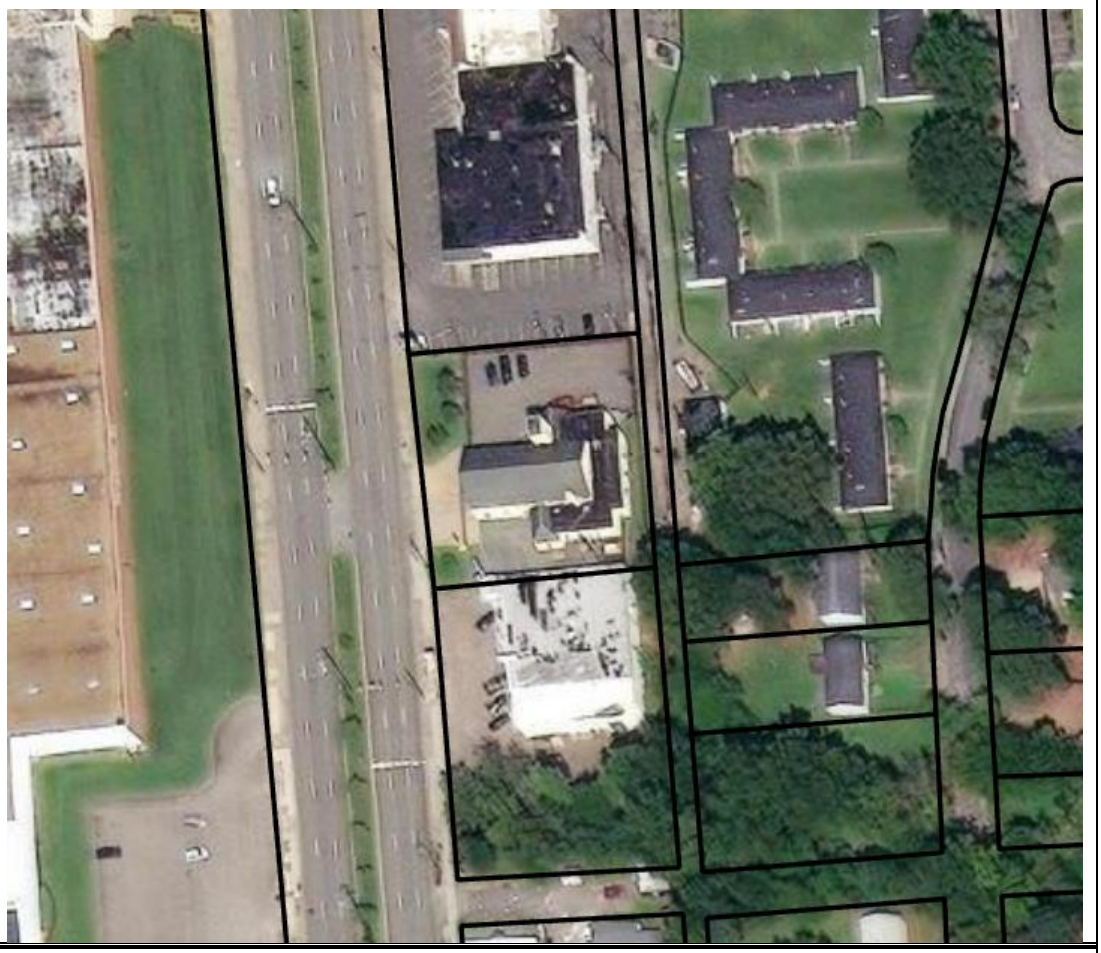
Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia

