

How to Use Richmond 300

Key Land Use Considerations



Richmond 300 and Land Use Administration Application Review:

Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth, the latest update to the citywide Master Plan, was adopted by City Council in December of 2020. The plan was amended July 10, 2023 and adopted by City Council September 26, 2023. The Department of Planning & Development Review and City Planning Commission will be following the guidance of Richmond 300 when reviewing new applications and in decision-making processes.

Types of applications LUA reviews:

- Special Use Permits (SUPs)
- Conditional Use Permits (CUPs)
- Rezoning
- Community Unit Plans
- Plans of Development (PODs)

We recommend reviewing the following sections of Richmond 300 to make sure the project is aligned with the goals and objectives of the plan:

- Land Use Map and Future Land Use Categories Description
- Nodes Descriptions
- Priority Neighborhoods Descriptions
- Future Connections Maps
- Goals, Objectives, and Strategies Applicable to the Project

Summary of Items to Review

1. Land Use Map and Future Land Use Categories Description: Examine the Land Use Map to see which of the ten Future Land Use categories is envisioned for the location of your project. Next, read through the category to make sure that your project aligns with the intent of that Future Land Use Category. See pages 78-97 of Richmond 300 and the Future Land Use Categories Description Table. Each future land use designation is described with the following elements:

- **Description:** a brief sentence conveying the general intent of the district.
- **Development Style:** describes how the area looks and feels today and provides general guidance on how new development should look and feel.
- **Ground Floor:** some of the categories include descriptions of how the ground floor should be designed and used.
- **Mobility:** describes how people are envisioned to move around the area.
- **Intensity:** describes the prevailing lot size and general heights of the buildings.
- **Primary Uses:** describes the predominant uses that are found in the area and that establish the basic characteristics of the area.
- **Secondary Uses:** describes the supporting uses that are sometimes found in the district. To determine the appropriate location of secondary uses, other sections of the plan must be reviewed including the Nodes Descriptions, Future Connections Maps, and the Goals, Objectives, and Strategies in the plan text.

Sample questions to consider:

- Does the project complement the existing context of the area?
- Will the ground floor of the project engage with and activate the street (when called for)?
- Does the project accommodate and/or prioritize pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access?
- Does the height of the project fit within the category's range? Is the density (units/acre) of the project appropriate within the category's intensity?
- If taller than the existing context, are there features (such as building setbacks and horizontal elements) that help scale the buildings to its surrounding?
- Is the project one of the primary or secondary uses designated in the category?

2. Nodes Descriptions: Check the Nodes map to see whether your project is within one of the many nodes identified in Richmond 300. In most cases, the descriptions of the Nodes are more specific than the Future Land Use category the area may be in. The Node Descriptions provide more details about the future development of nodes of various levels throughout the city. Note the node boundaries are not precise but provide the general location of the node. The Priority Growth Nodes can be found in Chapter One on pages 24-51 and all other Node Descriptions (besides micro-Nodes) are located in the Appendix C on pages C-1 to C-29.

Sample questions to consider:

- If the project was completed, would it help complement the Node's vision?
- Does the project respect and/or reflect the historic character of the Node?
- Will the project add to a sense of place, or placemaking, within the Node?

3. Priority Neighborhoods: Priority Neighborhoods are the primary focus of investment for the City of Richmond and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA). Priority Neighborhoods consist of public housing and land owned or recently transferred by RRHA that play an integral role in communities across the city. Priority Neighborhoods descriptions can be found in Chapter One on pages 52-77.

Sample questions to consider:

- Does the project promote connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods, green spaces, major corridors, etc.?
- Does the project create opportunity for neighborhood-scale retail?
- Is there opportunity for all existing public housing tenants to live in newly renovated areas?

4. Future Connections Maps: The Future Connections Map depicts the envisioned transportation networks. Though your project may not deal directly with the connections themselves, the project could help to enhance connectivity for non-single occupancy vehicle transportation networks. Additionally, based on the street type, the plan calls for different form elements to improve the pedestrian environment. These maps are found on pages 98-106 of Richmond 300 and are outlined below:

