

# Richmond 300: Code Refresh Advisory Council Meeting Notes

Date: December 10, 2025, 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**

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## Attendance

**Members Present:** Andrew Bunn, Riley Champine, Wayne Credle (virtually), Bennie Gates, Elizabeth Greenfield, Tiffany Gunn, Philip Hart, Preston Lloyd, Eric Mai (virtually), Charles Menges, Jennifer Mullen, Kendra Norrell (virtually), Casey Overton, Maritza Pechin, Damian Pitt, Councilperson Ellen Robertson (virtually), Melissa Savenko, Brian White, Charlie Wilson, Latasha Wyche

**Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Brian Mercer, LaJuan Neal, Sr. Dep. Dir. Marianne Pitts, and Dir. Kevin Vonck (Department of Planning and Development Review); Mr. Rene Biberstein and Mr. Colin Scarff (Code Studio consulting team representatives); Ms. Monishka Jhaveri and Ms. Emily McKnight (Brick & Story consulting team representatives)

## CALL TO ORDER

### Roll Call

Chair Greenfield called the meeting to order at 4:02 P.M. and then called the roll. A quorum was present.

Virtual participation requests were received from Rev. Dr. Credle, Mr. Mai, and Ms. Norrell. Each member stated their reasons for needing to join virtually— inclement weather, time commitments to a family obligation, and illness, respectively. Motions to approve each request were made, seconded and approved by the Council.

### Introduction of New Council Members

Chair Greenfield announced that a recent Planning Commission resolution expanded the number of Advisory Council members from 17 to 21. The resolution required that the Chair appoint new members after consultation with City Council and City Administration, with a focus on new members in City Council districts currently underrepresented on the Advisory Council. As a result, four new members were appointed. Chair Greenfield also announced that Mr. David Johannas resigned from the Advisory Council, and that an additional member had been appointed to fill the vacancy. Newly appointed Council members introduced themselves:

- Melissa Savenko, a residential real estate agent and licensed lawyer.
- Riley Champine, a Forest Hill resident of the 4<sup>th</sup> District who has lived in Richmond for three years and works at the University of Richmond with a background in maps and GIS.
- Andrew Bunn, a Church Hill resident of the 7<sup>th</sup> District who works as a transportation civil engineer and is pursuing a Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree from VCU.
- Latasha Wyche, a lifelong Richmonder and current Randolph resident of the 5<sup>th</sup> District with a background in transportation.
- Tiffany Gunn, a 9<sup>th</sup> District resident.

### **Chair's Comments**

Chair Greenfield reminded everyone that 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 October 2025 Meeting Notes**

Mr. White motioned to approve the October 2025 meeting notes, seconded by Mr. Wilson. After Council vote, the October 2025 meeting notes were approved.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Greenfield opened the floor to public comment. Members of the public were invited to comment on items not on the day's agenda.

Gwynne Cunningham, a long-time Richmond resident, revisited the topic of solar panels discussed at the previous meeting—particularly the impacts of reduced solar energy capture resulting from the shadows of taller buildings. She reminded Council of the City's goal to reduce emissions by 36% by 2030 and 80% by 2050, and cited the importance of solar energy production in reaching that goal. She shared new projects that are investing in solar energy production, including the East End Solar Farm, the new Diamond District baseball stadium, and public school rooftop installation projects. She shared that she recently installed solar panels on her home. She forecasted that the proposed zoning in Draft 1 would reduce their solar production to 71% of current levels. While Draft 2 was an improvement, the updated proposed zoning would still reduce her home's solar production down to 84% of current levels. Ms. Cunningham requested that Draft 2's contextual height rules be expanded to apply to MX districts that abut residential properties to lessen shadow impacts on solar panels and promote incremental height changes.

Annika Schunn, a policy advocate at HOME of Virginia, explained the goals of the Homes for All Our Neighbors Coalition (of which HOME of Virginia is a member). She spoke on Code Refresh's potential to increase housing stock, reduce housing costs, and ease displacement pressures across the city. On behalf of Home for All Our Neighbors, she expressed concern about how Draft 2 scaled back many of the proposals they supported in Draft 1, including reductions in lot coverage and building height limits, restrictions on corner-lot subdivisions, and Housing Preservation Bonus restrictions on when lots would be allowed a third dwelling unit. She advocated for ease in building homes of all shapes and sizes to advance equity and affordability.

