

COMMENTS TO THE CITY OF RICHMOND PLANNING COMMISSION

UDC 2021-35

Item Description: Conceptual location, character, and extent review of a temporary GRTC Transfer Station; 808 E. Clay Street.

Submitted by:

- (i) Michal W. Smith and E. Ford Stephens of Christian & Barton, LLP
- (ii) Representing the Judges of the Richmond City Circuit Court
- (iii) These comments focus on the loss of parking for the John Marshall Courts Building if the concept is approved.

**The Concept Would Eliminate Parking Spaces
Now Used by Courthouse Personnel
Without Indicating How Such Lost Parking Would Be Replaced or Provided**

The Site in question is directly across East Clay Street from the John Marshall Courts Building. The courthouse is approximately 140,000 sq. ft. and consists of three floors and a lower level. The building houses the Circuit Court of the City of Richmond, some of the Richmond General District Courts, the Clerks’ Offices for such courts, and offices for the Richmond Commonwealth’s Attorney.

The Staff Report of the Urban Design Committee regarding the concept at issue describes the Site as:

Site Description	The current parking lot is located in downtown Richmond bound by E. Leigh Street to the north, 9 th Street to the East, E. Clay Street to the south, and 8 th Street to the west. The parking lot provides approximately 64 public parking spaces, including 3 ADA spaces, and approximately 199 spaces for use by government employees. The parking lot sits several feet below street level, and has a stair case and a ramp at the E. Clay Street entrance which allow pedestrians and vehicles access into the space.
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It is estimated that there are about 200 people who work in the Courthouse, the vast majority of whom currently park at the Site in the 199 spaces designated “for use by government employees.” Those spaces reportedly have been available for such use for approximately 35 years.

The proximity and adjacency of the Site to the John Marshall Courts Building affords an element of safety to court personnel (and the public) who now park at the Site. Since it is across the street, the Site is visible from the side of the courthouse that fronts East Clay Street. That is

also where the main entrance to the courthouse is located. A new, expanded entrance now under construction, which will provide for public screening and be staffed by security personnel, also will face East Clay Street and the Site.

The Staff Report of the Urban Design Committee describes how the proposed concept would impact the parking available at the Site:

The current parking lot provides approximately 64 public parking spaces, including 3 ADA spaces, and approximately 199 spaces for use by government employees (City employees and John Marshall Courts Building personnel). The proposed lot will provide 34 spaces for government employee use and no public parking to make room for the transfer center and be controlled by gate access at the Clay Street entrance.

In other words, the spaces available for the John Marshall Courts Building Personnel at the Site would be reduced by 165 spaces, from 199 to 34 spaces, and the public parking would be reduced from 64 to zero. The total loss of parking spaces would be 229. Yet, the Staff Report of the Urban Design Committee does not state or indicate how or where such spaces would be replaced or otherwise provided if the concept were adopted.

In addition, it should be noted that a consultant for the City considering a possible new justice center for a combined courts building of 280,000 sq. ft. at three different sites (including one at 6th and Franklin Streets) has assumed that any such building would have a 1,000 car parking deck. (*See Virginia Courthouse Facility Guidelines* at 6-4 (“Limited data from several recent court projects indicate a parking demand for all courthouse users, excluding judicial officers who are given secured parking, ranges from about 2 to 4 spaces per 1,000 gross building square feet.”)).

In sum, the concept under consideration would deprive John Marshall Courts Building Personnel of 165 spaces that are directly across East Clay Street from the courthouse, spaces that have been available for approximately 35 years, without stating or indicating how or where such spaces would be replaced or otherwise provided.