

January 28, 2025

ATTN: Carrie Rainey  
Charlottesville Neighborhood Development Services

**Friendship Court Redevelopment Phase 3 – Special Exception Permit**

Dear Ms. Rainey,

This letter is to request a Special Exception Permit to Division 2.10.13 Rules for Zoning Districts: Street-Facing Entry Spacing.

**Zoning Ordinance Special Exception**

Per the CX-8 zoning district requirements, entrances must be spaced a maximum of every 40' along Primary Streets and 60' along Side Streets. The entrances aim to provide visual interest along the public realm, and promote greater use and activation of the public sidewalk.

We are requesting a special exception permit for Building 12, bordered by 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE (primary) and a new side street, currently designated as Hinton Ave Ext. on the Friendship Court Phase 3 site plan submission. Per the CX-8 requirements, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street would need 4 total street-facing entries, and Hinton Ave would require 1 street-facing entry.

**Special Exception Reasoning**

Building 12 is a multi-family residential building with amenity space and parking on the lowest floor. The ground story as defined by Section 2.10.1.F along 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE shifts between the lowest and second levels (as demonstrated by Modules 1 and 2 on the attached exhibit) due to grades. The ground story along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street has residential units for 122' of the total 190' building length, and for the entirety of Hinton Ave. Ext. If we were to provide all of the required street-facing entrances, three of the required entrances would have direct access to residential units. All units in this building enter off an interior corridor. Adding the street-facing entries directly into individual units creates a security concern for property management, who needs to be able to monitor building access through a limited number of entrances. Currently our main pedestrian entrance is located on the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE and Monticello Ave, and the main vehicular garage entrance is located off the rear alley.

Many of the units in Building 12 accommodate larger families with children or special needs dependents. Direct exterior unit access along busier streets like 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE and Monticello Ave. creates concern among residents about a child or dependent getting outside without proper supervision.

The ground story along Hinton Ave Ext is fully occupied by two 2-bedroom residential units. Any entrance on this elevation would go directly into those units, creating an undesirable and unacceptable security risk for residents and management.

This project is being financed through Virginia Housing, which requires equity of unit features among all unit types within a single building. Providing an entrance in only a few units creates major discrepancies in the floorplan features available to the residents.

Finally, and importantly, one of the major goals of this project and the city is to maintain the health and longevity of the street trees along 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE. Reducing entrances and any related exterior construction will minimize impacts on the extensive root structure of these trees.

### **Proposed Solution**

Our proposed solution provides two entrances along 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE and no entrances along Hinton Ave. Ext. The two 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE entrances would access the main building lobby and egress stair, respectively. These will be spaced within 40' of each end of the building. As shown in diagram K9 on sheet A010, the ground story transitions from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor between these two doors to meet the grade change along 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE. The exterior landing and stairs required to reach additional entrances would encroach upon the public access easement (if run is perpendicular to the building) or pass in front of an adjacent unit (if run is parallel to the building), interrupting planned locations for glazing.

The Building 12 streetscape design will include features that promote visual interest in the public realm, and maintain walkability and public safety. These features may include building mounted decorative screening, hardscape features, and specialized plantings. We will design to the principles of the zoning ordinance, particularly Section 2.10.12.B.3 Blank Wall Treatments. Preservation of the existing large street trees is a major component of our proposed solution. They will provide shading of the pedestrian way from Day 1, and continue to enhance the walk along this pivotal access artery between downtown and IX Art Park. Foundation planting along the building frontage will frame seating nodes set back from the sidewalk. These areas will enhance the pedestrian experience and break up the building façade to compensate for the removed entrances.

Glazing strategies will be used at the residential levels, which take up the majority of the ground story. The building transparency ratio is designed to exceed the zoning requirement, enhancing visual connection from the street to the active depth.

The building is in an early design phase and significant stakeholder engagement is still required, but the design and development team will preserve the city's vision for an engaging public way throughout the design process.