Frank Robinson, a 7<sup>th</sup> District resident in the Union Hill/ Church Hill area was concerned about the density that would allow 24 dwelling units on a small space. He felt such density would destroy green space (including courtyard space and mature trees), cause overcrowding, and re-introduce many of the neighborhood's past problems. He advocated for responsible density.

Peter Hann, a Fan District resident, referenced Va. Code §15.2-2283, which outlines the purpose of zoning ordinances to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the public. He questioned why Draft 2 did not include overlay districts addressing water or fire protection. He believed other city policies (such as rent caps and income-based policies) should be leveraged to ensure housing affordability—not zoning, which should focus safety issues and preventing overcrowding. Additionally, he did not support Draft 2's zoning of the Fan District. He felt the stepback requirements compromised the neighborhood and wished to see revisions to these provisions in a future draft.

Maria Düster, a policy manager with Community Climate Collaborative (C3) (a member of the Homes For All Our Neighbors Coalition), expressed her organization's praise for Code Refresh's continuance in allowing ADUs citywide and its consistency in proposing higher density in nodes and along corridors. However, she expressed C3's opposition to Draft 2's Housing Affordability Bonus provision, which she felt was a retraction on by-right duplex allowances and out of step with meeting the city's housing needs.

They were concerned that the Housing Preservation Bonus would not yield additional housing units in wealthier neighborhoods. They recognized the value of preserving existing housing stock for affordability purposes (specifically in lower income neighborhoods vulnerable to gentrification and displacement) and asked the Council to explore targeted policies to accomplish this. Personally, as a renter in the Museum District, Ms. Duster welcomed more multi-family development in her neighborhood that would open up opportunities for more diversity, more inclusivity, increased walkability, and greater access to quality transit, and improved housing affordability for all.

Kevin Cianfarini, a 7<sup>th</sup> District resident and lead organizer for Climate Changemakers RVA (a member of the Homes For All Our Neighbors Coalition), thanked the planning staff for its Code Refresh public engagement efforts. He explained that transportation is the largest source of climate pollution. He expressed his organization's concern that the proposed zoning along the north-south BRT route is not dense enough to foster transit ridership, and advocated for RM-B zoning from Brookland Pkwy to Azalea Avenue. They were also concerned with the close proximity of RD-A to this transit corridor, and advocated for RD-C or higher when located within a ten-minute walk of any BRT stop. Secondly, they expressed concern with RD-A's prevalence throughout Southside, and noted how it would contribute to low-density sprawl, deforestation, and car dependence. They encouraged these RD-A areas be changed to higher-density districts. Lastly, they asked that the city explore removing the CG district from the draft. Noting that the CG district was applied to major corridors identified as enhanced transit routes, they urged the CG district be replaced with mixed-use designations. Ultimately, they felt that car-centric developments should require an SUP.

Richard Hankins, executive director of Partnership for Smarter Growth, welcomed the five new members and thanked them for their commitment in serving on the Council. He appreciated the changes in Draft 2 that offered a balanced approach to growth and historic preservation. He asked that more housing be allowed in low-density neighborhoods to help ease displacement pressures on vulnerable neighborhoods. He explained that the General Assembly was considering a bill that would increase Richmond's ability to effectively incentivize affordable housing, and expressed hope in how it could be a useful tool if passed.

Christian Muttart, a resident of the Carver neighborhood in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District, thanked the Council for its involvement in ensuring the city could development in a more equitable way. A chief priority for him was zoning's role in solving the housing crisis. He wanted the Code Refresh to promote more incremental development in select residential neighborhoods, which would allow for more density without causing large adverse impacts. He proposed altering Draft 2's contextual height standard in a way that would consider an entire block's average story height and permitting an additional story above it, rather than restricting height to an additional 14 feet above the shortest house on either side.

Nicole Storm, a senior director at project:HOMES (a member of the Homes For All Our Neighbors Coalition), thanked everyone for their work on Code Refresh. In the past 5 years, the organization has requested and received nine SUPs to create 23 housing units. She stated that SUPs created additional work, forced changes to original designs, and drove up costs. She shared that project:HOMES just received an SUP for a site that will feature five new homes, all facing the secondary/side street (an orientation that would not be permitted under Draft 2's proposed provisions). She asserted such provisions limited access to safe, quality housing and requested that more flexibility be built into the zoning code to advance the creation of more housing in the city.

