Richmond 300: Code Refresh
Advisory Council Meeting Notes

Date: April 8th, 2026, 4 P.M.
Location: City Hall, 5th Floor Conference Room
900 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219
Microsoft Teams (https://bit.ly/CodeRefreshAC)

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Attendance:

Members Present:	Elizabeth Greenfield, Andrew Bunn, Riley Champine, Phillip Hart, Preston Lloyd, Charles Menges, Melissa Savenko, Charlie Wilson, Casey Overton, Jennifer Mullen, Maritza Pechin, Bennie Gates
Members Absent:	Wayne Credle, Tiffany Gunn, Damian Pitt, Eric Mai, Brian White, Kendra Norrell, David Johannas, Latasha White, Councilwoman Ellen Robertson,
Staff Present:	Sr. Dep. Dir. Marianne Pitts (Department of Planning and Development Review), René Biberstein and Colin Scarff (Code Studio, consulting team representatives), Kyle Talente (RKG Associates), Tara Warden (Office of Sustainability)

CALL TO ORDER

Roll Call

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

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. Chair Greenfield said the February 2026 Meetings Notes were not ready, so no meeting notes were approved at the April meeting. Chair Greenfield also reminded members to speak loudly so those attending virtually are able to hear them and to also announce their name so those listening will know who's speaking.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Greenfield opened the floor to public comment.

Frank Robinson, resident of Union Hill/Church Hill area, on rent increases in the past 5 years, noted City presentations name changing demographics as the cause. They stated inflation has been overlooked. They cited purchasing value changes from 2020 to 2026 as 26.26% as evidence of inflation driving up housing prices. They opposed concessions to developers, voicing its improbability in reducing housing affordability. They request a concept of livability to be added to the zoning plan. Robinson stressed the inefficiency of city buses and proposed an idea of self-driving cars used in San Francisco. With islands of people, they worried homegrown businesses like drug sales and prostitution would be promoted.

Rich Souser, resident of the Bellevue neighborhood, on the residential detached category (RD-C), voiced opposition to draft 2 RD-C parcels, noting a stark change from existing R-5 designation, high building coverage, and lower tree canopies. They cited the RKG market analysis, noting RD-C would see more development than RD-A and RD-B. They voiced concerns about preserving neighborhood character and infrastructure capacity. They recommended removing the RD-C category in the next draft to better align with Richmond 300.

Daniella White, President of the Fan District Association, on overall Code Refresh, thanked the Council for their work on the zoning rewrite effort. They mentioned a detailed letter from the Fan District to be sent to the Mayor. They supported overall zoning reform but voiced concern about unintended consequences to neighborhoods. They request evaluating long-term impacts of zoning, especially zoning places of worship as MX-3. They voiced worries about density increases, recommending demolition and displacement protections for existing communities. They voiced concern about the lack of economic analysis on rezoning RA parcels to RM and MX, stressing the impact of rezoning on housing costs, property values, and community stability.

Mu Levine, resident of the Fan District, noted changes in their zoning from RX-6 to MX-6. They voiced concern about the change in designation and the impact on the neighborhood. They noted their southern border also becoming upzoned to mixed-use districts, potentially disrupting the walkability, diversity, and businesses in the community.

Copeland Casati, resident on Grace Street, stated their support for retrofits. They mentioned how retrofits prevent displacement, protect affordable housing, and preserve trees. They voiced appreciation to planners for supporting trees. They requested to maintain current unbuilt lot restrictions to protect natural resources.

Kathy Hamberg, resident on West Grace Street, on Code Refresh, thanked the Council for incorporating community input. They voiced concern about the definition of a family. They mentioned the need for limitations, especially for college students. However, they stated support for a larger definition of a family for multigenerational families. They noted West Grace Street's notoriety in the 1970s for rooming houses. They requested changing maximum units on RM-A parcels from 6 units to 3 or 4 to preserve the Fan and prevent 30 people from living in one home. They echoed remarks from the February meeting about shooting the golden goose. Hamberg stated a decrease in units would ensure the zoning rewrite is done right.

