



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
2nd Floor of City Hall
Richmond, VA 23219
www.rva.gov

Meeting Minutes Urban Design Committee

Thursday, January 7, 2021

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

This meeting will be held through electronic communication means.

This meeting will be held through electronic communication means pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020. This meeting will be open to participation through electronic communication means by the public and closed to in-person participation by the public.

Committee members and other staff will participate by teleconference/videoconference via Microsoft Teams.

Special Guidelines for Public Access and Citizen Participation:

Audio of the meeting will be streamed live online at the following web address:

<https://richmondva.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.

To listen to the meeting's live stream at the web address provided, find and click the link that reads, "In Progress" in the farthest right hand column entitled, "Video".

Interested citizens who wish to speak will be given an opportunity to do so by following the instructions below.

[PDRPRES
2020.076](#) Public Access and Participation Instructions - URBAN DESIGN
COMMITTEE

Attachments: [Public Access and Participation Instructions - Urban Design
Committee](#)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Andrea Almond at 10:02 AM.

Mr. Alex Dandridge: This meeting of the Urban Design Committee will be held as an electronic meeting pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance 2020-093. The public has been notified of this meeting and how to participate by a notice via email, and an instruction sheet posted with the agenda on the Legistar website.

The public may participate in the meeting by calling *67-804-316-9457 and entering 860 851 961# Public comment will be heard for each item on the agenda after the applicant has responded to staff recommendations. Members of the public will be limited to 3 minutes for their comments.

Committee members are electronically present, none are physically present in City Hall. We will be conducting a roll call vote with each member stating their name prior to voting. If you are not speaking, it is asked that you keep your microphone muted to prevent any background noises.

Attendees of this meeting should not utilize the Microsoft Teams chat function, as any conversation within that function is not recorded and cannot become part of the public record of this meeting.

Roll Call

Present -- 6 - * Andrew P. Gould, * Emily Smith , * Chair Andrea Almond, * Charles Woodson,
* Andrea Quilici and * Max Hepp-Buchanan

Absent -- 2 - * Jill Nolt and * John Reyna

Secretary's Report

UDC Guidelines Update

The UDC Guidelines updates process underwent a lull during November and December due to holidays and absences, but will be resumed and will include discussions between Planning and Development Review staff and Department of Public Works staff to go over changes recommended by DPW.

2020 Recap

Mr. Dandridge presented slides summing up some statistics and highlights from 2020, including the preserved historic windows and Gothic tracery at the Binford Middle School, and the Bellevue seating wall which was recently completed.

Ms. Quilici asked about the Bellevue seating wall, which includes a step which was not in the plans, which appears to be a tripping hazard. Mr. Dandridge stated that the step was not in the plans and he only learned of its existence via a site visit. Mr. Dandridge had brought the completed state of the project to the attention of PDR Director Mr. Mark Olinger, who had not voiced any issue with the design, but that he could check with him again.

Approval of Minutes

December 10, 2020

To be approved at the February 2021 Meeting.

Consent Agenda

There were no items on the Consent Agenda.

Regular Agenda

1. [UDC 2021-02](#) Final location, character, and extent review of a new RPS Monument Sign; 3501 Belt Boulevard.

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location & Plans](#)

The subject property is located at 3501 Belt Boulevard in South Richmond, totaling approximately 19 acres. The proposed signage will be installed on the west side of the property, adjacent to Belt Boulevard. Belt Boulevard in this location is four lanes: two

north-bound lanes and two south-bound lanes divided by a painted median.

City of Richmond Public School's Department of Pupil Transportation is proposing to install a new free-standing monument sign at their Belt Boulevard location to assist vendors, potential applicants, and other public school personnel in locating the Transportation department from the roadway. The sign will be 59 inches in height, 95 inches in width, and 10 inches deep. The sign will be painted aluminum with applied vinyl lettering.

No landscaping is being proposed in the scope of this project; however, the applicant has stated that they are open to including a landscaping plan. The proposed sign does not contain any digital graphics or lighting.

