

Richmond 300: Code Refresh Advisory Council Meeting Notes

Date: July 10, 2024, 4 P.M.
Location: Plan RVA Board Room
424 Hull Street, Suite 300/
Microsoft Teams (<https://bit.ly/CodeRefreshAC>)



DEPARTMENT OF
**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT
REVIEW**

Members Present: Bennie Gates, Elizabeth Greenfield, Yanina James, David Johannas, Preston Lloyd, Eric Mai, Jennifer Mullen, Kendra Norrell, Casey Overton, Michelle Parrish, Martiza Pechin, Damien Pitts, Charlie Wilson, Roger York

Members Absent: Chenice Brown, Wayne Credle, Philip Hart, Burt Pinnock, Ellen Robertson

CALL TO ORDER

Roll Call

Chair Greenfield called the meeting to order at 4:05 P.M. Vice Chair Lloyd called the roll. A request was made for Mr. Hart to participate in the meeting virtually, but AV issues made communicating with Mr. Hart difficult so the request could not be addressed.

Chair's Comments

Chair Greenfield reminded Councilmembers of the purpose of the committee.

Approval June Meeting Notes

Mr. Mai made a motion to approve the June meeting notes, and Mr. Johannas seconded the motion. The motion passed. Ms. Pechin noted that she had not received the June meeting notes via email, and staff was asked to confirm that Ms. Pechin is included on the distribution list ahead of the next email.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Greenfield opened the floor to public comment.

Brock Hall, a resident of Manchester, expressed concerns regarding the pace and style of recent development in Manchester. Specifically, he noted his views that the current zoning code's restrictions on density and building height causes the city to sacrifice walkability, accessibility, green space and community space for townhouses and lower density buildings. He wanted to impress upon the members of the Zoning Advisory Committee (ZAC) the importance of moving away from a zoning code and moving towards more thoughtful city planning.

Will Wilson, RVA Yes In My Backyard (RVA YIMBY), is a resident of the 2nd District. He spoke to the negative impacts that zoning has historically perpetuated and spoke favorably about bottoms-up decision making. He noted that the city needs a zoning code that acknowledges and rectifies past injustices of exclusion and segregation.

Chair Greenfield closed the public comment period.

CONSULTANT PRESENTATION

Zoning 101 Presentation (Code Studio)

Rene Biberstein, project manager from Code Studio, gave an abridged presentation of the [Zoning 101 Webinar presentation](#).

Pattern Book Overview (Code Studio)

Mr. Biberstein gave the [Pattern Book Overview](#) presentation (on behalf of Utile). He provided a preview of the pattern book's multi-scalar analysis approach (comprised of the city-level, neighborhood-level, block-level, building-level scales). Additionally, Mr. Biberstein presented maps showing areas of the city where there are misalignments between the current built environment and zoning, and presented the list of representative neighborhoods where this such misalignments are most prevalent. Mr. Biberstein stated these neighborhoods are worthy of further analysis and invited councilmembers to provide their advice on any neighborhood that should be selected for additional study.

Community Ambassador (CA) Program (Brick & Story)

Emily McKnight, from Brick and Story, gave the Engagement and Community Ambassador Program presentation. Ms. asked how this community ambassador program will be different from the one organized for Richmond 300's engagement efforts. Ms. McKnight explained that the [Code Refresh CA Program](#) will have a lower barrier to entry, allow for smaller commitments, and allow for more hyper local opportunities for ambassador to get out into their communities. Ms. McKnight also explained there will be a greater number of ambassadors for the Code Refresh CA Program, so we will not have to rely on just a small handful of people who are able to commit to year-long participation.