Joh Gelbach, of RVA YIMBY (a member of the Homes For All Our Neighbors Coalition), echoed the comments previously stated by other members of the Homes For All Our Neighbors Coalition.

Meg Lawrence, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District, thanked city staff and consultants for engagement efforts and for incorporating the community's Draft 1 comments into Draft 2. She particularly thanked Ms. Marianne Pitts for her sincerity and intentionality in listening to community feedback. She iterated that questions and concerns remain, especially regarding the Draft 2 engagement process during the holidays. She was pleased to learn of the Mayor's announcement setting the comments deadline as February 15<sup>th</sup> and also pleased that the Draft 2 proposal for Chamberlayne Avenue aligned more with her neighborhood's desire. She was concerned about decision to apply MX-3 zoning to churches. She urged that the Code Refresh

process slow down to allow more time for the city to understand the implications that this proposal would have on neighborhoods.

Don O'Keefe, a board member of Eden Village and editor of the ArchitectureRichmond website, endorsed the comments previously shared by members of the Homes For All Our Neighbors Coalition (of which he is a participant). He felt Draft 2 was a step in the wrong direction, in regards to sustainability and affordability. He advocated for a more courageous and progressive code, which he felt could reduce automobile use, increase safety and save lives, protect the environment, and preserve natural habitats on the urban fringe. Regarding the engagement process, he expressed concern over unequal representation in comments received (both in terms of geographic area and wealth class), as revealed by an analysis performed by his brother Barry O'Keefe.

Charles, a resident of the 7<sup>th</sup> District, wanted the Advisory Council to take a more courageous and proactive approach. He reminded everyone that Richmond is attracting a lot of newcomers, rents are skyrocketing, and the housing market is not coming down. He saw it as unfair that some neighborhoods would be allowed to remain the same while other neighborhoods are upzoned. He asserted incremental density is not enough.

Sebastian Quinn, an architect who focuses on infill projects (mostly in the 7<sup>th</sup> District), spoke in support of the Code Refresh because of its potential to reduce the need for obtaining a SUP. He reflected on the SUP process, which makes development and rehabilitation difficult, expensive, and time-consuming. He shared that one of his SUP projects required the completion of a parking study. However, he expressed concerns about the draft provisions. He shared information about a vacant site at the intersection of Carrington and Mosby streets, which is currently zoned to allow for 3-5 homes under today's zoning ordinance but would only allow for one home under the proposed Draft 2 code. Additionally, regarding Draft 2's five-story height limit for Shockoe Bottom, he explained that the cost of elevators makes it prohibitively expensive for a 5-story building to be constructed. Additionally, a lot on 32<sup>nd</sup> Street is proposed with zoning that would allow for one house. He asserted that Draft 2 would not yield the number of market-rate dwelling units needed to enhance housing affordability in the 7<sup>th</sup> District.

Jacob Sherrod, of StrongTownsRVA, spoke to his own personal thoughts on the need for incremental development. He felt that change should not be concentrated in one or two neighborhoods, but instead should be accommodated throughout the city. He wanted the draft code to empower everyday residents to become developers and contribute to the city's built environment while respecting neighborhood context. He wanted to see greater flexibility in the code by reducing restrictions on lot coverage and lot width requirements. He also advocated that more non-residential uses in ground-floor spaces be permitted by-right (such as childcare centers).

Copeland Casati argued that upzoning hurts housing affordability. Instead of allowing duplexes as a starting action, she instead wished for the elimination of illegal short-term rentals as a first step in increasing housing stock for local rentership and homeownership. She also felt the draft code would reduce sunlight levels, and asserted that no solar, soil, tree canopy, or fresh air levels should be reduced. She wished that the draft code required mandatory shadow modeling for all buildings three-stories or taller, claiming that other cities have adopted this requirement. She asserted solar access would reduce energy costs, improve residents' health, and advance the city toward its net zero energy goals.

