



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2021-253: To authorize the special use of the property known as 2901 Bainbridge Street for the purpose of office uses, a garage for fire apparatus, and a private noncommercial community center use, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: October 4, 2021

PETITIONER

Thomas E. A. Bishop, Esq. on behalf of Richmond Fire Department Foundation

LOCATION

2901 Bainbridge Street

PURPOSE

To authorize the special use of the property known as 2901 Bainbridge Street for the purpose of office uses, a garage for fire apparatus, and a private noncommercial community center use, upon certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting a special use permit to allow for the use of the property as offices that will be used to support the City of Richmond Fire Department and a community center. Offices are not permitted in the R-5 Single-Family Residential Districts. Community centers are permitted in the R-5 Single-Family Residential District, provided that a number of conditions are met. The building on the property does not meet the requirement that it be at least 50' from property in an R district.

Staff finds that the proposed use of the previous fire department building is consistent with the recommendations of Richmond 300. The proposed office and community center uses are neighborhood and city-serving uses, as the Metro Richmond Flying Squad intends to use the space as its headquarters for which it provides support services to city firefighters. A community meeting room will be available for use by area residents.

Staff finds that with the ordinance conditions the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the granting of Special Use Permits, are met. Specifically, staff finds that the proposed use would not be detrimental to the general welfare of the community involved and would not create congestion in the streets in the area involved.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The subject property consists of a 15,846 square foot (0.36 acre) parcel that is improved with vacant building that was previously used as a City of Richmond fire station. The property is located in the Woodland Heights neighborhood within the Old South Planning District.

Proposed Use of the Property

The proposed Special Use Permit would allow for the previous fire station to be used as the headquarters for a nonprofit organization that provides support services to the city fire department, as well as a community center.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates the property as Residential. This land use category is described as a neighborhood consisting primarily of single-family houses on large- or medium-sized lots more homogeneous in nature.

Development Style: 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.

Mobility: 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 from one to three stories. Lot sizes generally range up to 5,000 to 20,000+ square feet. General residential density of 2 to 10 housing units per acre.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The Property is currently located within the R-5 Single-Family Residential District. Offices are not permitted in the R-5 Single-Family Residential Districts. Community centers are permitted in the R-5 Single-Family Residential District, provided that a number of conditions are met. The building on the property does not meet the requirement that it be at least 50' from property in an R district.

If adopted, the Special Use Permit would impose the following conditions on the properties:

- (a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as office uses, a garage for fire apparatus, and a private noncommercial community center use, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(b) No off-street parking shall be required for the Special Use. In the event that the area shown on the Plans as “Future Driveway with Parking” is improved for off-street parking, such improvements shall comply with the applicable requirements of section 30-710.12 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended.

(c) Outdoor lighting shall be located, directed or shielded so as not to shine directly on adjoining properties or to create a traffic hazard by means of glare or similarity to or confusion with traffic signals, warning lights, or lighting on emergency vehicles.

(d) In addition to the signs permitted by the underlying zoning regulations, signs permitted by section 30-507.1(2) of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, shall be permitted on the Property.

Surrounding Area

The subject property and properties to the east, west, north and south are located within the R-5 Single-Family Residential District.

The property is in a residential neighborhood, with single family dwellings being the predominant land use in the surrounding area. Carter Jones Park is located one block east of the property.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff notified area residents and property owners, The Woodland Heights Civic Association, and the Swansboro Neighborhood Association. Staff has received a letter of support from the Woodland Heights Civic Association.

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