Richmond 300: Code Refresh Advisory Council Meeting Notes

Date: September 9, 2026, 4 P.M.
Location: City Hall, 5th Floor Conference Room
900 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Attendance:

Members Present: Andrew Bunn, Riley Champine, Bennie Gates, Elizabeth Greenfield, Tiffany Gunn (late), Pilip Hart, Preston Lloyd, Eric Mai, Charles Menges, Jennifer Mullen, Casey Overton (late), Maritza Pechin (late), Damian Pitt, Melissa Savenko, Brian White, Charlie Wilson

Members Absent: Wayne Credle, Ellen Robertson

CALL TO ORDER

Roll call

Chair Greenfield called the meeting to order at 4:05 P.M. Chair Greenfield called the roll.

Chairmans comments

Chair Greenfield welcomed and 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 Meeting Notes

Philip Hart motioned to approve the April 2026 meeting notes, seconded by Andrew Bunn. After Council vote, the April 2026 meeting notes were approved, unanimously.

Philip Hart motioned to approve the May 2026 meeting notes, seconded by Andrew Bunn. After Council vote, the May 2026 meeting notes were approved, unanimously

Philip Hart motioned to approve the June 2026 meeting notes, seconded by Andrew Bunn. After Council vote, the June 2026 meeting notes were approved, unanimously

Public comment

Chairman Greenfield opened the floor to public comment.

Annika Schumm (HOME of VA; Homes for All of Our Neighbors Coalition) thanked Council; expressed concern that Draft 3 removes duplex and single-family zones contrary to Richmond 300/City Plan; urged revisions benefiting the broadest number of residents; noted a developer driven plan would differ.

Casandra Zedler from Fulton (7th/8th District) supports duplexes/ADUs to expand housing; links accessibility with affordability; says the draft removes/complicates these; urges simpler by-right rules and a decision tree for conditions and setbacks; notes that the draft's complexity hinders meaningful comment.

Ben Campbell addressed the Hermitage site on Northside. He expressed concern that in the 3rd draft of Code Refresh, the Hermitage is proposed to be zoned RM-C which appears to be an attempt to legalize the proposed redevelopment of the property with a 4-story building. He expressed concern with the future of this site as it is the entrance to the residential area and has historic significance and shared concern about the impacts of new development on traffic.

Kathy Hanberg asked why one house per block designated RM-C is; referenced a 2020 agreement and 5-year plan on building heights; supported conducting a light/shadow study; and offered comments on Code Refresh.

Copeland Casati stated Code Refresh—Draft 3 conflicts with Richmond 300 plan and harms jobs, dollars, and community health; cited lack of process/trust vs. prior drafts; requested objective analyses (water/sewer capacity, parking); opposed blanket zoning and land disposition without proffers, warning of rent/displacement; urged solar envelope standards.

Thomas Courtney (Floyd Grove Sheppard LLC) described by-right development impacts; cited a warehouse built by-right on Grove in a residential area without an SUP/public comment; neighbors raised environmental, permitting, traffic, screening, and compatibility concerns; opposed expanding by-right in Code Refresh; expressed concerns regarding the reclassification of properties owned by the VMFA in Draft 3 after receiving comments during Draft 1 and 2. The Chair stopped Mr. Courtney from continuing his oral comments. Additional written comments are attached.

Sleeves expressed support for Code Refresh, citing expanded opportunities for residents and the city, and appreciation for modernized zoning.

Kevin Randesi thanked the Commission; supports one primary + one accessory (ADU) per parcel; requested infrastructure impact review (parking, aging water/sewer, electric grid); proposed by-right live-work developments based on size/intensity and noted hope for internal-connection requirement between workspace and residence.

Suzanne Keller urged review of the ADU ordinance; warned rental ADUs may harm neighbors; raised density/impervious surface and Northside drainage (water in basements/crawlspaces); said supporting Code Refresh literature is contested; expressed displacement concerns.

Kurt Hardy said proposed mixed-use districts could allow a microbrewery; asked if noncontroversial mixed-use provisions (consistent with Drafts 1–2) can advance separately if broader updates need more time.

Frank Robinson (Union Hill Civic Association) raised three concerns about Code Refresh: affordability (no low-income/ownership options), environmental impacts, and parking.

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

Meeting Introduction by Mayor Danny Avula

Chairman Greenfield introduced Mayor Avula, who praised the Council's hard work and achievements.

COUNCIL RECAP AND MEETING INTRODUCTION

Marianne Pitts reviewed the last ZAC meeting.

Chair Greenfield noted that this is the final meeting for this item and a presentation on Draft 3 will be shared with the Planning Commission.

Presentation on Draft 3

PDR Director Kevin Vonck presented on Draft 2 to Draft 3 changes. The presentation can be found here.

Questions and comments:

Eric Mai asked about Code Refresh impacts on immigrant and intergenerational households, noting unintended consequences for homes with multiple adult occupants; raised EV charging access in multi-unit/mixed-use housing; and urged expanded resident parking infrastructure across public and private sectors.

Maritza Pechin and Brian White expressed concerns about the EV charging standards for parking lots and garages.