Barry O'Keefe, a lifelong Richmonder and a member of the Homes for All Our Neighbors Coalition, encouraged the Advisor Council to review the analyses of other coalition members such as Southside Releaf, C3, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, and ChangemakersRVA. As a new homeowner in the 5<sup>th</sup> District's Maymont neighborhood, he recounted difficulties he faced during the homebuying process and shortly after. Increasing construction costs made it difficult to close on the home. After purchase, rapid appreciation caused his home to double in value in just a five-year period. He reminded everyone that displacement is occurring across the city, and urged everyone to examine how Code Refresh could mitigate displacement. He urged the Advisory Council to listen to local experts on these issues.

*At 4:57 P.M., Ms. Mullen arrived in person.*

Sleeves recounted the shortcoming of the current zoning ordinance, particularly its history rooted in racist policy, its proclivities in creating inequities in real estate taxation, and its propensity to cause rising rents and displacement. He asserted that Richmond is attracting newcomers and the growth cannot be stopped. He trusted the city to make the right choice between adopting smart growth policies or continuing the housing crisis.

Josh Bilder was very supportive of the Code Refresh. He believed the Code Refresh was great for the city and would attract more people to come.

Seeing no other members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Greenfield closed the public comment period and thanked everyone for their comments.

*At 5:00 P.M., Ms. Robertson joined the meeting virtually.*

## **COUNCIL RECAP AND MEETING INTRODUCTION**

Ms. Marianne Pitts provided a recap of the previous meeting held in October, which featured a presentation from Mr. Merrick Malone (of the City's Department of Housing and Community Development) about the city's existing programs to address housing affordability and displacement. The meeting also featured a presentation from Mr. Guy Roach (of GRTC) about the north-south BRT project and the associated transit-oriented development study currently underway. Additionally, the Code Studio consultants presented on the draft development standards and the Advisory Council discussed those in great length.

Ms. Pitts reminded everyone that the November meeting was cancelled. Due to changes being made to the draft up until the day of the scheduled meeting, the draft was not yet ready to be shared, and a decision was made to cancel the meeting. She apologized for the short notice about the cancellation.

Ms. Pitts stated that the November Open Houses were hosted. She announced that interactive versions of the draft code documents, draft map, and Open House boards were recently made available online (with commenting capabilities), along with PDF versions of those same materials. All could be accessed through the Code Refresh website. She also reiterated that the public comment period would remain open through February 15, as recently announced by the Mayor. She informed everyone that civic associations were notified, and that staff is available to attend civic groups meetings if requested.

At the present meeting, the Code Studio and Brick & Story consultants would provide an overview of the November Open Houses and other recent engagement efforts, as well as an overview of the major changes between Draft 1 and Draft 2. The Advisory Council would have the opportunity to offer feedback on those changes. She noted that unexpected timing constraints prevented the consultants from incorporating the Advisory Council's comments regarding development standards into the public release of Draft 2, and that the consultants would share more details about this at the present meeting.

Chair Greenfield referenced Mr. Menges's request during the October meeting for a summary of Draft 1 comments received. She and Ms. Pitts confirmed that the comments were posted online for public review, including the Draft 1 map and documents with comments as well as a spreadsheet of all email comments received during that time.

## **CONSULTANT PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON DEVELOPMENT STANDARD GOALS**

### **Update on Engagement Stats and November Open Houses Themes**

Mr. Rene Biberstein (of the Code Studio consultant firm) introduced himself and turned the meeting over to his colleagues Monishka Jhaveri and Emily McKnight (of the Brick & Story engagement consultant firm).

Ms. Jhaverti provided an update on the Code Refresh engagement process, including a summary of engagement events and an overview of key themes heard at the November Open Houses. During the current phase of the project, several panel discussions, city-organized roundtables, community ambassador roundtables, open houses, pop-ups, Advisory Council meetings, and civic association/group meetings had resulted in the teach reaching about 4,600 people. Additionally, 3,700 comments were received online using the interactive map during the Draft 1 comment period.

At the November Panel Discussion and Open Houses, a total of 246 people attended, accounting for a 24% increase in attendance from the June Open Houses. The Main Library Open House saw the largest attendance with 121 attendees. Ms. Jhaverti shared common themes heard at these events, such as:

- desires for walkable neighborhoods, small-scale retail, and affordable homeownership,
- concerns about infrastructure capacity, equity, displacement, and environmental protection, and
- disagreement and conflicting perspectives on the density and location of housing growth, commercial/retail within residential districts, and ADUs and development standards (setbacks, heights, and lot coverage).

