



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2024-27	FINAL Location, Character, and Extent Review	Meeting Date: 6/18/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Ryan Rinn, Department of Parks and Recreation	
Project Description	UDC 2024-27 FINAL Location Character and Extent review of the proposed Whitcomb Community Park located at 2100 Sussex Street.	
Project Location		
Address: 2100 Sussex Street		
Property Owner: City of Richmond, City of Richmond Public Works		
High-Level Details: <p>The Applicant requests to amend the previously approved CONCEPT plan in conjunction with this FINAL Application for Phase 1.</p> <p>Phase includes basketball courts, walk path, seating areas, and stormwater facilities.</p>		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Previous Reviews	<p>The concept was approved December 2022.</p> <p>The Committee recommended approval with the conditions listed below.</p>	
Staff Recommendations	<p><u>CURRENTLY PROPOSED CONDITIONS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Applicant work with GRTC Staff to evaluate moving adjacent bus stop locations in surrounding blocks to be relocated directly adjacent to the proposed park and to improve any potential bus stop locations to GRTC standards. • Applicant to consider safety and visibility through the park area from the street in landscape plantings and maintenance. 	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site is located in the Whitcomb neighborhood at the intersection of Sussex Street and Whitcomb Street. The site is zoned R-53 - Residential (Multi-Family) district.
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Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.07 and review and recommendation under section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter
Project Description	<p>The Applicant requests to amend the previously approved CONCEPT plan in conjunction with this FINAL Application for Phase 1.</p> <p>The site is largely undeveloped, flat, and planted with grass. The site currently includes a small stand of well-established trees that will be maintained. The site also includes a walk path that will be maintained and enhanced and enlarged.</p> <p>The adjacent Whitcomb Community Center is taken into account and acknowledge by the design which provides access to and additional outdoor amenities for the Center as well as the potential to provide public bathroom within the community center, for park users.</p> <p>A new basketball court and existing football field are located to the northern most part of the site adjacent to the Community Center. Shaded seating and plantings will be provided adjacent to the fields, but will be planned in such a way as to not decrease visibility from the street in consideration for safety.</p> <p>Due to the depth of the site, portions of the park will be a decent distance from surrounding streets and public view. Staff has provided a condition of approval to have the Applicant consider safety and views when planting and maintaining landscaping.</p> <p>Pervious pavement will be considered for new sections of walking path.</p> <p>Staff has asked the Applicant to work with GRTC to determine if it is feasible to combine the two adjacent bus stops near the park into one new stop that is directly adjacent to the proposed park. Doing so will facilitate easier access to the destination, but primarily the ability to provide appropriate bus stop features such as benches and shelters in conjunction with this project. Moving to this location will also allow parks staff to maintenance the area surround the bus stop. Any new crosswalk near this location in conjunction with the park will advantage the new stop as well, but will need to be coordinated with DPW for safety and City Standards review.</p> <p>Native plantings are proposed for the project; final plantings will be coordinated with Forestry Staff.</p> <p>The area to the western edge of the park will include walk path and stormwater swale. The space will be more naturalized than the rest of the park to provide a differing experience for users of the walk path.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff recommends approval with conditions.</p> <p>Staff supports the improvement of public space in an area of the City that has historically been underinvested. The location is also adjacent to an existing Community Center that will greatly benefit from the improvements. The proposed items in the Phase 1 plan work well together and help to draw a wide range of users to the park on their own.</p> <hr/> <p>UDC recommends approval with conditions.</p> <p>The UDC discussed the benefits of the meadow and the adjacent brownfield.</p> <p>The Applicant clarified the adjacent brownfield has been tested and found some petroleum products in the soil, however, the site has been “capped” so there are no known pollutants at the topsoil level.</p>

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
Big Moves: Realign City Facilities	<i>Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty</i>	Big Moves: Realign City Facilities

	<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>The programming of the new community park will include a community garden and newly utilized green space.</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>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 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>Master Plan Objectives</p> <p>Landscaping and lighting details will be established at a later stage, but should include sustainability considerations.</p>
<p>Urban Design Guidelines</p>		
<p>GRTC Transit Stops - Page 6</p>	<p><i>A comfortable, safe, and quality environment should be created at transit stops.... Standard bus shelters and other bus stop furniture that have been approved by the UDC, the City Planning Commission, and GRTC</i></p>	<p><u>Staff recommends that the Applicant work with GRTC Staff to evaluate moving adjacent bus stop locations in surrounding blocks to be relocated to be directly adjacent to the proposed park and to improve any potential bus stop locations to GRTC standards.</u></p>

	<p><i>should be used at GRTC transit stops with high ridership and must be installed in a way that doesn't obstruct the public right-of-way or accessibility. Benches installed at transit stops should have arm rests in the middle of the bench for the comfort of riders and to discourage its use for activities other than a short-term wait for the bus.</i></p>	
<p>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3</p>	<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 introduced, especially in minimally used parking areas.</i></p>	<p>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS</p> <p>Permeable Pavement is being provided. Stormwater Swale is also provided.</p>
<p>LANDSCAPING – Page 10</p>	<p><i>Plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes. Site 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.</i></p>	<p>LANDSCAPING</p> <p>A significant portion of the site will be green space. Several well established trees will be maintained and protected throughout construction. Landscaping is used to create interest and natural connections for pedestrians throughout the site.</p> <p>A maintenance plan is provided.</p> <p><i>The applicant will give consideration to visibility through the park in planting locations and maintenance of plantings.</i></p>
<p>SITE FEATURES – Page 14</p>	<p><i>The site should respond to its users through its design and by providing an appropriate array of amenities to serve those users and should incorporate sustainable design aspects. Plazas are encouraged and should provide pleasant transition from street to building while being designed in inviting and accommodating ways for a diversity of users.</i></p>	<p>A number of outdoor spaces and amenities add interest and usable space for pedestrians. This diversity of uses will enhance pedestrian activity throughout the site.</p>