

# Richmond 300: Code Refresh Advisory Council Meeting Notes

Date: December 11, 2024, 4 P.M.  
Location: City Hall, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
900 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219  
Microsoft Teams (<https://bit.ly/CodeRefreshAC>)



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
REVIEW**

---

**Members Present:** Wayne Credle, Bennie Gates, Elizabeth Greenfield, Philip Hart, David Johannas, Preston Lloyd, Eric Mai (virtually), Jennifer Mullen, Casey Overton (virtually), Martiza Pechin, Damian Pitt, Brian White, Charlie Wilson, Roger York

**Members Absent:** Yanina James, Kendra Norrell, Michelle Parrish, Ellen Robertson

## CALL TO ORDER

### Roll Call

Chair Greenfield called the meeting to order at 4:03 P.M. Chair Greenfield called the roll. Ms. Pechin made a motion to allow Ms. Overton to participate virtually in the meeting, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Wilson. After Council vote, the motion passed. Mr. Johannas made a motion to allow Mr. Mai to participate virtually, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Wilson. After Council vote, the motion passed. A quorum was present.

### Chair's Comments

Chair Greenfield thanked everyone for attending. She reminded everyone of the purpose of the Council is to advise the Planning Commission, Department of Planning and Development Review, and the consultant team on the zoning ordinance revision process.

### Approval of November Meeting Notes

Mr. Johannas motioned to approve the November meeting notes, and the motion was seconded by Mr. York. The Council voted to approve the minutes.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Greenfield opened the floor to public comment.

Mr. Joseph Carlisle, of RVA YIMBY, stressed the zoning rewrite's importance in building a city that works for everyone. He mentioned the current housing crisis, and stressed the need for more townhomes, duplexes, and ADUs to meet today's housing demand. He also coupled this with the need for more community amenities and places where all uses can exist more closely together.

Mr. Mark Olinger spoke about alignment of the zoning code with Richmond 300. He hoped to see a better nexus between the zoning code and Richmond 300 in regard to the special treatments that should be given to nodes and corridors (especially along highways), as this was a crucial theme in the Richmond 300 Master Plan. He also mentioned that he has not yet seen many examples or imagery of Southside in the development of the zoning code. With 8 of the 10 representative neighborhoods in the Pattern Book located north of the river, he recommended that more attention be given to Southside. He felt the zoning code proposed too many mixed use districts, and recommended other zoning tools be utilized to tailor specific zoning rules (for example, corridor overlay districts). He also stressed the importance of updating

the subdivision and sign ordinances during this zoning code refresh, noting that they all work hand in hand to achieve the desired development pattern. He also spoke of the importance of the City's landscape.

Seeing no other members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Greenfield closed the public comment period.

## **FOLLOW UP FROM THE NOVEMBER PRESENTATION**

Chair Greenfield reminded everyone that Council is still in the analysis phase and that the documents being reviewed and discussed were not considered final.

Ms. Marianne Pitts gave a general recap of the November meeting. While the previous meeting included presentations on the Pattern Book's block-scale analysis and Zoning Framework's proposed districts, the present meeting will dive deeper to review the Pattern Book's building-scale analysis and discuss in small groups specific questions regarding each of the proposed zoning districts. Looking ahead, Ms. Pitts explained the January meeting will revisit the discussion and also introduce a plan for public engagement, whereas the following month will feature public meetings to gather feedback on the draft districts.

Chair Elizabeth requested that an open discussion be added onto the January meeting agenda. Council anticipates some topics may be more sensitive or contentious amongst members of the public, and Council would like to freely and openly discuss these topics in an effort to resolve them before hosting public meetings.