Regarding placement and size, the Urban Design Guidelines have a number of recommendations pertaining to signage, including that "freestanding signs should relate to the architecture of the building", and that the "the sign's base may be constructed of like building materials" (pg. 23). The message on a sign must be "easy to read and direct" and also "relate to the use of the building".

The Urban Design Guidelines state that the "sign color should relate to and compliment the materials and color scheme of the building, including accent highlights and trim colors" and that, "freestanding signs should be landscaped with appropriate deciduous evergreen shrubs, ground cover planting, annuals and/or perennials" (pg. 24). The proposed sign will be white, a neutral color, which does not negatively impact the character of the site or main building. As submitted, the proposed design does not include any landscaping. Staff recommends that landscaping around the base of the sign be included in the design. The applicant is open to this recommendation.

The project involves the construction of a freestanding monument road sign for Richmond Public School's Department of Pupil Transportation and Fleet Management Building. Staff is supportive of the overall design of the new signage. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval of the plan with the following condition:

- The applicant add landscaping around the proposed monument sign that compliments the sign and grows to a mature height that will not impact the visibility of the signage.

Ms. Almond asked if there was a precedent for the proposed sign, and if its design is similar to that of others in similar contexts. Mr. Dandridge stated that some of the RPS sign improvements approved by UDC at other schools have been different in that they included a base of like building materials, but those schools also had more significant defining architectural features and materials than the one currently under review. Mr. Dandridge stated that in this instance he had not recommended that the base mimic existing building materials.

Mr. Quilici suggested that there should be landscaping around the sign, rather than just grass. Ms. Smith expressed agreement and asked if there were plans for landscaping in conjunction with the sign. Mr. Dandridge stated that there were no such plans at this time.

Ms. Almond stated that UDC should seize any opportunity to have a tree planted, and acknowledged that the sign is near a power line, but suggested that a small native tree could be planted somewhere near the sign, which would be preferable to just planting ground cover around the base of the sign.

Mr. Woodson suggested that perennial wildflowers could be introduced, and would not

require much maintenance; and also agreed that a tree would be a great addition.

Mr. Gould questioned the layout of the sign itself, acknowledging that such details might be beyond UDC's purview. Mr. Gould pointed out that the site address is the most prominent detail, given at the top of the sign. Mr. Gould suggested that the RPS logo be highlighted to emphasize that the site is an RPS site and an RPS facility. Mr. Gould also suggested that the sign have a lower section where changeable messages can be posted, as other RPS school signs have. This would be preferable to other, more unsightly methods of occasional signage, such as a solicitation for bus drivers, visible in Google street view, which consists of a parked bus with a sign attached.

Ms. Almond stated that she had not realized the bus was being put to that use, but had wondered why it was parked in the median.

Ms. Almond asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

A motion was made by Committee Member Quilici, seconded by Committee Member Gould, that this item be recommended for approval by the Planning Commission with the following conditions:

-Instead of including landscaping around the base of the new sign, a native tree be planted on the property in a location that will not impact the new sign.

2. [UDC 2021-01](#) Final location, character and extent review of Powhatan Hill Community Center Addition and Site Improvements; 5051 Northampton Street.

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location & Plans](#)

Located at 5051 Northampton Street in East Richmond, Powhatan Hill Community Center is bounded by Goddin Street to the north, Union Street to the east, Williamsburg Road to the south, and Northampton Street to the west. The community center is adjacent to a 10 acre park and contains open spaces, tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field and gathering spaces. The Powhatan pool is located north of the community

The surrounding areas to the east and south are developed primarily with single-family detached dwellings. A mixed-use development consisting of two six-story buildings with approximately 204 residential units is located to the north of the site. The area to the west of Williamsburg Road is located in Henrico County and is developed with manufacturing/warehouse uses.

At the February 2019 meeting of the Urban Design Committee, the committee reviewed the final location, character and extent review of A.D.A. improvements at the Powhatan Hill Community Center. The Urban Design Committee recommended approval of the project with the following condition:

-That the proposed curb cut ramp on the west side of Northampton Street be removed from the final project design.

