



RVA First District

CM Andrew Breton

804-646-5936

www.linktree.com/rvafirstdistrict

First District Special Use Permits (SUPs)

Updated as of January 5th, 2026. This document may not include ALL SUPs in the District.

If you are not sure about the process of an SUP, [here](#) is a helpful document.

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Read a presentation on SUPs made by the Dept of Planning, Development & Review [here](#)

We continue to see numerous Special Use Permits in our district. Each of these projects, in order to receive an exemption from the standard zoning allowances, must meet a standard that it improves the neighborhood and helps us reach our goal of having a beautiful, livable, and more inclusive city.

Understandably, with our neighborhood already so good, it can be difficult to imagine how much any change would constitute an improvement. But if, through community discussions and careful considerations, a project can welcome a greater number of families and businesses to the neighborhood while retaining the neighborhood's historic charm and beauty, then it is a welcome addition.

I have the responsibility of casting a consequential vote on these and other projects in the city. I believe the city needs to find a balance between a few important principles that have tension between them.

Firstly, the city, and our neighborhood as a part of it, needs to welcome more families into it. I believe this is important because countless families are unable to find anywhere in the city where they can move. This is due to a housing shortage that is greatly impacting Richmond. We are lucky that we have a spot already, and I don't think we should make it our goal to exclude others from joining us.

But secondly, we mustn't create a negative living environment for existing or new residents. We must do what we can to ensure that we have green spaces (public and private), that the homes we build will be pleasant to live in, and that the city retains its historic charm, which contributes to our quality of life.

Here are some updates on a few Permits currently under discussion with the city:

Park & Tilden - Empty lot for two years, possibly being built after all

At Park & Tilden is an empty double lot where once stood a single detached home. The home was demolished (first), and then a contentious SUP process resulted in a permit for 4 attached homes on this double-corner lot. However, for two years, the property was left vacant and unmaintained, and the building permits were never filed. The property is currently up for sale. Generally, a Special Use Permit conveys with a sale, but in this case, the permit was set to expire in September.

I have heard from a local resident that, just before the expiration, another developer submitted building permits to the city to fulfill the SUP. This could mean that the SUP lives on, and the property could be sold to this new developer to complete the project. I have heard that the new developer intends to start quickly, but might split the 4 homes into two construction phases.

If the project does in fact get finally built as approved, it will not require any further Council approval.

My Response:

There are many negative opinions and feelings about this parcel, and about the unnecessary demolition and the SUP that was awarded on it. And leaving the property unbuilt and unmaintained has also been an eyesore and a nuisance to the neighbors.

It will at least end the chapter of this poorly-maintained vacant lot. Converting the lot into a permanent green space would have required someone to purchase the very expensive land. And there sadly is no way to un-demolish the perfectly good home that was previously on the property. Council Member Jordan's anti-demolition legislation that I co-patroned via the Land Use committee last month will help to reduce unwarranted demolitions by increasing penalties.

Henry Place Townhomes - The "Historic Farmhouse on Grove"

The applicant and the neighbors have agreed on the basics of a new design. Rather than two sideways rows of townhomes, the new design features a combination of duplexes and single family homes, consistent with feedback from neighbors. The new design will undergo review by city departments before coming back to Council and Planning Commission.

Next to the Malvern Manor apartment complex on Grove is a historic home with a large lot where Lafayette would have intersected Grove. This same lot backs up to the neighborhood of Henry Place, which consists of modestly sized one-story homes.

Center Creek Builders was proposing a large number of townhouses in this lot as part of what they describe as a mission of creating well-designed city homes at lower price points. Though

the very first proposals involved developing the whole plot, the revised project proposal later included the preservation of that original historic home, based on overwhelming community preference.

The project went through numerous iterations before an initial hearing at Planning Commission. Despite the broad opposition from neighbors at the time, that application was approved by the Commission.

My Response:

However, I shared the concerns of the neighbors that the design was not compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. I insisted that they continue to discuss and revise the designs before bringing them to Council or else they would not have my support. I certainly hate prolonging the process, which adds to expenses and delays the availability of new housing, but a project of this size requires that enough time be spent to achieve the best results.

After some more conversations, the applicants have returned with a more significant revision to their layout. This layout is consistent with proposals from the residents that they said they would support. While it unfortunately will provide fewer homes than the earlier proposal, it is still an eleven-home plan. Most importantly, it creates these new homes in a manner that is architecturally harmonious with the surrounding context. The new plan includes more green space, and adds no new curb-cuts.

