



May 15, 2023

VIA EMAIL

Raymond Roakes
Planner, Urban Design Committee Secretary
City of Richmond

Re: 3317 Rear Monument Avenue Special Use Request Application

Dear Ray,

I am writing on behalf of the Museum District Association Zoning & Land Use Committee with regards to the Special Use Request for 3317 Rear Monument Avenue (SUP-127719-2023) and the Department of Planning & Development Review "Comment Letter #1."

We appreciate that this in-alley property provides an attractive opportunity for in-fill development and that the city is supportive of adding inventory of single-family homes, in desirable neighborhoods, like the Museum District. We have great concerns, however, for the project as it is currently presented.

This will be the second alley infill residential project within the Museum District. We need to be thoughtful of the precedents it will set that will impact future alley development in our neighborhood. We feel that an alley infill must be subordinate to the surrounding street facing structures; our initial and most pressing concerns outlined below support this belief.

Treatment of Alley Frontage as Primary Street Frontage

With the addition of single-family homes with front doors and rear yards, etc, we feel the alleyways should be viewed as primary streets/right of ways and therefore expectations of primary street frontage should be met. If the alley is considered a primary street, the West of the Boulevard Design Overlay guidelines should be met.

This includes (as defined in R300 for Neighborhood Mixed-Use designated properties): appropriate setbacks, open space, front porches, elevated ground floors, and other features that provide a sense of privacy should be provided for residential uses.

Height

The width of the right of way and the height of structures lining it define the enclosure of the public realm. These proportions are important in creating places where we want to be to live, work, play. With the narrow alleys, three story homes would not be appropriate, especially when the vast majority of major street facing residential structures are two stories in the surrounding blocks and the existing alley facing structures are one story.

Density

As the Land Use Administration noted in the Comment Letter #1, the density of the proposal should be close to the average density of the surrounding block. The average surrounding density is 14.5 dwellings per acre. ADU's would be counted as a unit in any density calculations for this project. We strongly encourage the removal of the ADUs to ease the increase in density at this location.

We recognize that the city has requested the applicant to resubmit with a new proposal, and we hope that our concerns outlined here will be addressed.

We also welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns in more detail.

Sincerely,

Karen Headley
Zoning & Land Use Chair, Museum District Association

Cc: Mark Baker, Baker Development Resources