



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2025-025: To authorize the special use of the properties known as 5009 Rear Snead Road, 5015 Snead Road, and 5015 Rear Snead Road for the purpose of up to 180 multifamily dwelling units and a clubhouse, upon certain terms and conditions. (9th District)

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: February 18, 2025

PETITIONER

Preston Lloyd

LOCATION

5009 Rear Snead Road, 5015 Snead Road, and 5015 Rear Snead Road

PURPOSE

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to authorize a multifamily use, with up to 180 units, within an R-4 Single-Family Residential District. Multifamily buildings are not a permitted principal use within the R-3 District. A Special Use Permit is therefore required.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that, while the proposed development is intended to provide affordable housing, it is not consistent with the City's Master Plan pertaining to the Residential land use category. Staff cannot support this application as the proposed use does not align with any recommended future development styles, the intensities, or "Primary" and "Secondary" uses within the Residential land use category of the Richmond 300 Master Plan.

Staff finds that the safeguards contained within the City Charter relative to the granting of Special Use Permits are not met. Specifically, staff finds that the proposed use would be detrimental to the general welfare of the community involved, would tend to undue concentration of population, and lead to overuse of inadequate infrastructure (i.e. congestion), as described below.

The proposal maintains the following conflicting features:

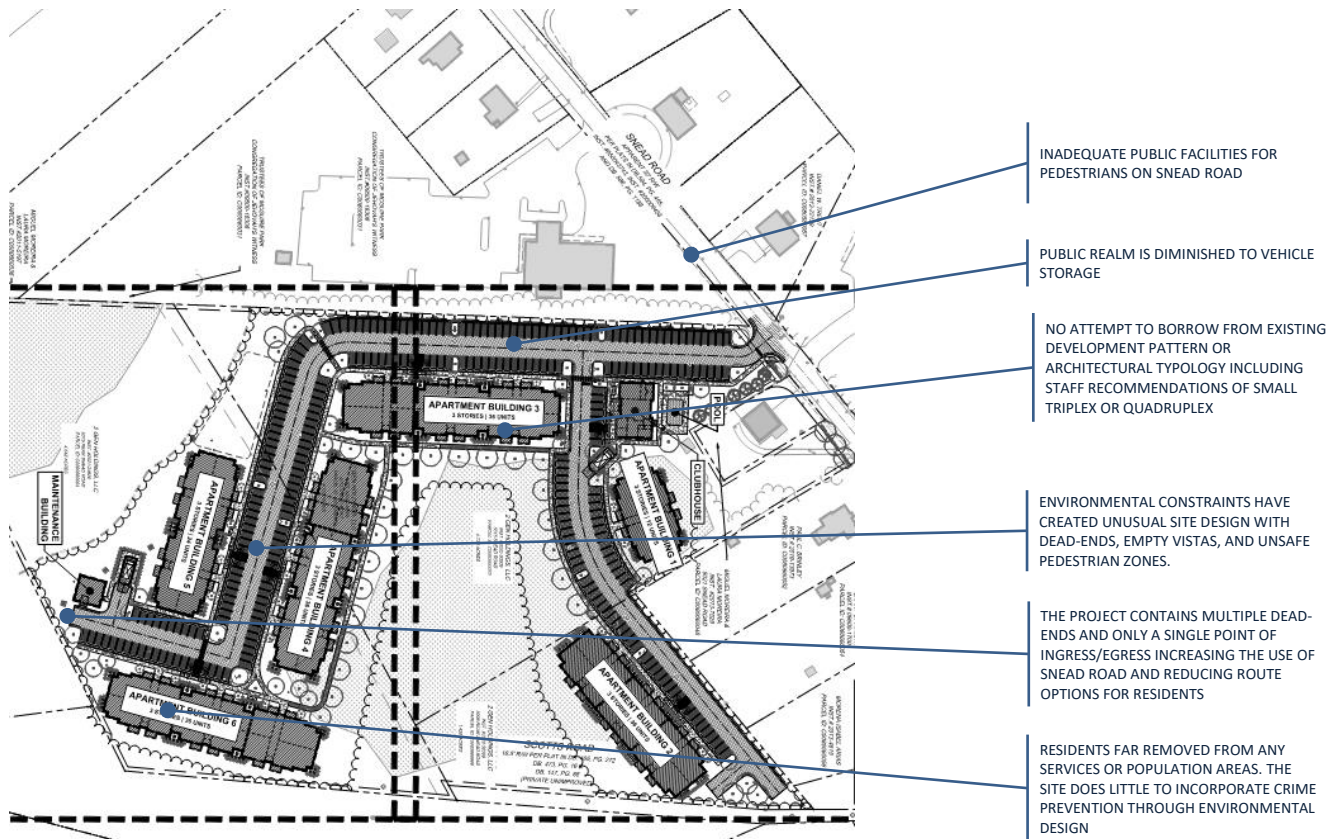
1. The property is not on a designated Great, Major Mixed-Use, or Major Residential street.
2. The property is not within a National/Regional, neighborhood, or micro-node.
3. The properties are not located within a National, Neighborhood, or Micro-Node.
4. Adjacent R-48 property pre-dates Richmond 300, is designated for Community Mixed Use land use by the Master Plan, and fronts on Broad Rock Boulevard, which is a Major Mixed Use street.
5. 3-story multifamily buildings, as proposed, are an increase in intensification and densities from the referenced, adjacent multifamily developments. If multifamily were to be incorporated, it should decrease in intensity from both Broad Rock and Walmsley Boulevards as well as nearby Tuscany Townhomes.