I am eager to build many more homes in the District, and I believe we will make more progress more quickly if we respect the context of the neighborhood. This may mean less ambitious projects but it will spark less opposition and result in an outcome we can all be proud of.

Berrington Court Townhomes (behind Grove Eye Care)

The application is for 17 townhomes in the area between Thompson and 195, between Floyd and Grove Avenues. The Museum District Association has been engaged in discussions to ensure the designs are compatible with the surrounding context. The plans I've seen include garage parking and a reasonable number of street trees. Given the isolated nature of this property, I am not expecting any concerns or opposition.

My Response: I am glad to hear about the addition of 17 new homes in the district. I am also glad to see the plans include improvements to the crosswalks around Floyd and Thompson, adding bumpouts to reduce the crossing distance.

7th Street Church (Malvern & Grove)

A proposal has been submitted to redevelop the property of the 7th Street Church at Malvern and Grove. The property is owned by the congregation, which is considering options for its future - including relocation of the congregation and the sale of the property to create more housing.

The process is being driven by the congregation, with a set of objectives that includes furthering the church's mission and ensuring that the property is used in a way that aligns with the community. As the pastor explained to me, the maintenance backlog of the existing building is immense, but they do hope to preserve aspects of the historic structure, and leave a positive legacy in the neighborhood.

The proposal submitted is an elegant design, with a combination of townhomes fronting the streets, and a condo building along the alley. The proposal preserves mature street trees and preserves and repurposes a section of the original church building.

The neighbors expressed concerns about traffic and parking, and the neighboring Greek Church has also raised concerns about their private alleyway traffic, and close proximity between Greek Festival activities and potential new residents.

My Response:

There is still plenty of time to discuss the merits and concerns of this proposal and to request revisions based on community and administrative feedback.

I myself believe the community would benefit from preserving as much of the historic church structure as possible, but there is no law requiring that the structure be preserved, and there are realities of the cost and feasibility of repurposing old buildings. I met with Historic Richmond to better understand the factors that impact preservation.

The neighbors' questions around the proposed parking impacts warrant a close look too. The ratio of units to dedicated spaces is ambitious. And while it makes me really sad to think of rejecting homes simply due to car parking concerns, at certain project sizes the question is legitimate.

Still, we can't forget the city's goal for more housing, the private development rights of the property owner (the church), and the church's mission of service that a property sale would support.

This is a high profile property at the corner of two major streets, with access to bus routes and bike lanes, and within walking distance of Carytown. A great project here could be a wonderful addition to the West End.

1705 Commonwealth - Lavender Hill Coworking and Event Space

The Special Use Permit application, as currently submitted, is not supported due to its potential impact on the immediately adjacent residential neighbors. Since the initial submission, the applicant has made updates to the proposal that address Planning staff's concerns regarding enforceability. As a result, the Planning staff has issued a recommendation of approval. The application will now proceed to the Planning Commission for a recommendation, and, if approved, will then move forward to City Council for consideration.

This is a small property near the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Broad Street, located in a TOD-1 (Transit-Oriented Development) zoning district. While TOD-1 allows for a wide range of commercial uses and significant building height, it also places specific limitations on outdoor entertainment when a site is within 100 feet of residentially zoned properties. This restriction was reaffirmed and strengthened in the 2024 zoning updates and remains an active protection in the zoning code.

Under existing zoning, it could also continue to function as an indoor venue or community space, including hosting musical or recreational activities indoors. The SUP request seeks approval to allow outdoor events in the rear yard, some of which would include amplified music and larger gatherings.

Although the applicant is an experienced event planner and capable of managing events professionally, abutting residents have consistently raised concerns about noise impacts from outdoor musical entertainment. These concerns align directly with the zoning code's intent to protect residential livability when mixed-use activity occurs nearby.

The Broad Street corridor is a busy commercial area where activity and foot traffic are expected, and concerns related to traffic or general activity are not, on their own, a basis for denial in TOD-1 zoning. However, the zoning code clearly distinguishes between indoor activity, which is broadly permitted, and outdoor entertainment, which is restricted when adjacent to residential properties due to health and quality-of-life impacts.

My Response

I am centering this discussion on the experience and protections afforded to the abutting residential neighbors, consistent with the zoning code. The 100-foot restriction on outdoor entertainment and the limits of the noise ordinance are intentional safeguards meant to balance community activity with residential livability.