Rev. Dr. Credle sought an explaining for the disparity in attendance levels for the City Hall and Southside Community Services Center open houses, compared to the attended Main Library Panel Discussion and Open House. Ms. Jhaverti stated that this pattern of attendance was seen at the previous open houses too. Acknowledging these lower attendance levels, she reminded Council that the consultant team and city staff supplement the open houses with more engagement events (like pop-ups and roundtables) to reduce barriers and hear feedback directly from harder to reach areas (like Southside). Rev. Dr. Credle stated he was happy to assist with the targeted engagement efforts, and that other Council members may also be willing. Ms. McKnight thanked him for his offer, and asked that Council members spread the word about the comment period being open and encourage more people to engage.

Mr. Mai said it is hard to collect demographic data at these events but asked if they had any to share. Ms. McKnight presented demographical data of those attending in-person events and shared where some populations were underrepresented (such as renters, African American residents, and young people under the age of 18 years old).

*At 5:16 P.M., Ms. Robertson requested to participate virtually while she cared for an ill family member at her home. Motions to approve the request were made, seconded and approved by the Council.*

Ms. Robertson expressed appreciation for speakers who made public comment at the present meeting. She referenced Don O'Keefe's assertions that no online map comments could conclusively be attributed to people in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Districts. She also reiterated Ms. McKnight's statements about underrepresentation in African American participation. She asked if the consultants knew of any districts that were not getting the participation that was needed. Ms. McKnight made it clear that Brick & Story did not conduct the analysis of online map engagement that Don O'Keefe referenced. She did acknowledge that their findings seemed to correlate with Brick & Story's analysis of in-person engagement analysis (as presented at the present meeting). She informed the Council that demographic data was being collected as a part of Draft 2 engagement, and that they are trying to be creative and intentional with outreach.

Ms. Pitts clarified that emailed comments lacked representation from the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> Districts; and that the online map contained did contain comments from those districts. She also added that staff would be attending the 8<sup>th</sup> District meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup>, and that staff's appearance at the 9<sup>th</sup> District meeting (cancelled due to inclement weather) would be rescheduled for a date in January.

Regarding demographics, Ms. Pechin expressed the difficulties in collecting data fully and perfectly for all people and groups engaged with. For example, she stated that city staff were tirelessly attending civic association and Council district meetings upon invitation, and that these groups generally do not collect demographic data during meetings. She urged the Advisory Council to continue to support the consultants and city staff in outreach outside of the open house events.

## Summary of November Draft Changes

Mr. Biberstein restated that the Advisory Council's comments on development standards were not reflected in Draft 2 but would be incorporated into the next iteration of the draft code. He also announced that he hoped to share a draft of the code's administrative provisions section in January. He then began summarizing the major changes made since June between Drafts 1 and 2, starting with the changes in zoning districts. Some districts saw name changes, some were consolidated to create new districts, and some saw tweaks made to minimum and maximum dimensional/form requirements. He also stated that slight changes were made to the Draft 1 map and encouraged everyone to view the Draft 2 online map for a closer look. He stated that the Draft 2 map included informational details about how each parcel was designated under Draft 1 and Draft 2 for easy comparison between the drafts.

Mr. Biberstein then overviewed changes made to alleviate concerns over maximum unit counts and minimum lot width requirements. He explained the new rules governing the subdivision of corner lots. He also explained Housing Preservation Bonus provision, which is intended to discourage demolition of existing housing stock and promote adaptive reuse that generally leads to more affordable housing. Mr. Wilson raised questions about how this provision might create challenges for zoning code enforcement, including *"To what extent (minimum %) must the existing building be preserved?"* and other possible questions. Mr. Wilson also suggested adding language that would allow a vacant lot to be developed at the full 2 Dwelling Units + 1 ADU density if it was already vacant at the time of the code's adoption. Mr. Biberstein clarified that this was the intent of the code (so as not to penalize demolitions that occurred in the past prior to code adoption), and that the language could be edited to make that clearer.

