



March 24, 2023

Rodney M. Poole,
900 E. Broad St., Room 511
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: TOD-1 Zoning Amendments

Dear Chair Poole and members of the Planning Commission:

We understand that the Planning and Development Review Department is looking to revise the zoning ordinance in three ways: amending the TOD-1 district, creating a Stadium District Signage Overlay, and amending the zoning map to show boundaries of the Stadium District Signage Overlay.

While we are happy to see that the original proposal has been amended, such as removing the fenestration changes and the reduction to one-story minimum height for TOD-1, PSG is concerned about the accelerated pace of these proposed changes, lack of time for public involvement, and failure to include the public in the design process for such a large portion of our city.

In addition, since the TOD-1 district changes are meant to be city-wide and not just applied to the Diamond District, the implications of the proposed changes certainly need to be more widely discussed. While we applaud the efforts that have been made thus far, we would recommend that additional public outreach efforts be conducted if possible before the final proposed changes are brought to the Planning Commission for a vote.

Our questions on this proposal include:

- What requirements for sizing of ground floor commercial uses on street-oriented commercial frontages will be changed?
- How will the entrance requirements for street-oriented hotels be changed?
- Can you clarify the differences that will result in building height and design based upon where the inclined plane is measured from?
- What restrictions on the location of circulation for stadium, arenas, hotels, libraries, museums, and schools will be removed?

- Could you provide color illustrations of where the proposed signage would be on the buildings, on the site, and at what height and lighting intensity?

Our questions highlight the benefits that would accrue from providing the public with visualizations that reflect the proposed changes and from engaging the public in the design discussions between the city and the developers for such a large and significant part of our shared city.

While we appreciate the potential need for changes in the zoning code for the Diamond District and its stadium, we believe these changes should be applied instead to a special zone for the Diamond District that can adequately address its unique situation. Otherwise, if these changes are to be implemented across the city's TOD-1 districts, it is even more important to have a thorough public engagement process with more specific information and illustrations of the effect of such changes.

Sincerely,

Amy Guzulaitis
Policy Coordinator

Cc: Kevin Vonck, Director of Planning and Development Review