



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review

Staff Report

Ord. No. 2021-209: To rezone the properties known as 2400 Afton Avenue and 2420 Afton Avenue from the R-53 Multifamily Residential District to the B-5 Central Business District, under certain proffered conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: August 16, 2021

PETITIONER

Lory Markham – Markham Planning

LOCATION

2400 and 2420 Afton Avenue

PURPOSE

To rezone the properties known as 2400 Afton Avenue and 2420 Afton Avenue from the R-53 Multifamily Residential District to the B-5 Central Business District, under certain proffered conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting to rezone the property to the B-5 Central Business District, which allows a greater range of uses and densities than the current R-53 Multifamily District.

Staff finds that the rezoning and allowable uses within the B-5 Central Business District is generally consistent with the recommendations of the City's Richmond 300 Master Plan pertaining to the Route 1/Bellemeade Node. "Nodes are places in Richmond where people and jobs are today and continue to grow into the future. Nodes are the places of convergence of many uses and include offices, shopping, housing, and/or public gathering places as well as access to multiple modes of transportation." (p. 24) One of the primary next steps associated with this node is to rezone the area "...to align with the Future Land Use Plan to encourage the residential development and economic revitalization of the corridor in a building form." (p. 44). Moreover, the subject property is adjacent to and across Bellemeade Road from properties with a corridor mixed-use land use designation, which encourages retail/office/personal service, multi-family residential, and cultural land uses.

Staff finds that the proposed B-5 district allows multi-family use, which is supported by the Residential land use recommendation as a secondary use of the subject property, and that the B-5 district would impose form-based requirements on the property, such as fenestration requirements, which are not currently imposed by the underlying R-53 district.

Therefore staff recommends approval of the rezoning request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The properties combined consist of approximately 78,396 SF, or 1.8 acres, of unimproved land. The properties are located in the Bellemeade Neighborhood between Columbia Street and Lynhaven Avenue.

Proposed Use of the Property

Uses allowable within the B-5 Central Business District

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject properties as Residential, which is defined as a "Neighborhood consisting primarily of single-family houses on large- or medium-sized lots more homogeneous in nature." The development style includes houses on medium-sized and large-sized lots in a largely auto-dependent environment. Homes are setback from the street. Future developments continue and/or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity. Future single-family housing, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and small multi-family residential buildings are built to a scale and design that is consistent with existing buildings. Bicycle and pedestrian access are prioritized and accommodated. Low residential density means that it is not possible to provide frequent transit within these areas; however, frequent transit may be found at the edges of these areas within more intense future land use designations. Many homes have driveways and/or garages, which are located off an alley behind the home if an alley is present. Intensity: Buildings are generally one to three stories. Lot sizes generally range up to 5,000 to 20,000+ sq. ft. Residential density of 2 to 10 housing units per acre. Primary Uses: Single-family houses, accessory dwelling units, and open space. Secondary Uses: Duplexes and small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), institutional, and cultural. Secondary uses may be found along major streets. (p. 54)

The properties are located within the Route 1/Bellemeade Road Priority Growth Node. These nodes are "...where the City is encouraging the most significant growth in population and development over the next 20 years." (Ibid, 24)

The Vision of the Route 1/Bellemeade Road Node is: The intersection of Route 1 and Bellemeade Road is a walkable, well-connected, mixed-use Node with medium-scale buildings that are complementary with the surrounding single-family neighborhoods. Commercial development includes both neighborhood-serving commercial uses and job-generating businesses. The warehouses on the west side of Route 1 are redeveloped into a mix of medium-density residential projects and job-generating businesses. The apartment complexes at the southeastern corner of the intersection are redeveloped into medium-scale, mixed-use development that continues to provide affordable multi-family housing units in addition to market rate housing and commercial uses. The increased residential development along the corridors and in the neighboring Nodes establishes a market for services and amenities, such as a grocery store. New buildings address the corridors to create a pleasant pedestrian environment with parking minimized. Both Route 1 and Bellemeade Road are Great Streets with street trees, pedestrian amenities, enhanced transit, and greenways.

One of the specific, “Primary Next Steps” within the Master Plan includes a rezoning of the area to “...to encourage the residential development and economic revitalization of the corridor in a building form that improves the pedestrian environment” (Ibid, 44)

The properties front Bellemeade Road, which is designated, within the Richmond 300 Plan, as a “Great Street” and categorized as a “Major Residential Street” which:

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, as well as pedestrians and bicycles, through residential neighborhoods
- Prioritize for creating sidewalks and crosswalks
- Install street trees as a buffer between sidewalk and street
- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops
- Ensure low street speed by utilizing traffic calming measures (Ibid, 72)

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is R-53, Multifamily District. The City’s Zoning Administration reviewed the application and provided the following comments:

ZONING AND USE:

CURRENT: The current R-53 zoning district only permits dwelling uses (multifamily, two-family and single-family) and does not permit any non-dwelling uses other than those specified in the R-1 district (churches, schools, parks, etc.)

PROPOSED: The proposed B-5 zoning allows for a variety of commercial uses of buildings and premises, provided that drive-up facilities and facilities for dispensing motor fuels shall not be permitted in conjunction with any of the uses permitted in the district. The B-5 district also permits dwelling units, provided that when the principal street frontage for a given property is designated as street-oriented commercial, a portion of the first floor must be a permitted non-dwelling use. (The subject properties do not have principal street frontage nor are designated as street-oriented commercial.)

A plan of development shall be required as set forth in article X of this chapter for such uses as specified in this section and for any newly constructed building with greater than 50,000 square feet of floor area, provided that a plan of development shall not be required for any use that is subject to location, character and extent approval by the city planning commission in accordance with section 17.07 of the City Charter.

This Rezoning includes the following Proffers submitted by the applicant:

1. The owner shall make sidewalk improvements within the Afton Avenue, Columbia Street and Lynhaven rights-of-way adjacent to the Property, including the installation of new sidewalks where none currently exist and the repair of damaged existing sidewalks, which improvements may be completed in one or more phases as approved by the Director of Public Works. All improvements and work within the public right-of-way shall be completed in accordance with the requirements of the Director of Public Works. The Property shall not be eligible for the final certificate of occupancy until all requirements of this subsection are fully satisfied.

Surrounding Area

Properties to the south to the East are the same R-53 District as the subject property. Properties to the North and West are a combination of R-5, Single-Family Residential and B-2 Community Business, respectively. The Bellemeade neighborhood is also comprised of single-family units and is in close proximity to the Route 1 corridor which is designated as Neighborhood Mixed-Use and Corridor Mixed-Use.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents, property owners, and the Bellemeade Civic Association of the proposed Special Use Permit. Staff has not received any letters of support or opposition for this application. One resident expressed concern via telephone.

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