Subsequently, the Planning Commission approved the project with the Urban Design Committee's recommendations at their February 19th, 2019 meeting.

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (DPRCF) has completed renovation designs for the existing Powhatan Hill Community Center. The facility is

several decades old and needs upgrades to better suit current needs of the community.

The scope of this project includes a twelve hundred square foot addition to the existing Community Center as well as the renovation of the existing Tennis and Basketball Courts, including the addition of a pickle ball court, and a small skate park. Site Furnishings will be replaced with new benches, trash receptacles, and bike racks.

Building Addition and Renovation

The 1,200-square-foot addition will provide a multi-purpose space for programmed functions, a new single-occupant restroom and reconfigured storage. The exterior of the new addition will be clad in a scored, CMU masonry veneer with decorative bands of brick, matching that of the existing building.

Windows on the new addition will be aluminum, non-operable, full-light windows. The addition will utilize a flat roof form, matching that of the existing building.

Two aluminum, non-operable, full-light windows will be added to the west side of the existing building as well.

Site Improvements

Site improvements will combine the existing features, which will be maintained and renovated, with new additions. Planned additions include a small skate park, with a seat wall between the basketball and tennis courts, and site furnishings. Because the proposed seating wall is in close proximity to the skate park, it is likely that it will be utilized as an informal skate feature. Staff would recommend that a protective, metal coping be added to the edges of the seating wall so that the wall can withstand the impacts of skateboards. The applicant is supportive of this recommendation.

New painted markings will be applied to the existing tennis and basketball courts as well as new basketball hoops and tennis court net. The skate park equipment will be repurposed and relocated from Southside Community Center, which is receiving new skate park equipment. Site furnishings, including benches, bike racks, and waste receptacles will be located adjacent to the athletic courts and in front of the community center building. The tennis courts will be reconfigured to accommodate sole-use pickleball courts and a combined tennis-pickleball court. Sidewalk improvements leading to and around the athletic courts and along Northampton Street are also planned. Asphalt walkways will be installed around the courts and skate park as part of the scope of this project; however, the sidewalk construction from Northampton Street to the courts will be excluded from the initial bid package for the project, as DPRCF will be working with DPW on this component of the project.

The area of disturbance for the building addition portion of the project falls below the necessary threshold of land disturbance that would require stormwater management; the athletic courts renovation and addition of the skate park, however, exceed the threshold, and underground detention is planned for the northern end of the tennis courts to meet stormwater management requirements.

Landscaping Plan and Maintenance Analysis

Landscaping on the site will focus primarily on maintenance and preservation of existing landscaped areas, namely in front of the building entrance, and pruning of existing vegetation as necessary for the building and site improvements.

Existing healthy trees will be preserved, all disturbed areas will be seeded, and any damaged lawn will be renovated. Landscape maintenance will primarily belong to DPRCF as the property owner. Care of trees on City-owned property is the responsibility of the Urban Forestry division of the DPW.

Regarding public structures, the Urban Design Guidelines state that a “a corner building may use its roof form to define an entry point location to the block. Larger scaled buildings should have varied roof forms and roof lines in order to minimize monolithic visual impacts. Roof materials and colors should blend with building materials and colors.” As submitted, the design of the new addition has a flat roof form, mimicking that of the existing building. Staff finds that the current design does not negatively impact the surrounding structures or neighborhood. While this new addition is located on corner lot, the applicant has clarified that the intent of the new addition is to blend into the existing building as seamlessly as possible, and that this addition is not meant to be emphasized as it will not serve as an entry point.

The Urban Design Guidelines state that “New building materials should be compatible with and complement adjacent buildings” (pg. 17). The new addition will be clad in scored CMU, masonry veneer with decorative soldier brick design which will match the existing building in design and in color.

“The number, size, style and type of windows should be appropriate for the architecture of the building”. The new addition will utilize the same design of window and fenestration pattern as the existing building.

