Saunders office project, housing two venture capital firms and providing office rental space for other business entities, will generate even more parking on these streets, and this is a matter of great inconvenience and concern to our residents.

Also, the 5600 block of Grove Avenue has historically been a “transitional block,” and it is important to our neighborhoods to protect that status. It is a buffer that separates the commercial Grove/Libbie shopping district from our residential neighborhoods. While transitional structures may have some commercial uses (such as law office, antique shop, etc.), they retain a residential appearance and characteristics. The Richmond 300 Community Mixed-Use definition continues this legacy of recognizing transitional blocks to protect adjacent neighborhoods. (See Final Plan, p. 58 - Building size and density “may vary depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics,” and future development should “complement existing context.” Building height is based on “street widths and historic context” and new buildings “should step back after matching the height. . . of the block.” The intent is to provide “commercial and residential uses that provide neighborhood services to nearby residential communities.”). In our view, the proposed “Saunders Headquarters” office complex represents a sharp departure from these standards and would serve as precedent for future non-compliant development in the transitional block. Hence our sincere interest in this SUP application.

Turning to the SUP application itself, I have counsel’s two-page cover letter and the charts and diagrams included in the drop-box. Is that all there is currently? Are there any other forms, documents or attachments that are part of the application? If so, may I get copies of those papers? I also have the following questions:

The proposed office building structure appears to be very large – many thousands of square feet. Do you know the total square footage of the proposed building? And how that compares to the square footage of the existing structure on the property now? And how it compares to other structures in the transitional block and in the adjacent neighborhoods? That would seem relevant in determining if the building size is consistent with “historical densities and neighborhood characteristics.”

The property is in an R-4 Residential zoning district that has very specific standards for building height and front/side yard setback requirements. Looking at the proposed big-box structure (see attached rendering) and the site-plan, it appears the building far exceeds those R-4 height and setback standards (see, e.g., the western wall side yard setback of the existing structure is 27 feet, while the side yard setback of the proposed office building is only three feet; see also height and front-yard setback deviations). My assumption is the SUP would have to grant an exception those R-4 height and setback standards to construct the noncompliant building. Is that correct? As it is not clear from counsel's cover letter ("The Applicant proposes to amend the SUP only to permit the property for office purposes. . ."), what other exceptions or permissions are sought by the SUP in this application?

The applicant's counsel has stated that this project is required to have twenty parking spaces available for the building, but the City will allow them to count six parking spaces on the street toward that total. Is that requirement particular to an office building in an R-4 district, or is it of a general nature? Is it based on total occupancy, square footage or some other standard? And is this parking standard set forth in the zoning ordinance? If so, where in the ordinance is it found? Also, the site plan shows some fifteen parking spaces (of which two are designated handicapped) in the expanded parking lot alongside and behind the building. However, the owner expects to house two venture capital firms in the building, eventually with 15 to 20 employees, and also to rent office space to other business entities, bringing in additional employees. Does this mean there may only be 13 on-site regular parking spaces for perhaps 25 to 30 employees, and visiting clients, consultants and customers? And if so, won't this contribute to the parking burden and congestion on adjacent neighborhood streets?

Thank you for your consideration. Please understand that we are not opposed to development that is compatible with our residential neighborhoods, but for the reasons outlined above, we cannot support this SUP as written. I will appreciate if you could respond to my questions at your earliest convenience. Let me know if you need any additional information.

Gregory Lucyk  
804.920.7031  
gglucy@comcast.net

---

**From:** Saunders, Richard L. - PDR [mailto:Richard.Saunders@richmondgov.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 4, 2021 11:24 AM  
**To:** Greg Lucyk  
**Cc:** Jennifer Mullen  
**Subject:** RE: Special Use Permit Application Access - 5605 Grove Avenue - SUP-086014-2121

Mr. Lucyk,

I am sorry for not including you in my original notice about this project- it looks like your neighborhood boundary ends on the other side of Grove; but it's close enough that I should have included you. I've copied Jennifer in this email to see if she would be willing to share the plans with you. Otherwise I can get you in touch with our department's FOIA officer and he can provide you with them.

Thank you,  
Rich

**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.