Ingrid Van Orden, resident of the First District, voiced opposition to chaotic development. They noted how city residents feel stressed by the development. They mentioned a lack of consideration for cars, parking, safety, and overcrowded schools. They noted a stark difference between Code Refresh and Richmond 300. They mentioned Richmond 300 and the need to preserve single family homes with sunlight, parking, and people they know. They recalled living in an integrated community in Atlanta, stating that Richmond neighborhoods could not effectively become integrated communities. Van Orden voiced confusion towards those who support Code Refresh. They stated the zoning rewrite relies on the price of houses dropping drastically or being sold well over affordability. They voiced disappointment in the zoning rewrite and hoped for public comments to change the plan.

Kearthy Hearn, resident on West Grace Street, on the height of West Broad Street, noted the 14-foot alley behind their house. They mentioned the new zoning to allow 6 story buildings behind their house. They noted a compromise with the City, allowing for 4 story buildings from Lombardy to Strawberry and 5 story buildings from Strawberry to Arthur Ashe. They requested for their neighborhood to be considered an Old and Historic District with the same limitations in Code Refresh. They appreciated the work and effort of the council and requested the council to keep West Grace Street height limitations in mind.

Barbara Terry, resident of the East End, on the enforcement and regulation of Special Use Permits (SUPs), voiced concerns over developers attempting to bypass local code and regulations. They argued that construction of larger homes in their neighborhood significantly altered their neighborhood character.

They recalled their neighboring large home towered over their home, not fitting the theme of their area of Church Hill. They stated the house prevented them from installing solar panels and included a gas line two feet from their fence. They went on to explain how the water drainage is aimed at their property, giving them water damage. Terry requested issues of drainage and matching neighborhood character to be resolved in the building permit stage. They also stated there was construction of a rooming house across the street and now the corporation replaced single family homes with multiunit homes. They expressed concern for displacement of long-time residents, noting a 400 dollar increase in their property taxes. They request the council to resolve the matter and respect the neighborhood's integrity.

Robert Franklin (virtual), member of the Southside Community Development Housing Corporation and Homes for All Our Neighbors Coalition, voiced support for Code Refresh. They noted that the affordable duplex proposal with 1,500 square feet provides neighborhoods with new, affordable housing opportunities and a tool to combat displacement. They cited a recent study by Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, stating there are zero census tracts in Richmond with naturally occurring affordable housing for 80% AMI. They stated that 60% of Richmond's housing is reserved for single-family homes while duplexes would fit well with the city's character. They felt housing projects are restricted by SUPs and the time required to go through the process is a burden. They note that Code Refresh provides an opportunity for housing professionals and organizations to create new home purchasing opportunities for new homebuyers.

Jackson Miller (virtual), resident, supported Code Refresh, emphasizing it as essential for Richmond's goals of affordability and climate action. They stated the zoning refresh is well established by database research and expert consensus. They mention that current zoning is the biggest obstacle standing in the way of new housing. Miller stated that Code Refresh is the biggest climate action the city can take. They cited statistics that transportation like cars account for 20% of emissions. They went on to explain how transportation is the biggest climate issue the City can affect. They suggested building as many houses as possible on public transit roads like Broad Street. They recalled how they now ride the Pulse and got rid of their car. Miller recommended lessening limitations on Broad Street, allowing for denser housing and thereby reducing emissions. They noted that concern for urban trees and grass fails to consider urban sprawl and its impact on emissions. They went on to mention that infill housing will increase Richmond's tax revenue by raising property taxes without the need for significant infrastructure constructure. They voiced concern for the average resident, worrying that Code Refresh will be watered down to appease wealthier residents. They cited a survey with most Richmond residents supporting more housing. They argued that the City has received disproportionately more negative feedback from older property owners. They noted changes from Draft 1 to Draft 2 which decreased the number of homes in the downtown area. Miller argued that younger residents and their friends now refrain from commenting on Code Refresh, believing their feedback will not be considered. They recommend reversing the changes from Draft 1 to Draft 2 that would reduce housing. They support the legalization of town homes and apartments in more areas. They also suggested looking at the duplex proposal made by Homes for All Our Neighbors.