FACILITATED ADVISORY COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS

Ms. McKnight introduced the activity prepared for the Advisory Council. Poster boards showing each of the Richmond 300 topic areas (High-Quality Places, Equitable Transportation, Diverse Economy, Inclusive Housing, and Thriving Environment) were displayed around the room. Councilmembers were asked to walk around to each board and write comments and ideas about how zoning relates to each of the topic areas. Afterwards, the councilmembers split themselves into smaller groups, where each group was given time to engage more closely with one of the topic areas. In their small groups, a scribe recorded the key points from their discussion. After small group discussion, each group presented the key takeaways of their discussion to the room:

- High Quality Places – A need for improving walkability and increasing fenestration; cafes create interest; some uncommon housing types to consider include tiny houses, co-op housing, and agrihoods; and square footage minimums should be removed.
- Diverse Economy – A need for more flexibility for commercial uses in residential zones, such as allowing a home to be used for more types of small business; and a need for more small-scale temporary lodging in motels to address homelessness.
- Thriving Environment – A need to be more flexible and aware of the land disturbance permitting process and how it affects development; a need to loosen stringent setback requirements for solar panels and rain barrels; and emerging technology issues like EV charging should not be hindered by zoning.
- Inclusive Housing – Recognition of the housing crisis and how the ordinance should allow transitional housing, emergency housing, and temporary housing to help those affected by the crisis; a need to allow for a diversity of housing including cohousing and tiny homes; a recognition that zoning should not increase project costs; a need for senior housing and dwelling units that allow for aging-in-place

and downsizing within your neighborhood; and a need to “undesign” the single family zoning district and allow more density within these districts.

- Equitable Transportation – a need for increasing density; how sidewalks and use of alleys contribute to equitable transportation; and a need to be mindful of zoning’s impact on development costs.

Additional more detailed notes from this discussion can be found attached to these meeting notes.

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting of the Advisory Council is August 14, 2024, at 4 P.M. at PlanRVA Boardroom (424 Hull St Suite 300, Richmond, VA 23224). Ms. Greenfield invited councilmembers and the general public to attend the Happy Hour event at Basic City Beer, being organized by the Central Section of the APA VA Chapter. Chair Greenfield also noted that the panel discussion scheduled for July 11 has been postponed to a later date in the summer/fall.

Chair Greenfield adjourned the meeting at 6:02 P.M.

07.10.2024 ZAC Meeting

Facilitated Discussion Notes: Small Group

HIGH-QUALITY PLACES

<p>Richmond 300 calls for introducing design requirements that encourage walking, such as providing sidewalks, street trees, shade structures, pedestrian-scale lighting, street furniture, and street-level windows and doors; prohibiting parking facing the street; and limiting driveways. Do you have any specific suggestions for what these requirements should be? How else could zoning help to encourage walking in these areas?</p>	<p>What new (or uncommon) housing types would you like to see, and in what areas?</p>	<p>In what ways do you think the Zoning Ordinance could encourage the reuse of buildings and deter demolition?</p>	<p>How can zoning support, protect, and enhance neighborhood character especially for areas outside of historic districts? In what ways (if any) is zoning falling short on this today?</p>
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RESPONSES

<p>Improvements to the streetscape only related to the parcel being developed or redeveloped in accordance with an approved streetscape plan. Street furniture should not be included</p> <p>Zoning can assist with fenestration requirements and also being flexible on setbacks, allowing for variation of setbacks to allow additional setbacks or none at all</p>	<p>Lots of room for tiny houses (permanent), co-housing, remove square footage minimum on conversion of non-conforming units, agrihoods (particularly southside and northside)</p>	<p>Allowing for maximum flexibility in use and options for interim uses. Encourage rehabilitation through tax credits or other incentives - it must make economic sense if outside an old historic district.</p>	<p>It should not except to make the building form compatible with a historic pattern, which does not mean all the same height, design or pattern. Even a historic neighborhood needs variation.</p>
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DIVERSE ECONOMY

<p>How can zoning support the creation of a variety of housing types that accommodate a variety of employees across an economic spectrum?</p>	<p>How can zoning do a better job at supporting small businesses, prevent the loss of space for them, and help ensure that new more affordable spaces are available?</p>	<p>Given the changing needs of industrial users, how could height limits and other zoning standards for industrial uses be updated to better accomodate current and future trends?</p>	<p>How could zoning be modified to encourage the development of hotels in Nodes and Priority Neighborhoods?</p>
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RESPONSES

<p>Diverse housing located near employment centers, job areas. Housing needs to match the needs of employment seekers.</p>	<p>Increase more housing/commercial allowances to use personal property space as opposed to needing access to commercial.</p> <p>Allowing for more mixed-use developments.</p>	<p>Better allocate how industrial areas can be used</p>	<p>Allowances for more small scale/medium scale temporary lodging and hotels</p>
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INCLUSIVE HOUSING