Melissa Savenko questioned the contextual basis for numeric standards (e.g., 1,200-sq-ft ADU cap regardless the size of the lot) and whether height/coverage limits could incentivize teardowns to build to the maximum envelope plus an ADU.

Kevin Vonck responded that coverage incentives exist but do not expect a significant increase in demolitions and observed no major difference between citywide and residential areas in this regard.

Damian Pitt emphasized clarifying current vs. proposed allowed uses; cited supply-side housing research; distinguished housing affordability from affordable housing policy; questioned Richmond 300-unit needs (35k → 50k) and whether supply-side solutions will meet them; warned of suburban sprawl if alternatives aren't provided.

Charles Menges cautioned against modeling neighborhoods after the Fan; objected to ADU size increases (from ~500 sq ft in 2023 to 1,200 sq ft); noted Draft 2 sought to avoid 3 units/lot, while Draft 3 allows duplexes (2 units); raised sublot concerns; and opposed nonresidential uses (boarding houses, fraternities, restaurants, markets) entering single-family neighborhoods via CUPs.

Melissa Savenko referenced Georgetown Poverty Law Center research on six "high-road" metros, cautioning that supply-side production alone may not meet needs; urged family-oriented rentals; warned sublots and increasing ADU size to 1,200 sq ft could spur teardowns in protected neighborhoods; questioned affordability goals if naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) is lost.

Eric Mai stated zoning/approvals hinder affordability—costly and slowed by density-related neighborhood concerns; advocated expanding by right development and noted zoning is not a preservation tool.

Andrew Bunn reiterated affordability concerns; praised increased tree coverage and shifting high-vehicular uses to conditional/special use to manage traffic; opposed reducing corridor focus (e.g., Pulse/TOD); urged reinstating MX-7/MX-5 where appropriate.

Riley Champagne noted growing interest in alternative living patterns; welcomed CUPs and the ability to build small homes beyond the single-family, car-dependent default; supported corner cafés and neighborhood general stores, suggesting higher-than-expected demand for these uses.

Philip Hart stated the draft is moving in the right direction but requested more time to discuss lot types. He flagged wording/language concerns, noting design overlay districts are a good idea but that stakeholder input into the draft text was limited. Regarding Old & Historic Districts, he observed a lack of historic-advocate representation on Council and urged outreach, expressing hope that Code Refresh will support preservation.

Bennie Gates expressed concern about encampments near Rosie's Casino on Midlothian, called the houseless crisis disheartening, and urged action in this corridor.

Advisory Council Discussion of the Draft Administrative Regulations

Charlie Wilson noted a significant change affecting BZA while Charlie Menges stated many special exceptions are now moot under current zoning; and commended staff for anticipating where relief may be needed.

Preston Lloyd agreed with Charlie Wilson's remarks and requested implementation clarity for Code Refresh regarding the effective date upon Council adoption, the staff ramp-up/training timeline, and transition rules for applications currently under review versus those to be reviewed under the new code.

Marianne Pitts stated the City Attorney's Office is reviewing an implementation window—currently discussing 90 days post-adoption—but details are not yet finalized.

Preston Lloyd recommended adopting a clear transition policy, referencing recent codes adopted in other localities (e.g., Chesterfield): applications filed before a cutoff date follow the current code and those after should be reviewed under Code Refresh to avoid confusion.

ADJOURNMENT

As this was the last meeting, there was no follow-up needed for additional meetings. Chair Greenfield thanked everyone for their time and service on the Zoning Advisory Council.

Public Comment at 9/9/2026 Zoning Advisory Committee Meeting by Thomas Courtney at ~4:15 PM

Good evening. My name is Thomas Courtney representing Floyd Grove Sheppard LLC.

I want to speak briefly about what “by-right development” can mean in practice, because my neighborhood has already experienced the future outcome of Code Refresh.

Along Grove Avenue, a warehouse was constructed on residential land - by right. The existing special use permit didn't even apply. Throughout that process, neighbors repeatedly raised questions about zoning, environmental review, permitting, traffic, screening, and compatibility with the surrounding homes. Yet the process consistently seemed designed to move forward, rather than first asking whether it was appropriate for the neighborhood.

That experience matters as the City considers expanding by-right development through Code Refresh.

I am particularly concerned by the late reclassification of additional residential properties loosely owned by the VMFA along Grove Avenue, including property operating as a bed-and-breakfast. Residents commented on these same properties during Draft 1 and Draft 2, only to see significant classifications appear days before Draft 3 was published. That does not create confidence that public comment is meaningfully influencing the outcome.

My experience with Mr. Lloyd and entities he represents has reinforced that concern. After I raised legitimate questions of public interest, his clients asserted private trespass restrictions against me based based upon false accusations.

—-- At this point I was interrupted by the electronic meeting host and then muted advising that comments related to members of the ZAC are not permitted (or similar) —--

Whatever the legal merits of those actions, that experience reflects an aggressive approach to development and public scrutiny that should concern anyone considering rules that reduce discretionary review.

The City should also provide much greater transparency regarding the interests and professional relationships of members of the Code Refresh Advisory Committee. Potential conflicts should not have to be researched by members of the public.

If public participation is going to matter, the City must justify all late stage zoning changes to the map, and ensure that by-right development does not become a mechanism for avoiding meaningful public review.

Thank you for your time.