At the end of the allotted 30 minutes, Chair Greenfield closed the public comment period.

COUNCIL RECAP AND MEETING INTRODUCTION

Ms. Marianne Pitts, Deputy Department Director of Planning & Development Review, provided a recap of the previous meeting held in March. They went over the discussion of development standards and the comments on the standards. They stated that comments and public feedback will be considered for draft 3. They mentioned the brief development scenarios presentation by Kyle Talente of RKG Associates, one of the City's subconsultants. They stated that Kyle Talente will join the council at the current meeting for questions about the development scenarios. They provided council members with a map of the subareas from the development scenarios. They also shared that Tara Warden from the Office of Sustainability would share information regarding tree canopy requirements.

Chair Greenfield questioned whether the development scenario analysis would be expanded to other areas and whether it fell within the consultant team's work.

Ms. Marianne Pitts affirmed that the consultant team's work would be expanded to do further analysis.

Melissa Savenko reiterated their question. They questioned whether there would be an economic analysis of the upzoning from residential attached (RA) to RM, RX, and MX.

DISCUSSION OF THE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS ANALYSIS

Kyle Talente, consultant with RKG Associates, responded to submitted questions regarding the development scenario analysis.

Talente began with a question about the boundaries of the study. They referenced the map of the subareas provided by Ms. Marianne Pitts. They stated that the map identifies the 6 subareas used in the study with an overlay of RA, RB, and RC. They stated that the overlay depicts the interaction of the RA, RB, and RC with the subareas. Talente continued on to explain how the subareas were identified. They responded that within Richmond, markets behave differently. They noted that averaging all the markets to one City average would be ineffective and a disservice. They stated that the 6 subareas were a compromise between the level of specificity of housing markets in Richmond and an effective analysis. They were fairly confident in the similarities within the 6 submarkets. In response to a follow up question regarding why real estate parameter boundaries were not used, Talente noted they looked at many factors such as existing development, socioeconomic, lot sizes, and market rate factors. They framed their analysis as a clear analysis with current data based on different realities of markets in Richmond.

Talente read the next question about how the presentation questions respond to an owner who wishes to split a lot or build additional units. They reminded council that Q1 was about splitting the lot side to side. They stated that very few lots could split the lot and the analysis revolved around the limited ability. They went on to explain how Q2 was focused on an investor perspective where the investor buys the property and builds units behind the principal unit. They reminded council that Q4 focused on the existing owner occupant purchasing a property to live in one of the units and build it. They stated that there was no significant difference between an investor or a homeowner building additional units. They stressed one caveat that homeowners have other non-financial considerations which makes them less likely to build additional units on their lot. They stated that the analysis focused on mathematical analysis, not the non-financial considerations like backyard size. However, they added that homeowners may be more likely to build ADUs to support family members or age in place with rental income.

Talente continued to the next question asking for data on the breakdown between owner occupied and renter occupied for each of RD-A, RD-B, and RD-C categories. They answered no, arguing that there are challenges to do so. They stated the need to compare the property assessment data, the mailing address of the property, and the mailing address of the owner. They mentioned that the data could be easily skewed by homeowners by placing their address in a P.O. box or a trust. They stated that their analysis shows that RD-A has fewer predicted conversions to rentals than in RD-B and in RD-B than RD-C, but the specific numbers cannot be determined. They mentioned that the analysis compares the value based under the new policy and the value of today.