Additionally, Dr. Pitt offered recommendations on the five-year delay period following demolition of an existing structure. While he understood the rationale for the delay period, he felt five years was too long and suggested it be lowered to two or three years. He also questioned if this provision would produce a significant number of dwelling units. He also felt that the permitted lot arrangement provided in the graphic (existing structure in the front and other units behind it) conflicted with the aesthetic design and character of most neighborhoods, and advocated allowing for the construction of a duplex that is meant to look like a traditional single-family home. Mr. Bunn asked for clarification on which zoning districts this Housing Preservation Bonus provision would be applied. Mr. Biberstein stated it would apply to the RD and RA districts.

Mr. Menges saw the Housing Preservation Bonus provision as an improvement from Draft 1 to discourage demolitions, but was disappointed that duplexes could still be built on existing vacant lots within established single-family residential neighborhoods. He said he talked with a lot of neighborhood associations and residents in those types of neighborhoods and no one felt it was a good idea. Though he recognized the need for more housing, he stated this allowance would not produce a significant increase in the number of housing units, but that a new duplex in a single-family neighborhood would certainly have a significant impact on the residents living next door to one. He asked if consideration was given to public comments requesting the preservation of single-family neighborhoods or if those comments were ignored. Chair Greenfield answered that the comments were not ignored, and that she personally read each one. She stated that most comments expressed deep concerns about demolition of existing homes to subdivide the lot and construct multiple units at a higher density in its place. She stated the Housing Preservation Bonus provision was specifically introduced to address these concerns over demolition and higher density development. Mr. Menges suggested that this provision could be helpful in reducing demolitions in smaller-lot neighborhoods where it is more economically feasible to acquire and demolish property, but felt it would not help wealthier neighborhoods where a vacant lot could produce a house that residents do not want built.

Mr. Gates underscored the housing crisis and emphasized that it affects everyone. He stressed that everyone must do their part to solve the crisis and ensure all people have a home. He stated no person should get a "free pass" simply because they live in an established neighborhood. Mr. Hart stated that this provision was a compromise that aimed to address concerns being heard from all sides. However, he noted that a previous regarding duplexes being appropriate on major streets was

discussed and arrived at during the Richmond 300 master plan process. He felt the Richmond 300 compromise was a better compromise that would allow for more housing units at greater density while preserving the interior of single-family neighborhoods. He even felt this Richmond 300 compromise would supply more housing than the proposed Housing Preservation Bonus, and urged the consultants and city staff to examine this more closely. Additionally, if duplexes were removed from residential districts, Mr. Hart reminded everyone that higher density development would still be achievable under the new code because zoning districts have been rewritten to allow for smaller lots.

Ms. Savenko commented on the graphic depicting the Housing Preservation Bonus provision, particularly regarding the scenarios that showed an attached duplex at the rear of an existing structure. She felt those development styles were a reasonable approach, and stated that back-to-back duplexes existed already in the Fan District. She also noted the significant environmental impact of preserving existing homes, rather than demolishing them and sending material to the landfill. Chair Greenfield agreed with Ms. Savenko's sentiment that this was a reasonable approach. She noted that an addition was constructed onto the back of a home in her neighborhood (doubling the square footage of the home), and yet, the addition cannot be seen from the street and is easily disguised.

Ms. Pechin recognized the importance of discussing the Housing Preservation Bonus provision but felt it would not have a major impact on housing availability in the city. Rather, she wanted to focus more attention and discussion on the higher-density zoning districts (for example, their development standards and how they are mapped throughout the city), and how they could facilitate easier housing development. Currently as proposed, she felt the draft development standards placed onerous requirements on developers and would make development difficult. She wanted to dive deeper into fixing those requirements. Vice Chair Lloyd agreed with Ms. Pechin, noting that most of the discussion thus far has focused on accommodating growth in established neighborhoods rather than the nodes and corridors outlined in Richmond 300.

Chair Greenfield invited Mr. Biberstein to continue the rest of his presentation. Mr. Biberstein explained the Sublot provision, which was intended to allow fee-simple sale of dwelling units or an undeveloped part of a lot to increase ownership opportunities. He explained that sublots differed from normal subdivisions, because development standards (like setbacks, lot width, and maximum dwelling unit count) would apply to the overall parent lot (not the individual sublots). He explained that the rules governing the sublot provision was still being refined.