<p>What changes to zoning are needed to help facilitate the construction of more permanent supportive housing and emergency shelter units?</p>	<p>What changes to zoning should be considered to help the City meet its affordable housing goals in the next 10 years?</p>	<p>Richmond 300 calls for allowing middle housing (2- to 4-unit buildings) within a half-mile of a high-frequency transit stop. Should there be any limitations to this? Are there any additional areas where middle housing should be allowed?</p>	<p>How can zoning help Richmonders to age in place?</p>
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RESPONSES

<p>Recent helpful change in the city - changes to outdated definitions allowed certain districts to permit shelters by right</p> <p>How zoning affects/fosters/prevents co-ops and other ofrms of non-market housing</p>	<p>It's a supply and demand issue where we need to create housing at all price points with a diversity of housing products; eliminating fears of density</p> <p>Developers want to deploy capital, city requires a certain percentage of affordable; 60% AMI runs developers off. They want flexibility. Zoning might not be THE answer</p>	<p>Allow density and flexibility</p> <p>Understanding of public comment concern around more larger buildings, but building codes requiring steel above a certain number of stories makes this financially nonsensical</p>	<p>Loosening restrictions on commercial (nursing homes) - a diversity of housing types across the city</p> <p>Tax relief for the elderly and disabled is good!</p>
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Considering what prevents us from providing housing	<p>Concerned about elders and marginalized populations being housed and demand meeting that need</p> <p>Skeptical of market alone, so wanting to focus on small development and non-market development</p> <p>Regulatory process adds costs to make affordability hard</p>	Allowing flexibility for single family homes to provide multiple units
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EQUITABLE TRANSPORTATION

How could zoning help encourage housign at all income levels in and near Nodes, Priority Neighborhoods, and along major corridors?	How could zoning support the retention, creation, and attraction of businesses in and near Nodes, Priority Neighborhoods, and major corridors?	How can the Zoning Ordinance prioritize the construction of sidewalks, the use of alleys and the reduction or closing of driveways?	Richmond 300 calls for revising the Zoning Ordinance to require bike parking for more uses. Currently bike parking is only required for multifamily dwellings and in parking decks and garages. What other types of uses should be required to provide bike parking?
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RESPONSES

Richmond 300 addresses and recommends increase density in high traffic areas	Walkability - need areas that encourage access to businesses	Every neighborhood should be responsible for being more open to buildings and accessing the alleys	Commercial and retail uses
Connect the region at large across neighborhoods to make transportation more accessible We need zoning to enhance these nodes	All interconnected with high density in order to make it more attractive to businesses	Better lighting in alleyways Go through special use	Have minimum bike parking in public use areas Institutional uses
Push for the state to allow for more affordable housing		We have to be mindful of additional requirements driving costs	

THRIVING ENVIRONMENT

What are the zoning barriers to renewable energy, wind, solar, or rainwater catchment?	What requirements should the zoning have for green infrastructure?	Where should urban agriculture be allowed? DOes the City need a special urban agricultural zoning district, or should urban agriculture be allowed in other districts (e.g., residential)?	What standards could be applied to help reduce stormwater runoff?
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RESPONSES

Setback requirements can limit renewable energy generation...including rooftop solar in some cases (and maybe rain catchment too)	Should zoning duplicate/align with the others required water resource permitting?	Should be broadly allowed in many types of districts but with some limitations	Not exactly zoning, but perhaps consider a reimbursement program for opting-in to (not required) things like rain barrels, french drains, dry wells, rooftop gardens, etc.
The current zoning defines "yards," not setbacks, which causes confusion, particularly for attached housing We should look for how to incentivize these uses, e.g. through density bonuses, expedited permits, other zoning tools	Bealance concern with simple/effective ways to install and implement Offer FAR (floor area ratio) alternatives allowing for more height with less coverage	For instance, do not necessarily want larger-scale, commercially oriented urban ag in residential areas, neighborhood commercial districts, etc	
We also need to be aware of zoning barriers for EV charging, energy storage, etc.	ROW (not zoning) - consider better use of area for sormwater dissipation Differentiate requirements between commercial/industrial and residential		