- **Great Streets:** Great Streets are significant entrances to the city and serve as major connectors between city destinations. Great Streets should feature buildings addressing the street, underground utilities, sidewalks, street trees, lighting, enhanced transit, and other amenities.
- **Street Typologies:** The Street Typology Map, shown in Figure 12 on page 73, depicts four Street Typologies which are applied to the most frequently-used streets (those with high annual average daily traffic (AADT)).
 - **Major Mixed-Use Streets:** carry high volumes of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles through commercial or mixed-use areas; require form elements, prioritize curbside for walking, biking, transit, and short-term parking, and incorporate streetscape features; are ideal locations for transit routes/stops
 - **Major Residential Streets:** carry high volumes of vehicles and some pedestrians and bicycles through residential neighborhoods; prioritize the creation of sidewalks and crosswalks; use street trees as a buffer between sidewalk and street; use traffic calming measures to ensure low street speed; are ideal locations for transit routes/stops
 - **Major Industrial Streets:** carry high volumes of vehicles, including a high percentage of truck traffic, through industrial areas; should ideally prioritize sidewalks and crosswalks, and the installation of street trees as a buffer between sidewalk and street; and are ideal locations for transit routes/stops
 - **Limited Access Highways:** limited-access highways that do not allow for non-vehicular access, such as Interstates, the Downtown Expressway, Chippenham Parkway, etc.

In addition to requiring form elements with buildings engaging with the street along Major Mixed-Use Streets, these typologies are referenced in two future land use categories.

- **Residential Secondary Uses:** Secondary uses (Duplexes and small multi-family buildings (typically 3-10 units), institutional, and cultural) may be found along major streets
- **Neighborhood Mixed-Use Intensity:** Buildings taller than four stories may be found along major streets.
- **Greenways and On-Street Bike Facilities Map:** Objectives and strategies related to Greenways and On-Street Bike Facilities are found primarily in Goal 8 and Goal 17.

- **Enhanced Transit Routes:** The Enhanced Transit Routes shown in Figure 14 on page 77 are transit corridors envisioned to have high-frequency service (ideally every 10 minutes, but likely 15 minutes) and longer service hours (ideally 24/7, but likely less). The plan encourages increased density of residents and jobs near enhanced transit corridors and has many housing recommendations related to enhance transit corridors and transit stops.
- **Street Connections, Interchanges, and Bridges:** This map shows proposed new and improved connections including new bridges and interchanges.

Sample questions to consider:

- Is the project located on a Great Street? Will the project reflect the goals of the Great Street?
- Is the project located near a greenway or on-street bike facility? Does the project have bike parking?
- Is the project located near a bus stop? Will my ground floor enhance the streetscape experience for those waiting for a bus?

5. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies Applicable to the Project: There are 5 chapters, 17 goals, and more than 400 strategies in the Richmond 300 document. Your project may not address all of those, but they give context for the way the City will evaluate new projects. The following list outlines different land use topics with relevant goals, objectives, or strategies from Richmond 300:

Types of projects:

- Create innovative mixed-use developments (1.3.a)
- Increase housing at all income levels along corridors and at Nodes and Priority Neighborhoods(1.3.f)
- Encourage the adaptive reuse of historical buildings and deter demolition (3.2.a)
- Reduce blight (3.2.f)
- Develop housing at all income levels in and near Nodes, Priority Neighborhoods, and along major corridors (6.1.b)
- Support the retention, creation, and attraction of businesses in and near Nodes, Priority Neighborhoods, and major corridors (6.1.c)
- Encourage the development of a variety of quality housing types to house employees across the economic spectrum (11.1.d)
- Encourage the development of hotel rooms in Nodes and Priority Neighborhoods (12.3.a)
- Prioritize funding projects that provide housing to very low-income individuals and families, including supportive housing, within half a mile of high-frequency transit stops (14.3.a)
- Create mixed-income residential housing where at least 20% of the units are affordable to households earning less than 50% of the AMI (14.3.b)
- Encourage accessory dwelling units (14.5.c) and middle housing [2- to 4-unit buildings] (14.5.e)
- Encourage the creation of 55+ senior communities within a half mile of high-frequency transit stops (14.9.j)
- Encourage the development of parklets throughout the City (17.1.f)
- Encourage redevelopment of surface parking lots into mixed-use developments and/or park area (17.3.d)

Project site:

- Enhance the unique character of Richmond's residential districts (1.4.a)
- Protect the character, quality, and history of the city (3.1.a)
- Protect & enhance views of critical nature features, such as the Libby Hill looking down river (3.1.l)
- Support, protect, and enhance neighborhood character, especially in areas that are not protected by City Old & Historic Districts (4.1.a)

- Require any new development along the river and canals to provide public access and activated ground levels (4.3.f)
- Increase the number of Richmonders living in a development pattern that encourages density and reduces dependency on single-occupancy vehicles (15.1.a)
- Locate jobs near residents (15.1.b)
- Design neighborhoods with a variation in building heights to encourage air circulation (17.3.c)
- Encourage development in areas at lower risk of flooding (17.5.b)