They read the next question about whether lot coverage requirements were considered in the analysis. They affirmed that lot coverage was considered. They stated that Code Studio calculated the minimum lot requirements for RD-A, RD-B, and RD-C to be feasible which RKG then analyzed against the existing sizes of parcels. They stated that the comparison between minimum lot sizes and existing lot sizes was essential in determining development scenarios.

They moved on to the next question about the source of information for minimum lot size, dwelling lot size, and etc. They echoed their answer to the previous question for the source of information for minimum lot size. They stated that dwelling size simulated different sized full units and capped ADUs at

1000 sq. feet to be consistent with the community and respective sub area. They mentioned it would be impractical to examine each parcel for the largest ADU or new building.

They read the final question they received prior to the meeting. The question asked about the difference between an existing homeowner occupant, a prospective homeowner occupant, and an investor. They echoed their previous remarks, denoting Q2 and Q4 as the major difference between homeowners and investors. They explained how Q2 and Q4 control for either a homeowner living in one unit or not, impacting the financials like revenue.

Chair Greenfield opened the floor for ZAC members to ask remaining questions.

Melissa Savenko requested to see the geographic boundaries provided with street names for each of the 6 sub areas. They stated that the geographic boundaries would aid in understanding rationale for the division of each sub area. Chair Greenfield followed up, asking Ms. Marianne Pitts and Kyle Talente if there was a clickable map version of the sub areas. Talente responded they would provide a GIS-shaped file which the City could layer over GIS maps with street names. Ms. Marianne Pitts responded that the City would make it available.

Charles Menges questioned whether the reddish, tannish, bluish area on the map reflects the current residential detached districts or shrunk. Colin Scarff, Code Studio consultant, responded that yes, the colors reflect the residential detached districts. René Biberstein, Code Studio consultant, stated that the map reflects the proposed RD zoned parcels and mentioned there would be less RD parcels under the new zoning.

Charlie Wilson posed a question around the downzoning of R-6 districts to residential detached. René Biberstein responded that the downzoning decision occurred due to previous historical upzoning of areas that were primarily detached. Wilson followed up, asking about the Highland Park neighborhood. They recalled large Victorian houses with some in disrepair and some vacant lots. They voiced concern about the switch to RD-C limiting the possibility of development and sales of homes. However, they mentioned the current zoning allows for apocalyptic development, so they wondered whether the new zoning would be less feared thanks to increased limitations. They appreciated the analysis and data-driven evidence.

Phillip Hart questioned building size assumptions on slide 8 – “Methodology: Building size assumptions.” They requested more explanation on how the square foot values for each RD-A, RD-B, and RD-C were calculated. Kyle Talente responded that the numbers reflect averages under the new RD zoning boundaries. They stated how RD-A tends to be larger than RD-B and the values needed to reflect the size of the unit. They stated they were keeping in mind the existing neighborhood character. They stated the size of the unit fits into the math in terms of revenue per SF and cost per SF of housing. They also stated the revenue and cost then impacts the comparison of the units under different development scenarios. They added that the ADUs were capped at 1,000 SF as denoted in the zoning plan. Hart posed a follow up question about the RD-A and RD-B districts. They stated that the building size assumptions for RD-A and RD-B are conservative estimates. They wondered if the analysis underestimated the development pressure on RD-A and RD-B if new principal structures could be larger. Talente confirmed that yes, if building size assumptions for RD-A and B increased, the development pressure would increase. Hart posed a final question about slide 7 and using current market values. They voiced concern that market values would be significantly impacted by the incentive of development and thereby increase output. Kyle Talente responded using data from slide 9, stating that the new market value of the site was part of the analysis. They explained the mathematical analysis using an example calculation on slide 9. They emphasized the lower likelihood of a lot sold at current market value when the proposed rezoning increases market value. They further explained how the development scenarios model the impact of increased market values and increased output.