Mr. Biberstein reviewed the provisions for contextual front yard setbacks, which would be calculated based on the existing setbacks of properties fronting the block and neighboring within 100 feet of the site. He also explained the newly-introduced contextual height provision, which would limit a structure to no more than 14 feet taller than the shortest of neighboring structures on the block.

Mr. Biberstein also explained changes to commercial uses in residential districts based on public feedback received. He explained that commercial uses would require conditional use approval in RD and RA districts, but small-scale commercial under 1,500 square feet would be permitted by right in RM districts. He also explained that provisions for the MX-3 district were modified to shape the district into a more limited, neighborhood-serving commercial zone.

Mr. Biberstein explained that maximum building coverage requirements were lowered in response to public feedback. The new maximum coverage requirements found in Draft 2 are closer to those found in today's existing zoning ordinance. Mr. Biberstein also explained that minimum side setbacks for detached structures were added to RA, RM-A and RM-B districts. Additionally, he explained that adjustments were made to the mapping of the RX, RA, and RD-C districts to resolve public concerns about incorrect mapping. He also explained that both MX-3 and MX-4 appeared in Draft 2, a decision that was made in response to public feedback about the need for both.

Mr. Biberstein explained that transitions standards with stepback requirements were introduced to address concerns about height standards. He also explained that some districts were remapped to less height-intensive districts. Mr. Biberstein explained that the mapping of the INS district was adjusted to

align more closely with the Richmond 300 Future Land Use Map, and that many places of worship were subsequently remapped as MX-3.

To address public concern over drainage and the potential loss of trees with added density and development, Mr. Biberstein explained that the landscaping requirements were updated and new Tree Canopy Standards were introduced to preserve the city's tree canopy and existing trees. Lastly, Mr. Biberstein explained that Chamberlayne Rd was mostly remapped to be RM-B and RM-C, with major intersections mapped as MX-4.

*Chair Greenfield, a few other Advisory Council members, and some city staff members left the present meeting to attend the Code Refresh 1<sup>st</sup> District Community Meeting. Vice Chair Lloyd presided over the meeting in the absence of Chair Greenfield.*

At the conclusion of Mr. Biberstein's presentation, Vice Chair Lloyd opened the floor for discussion. Dr. Pitt asked for clarification for why district names were changed and consolidation. Mr. Biberstein explained that the RA-B, RA-C, and RX-4 districts were consolidated into the newly created RM- districts in order to better communicate the maximum development potential as multi-unit residential buildings. He explained that the RX-6 and MX-6 districts were consolidated because of how similar the districts were in terms of massing and use allowances.

Rev. Dr. Credle sought clarification on how mapping churches as MX-3 might impact those organizations, and asked that the consultants explore a 'middle ground' that would offer flexibility while still preserving their institutional nature. Mr. Biberstein explained that the intent of applying MX-3 to places of worship was to create that middle ground solution. He summarized Code Refresh's evolving approach in considering places of worship, and was open to other ideas for how to treat them. Dr. Credle expressed concerns over a church being deemed non-conforming if it were to be zoned residential. Vice Chair Lloyd supported the decision to map these properties as MX-3 (as opposed to INS or the surrounding residential zoning district) because it perpetuated an equal treatment of all church-like structures, guaranteed commercial zoning rights to business owners currently operating commercial uses in former church spaces, and allowed flexibility for churches to be converted into multi-unit residential or commercial uses even when the surrounding context is a single-family residential pattern of development. Mr. Biberstein asked city staff if a working group would be formed to consider churches. Ms. Pitts explained that the High Quality Places Working Group could take a closer look at this. Dr. Credle expressed interest in participating in the working group and inviting other faith leaders to join so they could be part of the discussion. Ms. Pitts welcomed the idea of having a meeting with Dr. Credle's contacts, and also shared that the Planning Director recently spoke with a group of Baptist Ministers regarding this topic.