Planning Commission

UDC 2023-15	FINAL Location, Character, and Extent Review	Meeting Date: 8/21/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Lynne Lancaster, City of Richmond Capital Projects	
Project Description	FINAL Location, Character, Extent review of the demolition and reconstruction of Fire Station 21 located at 2505 Richmond Highway.	
Project Location **Address:** 2505 Richmond Hwy **Property Owner:** CITY OF RICHMOND PUBLIC WORKS **High-Level Details:** The applicant proposes to demolish the existing Fire Station and construct a new 18,500 sq. ft., 3 story facility with a 3 bay apparatus garage and associated site work.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	The Applicant has requested that this application be reviewed at FINAL approval rather than go through CONCEPT first. Staff sees no issue with doing so, the plans are relatively simple and the location is already used as a fire station.	
Conditions for Approval	<u>UDC Recommended Conditions of Approval</u> Outdoor lighting shall be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where feasible. Applicant to consider revising the entrance to provide more direct pedestrian access from street. Applicant to work with UDC subcommittee formed at the August 10, 2023 meeting to refine architecture, to include improvement of side elevations and emphases of the entrance tower, changes to be approved by Staff and the subcommittee.	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site is located in the Jeff Davis neighborhood (as listed in the tax records) on the east side of Richmond Highway, between Bellemeade Road and Terminal Avenue. The site is zoned B-3 - Business (General Business), and of a property roughly 0.505 acres, or 21,990 square feet in size. The property is currently a fire station. Commercial and industrial uses are located adjacent to the site along Richmond Highway with residential to the rear of the site, across the alleyway.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 and 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter
Prior Approvals	The Applicant has requested that this application be reviewed at FINAL approval rather than go through CONCEPT first. Staff sees no issue with doing so, the plans are relatively simple and the location is already used as a fire station.
Project Description	The applicant proposes to replace the existing Fire Station at 2505 Richmond Hwy with a new 18,500 sq. ft., 3 story building with a 3 bay apparatus garage. A parking lot and landscaping is proposed for the remaining surface of the lot. The project will likely involve improvement of the alleyway to the rear to facilitate better access to the site. The Applicant states in the narrative: *"The current Fire Station #21 is a 1-story facility, located at 2505 Richmond Hwy, and has honorably served the citizens of this surrounding community for numerous decades. However, the existing facility has well exceeded it's life expectancy, and can no longer accommodate increases in staffing, apparatus needs and continued population growth of the area.* *The new Fire Station #21 will be built on the current site of the existing fire station #21, located at 2505 Richmond Highway, Richmond, VA. The City feels this property represents the most ideal location for constructing the new fire station, which is designed to better accommodate current and future staffing needs, along with larger fire trucks and emergency service apparatus, and will provide for more appropriate types of program spaces to enable the staff to work effectively meet today's more stringent response time performance standards."* The Applicant notes: *"The suspended entry canopy and curved masonry bench seat with architectural pavers offers a 'pedestrian friendly' entrance plaza. The exterior facades includes a balance of traditional masonry materials and colors, along with accent brick, vertical bump-outs, architectural precast trim features, and pleasing 'windows-to-wall' ratios. Collectively, these design elements provides visually pleasing patterns and human scale that invokes a 'sense of space' from the pedestrian's perspective."* And that – "*The City intends for this facility to be designed and constructed as a high-performance green building, with a target to achieve USGBC - LEED 'Silver' level certification."* Staff finds that the project includes quality architecture that is in character for the surrounding neighborhood and the general expectations for Civic building in the City of Richmond. The site improvements are also high quality and sustainability is a consideration in the design as they aim for LEED Silver designation. **Staff recommends APPROVAL with recommended standard condition.** _____ UDC discussed the architecture of the entrance tower and north façade, making the entrance more accessible directly from the street, and use of different materials. UDC created a subcommittee to work with the Applicant to further refine the architecture of the entrance tower and north elevations, to be approved by Staff and Subcommittee post Planning Commission hearing. **UDC recommends APPROVAL with recommended Staff condition and additional conditions.**

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
	P.70: Future Land Use Designation: *Corridor Mixed Use* *Primary Uses: Retail/office/ personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space.* *Secondary Uses: Single-family houses, institutional, and government*	Staff finds that the proposed use of Fire Facility falls under the secondary use of "Government," as listed in the Master Plan.
Big Moves: Realign City Facilities	*Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty* *Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.* *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.*	**Big Moves: Realign City Facilities** The building will be designed to qualify for LEED Silver.
	Objective 17.7 *Increase and enhance biodiversity* *b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities* *c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.* *g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.* ***Objective 17.8*** *Reduce light pollution.* *b. Install hooded light fixtures on public rights-of-way and buildings to reduce light pollution and reduce effect on nocturnal species.*	**Master Plan Objectives** Native species are proposed for use in landscaping. **Outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.**
Urban Design Guidelines		
LANDSCAPING – Page 10	*Plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes. Site*	**LANDSCAPING**

	landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture. Plant materials should create spaces by providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas. In addition, landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest. Species diversity, plant selection, and long term maintenance should be considered.	A landscaping plan is provided with several trees and flower beds. The site is difficult for provision of *further* tree canopy due to its urban nature and small size.
BUILDING PROPORTION – Page 15	*Building massing should be compatible with the surrounding uses; although, important public buildings may require larger sizes. Visual impact can be minimized via design techniques such as setbacks or varying surface and roof planes. Height and roof design should be sensitive to surrounding uses, but may be taller on corners to frame access to the block.*	**Architecture** The proposed architecture represented the introduction of civic and larger scale architecture in the surrounding neighborhood.
FAÇADE DESIGN. – Page 18	*Building* materials should be compatible with surrounding uses and not cause visual confusion by using numerous different materials on a single façade. Material quality and design should complement those on the existing building and be sufficiently durable and sustainable. Building design should take cues from the surrounding area. *An easily recognizable, inviting and accessible entrance should be included and ground level design should be comfortable for the pedestrian. Large expanses of blank or undifferentiated wall are not appropriate building elevations, especially at the street level. Access for users of differing mobilities should be included; handicap ramps or other handicap considerations should be incorporated into the façade design and to a high design quality.*	The proposed architecture represented the introduction of civic and larger scale architecture in the surrounding neighborhood.