## **CONSULTANT PRESENTATION AND ADVISORY COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Mr. Carlos Sainz Caccia (Utile) presented on the Pattern Book's building-scale analysis, which analyzes prevailing trends in the building's frontage, setbacks, and overall form and character. Mr. Sainz Caccia gave a detailed overview of the following building types:

- Detached urban houses: Includes an independent side wall, which may or may not touch a neighboring building; typically includes a three-window pattern; includes a porch or a stoop; ground floor is raised a few feet from the street (in some cases, as much as a half story); typically situated directly on one of the side property lines, with the neighboring house having a 3-foot setback distance from the line; mostly incorporate a shed roof. Mr. Sainz Caccia explained that this is the most prevalent form in older sections of the city, and that even some newer homes replicate this building style. He also explained that detached urban houses can include houses that touch together on the sides, but they are considered to be detached because they have their own independent sidewall, their own independent rooflines/ porch rooflines.
- Attached urban houses: Share a common side wall; typically includes a three window pattern; the parcel line runs right in between the building to create separate parcels with an individual unit (often denoted with 2 differing paint colors); includes continuous porch roofline which creates a unified architectural appearance; usually has a front setback of 10 to 15 feet.
- Walkup buildings: Has the front entrance located in the middle of the building, flanked by porches and stacked balconies on each side; roofline commonly contains gable accents.
- Detached houses: Has wide side yards; generally 1 and 2 stories in height; typically accented with a stoop or porch. Mr. Sainz Caccia explained that this design form comes in many shapes and sizes, and the range in setbacks varies widely.
- General commercial buildings: Typically do not observe a front setback and are usually built right on the front property line/ up against the sidewalk.

In reference to the note (on page 7 of the handout materials) about a Jackson Ward building having no side street façade and minimum windows, Mr. White asked if there would ever be a case where a blank façade with minimal windows would be desired or encouraged. Mr. Sainz Caccia explained that the Pattern Book only aimed to identify and describe the existing development pattern, without assigning

judgement or value on any particular patterns, features or conditions. Ultimately, the zoning code will make decisions on which patterns to encourage, allow, and tolerate.

Mr. White asked if the fire department has any preference over grouped (abutting) detached urban houses vs. attached urban house that share a common side wall. Mr. Johannas explained that fire protection standards require the same level of protection, regardless of their design type or development pattern. He added that modern townhouses are designed with a single-building appearance. Mr. Wilson explains that these fire protection standards are requirements of today's modern building code.

Ms. Pechin asked if all the building included within this analysis were located in the ten representative neighborhoods. Mr. Sainz Caccia confirmed they were. Ms. Pechin also asked how this analysis would inform the zoning framework discussion. She expressed concerns that some house design types were not reflected as part of this analysis. Mr. Sainz Caccia explained that the Pattern Book mainly analyzes the older, traditional neighborhoods in the city where most of the nonconformities exist. The building-scale analysis helps facilitate the zoning framework discussion by providing the city with data and metrics for various features within the nonconforming neighborhood (roof types, entrance types, fenestration, setbacks, ground floor elevation, etc.) so that the new zoning code can accommodate them better.

Mr. Johannas expressed thoughts about duplexes and how they effectively act as a pair of attached houses. A large discussion was had amongst Council. In the interest of time, the discussion was postponed for later.

Mr. Rene Biberstein (Code Studio) presented on the Zoning Districts Framework. He gave an overview of the adjustments they were considering, based on the conversation and notes arising from the previous meeting in November. Possible adjustments included:

- Removing the R-E district;
- Removing the limitations regarding commercial square footage in the RX districts;
- Striking the IX-5 and IX-13 districts, effectively reducing the number of IX districts to just two; and
- Adding an auto-oriented commercial district for suburban-style development

## **FACILITATED SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Mr. Biberstein overviewed the discussion questions prepared for Council, many of which revolved around the aforementioned possible adjustments. Councilmembers broke into 5 groups (four in-person and one virtual) to engage in detailed discussion. A notetaker at each group was assigned. Groups spend approximately 35 minutes discussing the questions.

## **SMALL GROUP REPORT BACK**

Each group reported back to the Council, highlighting major takeaways from their small group discussion. Notes from each group were provided to the consultants for further refinement of the draft zoning code.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The next meeting of the Advisory Council is January 8, 2025, at 4 P.M. in the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room at City Hall (900 E. Broad St, Richmond, VA 23219).

Vice Chair Lloyd adjourned the meeting at 6:00 P.M.