Andrew Bunn stated that the presentation was driven by market analysis and value increasing over time. They mentioned they hoped to see housing prices decrease or slow down dramatically. They questioned the ramifications if housing supply increases and value decreases. They wondered if Talente would

expect the annual rate of change to further decrease. Talente responded that the increase in housing would not go so far as to change supply and demand. They did not believe that the annual rate of change would further decrease. They went on to say the ADU 1,000 SF limit would cause development of smaller units, providing more housing. Talente stated that there would not be enough new development to reverse value and appreciation.

Bunn stated their takeaway from the analysis and the discussion of the 4 questions to provide diminishing returns due to minute annual rates of change. They stated that current analysis contains the necessary data, and further analysis does not seem necessary. Maritza Pechin echoed Bunn's remarks. Chair Greenfield stated that many council members shared Bunn's feelings.

Charlie Wilson posed a question to Melissa Savenko and their realtor background. Wilson questioned if 300 more parcels were available in Richmond every year, would escalation clauses and bidding wars be less likely. They wondered if people having more choice in buying houses would decrease pressure and help with affordability. Melissa Savenko responded that 300 more houses each year would be immaterial. They further explained that many families are moving into Richmond from higher cost-of-living cities and buying homes. They expressed frustration at the lack of starter homes. They stated that homes need to be smaller and on smaller lots. They requested more RC (residential cottage) zoning which would address starter homes. They stated that using RC zoning only for mobile homes would be a missed opportunity. Wilson mentioned that lot width size and RC zoning was discussed in the council a year and a half ago. They stated that Savenko had not yet joined the council during that discussion. Savenko echoed their previous remarks on 300 homes being immaterial. They stated that there would be low likelihood the 300 parcels are sold at the desired price point. They stated that developers would look to sell homes in more valuable areas with higher sales prices.

Chair Greenfield stated that the ZAC requests to revisit RC zoning and manufactured homes and its role in later drafts to which Ms. Marianne Pitts agreed.

Andrew Bunn stated that ADUs are the target starter homes and make up a tiny portion of the predicted development of parcels. Bunn wondered if ADUs should be made by-right and expanded. Savenko stated there are issues with ADUs. They mentioned the difficulty in financing ADUs and how homeowners often build ADUs for themselves. They also stated that they found sublots interesting but saw issues around them. They stated that Richmond has infrastructure issues of bringing sewage and water lines to ADUs. Maritza Pechin remarked that it would be possible, but the homeowner would have to pay for it. They echoed Savenko's remarks that it would be expensive. They wondered if there are parcels which have the zoning to be small enough to drive down the cost. They stated that there are bigger economics at play than possible to be resolved in the zoning ordinance. Savenko agreed with Pechin and stressed the need for smaller lots and smaller houses. Pechin agreed.

Charles Menges stated that most of Code Refresh is based on unrealistic expectations. They supported Savenko's idea of starter homes. They wondered if there are areas in the city where developers can buy land and create starter homes. Savenko stated that building these starter homes would be south of the river because land is less valuable in the Chesterfield annex. Chair Greenfield echoed Savenko's remarks and reminded the council to be mindful of financing and the role of the bank. Preston Lloyd responded to Menges' question. They stated that land and construction costs play big roles in where development occurs. They mentioned the economies of scale for infill housing and how the land is the biggest factor. They stated that the available land at the appropriate scale is from the Chesterfield annex, but the area lacks infrastructure and has overcrowded schools. They stated that other infill lots in the City are not large enough for developers to buy and build houses. Charles Menges questioned why there is no focus on expanding infrastructure to meet the demand for land south of the river. They requested moving infrastructure funds in the City towards building new infrastructure. Maritza Pechin responded that the zoning ordinance does not focus on infrastructure. They noted that the Master Plan attributes City development to the zoning ordinance and the City budget. They stated that the Planning Commission reviews DPW's Capital Improvement Budget before City Council to ensure it aligns with the Master Plan. They emphasized that the two tools of the City budget and zoning act in response to one another, not

perfect alignment. Menges remarked that the zoning ordinance is falsely advertised as a solution to all the issues.