6. The proposed affordable units are located in an un-walkable, car-dependent area, far from frequent transit, employment centers, and services, adding to the cost of transportation expenses.
7. The density of the proposed project is not consistent with the densities of multi-family developments existing within the vicinity of the subject property.

Staff finds that upon multiple recommended changes to the site design, residential type, and residential density, the applicant has not amended the plans beyond relocating the clubhouse and pool closer to Snead Road. This marginal change does little to ameliorate the concerns listed above. More specifically, the applicant was unwilling to consider alternative plans that include the following:

1. A Secondary use within the Residential category. This may include 3–6-unit multi-family buildings that appear as large single-family dwellings, with additional ADUs.
2. Pedestrian connectivity incorporated into the street design by adding on-street parking, tree-lawns, and sidewalks.
3. Buildings should address new streets appropriately with permeable pavement parking lots to the rear of buildings accessed by gravel alleyways.
4. Possible future street connections to adjacent properties that abut Walmsley and Broad Rock Boulevards.
5. Duplex/Triplex addressing Snead Road.

Staff finds that the proposed is antithetical to the spirit and intent of the Richmond 300 plan due to its overall intensity, location, scale, and form. Goal 1: Complete Neighborhoods details the contextual intent of the future development, regardless of scale, to be an improvement from past zoning characteristics that confined residents to Euclidean, automobile dependent development patterns. The plan elaborates how “Single-use zoning across the nation has been shown to lead to sprawling auto-dependent communities. Due to changes in housing preference and a concern for reducing the negative effects of climate change, individuals are increasingly drawn to mixed-use, transit-supporting, walkable neighborhoods. The Zoning Ordinance has been amended in recent years to allow for more mixed-use districts that allow a combination of uses, with fewer requirements for parking and more focus on building form. (p. 84) Note the said characteristics within the submitted site plan:



Staff finds that the proposed is counter to Objective 1.4f, and 6.1b, to “Implement housing strategies that increase housing at all income levels along corridors and at Nodes” The proposed seeks to segregate housing by income away from corridors and Nodes. (p. 86)

Staff finds that the proposed is counter to Objective 4.1i as it does not display an adequate transition “among varying intensities of building types and land uses.” In fact, the abrupt infusion of multifamily buildings at this location displays a significant departure from the density gradation currently displayed between the site and Broad Rock Boulevard. Close inspection of land uses reveals how the proposed disrupts the gradual diffusion of intensity currently present and why a Residential secondary use would be more appropriate for the long-term success of the community.



Staff finds that the applicant is unwilling to accommodate realistic changes within the site design to achieve Objective 9.3d, to “Create new alleyways”, which are an affordable way to enhance the pedestrian realm without compromising on vehicle storage.

Staff finds that the plans are counter to Objective 9.4 which seeks to “Strengthen the street network by preventing superblocks and encouraging gridded street networks and two-way streets.” The proposed does not expand the street network as it is serves only resident vehicles with a single ingress/egress point. (p. 128)

Staff finds that the proposed parking lots for private vehicles are not a community building element and decrease walkability. Objective 15.1a of the Richmond 300 states: “Increase the number of Richmonders living in a development pattern that encourages density and reduces dependency on single-occupancy vehicles.” Current site location and design is reliant upon private automobiles as the sole means of transportation to all nearby destinations. This places significant constraints on housing affordability. According to indices provided by Center for Neighborhood Technology, households within this portion of the City spend between 22 and 26% of their income on transportation. While the increase in housing density is acknowledged, so is the isolation from employment and services. The location and design reveal a complete dependency on private vehicles and negative impact on annual household income.