Building form:

- Allow & encourage a variety of architectural styles (4.1.b)
- On development sites that encompass most of a city block or block frontage, require multiple buildings and/or façade articulation to increase visual interest, require massing that is responsive to the human scale, and consider pedestrian through-block connections through existing superblocks to establish a street grid (4.1.c)
- Require sites with frontage on Great Streets to meet special design guidelines, such as burying power lines and the six design elements outlined in the Pulse Corridor Plan, to ensure the buildings enhance and support the Great Street (4.1.d)
- Encourage development that respects and preserves the natural features of the site through sensitive site design, avoids substantial changes to topography, and minimizes property damage and environmental degradation resulting from disturbance of natural systems (4.1.e)
- Ensure that building materials are durable, sustainable, and create a lasting addition to the built environment, and provide maximum adaptability for environmental change, change of use, and efficiency (4.1.f)
- Require adequate distribution of windows and architectural features in order to create visual interest (4.1.h)
- Encourage design approaches that support creative solutions for transitions among varying intensities of building types and land uses (4.1.i)
- Promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion caused by a proliferation of signage, ensuring that public and private signage is appropriately scaled to the pedestrian experience (4.1.k)
- Encourage roof lines and upper levels of tall buildings to be articulated with distinguishable design (4.1.l)
- Require the podiums of tall buildings to reflect the human-scale, with design elements and active uses on the ground level (4.1.m)
- Increase building permeability by requiring new buildings to have functioning entrances from the sidewalk and restricting blank walls at ground level (4.1.o)
- Encourage building placement and massing design that reduces the heat island effect by varying building heights in neighborhoods to increase airflow (4.1.p)

Construction:

- Encourage developers to renovate buildings with deep energy retrofits and/or build new construction following green building guidelines (15.3.a)
- Require stronger energy-efficiency and green-building standards of developers requesting zoning variance and/or site plan approvals (15.3.j)
- Require new construction projects to provide areas for dumpsters, recycling, and composting (15.4.g)
- Encourage lighter-colored surfaces for roads and roofs to reflect sunlight (17.3.a)
- Encourage green roofs in private development (17.3.b)
- Encourage the use of bird-safe glass and other building materials and features that protect and enhance natural ecologies where appropriate (17.7.f)

Site amenities:

- Utilize public art and the public realm to create unique features within Nodes and Priority Neighborhoods (1.3.c)
- Encourage outdoor art features on private land and buildings as part of a city-building aesthetic (4.2.d)
- Require private land owners to include usable open space, small parks, playgrounds, green roofs, courtyards, etc. in their developments and link the open spaces to the city-wide open space network (4.3.c)
- Include shade trees, bike parking, bike share, signage, public art, screened parking, street furniture, pedestrian-level lighting, and other elements in the right-of-way that enhance walkability (4.4.a)
- Require developers to construct sidewalks and street trees as part of their development projects, including single-family infill developments in neighborhoods (8.1.b)
- Require bike parking for more uses (8.3.e)
- Support the expansion of the electric charging network for vehicles and bicycles on privately-owned land (10.4.a)
- Encourage the installation of solar panels on private buildings (15.3.h)
- Encourage private property owners to replant stream buffers in riparian areas (16.1.b)
- Create publicly accessible open space as part of private development (17.1.l)
- Encourage private land owners to plant trees and care for existing trees (17.2.a)
- Require new developments and additions to buildings to retain mature trees, replace lost trees, and plant more trees if none were there originally (17.2.g)
- Promote planting of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities (17.7.b)

Related to Cars & Parking:

- Prohibit driveways for new small-scale residential buildings on blocks that have alley access (4.1.n)
- Reduce the creation of driveways and car access curb cuts, especially if there is alley access to the parcel and/or multiple parcels can utilize the same car access curb cut to access their sites (8.1.c)
- Encourage homeowners and developers to utilize and upgrade existing alleyways in their development site plans or create new alleyways as part of redevelopment efforts (9.3.b)
- Require new large developments to tie into existing streets and prohibit cul-de-sacs to support the creation of a gridded street network (9.4.a)
- Discourage the creation of new surface parking lots along pedestrian-oriented and transit-accessible corridors (9.6.a)
- Safely and beautifully screen unsightly parking facilities from the street (9.6.b)
- Encourage property owners to consider shared parking spaces (9.6.i)
- Reduce parking requirements and increase landscaping requirements (16.1.a)
- Increase the parking screening requirements and require a 10% tree canopy coverage of surface parking lots (17.2.f)
- Reduce parking minimums (17.3.f)