Preston Lloyd stated that the zoning ordinance is just a tool. They went on to say the ordinance is the most powerful tool to align the objectives of development, infrastructure, and efficient movement of the market. They noted the best way to use the tool is to limit regulatory burdens on development. They referenced Richmond 300 and the need to focus on nodes and corridors. They stated that the nodes have infrastructure but their land costs significantly more. They further stated that the zoning ordinance is not a one-size fits all document but still requires their effort and precision.

Melissa Savenko questioned why the focus on the zoning ordinance is not on nodes and corridors. They wondered why duplexes plus ADUs are emphasized. They recommended upzoning the areas only on nodes and corridors to drive development. Maritza Pechin argued that they wouldn't like to focus only on those areas. They stated that SUPs are received around the edges of single-family areas. They supported focusing more energy on corridors. They mentioned that the ordinance allows developers to build in a financeable but respectable manner. However, they worried that the regulations in the ordinance will add administrative burden and increase expenses for builders, slowing down construction.

Chair Greenfield asked Ms. Marianne Pitts if someone doing small development at the infill scale could speak about the cost of construction. They stated that the ZAC could write questions for a small-scale developer to answer.

Melissa Savenko mentioned that Charlie Wilson has some experience with small-scale infill lots. They stated that Savenko themselves has experience with infill lot projects in their neighborhood.

Charlie Wilson stated that encouraging starting homes is not within the zoning ordinance. They mentioned that a unit size maximum for a dwelling may be useful in the future. They recalled Oak Grove and Bellemeade and intentional downzoning as a means of racism. They recommended upzoning the node to rectify for past mis-zoning. They suggested density bonuses as a possible policy as well.

Ms. Marianne Pitts remarked that they appreciated the comments about corridors and nodes.

Riley Champine questioned whether the analysis would drive up assessment values even if predicted development does not occur. They voiced support for balancing starter homes and increased housing while balancing assessment costs. They questioned whether models exist for the land values. Melissa Savenko suggested that Champine google academic studies related to land values. They stated that yes, land values will be driven up in areas where development occurs. They mentioned driving up land values as a goal of the ordinance in increasing City revenue. Ms. Marianne Pitts responded, referencing a conversation with the City assessor. They stated that property values do not automatically increase. They noted that as development occurs, the taxes increase, not necessarily just due to upzoning. Maritza Pechin commented that homeowners want property value to go up to make more profit when selling. Riley Champine voiced concern about affording to stay in their current house if taxes rise. Maritza Pechin responded that when land values go up, the City must document the change. They stated that there are pros and cons to the increase in value.

Andrew Bunn, on anti-displacement measures, stated that tax-based solutions to anti-displacement are beyond the scope of zoning.

Chair Greenfield wrapped up conversation on the development scenarios. They stated that further topics for discussion like RC and diminishing rates of return may be submitted to staff as draft 3 is composed.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF THE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS ANALYSIS – TREE CANOPY REQUIREMENTS

Office of Sustainability Presentation – Tree Canopy Minimums

Tara Warden, Sustainability Manager for the Office of Sustainability, began their presentation on tree canopy minimums. They underscored the importance of urban trees as infrastructure for heat island reduction, stormwater management, property value, and public health. They noted access to tree canopies as a health equity issue. They stated Richmond's decrease in Citywide canopy coverage from 42% in 2014 to 32% in 2021. They cited a paragraph from Richmond 300 which calls for 60% citywide tree canopy by 2037. They stated the need for private properties including tree canopies to meet this requirement. They provided the council with information on 9 surrounding localities which require canopy minimums. They spotlighted canopy requirements in Falls Church and Charlottesville. They emphasized the issue of enforcing tree canopies until their 20-year maturation date. As a potential solution, Warden posited Charlottesville's tree removal permit requirements.

Warden stated that a Virginia Tech study on Fairfax County found a significant impact of tree canopy requirements. They underscored how development groups easily met the canopy requirements and 16% exceeded the requirements by their 10-year compliance check.

