



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: January 4, 2016
RE: **Conceptual Location, Character and Extent Review of a new building for the Horticulture, Maintenance and Public Safety Departments at Maymont, 800 Swan Lake Drive**

I. APPLICANT

Dr. Norman Merrifield, Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities
Norman Burns, Maymont Foundation

II. LOCATION

Maymont, 800 Swan Lake Drive

Property Owner:

City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

III. PURPOSE

This application is for conceptual location, character and extent review of a new building for the Horticulture, Maintenance and Public Safety Departments at Maymont.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

Update for 1/4/2016 Planning Commission meeting: Following concerns raised at the Urban Design Committee (UDC) meeting on May 7th (and described below), the applicant requested a 30-day deferral from Planning Commission (PC) consideration. Three subsequent deferrals were requested from and granted by the Planning Commission in order for the applicant to gather additional information and to meet with concerned citizens. The UDC report that follows is based upon plans submitted for their May meeting and does not take into account any new information presented at the January 4, 2016 Planning Commission meeting.

The Maymont Foundation has launched a fundraising campaign with the goals of “expanding and improving Maymont’s aging facilities and programs and achieving sustainability (via growth of operating endowment funds) so that future generations of residents and visitors can enjoy and explore Maymont”. One of the projects associated with this campaign is to construct a new building to serve the Horticulture, Maintenance and Public Safety Departments, which are currently housed in various buildings across the park. An additional covered area will accommodate storage of tractors, mowers and carts; dump trucks, maintenance vehicles and golf carts; and a fueling pad. The proposed site was selected by the Maymont Foundation Board after review and evaluation of potential sites by the Maymont staff with input from neighbors and consultants.

During discussion of the proposal, two questions arose that the Committee would like further clarification on. The first question involved whether or not there was a boundary line delineating Maymont from Byrd Park. The second question involved whether it was feasible for Maymont to share the Byrd Park Maintenance Facility with the City, which

could negate the need for them to provide vehicle storage as proposed. The Committee requested that the applicant have additional conversations with the appropriate parties and provide additional information at final review phase.

The Committee finds the building materials to be compatible with each other and with adjacent buildings, aesthetically and structurally durable and low maintenance. The Committee further finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval, with the following conditions:

- That the final plans include a landscaping plan and schedule showing plant species, quantity, location and size at the time of installation.
- That the landscaping plan seeks to utilize native, non-invasive species to the greatest extent possible.
- That the applicant considers utilizing a vegetative roof or a solar panel roof on top of the vehicle storage area.
- That the final plans include a lighting plan, showing make, model and finish for any light pole and fixture, as well as fixture light source and color temperature.
- That the final plans include detailed architectural plans and renderings for each building, indicating dimensions, building materials and finishes.
- That accessible ramps are installed in the sidewalk where the access lane connects to Hampton Street.
- That the applicant has further conversations with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities and the Department of Public Works to pursue whether or not combined usage of the Byrd Park Maintenance Facility is feasible.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

Maymont is a 100 acre City park property located north of the James River and Kanawha Canal and south of Shield Lake Drive between Hampton Street and Park Drive, which in turn becomes the Boulevard Bridge over the James River. Maymont is a National Register Historic Place and a Virginia Historic Landmark. Since 1975, the nonprofit Maymont Foundation has maintained and operated the park and has carried out extensive preservation and restoration of the original estate buildings including the Dooley Mansion, a Romanesque-style dwelling completed in 1893, and a number of other period outbuildings.

The property lies within the R-2 (Single-Family Residential) zoning district and besides the Dooley Mansion is improved several newer buildings reflecting the mission of the Maymont Foundation, including the Nature Center and Children's Farm. In addition to these structures are formal and informal gardens, open spaces and wildlife habitats. Today Maymont is visited by over 500,000 people annually.