While there has been outreach and discussion, there is no demonstrated support among the abutting residents for the terms of the application as currently proposed. At this time, there is no Special Use Permit before City Council to approve or reject. The application is scheduled to be

considered by the Planning Commission on January 6, 2026, and I encourage impacted residents to attend.

My position reflects the application and staff report as currently submitted and may be revisited if the proposal materially changes. I will continue to share updates if and when there are substantive changes to the application.

5900 Grove Ave - Office Use in a Home at Grove & Maple

The Property is currently zoned Single-Family Residential (R-2) District. The owners are requesting a special use permit to repurpose the existing building for office use, for use as an interior design firm and for early childhood tutoring individually and in small groups. There was an information session on Monday, November 3, 2025 at 6 p.m. at the West End Branch of the Richmond Public Library.

My Response: It's still early for me to comment on this project. The applicant received feedback from the neighbors and is revising the application in response.

Many of the comments at the meeting spoke to a general concern about the changes and traffic in the Libbie & Grove in general - so I will be convening a meeting with those residents and our DPW traffic engineering group to present resident concerns and learn about how the city is managing the traffic and growth near this intersection.

Crenshaw Mews Garages (Alley at Crenshaw/ Ellwood/ Floyd/ Nansemond)

A prior SUP was approved for some homes in this alleyway, but it has expired. There is a new proposal to build some garages here instead. The reason for the SUP is to allow the garages to be a little taller than the standard by-right, and to legalize their use by people who don't live on the abutting properties. (Currently, garages must be used by people on the adjacent/surrounding block)

My Response: It is hard to get excited about building out any kind of car infrastructure, but the space is already a paved parking lot. The master plan calls for great spaces so there's a good chance this application would require architectural revisions, at least.

4400 Broad Street Apartment Building

Next to the self-storage facility on Broad there is a large empty lot. The Broad Street frontage is in Richmond City and the rest of the lot is in Henrico. A County Master Plan for this area hopes to convert it from industrial to residential and mixed use, and this property includes some of the key initial new street connections.

A developer is attempting to kick-start the neighborhood with a 4-story apartment building, surrounded by surface parking around it. This plan is approved by Henrico, but is bumping up against some of our city's goals for a less auto-centric Broad Street. In fact, the front of the building technically doesn't meet the city's requirement that 80% of the property's street frontage be taken up by the building face itself. This is because it has some extra driveway and parking that were necessary to create some mid-block street grids to support the future of the neighborhood.

The SUP is therefore to waive or reduce this 80% building frontage requirement for the portion of the building along Broad that is technically within the city.

My Response:

My office is glad to see empty parking lots being converted into residential homes along the transit-oriented Broad Street. In order to honor the vision and values of Richmond's Master Plan, we asked the applicant to upgrade their architectural features in two ways:

First, the building facade was redesigned to be more consistent with the modern, urban design and materials of Scott's Addition buildings.

Second, since the building itself doesn't take up 80% of the lot frontage, we asked the applicant to expand the frontage to 80% with pedestrian space instead. What the new design includes is sheltered outdoor pedestrian spaces that are integrated into the building design. This will contribute to the transition of Broad Street from an industrial feeling to a walkable and human-focused feeling. I am pleased with this solution and I feel the design they are submitting may be better than what a standard 80% building frontage would have been.

Lincoln Dealership at Broad & Westmoreland

The Truck dealership on the Northeast corner (across from Ford) is being converted to a Lincoln Dealership. Most of the property is in Henrico, but the street frontage is in Richmond. Richmond's Transit-oriented TOD-1 zoning there no longer allows for car dealerships, so any expansion or new construction requires a variance now.

Rather than reject their proposal, my office gave the applicant guidance on how to improve their architecture and layout to create a more pleasant design that respects the human experience on

Broad. The building was made taller and moved to the corner, and the number of driveways and curb cuts was reduced. Street trees will be required.

It is hard to get excited about building any kind of car infrastructure but the property is already a parking lot full of trucks. The new building and layout would be an improvement to the streetscape.

Franklin Street Alleyway Infill

At Roseneath and W. Franklin in the Museum District, there is a rectangular lot between the alleyways that currently hosts a few garages, some green space, and a mature tree. There is a proposal to build some townhomes in this space.

The owners have been engaging in many rounds of discussion and revision with the impacted neighbors, and the latest proposal differs significantly from the original. The latest revision has fewer, smaller homes, retains more green space, and reorients the homes in a way that is more compatible with the context.