Ms. Pechin asked for recommendations on how Advisory Council members might best share their comments for Draft 2. Ms. Pitts suggested the most helpful methods would be to provide a redlined copy of the documents (as was previously done by Ms. Pechin), and continue to have conversations at the Advisory Council meetings. Ms. Pitts noted that not all comments would be incorporated into the final draft but would certainly be considered. In addition to those methods, Vice Chair Lloyd recommended also adding comments to the interactive draft map and documents online, and stressed the importance of providing a full set of written comments to city staff and the consultants. Vice Chair Lloyd reminded everyone that the Advisory Council was solely an advisory group that provided expertise-level insight and feedback. He stressed that the consultants ultimately answer to City staff, not the Advisory Council.

Mr. Bunn expressed concern over contextual setback and height requirements. He opposed how these requirements imposed limits on by-right multi-unit buildings that might be built near a single-family home within an already high-density RM- district.

Mr. Champine asked if the RA district allowed for only one dwelling unit per lot. Mr. Biberstein explained that the RA district followed the same allowances as the RD- districts, allowing for upwards of two dwelling units and a ADU with the Housing Preservation Bonus provision. Mr. Champine recommended that particular attention be given to how RA was applied in the Church Hill neighborhood. He was

concerned that wider parcels were inappropriately 'down-zoned' to RA, and noted that the consultants could review an online map comment placed around 33<sup>rd</sup> Street for more specifics. Mr. Biberstein explained that some parcels were remapped from RA to RD- districts between Draft 1 and Draft 2, in instances where existing zoning allowed for attached rowhomes but the built environment/ existing conditions revealed mostly detached houses.

Ms. Savenko commended the consultants on the introducing the subplot provisions because she felt it would encourage the development of starter homes. She asked if this idea was already being used in other cities and was curious about their results. Mr. Biberstein stated that the subplot approach was used by some places, though not very commonly. Mr. Colin Scarff (of the Code Studio consultant firm) stated that the concept originated out of Oregon, and that Charlottesville included subplot provisions in its zoning code. He said that more consideration was needed to address implementation (specifically, challenges around securing utilities access for sublots). Mr. Scarff indicated that sublots were successful in Oregon.

Dr. Pitt requested that time be allocated for a discussion of the draft map during the next Advisory Council meeting, particularly focusing on changes between the Draft 1 and Draft 2 maps (for example, where certain areas were designated for more density or less density). He also sought clarification on the Housing Preservation Bonus provisions and to which districts they were applied. Mr. Biberstein explained that the Housing Preservation Bonus could be used in the RD- and RA districts. The Housing Preservation Bonus would not have bearing on the RM- districts, as these districts would already allow two-unit development by-right.

Ms. Pechin requested that a series of maps be presented at the next Advisory Council meeting that show the location/mapping of each individual zoning category (for example, a citywide map only showing where the RA district is mapped, and so on) with key arterial roads. Ms. Mullen requested that the Major Residential Streets, Major Mixed Use Streets, and Great Streets from the Richmond 300 Master Plan also be shown on those maps requested by Ms. Pechin.

Mr. Wilson recommended that the Tree Canopy requirements should only apply to new development. While Mr. Wilson cherished trees, he was concerned about the implications of enforcement on existing properties, and feared that the requirements might be weaponized by disputing neighbors who don't see eye-to-eye. Mr. Biberstein noted the Applicability section. He also acknowledged the difficulty of enforcing the Tree Canopy and Landscaping requirements, noting that a tree could be planted to meet the requirements and then be cut down the following year. In those cases, the City may need to rely on neighbor complaints to trigger investigation and adequate enforcement of these provisions.

Regarding the subplot provisions, Mr. Hart suggested that the consultants consider if the 'condominium ownership structure' could accomplish the same goals and intent of the proposed subplot system, seeing that the condominium ownership structure already exists under current statutes.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Pitts announced that staff from the Office of Sustainability were present in the audience, and that they were originally supposed to present at the cancelled November Advisory Council meeting last month. She announced there would be more discussion about the Tree Canopy requirements and other incentives during the upcoming Thriving Environment Working Group, which Office of Sustainability staff would lead.

Vice Chair Lloyd adjourned the meeting at 6:29 P.M.

*The next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2026, at 4 P.M. in the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room at City Hall (900 E. Broad St, Richmond, VA 23219). The draft zoning map and draft code documents are available online and will remain open for public comment through February 15<sup>th</sup>.*