




Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Urban Design Committee

UDC 2024-09	FINAL – Location, Character, and Extent	Meeting Date: 3/7/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Heywood Harrison, Parks and Recreation	
Project Description	UDC 2024-09 FINAL Location, Character, Extent review for a redesigned Blackwell Park located at 1400 Maury Avenue.	
Project Location		
Address: 1400 Maury Avenue		
Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND RECREATION & PARKS		
High-Level Details: This project proposes a new FINAL plan for renovated Blackwell Park. The FINAL includes sport fields and courts, community garden, walking trail, fitness court. A tennis court, natural play space and shade structure, and pedestrian bridge will be a future stage.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	Please see Applicant Narrative.	
Conditions for Approval	RECOMMENDED FINAL CONDITIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where applicable. • Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. • Staff recommends the inclusion of public art, where feasible. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. Staff recommends the Applicant remove invasive and undesirable species in surrounding tree canopy areas with the purpose of increasing visibility into the park. <p>PREVIOUSLY APPROVED <i>CONCEPT</i> CONDITIONS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> UDC recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where applicable. UDC recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. UDC recommends the inclusion of public art, where feasible. UDC recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. UDC recommends that the Applicant provide storage space for the community garden for FINAL application. UDC recommends that the Applicant consider working with the Department of Public Works and Council Members to improve sidewalk along all frontages. UDC recommends that the Applicant consider orientation of the sports field for FINAL Application. UDC recommends that the Applicant provide a detail and street views from Maury Street and 15th Street for FINAL Application.

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The project is located at 1400 Maury Avenue in the Blackwell Neighborhood. The site consists of 12 acres (542175 sqft.).
Scope of Review	<p>The project is subject to general location, character, and extent review under section 17.07 and project recommendations under section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter.</p> <p>Items the UDC could directly review include the General Location, such as if this use is appropriate for this location according to the Master Plan; General Character of site improvements, such as the appropriateness of overall landscaping themes; and General Extent, such as does this project meet its stated goals or interfere with other City priorities or goals.</p> <p>Items the UDC could make specific recommendations on include the site improvements, such as materials, plantings, and site layout.</p>
Prior Approvals	UDC 2024-07 CONCEPT Approval – UDC Meeting February 8, 2024
Project Description	<p>The applicant states in the narrative: “The Blackwell Park project aims to transform the existing park area by adding functional site features that promote community-preferred recreation activities and site elements. Park improvements will feature several forms of stormwater best management practices (BMPs) to improve site drainage, enhance aesthetic and habitat value, and serve as an environmental education tool. The proposed project is offered in a phased approach due to budget constraints. “</p> <p>The site currently consists of green open space, a sports field, and restroom building.</p> <p>The FINAL includes parking area, two basketball courts, baseball (green roof on dugouts) and soccer field, community garden, walking trail, environmental stormwater facilities, meadow space, ping pong, reforestation, and fitness court. A tennis court, baseball field, natural play space and shade structure, and pedestrian bridge will be a future stage.</p>

	<p>Staff has had time to consider the UDC’s concern with safety within the park due to its depth and distance from the main ROW. Completing a site visit, Staff believes if the tree canopy area surrounding the park is cleaned up, including invasive removal and removal of undesirable species (such as vines) – then the visibility into the depth of the park will be strongly increased from the surrounding ROW. Staff has attached a condition of approval regarding this consideration.</p> <p>Staff recommends approval with the attached standard conditions. Staff finds that the proposal meets best practices for park design and includes a number of different uses for all ages, abilities, and interests. The proposal also includes significant green and natural space.</p> <hr/> <p>The UDC discussed during its CONCEPT review: access to the park and how it related to surrounding sidewalk, security, the orientation of the ball fields, fencing.</p> <p>Staff recommends the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where applicable. • Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. • Staff recommends the inclusion of public art, where feasible. • Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. • Staff recommends the Applicant remove invasive and undesirable species in surrounding tree canopy areas with the purpose of increasing visibility into the park.
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Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
Big Moves: Realign City Facilities	<p><i>Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty</i></p> <p><i>Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.</i></p> <p><i>Beauty – Oftentimes, City facilities serve as beautiful landmarks that anchor a neighborhood and create a distinctive place through architecture and site design.</i></p> <p><i>Thriving Environment: City-owned buildings and land are opportunities for energy retrofits and green infrastructure to further Goals 15 and 16, as well as locations for new parks, urban agriculture, and resiliency hubs to further Goal 17.</i></p>	<p>Big Moves: Realign City Facilities</p> <p>The project includes the stated goal of enhancing community space located in an underserved neighborhood. The park already serves as a community focal point and will greatly benefit from the high quality design and amenities proposed.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>
	<p>Objective 4.2 – Integrate public art into the built environment.</p> <p><i>c. Link public art with major public facility initiatives (e.g., plazas, buildings, parks, bridges) and expand the definition of public art to include architectural embellishments of buildings, or landscape features.</i></p>	<p>Master Plan Objectives</p> <p>Staff recommends opportunities for public art be considered.</p> <p>Richmond 300 includes a number of sustainability objectives specifically relating to public facilities and City owned properties. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable stormwater management, and sustainable construction should be considered.</p>

	<p>Objective 15.4 - Reduce the amount of waste going to landfills.</p> <p><i>f. Demonstrate sustainable consumption, sustainable building practices, and zero-waste behaviors in the design and expansion of City operations.</i></p> <p>Objective 16.3 - Reduce water consumption by 10% per capita.</p> <p><i>b. Encourage on-site graywater uses in public and private facilities.</i></p> <p>Objective 16.4 - Increase green stormwater infrastructure</p> <p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way</i></p> <p>Objective 17.3 Reduce urban heat</p> <p><i>a. Encourage lighter-colored surfaces for roads and roofs to reflect sunlight.</i></p> <p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green roofs on public facilities</i></p> <p>Objective 17.7 Increase and enhance biodiversity</p> <p><i>b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities</i></p> <p><i>c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.</i></p> <p>Objective 17.8 Reduce light pollution.</p> <p><i>b. Install hooded light fixtures on public rights-of-way and buildings to reduce light pollution and reduce effect on nocturnal species.</i></p>	<p>Greater landscaping will be provided in what is not open lawn space.</p> <p>Lighting details will be established at a later stage, but should include sustainability considerations.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>
Urban Design Guidelines		
PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3	<p><i>The design guidelines suggest compatibility, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, cost, and sustainability be considered when designing pavement areas. Impervious areas should be limited and pervious pavement materials should be</i></p>	<p>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS</p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>

	<i>introduced, especially in minimally used parking areas.</i>	
	<i>(P.9) <u>Environment, Public Parks:</u> 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.</i>	The park includes a number of activities for all ages, abilities, and interests.
	<i>(p.10) <u>Landscaping, Design:</u> Landscaping should not only provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest, but should also be designed to minimize human impact on the environment. Designs that include conservation landscaping, strategically minimize the urban heat island effect, or decrease stormwater runoff are strongly encouraged.</i>	The proposal increases the amount of landscaping in what is currently open lawn. Minimal, if any, trees will be removed and many more will be planted through a reforestation effort.
	<i>(P.10) <u>Landscaping, Species Diversity:</u> Landscape plans should include a diverse palette of plant species that include evergreen trees, flowering and shade tree species, shrubs, ground cover, and annual and perennial plantings.</i>	The proposal includes native species. The proposal also includes a specific native species meadow that will be pollinator friendly.