To the south of the park is the James River, to the east of the park is an area zoned R-5 and improved with single-family detached dwellings. To the north of the park is a group of single-family detached dwellings in the R-2 district, and both to

the north and the west is the City's Byrd Park with Shields and Swan Lakes, the Carillon and Dogwood Dell amphitheater.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as a "park" under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

The UDC has reviewed a number of projects related to various buildings at Maymont over the years, most recently accessibility improvements to the Carriage House in 2012.

d. Project Description

The Maymont Foundation has launched the Spirit of Generosity Campaign seeking to raise \$35 million with the goals of "expanding and improving Maymont's aging facilities and programs and achieving sustainability (via growth of operating endowment funds) so that future generations of residents and visitors can enjoy and explore Maymont". One of the projects associated with this campaign is to construct a new building to serve the Horticulture, Maintenance and Public Safety Departments, which are currently housed in various buildings across the park. Other projects associated with the campaign include improving and expanding the area near the Children's Farm to include barn renovation, a new Animal Care Facility, a new classroom building, restroom expansion and improvement, an expanded parking lot and roadway realignment and a future welcome plaza. Those projects are being considered under separate application.

This proposal includes the construction of a new 3,847 square foot building (the Horticulture building) to include vehicle repair bays, storage area for tools and equipment, offices, rest rooms and a break area for volunteers. An additional 2,600 square foot covered area will accommodate storage of tractors, mowers and carts; dump trucks, maintenance vehicles and golf carts; and a fueling pad. Both buildings will be constructed into the side of a hill; for the Horticulture building this will allow for a basement level to accommodate additional storage. The new structures will be located in the area between the existing Nature Center and Hampton Street. A new private (not public access), gated drive will be established from Hampton Street and will run between the proposed building and vehicle storage area, connecting to an existing 10' cart path to the south of the Horticulture building. A new sidewalk will connect the Horticulture building to the Nature Center, and the existing sidewalk along Hampton Street will remain.

The Horticulture building will be constructed of board and batten siding with a light green (to match the patina on the Nature Center roof) standing seam metal roof. Any exposed foundation will be composed of engineered stone. Windows will be provided along all facades except the eastern façade, where the vehicle repair bay will be located. Natural light is also provided into the building by way of two sections of clerestory windows. The proposed building materials are consistent with those used on other buildings in the park. No architectural plans were submitted for the vehicle storage building, though one of the renderings seems to indicate that it will be composed of the same engineered stone as the base of the Horticulture building, with a slightly raised and open roof.

Several trees are proposed to be removed to allow for the construction of the new structures. The conceptual landscape plans call for planting replacement trees around the proposed structures. In addition to the trees, the plans note that shrubs will be provided around the vehicle storage building (*Berberis julianae* - Winter Barberry) and along an existing sidewalk to the north (*Ilex pedunculosa* - Longstalk Holly). The sloped area to the east of the Horticulture building is proposed to be planted in *Jasminum nudiflorum* (Winter Jasmine). None of these plants appear to be native to the area.

The projects included in this proposal are privately funded through the Maymont Foundation. Construction will proceed when funding allows and after all approvals are granted.

e. Master Plan

The subject property is located in the Near West Planning District, as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan places the subject area in the Public and Open Space land use category, with primary uses including publicly owned and operated parks, recreation areas, and open spaces, among others. There is no language in the Plan specific to the site or the proposed improvements.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines states that “public parks are integral to the quality of life found in any urban landscape”. In general the plan notes that “successful public parks, both small and large, active or passive, share certain qualities, which include the ability to attract and entertain visitors, access and connectivity to surrounding areas, and safety and comfort”. The guidelines note that “impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements”

In general, the Urban Design Guidelines note that “the quality, design, and condition of all public facilities sets the image of the City, and sends a message about the values placed upon the services provided” (page 13). The Guidelines also note that building materials “should be appropriate for the size and architectural style of the building” and that “many different materials on a single building lead to visual confusion and should be avoided” (page 17). Building materials should also be “aesthetically and structurally durable, of high quality, and require little maintenance” (page 17).

The subsection on materials continues to say that “building textures and their combinations should add continuity and not conflict or detract from each other” and that “textures should be appropriate for the size, proportion and architectural style of the building and its surroundings” (page 17). Referring to building colors, the Guidelines note that they “should be coordinated and compatible with each other and with adjacent buildings” (page 17).

The Guidelines note that landscape plans should “include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings” and that “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10). The Guidelines express support for low-impact development, the goal of which is to “mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source” (page

11).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**