Warden provided insight into how state standards were applied in Code Refresh and mentioned draft 3's inclusion of an 8% canopy preservation incentive.

Warden homed in on tree canopy requirement details such as preservation incentive details and the in-lieu fee tree canopy bank. They stated the requirements for using either policy. For the in-lieu fee tree canopy bank, they named the 3 situations: on-site trees restrict development intensity, do not meet health standards, and will be harmed by construction activities. They listed the draft policy recommendations identified via peer city research. They stated 6 recommendations: define and credit canopy precisely, name reference texts in the ordinance, establish the tree canopy fund, prohibit invasive and problem species, build in an existing tree preservation bonus, and plan for enforcement mechanism. They concluded the presentation and welcomed the council to ask any questions.

Charles Menges voiced concern about the In-Lieu Fee Tree Canopy Bank, worrying about the first situation of trees restricting the development intensity. They opposed allowing developers to cut down trees simply because they impede with the zoning district. Tara Warden responded that the point was being debated. They stated that they could not utilize lot coverage instead and that the state law utilizes the restricted development intensity clause.

Andrew Bunn stated that the zoning code had a great opportunity to defer to universal consensus on best practices. They emphasized the diversity of the 9 strong cities which utilize the tree canopy minimums. They strongly recommend following the proposed tree canopy minimums which match the 9 localities and seem expertly proven.

Preston Lloyd, on tree preservation, stated that northern Virginia ordinances are not low impact for the development community. They mentioned that the regulations pose design restrictions and entitlement risk, especially when they conflict with new housing units. They requested the council to be candid about the tradeoffs and added costs for preserving trees. They highlighted significant differences between the 9 localities, specifically Fairfax and its existing forested areas. They supported the ordinance but felt the regulation would not be easy to impose. They questioned the tradeoff between developing transit and preserving tree canopy.

Tara Warden, on burden, stated that the canopy bank accounts for the hardship of maintaining trees. They further explained how the canopy bank follows state code. Preston Lloyd asked if the developers would face no costs to maintain trees. Tara Warden negated, mentioning there are costs to developing in Richmond. Preston Lloyd stated that adding more costs to development poses another burden to building housing. Tara Warden argued that the canopy requirements would be an upfront cost then satisfied for the next 20 years.

Charlie Wilson, on the 60% tree canopy goal, asked how many trees must be planted to hit the 60% mark. Warden referenced an analysis by Charlottesville on their required number of trees. They stated that Charlottesville needed to plant more than 3600 trees annually to hit their 45% goal. Warden reinforced that Richmond's current 32% tree canopy is nowhere near the desired 60%. Wilson proposed an alternate strategy to incentivize tree preservation. They suggested a monetary incentive for homeowners to plant certain species of trees. They highlighted the limited parcels undergoing redevelopment and subject to the tree canopy requirements. They maintained that a homeowner incentive to tree preservation provides an avenue for tree planting on private properties. They voiced strong support for the 60% tree canopy goal but worried if the proposed policy effectively achieves it. Tara Warden stated that the community initiative Cool the City gives away free trees and gift certificates for planting. They stated that hitting the 60% tree canopy goal is a multiple policy approach.

Maritza Pechin questioned if the Virginia Tech study on Fairfax policies also included programs and community initiatives like Richmond's. They wondered if the analysis isolated which policy most effectively increased tree canopy. Pechin calculated their own property's tree canopy requirement under the new proposal. They mentioned being 60 SF away from the requirement. They voiced hesitancy in tree canopy requirements as homeowners like themselves do not want many trees in their backyard. They asked if a tree on the corner of their property would count towards the tree canopy requirements of surrounding property. Tara Warden corrected that tree canopies do not look specifically at property lines, noting that a tree planted in Pechin's backyard would count towards Pechin's requirement. Pechin inquired about tree maintenance on the neighboring property. Warden noted that tree canopy enforcement would require increased staffing to prevent maintenance issues.