Staff finds that the proposal will subject future residents to an unsafe pedestrian environment. The walk from the proposed development to Broad Rock Boulevard is without sidewalks, crosswalks, shoulders, stop signs, or yield signs. It should be noted that the ordinance requires a crosswalk and sidewalk be installed by the property owner from the subject property to JL Francis Elementary School provided the City has acquired sufficient right-of-way for the Owner’s installation within 90 days of the Owner’s submission of an application for a building permit.

Staff finds that, according to the Richmond 300 Master Plan the property lies within housing market type “F” where housing is “...2/3 of the regional average in sales price, with high percentage of bank sales, even split between owner- and renter-occupied households, high

amount of publicly-subsidized rental housing options". In other words, the proposed seeks to add to the concentration of already marginalized populations by placing a target market within an area not suitable for affordability, due to an unfortunate lack of available land in already established portions of the City. Staff recognizes the funding constraints associated with building scale, construction, and parking access requirements. Staff notes that the *Low-Income Housing Tax Credit* program, of which the proposed application is currently applied to, does not have a parking minimum "number" requirement but does seek adequate "access" to parking. This distinction allows for creative site designs that may support additional objectives within the Richmond 300 Master Plan. Staff finds the location, scale, density, and overall site-design as a short-sighted, temporary solution to a larger problem. The long-term solution to affordability will not be segregating families by income and isolating them within car-dependent, concentrated enclaves, but to invest in better locations and site designs which can achieve both applicant and Richmond 300 goals. (p. 148)

Therefore, staff recommends denial of the Special Use Permit request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The properties are located in the Piney Knolls neighborhood off of Snead Road, approximately ¼ mile west of Broad Rock Boulevard. The properties are currently a combined 460,633 sq. ft. (10.5 acres) of unimproved land.

Proposed Use of the Property

180 multifamily dwelling units and a clubhouse. The proposed density of the parcel is approximately 17 units per acre.

Master Plan

The City's Richmond 300 Master Plan designates a future land use for the subject property as Residential. This designation is defined as neighborhoods "...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.

Ground Floor: Not applicable.

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 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.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The current zoning for this property is R-4 Single Family Residential District. The proposed is not a permitted use within Section 30-408.1, Permitted principal uses.

This special use permit would impose development conditions, including:

- The Special Use of the Property shall be as up to 180 multifamily dwelling units and a clubhouse, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- The height of the Special Use shall not exceed three stories, as shown on the Plans.
- All elevations and site improvements, including landscaping, shall be substantially as shown on the Plans.
- All mechanical equipment serving the Property shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way.
- No more than 270 parking spaces shall be provided for the Special Use, substantially as shown on the Plans.
- The Owner shall make improvements within the right-of-way, including the (i) construction of sidewalk improvements within the public right-of-way along either the northern or southern line of Snead Road from Francis Elementary School to the Property, and (ii) a pedestrian crosswalk across Snead Road connecting the sidewalk to Francis Elementary School or the Property, as applicable; provided, however, that the improvements described in (i) and (ii) shall only be required to be installed by the Owner in the event that the City has acquired sufficient right-of-way for the Owner's installation within 90 days of the Owner's submission of an application for a building permit. Such 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 (i) completed in accordance with the requirements of the Director of Public Works, (ii) considered completed only upon written confirmation by the Director of Public Works or his designee that such improvements and work are in accordance with such requirements, and (iii) transferred to the City, following the written confirmation by the Director of Public Works, or his designee, pursuant to a transfer of interest document approved as to form by the City Attorney and accepted by the Chief Administrative Officer or the designee thereof on behalf of the City. The Chief Administrative Officer or the designee thereof, for and on behalf of the City, is hereby authorized to accept, in the manner for which this subsection provides, all improvements and work required by and meeting the requirements of this subsection. The final certificate of occupancy shall not be issued for the Property until all requirements of this subsection are fully satisfied.

Surrounding Area

The surrounding land uses are primarily single-family detached residential. Adjacent and nearby properties are largely located within the same R-4 District, with an R-48 Multifamily Residential District to the east of the property as well.

Neighborhood Participation

The City notified area residents of this application. To this date, staff has received not received any letters of support, nor opposition, from nearby residents.

Staff Contact: Jonathan Brown, Senior Planner, Land Use Administration, 804-646-7319