

6.7.23 meeting memo

#7.

A) To the PC members:

Keith and I spent this morning (Friday) touring the C and I/C districts with the Beals and Donovans. I am excited to think that we do something here to actually help with the housing shortage, allow some Richmond residents to use their property as they wish, and at the same time, clear up some discrepancies and inconsistencies in our zoning regulations without causing any major controversy. Since we are ON HOLD with the village neighborhoods until S. 100 has been finalized (waiting on the governor's approval or veto, and then the override or not), I would like to use this time to move ahead with this work.

This will require that you all have some familiarity with 1) the zoning map of these districts, 2) what is actually on the ground in these two districts, and 3) the current zoning regulations for the districts. I thought I'd send this memo now as we have 1 1/2 weeks until our meeting, thus providing some time to engage a bit. Three pieces of information are important here. First, there are virtually NO uses that are allowed in the I/C district that are not allowed in the commercial district, and we would not be removing any uses. All of the business uses currently existing in both of these districts could be described as "commercial." Secondly, about a third of the lots in these two districts host single family dwellings, which are currently not an allowed use in either district; and thirdly, these two districts share two long borders with the large residential neighborhood that is the Riverview Commons mobile home park.

For these reasons, it makes sense to me to combine these districts into a single Commercial District and allow residential uses. Commercial enterprises could still be prioritized, and adequate development standards could be put in place to keep everyone on good terms with their neighbors. This may not, in fact, be a very suitable area for truly "industrial" operations (not the "light manufacturing" that we are already allowing in our R/C districts and would continue to allow here) as previous planning commissions may have considered.

You will have many questions about this idea. I would like to encourage everyone to come to our next meeting having thought about this so we can have a good discussion. Keith and I will be happy to talk or walk these districts with anyone who is interested to help generate (or answer) these questions, although he will be away from 6/1 to 6/7, and I will be away from 5/31 to 6/4 (but reachable by email). I really hope we can capitalize on this window of opportunity. Keith is working on maps to help us visualize the area better, and I will likely send out some more thoughts next week.

Thank you all for being interested in this work,
Virginia

B) Further thoughts on combining the C and the I/C districts for discussion 6.7.23

The Beals' request to allow housing on the Donovans' lot gives us the opportunity to do two things with one action:

1. Take an immediate step to address the housing crisis, and
2. Correct some inconsistencies and out-of-date concepts in our current zoning regulations (RZR), specifically related to the Commercial (C) and Industrial/Commercial (I/C) districts.

To take this action we need to answer the following two questions: (1) Should we allow residential uses in the I/C district, and (2) could we combine the C district and the I/C district into a single “C” district.

Here are some thoughts/facts about the RZR zoning that I think promote the concept of combining these two districts:

- I/C has all the same uses as C except “equipment service and repair” and “mobile home sales” – the former could easily be added – the latter could be added or omitted –telecommunications can be in either C or I/C as per 6.12.4 – **so there would be virtually no change on the ground if we just added the I/C district to the C district.**
- **All** lots in **all** districts have to adhere to the same performance standards (4.12) -- there are no districts where it’s ok to make more vibrations , dust, odors etc Noise is handled separately (4.9)—Traditional industrial districts usually have more lenient “nuisance” standards. In the RZR slightly more noise is allowed in the C and I/C districts.
- We don’t really have any existing industrial businesses in Richmond -- is there anywhere in the I/C that is suitable for a traditional industrial business (see definitions)?
- MHP may be considered commercial but is actually residential and is next door to I/C – is this really a suitable place for industrial uses?
- The combination of “industrial” and “commercial” seems to blur the terms -- the industrial/commercial split doesn’t seem to apply to the currently existing businesses in the C and the I/C (all appear to be currently considered “commercial”)
- We have already allowed for “light manufacturing” in our commercial and R/C districts – this is sometimes considered a type of industrial use – light-manufacturing is generally more consumer-facing, similar to commercial. If we are required to allow for “industrial” uses somewhere in Richmond, we can point to our “light manufacturing” use category.
- Extraction of earth resources is allowed in the A/R and most other districts, so the Kenyon Rd gravel pit doesn’t need to be I/C – (it’s grandfathered anyway) – NB: section is 5.6.5 not 5.6.6
- Kenyon Rd gravel pit is located next door to developing residential neighborhoods. Keith is in contact with the owners of this property.
- Solar arrays don’t need to be “industrial,” maybe not even commercial, likely should be allowed in the A/R (statutorily are?) so the GMP array area doesn’t need to be I/C
- The Mann and Machine area (RCCC) would move out of “C” to join the Railroad St area in Village Commercial (VC)
- The VYCC and Jonesville portions of the “C” district could remain as they are or we could think further about them (either now or at some future time).

Here are some thoughts/facts that I think promote the idea of allowing residential uses in this new “C” district:

- There were residences most places in Richmond before we had zoning – this seems to work ok because we don’t have any traditional industry – the combination seems to be working ok in the I/C as per Linda Donovan.
- Multiunit residential buildings blur the line between commercial and residential, as do MHP’s – these are often considered a commercial use, but they really consist of residences – this seems like an ambiguous situation with a historical basis is exclusionary zoning protecting SFR’s

- PRD's are allowed in I/C, but there are no permitted or conditional residential uses . PRD's are not allowed in C , but the residential uses " retirement community" and "rooming house" are allowed.
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- PRD's are allowed in I/C, but there are no permitted or conditional residential uses listed in the "uses" section. PRD's are not allowed in C , but the residential uses " retirement community" and "rooming house" are found on the "uses" list.