Jennifer Mullen, on payment in-lieu, asked about the logistics of the fund. They requested that Warden share their plans for the fund. They wondered how effective a fund would be if Richmond lacks enough public property to plant enough trees for the 60% quota. Warden referenced the state code. They stated that the code allows the City to use funding to plant trees in areas with limited tree canopy like redlined neighborhoods. They also added that funding could be given to community partners to plant trees. They stressed that the infrastructure for distributing the funds already exists, the money itself must be collected. Mullen followed up, questioning if the current plan lays out locations for the trees. They asked if the City and community-based partners (CBOs) have established an agreement on enforcement. Warden responded to the first question, referencing Richmond Tree Plan and its analysis on gaps in the tree canopy in the public right-of-way (ROW). They noted that the Cool the City Initiative requires trees to be planted in the ROW. They stated that the urban forest master plan listed further protocols to be initiated in tandem with the tree canopy requirements.

Bennie Gates questioned if Richmond Public Schools could be involved in the program. They underscored the need to educate students on the importance of trees. Tara Warden responded that the Cool the City Initiative includes an educational component.

Charles Menges, on canopy loss, questioned how 200 acres of canopy were lost. They asked what the current state of the City was and whether tree canopy continues to be lost. Tara Warden referenced a LiDAR study to be published in fall 2026 which would indicate current trends. They predicted it to be a downward trend from 2014 to 2026. They referenced an analysis on net gains and losses in tree cover from 2014 to 2021. They broke down how many acres of tree cover were gained and lost over pervious and impervious surfaces. They noted that the majority of tree loss occurs in Southside. Menges asked for more clarity on the tree cover change analysis slide. Warden provided insight into the definition of tree loss, explaining how 99 acres of trees were replaced with pervious surfaces while 228 were replaced by impervious. They highlighted the net change in tree cover to be a loss of 199 acres.

Charlie Wilson worried that the urban tree canopy status was misleading. They stated that major development does not account for the 4th district and its tree cover loss. Warden explained how the 4th

District is already wooded, so any loss in trees showcases significant loss. They clarified the figure as a trend map of tree loss, not a tree canopy gap map.

Chair Greenfield voiced concern about the maintenance of trees on private property. They stressed the cost to trim and nurture trees and how some homeowners and commercial areas oppose the maintenance. They support preservation and planting of trees but wonder how enforcement will occur. They stated that the City must assume responsibility for nurturing trees. They questioned if failure to maintain trees would be considered a violation of the zoning ordinance. Bennie Gates recalled their mother's difficulty maintaining trees due to hurricanes and weather. They mentioned how the trees were not replaced and the home feels warmer. They connected their mother's story to other homeowners who do not plant trees, stressing its harm to the common good.

Riley Champine voiced strong support for tree preservation. They advocated for the proposed method, appreciating a better mechanism to fund urban forestry. They conceded that the developer would face a burden but stressed the importance of forestry.

Charlie Wilson differentiated between developers and residents building additions. They mentioned that the proposal does not address simply developers. They voiced concern about the requirements being difficult to accomplish and slowing down construction. They recommended simplifying the policy to reduce administrative burden yet remain effective. Maritza Pechin mentioned that the applicability of the standards in table 4.11 does not list when tree canopy requirements are needed. They stated that the table should list when the canopy requirements are needed.

Chair Greenfield thanked Tara Warden for her presentation and responses to council's questions. They voiced the council's support for tree canopies but underscored the importance of perfecting the policy.

Chair Greenfield clarified the timeline for the ZAC. They stated that the next meeting would list the remaining meetings and agendas. Ms. Marianne Pitts stated that draft 3 of Code Refresh may be released in May but no official date has been set.

Bennie Gates inquired about tree giveaways. Melissa Savenko stated they would share the details with Ms. Marianne Pitts so that the ZAC could receive the information.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Greenfield adjourned the meeting at 6:26 P.M.