I attended another presentation with the neighbors last week. The themes under discussion have included a lot of stormwater remediation, as the alleyways already have issues with flooding into garages. There are also reasonable questions around height, sight lines, privacy, footprint, turning radius, green space, tree canopy, and construction logistics.

My Response:

I think we should be glad to see more homes built in the neighborhood when they are well-designed and properly scaled. I applaud the level of engagement that this property owner is showing to reach an agreement with abutting neighbors. There may still be some architectural revisions to be made, but this project is on much stronger footing than when it began.

Hamilton & Hanover - 4 Attached Homes + No ADUs. Approved.

The final amendment to this application was approved at the Tuesday October 14 Council meeting, with the support of the neighborhood. The applicant and the neighbors have agreed to a proposal for 4 homes (two sets of attached pairs) facing Hamilton, without the right to additional Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

This project has changed and improved significantly as a result of community engagement. It was originally conceived as a plan to fit ten or more homes in the space of two large corner lots that currently hold two homes.

Initial conversations with neighbors resulted in some major accommodations: the protection of large street trees, the preservation of the two existing homes, and top-floor setbacks to reduce the feeling of encroachment. The project was to be 8 new attached 3-story homes behind the existing two.

After more community meetings and some more revisions, the proposal that passed the Planning Commission was 4 new townhomes (2 duplexes) along Hamilton, with backyards onto Reveille, plus the right to build ADUs in those Reveille backyards.

There remained some consternation that the potential for ADUs might result in a ten-unit development after the discussions had resulted in an agreement for six. To eliminate these concerns, the applicant has agreed to forgo the right to ADUs as long as future property owners have the option to construct normal structures such as tool sheds.

My response: In this case, both I and the Planning Commission pushed back on the project and requested more accommodations for neighbors' concerns.

I met with the neighbors and developers a number of times, sometimes together, sometimes separately. Though I appreciated the initial accommodations, such as preservation of the existing homes and preservation of mature trees, I supported the fact that the impacted neighbors still needed more discussions and accommodations, particularly after they had already been recently impacted by the Grove & Hamilton townhomes.

At the June Planning Commission meeting, the Commission found the neighbors' testimony compelling, especially the fact that neighbors were bringing a feasible alternative they could support. I am grateful for the neighbors who were willing to have those constructive conversations that led to a new proposal for July.

At the July Commission meeting, the discussion was less straightforward. The Commission approved the application, but there remained some ambiguity around the treatment of ADUs in the proposal, so I wasn't able to judge whether the plan met the intention of the neighborhood advocates who worked to broker an agreeable compromise. I was disappointed that this part of the application wasn't more transparent.

On the bright side, ADUs are one of the best avenues for affordable housing in our district. 500-square foot cottages will do more for the affordable housing stock than most other housing types, AND the smaller size mitigates many of the potential impacts of larger homes, such as loss of green space, multi-car parking burdens, or blocked sight lines.

Though most properties in the city can build ADUs in their backyard by-right with no special approval, the configuration of these lots facing Reveille St requires special attention. I was planning to require the applicants to supply additional details around the potential ADU structures before I could approve this SUP. The removal of ADUs from the application allowed us to finalize the discussions and submit the final legislation for introduction. After so many

concessions and compromises, I intend to do everything I can to streamline the final stages of approval for the applicant.

Libbie & Patterson - “The Westhampton Bakery Building”

This project was approved by Council on May 12th. I spent months researching and working on this project and have written a description of the situation in a previous newsletter. [Please give it a read](#). In the end, it was a good project for the neighborhood that improved the area.

****“The Grove on Hamilton” - Some Updates Made**

This project was approved during COVID with a virtual engagement process that frustrated neighbors. Still, the plans approved by the Planning Commission had high architectural standards for the prominent placement on busy Grove Avenue. Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that the later building permit approval process may have failed to enforce these architectural standards, and the resulting buildings do not match the plans from the approved legislation.

My response: I escalated a report from a resident, flagging some gaps in the approval process. As a result, the Department of Planning & Review has pulled back its approval on the unsold units in this development, pending the resolution of some items. Since then, the builder made some adaptations such as screening the roof-mounted HVAC systems and the trash cans, and I believe the certificates of occupancy have all been issued.

I have heard from newer SUP applicants (to their chagrin) that the Planning Department is enforcing design compliance much more strictly now, after public blowback from this case.

More to Come

There are other projects on the way, and more conversations to have about our shared (and differing) goals and values. Let's keep the conversations going.