The Guidelines state that, The design of new buildings should take design clues from neighboring buildings. (Pg. 18). The proposed addition mimics the design of the existing community center building. On a site visit, staff noticed that the other building on site, the pool facility, has a steep, stepped, shed roof form. The new addition will have a flat roof, and is not proposed to utilize any of the architectural characteristics of the pool facility.

“Large expanses of blank, undifferentiated wall are not appropriate building elevations, especially at the street level” (pg. 19). The new addition to the community center is proposed to have a fenestration pattern on the south facing façade that will reduce the amount of blank, monotonous wall space. There are no windows being proposed on the new addition’s east facing façade. While this façade will be minimally visible, and not located on the main road, Staff finds that as submitted, this will created an expanse of monotonous wall. On a site visit, staff noticed that the community center has broken up monotonous wall space on the existing building along Williamsburg using a mural. Staff sees any wall space on the new addition as an opportunity to implement other creative design elements like murals, green walls, or other landscaping.

The Public Park section of the Urban Design Guidelines notes that “a preference should be given towards materials and construction techniques which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality” (pg. 9). The applicant has clarified that green infrastructure such as green roofs, green walls, and rain barrels are not feasible due to the small size of the addition and limited funds that are available.

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), and that “lighting and landscaping should allow for surveillance and policing activities, but should be designed primarily to accommodate the intended use of the park” (page 9). While no additional landscaping or lighting is planned within the scope of this project, all existing shrubs and

trees will remain and will be appropriately pruned. All disturbed areas will be re-seeded.

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities have engaged Timmons Groups and Worley and Associates Architects to add a 1,200 square foot addition to the Powhatan Hill Community Center. Various other site improvements including the renovation of the existing basketball court and tennis court, the addition of a small skate park and a pickleball court, and new asphalt walking paths and site furnishings are planned as well.

The new addition to the community center will match the existing building in design, using the same cladding, fenestration, and roof form, and will not negatively impact the character of the building. The site improvements will create more attractive courts and walking paths, and will respond to the wants of the community by installing amenities that were specifically asked for during the project team's community engagement process.

While there is no landscaping proposed in the scope of this project, all disturbed areas will be reseeded, and existing healthy trees will be preserved, and pruned.

It is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following conditions:

- The proposed seating wall between the basketball court and the skate park include metal coping along the edges, enabling the wall to withstand impact from skateboards.
- The applicant consider ways to break up the expanse of blank wall on the east side of the new addition, which is visible from Williamsburg Road.

Mr. Quilici asked if there was information about the planned location of the bike racks.

Mr. Trevor Buckley of the Timmons Group stated that the bike racks will be located on a new pad. Mr. Quilici asked if they would be in the proximity of the renovated tennis or basketball courts. Mr. Buckley stated that there are no bike racks planned for that area. Mr. Quilici stated that he expected there would be some park attendees arriving by bike to directly by the courts, and asked if it would be possible to add bike racks. Mr. Heywood Harrison of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities stated that currently there are bike racks located in the front of the building, and it would be an easy matter to add bike racks in the suggested location.

Mr. Quilici stated that, in order to enhance security via visual connection between inside and outside spaces, he would discourage the proposed use of tinted glass. Mr. Quilici asked if a sample of the proposed glass could be provided, or if clear glass be substituted. Ms. Jenn Weatherford, project architect, stated that the applicants would certainly consider glass that would allow for more visibility. Ms. Weatherford stated that the glass tint had been intended to mitigate heat gain, but that the glass would not be tinted in such a way that it would obstruct views. Ms. Weatherford stated that she did not have a sample to show the Committee. Mr. Quilici stated that, if the glass does allow visibility, he would be fine with it having a tint so as to reduce heat gain.

Mr. Quilici asked if the new materials would match those of the existing buildings, and suggested that if it is not possible to make the materials match, then entirely new materials should be used. Ms. Weatherford stated that comparisons had been made and that the contractor had been able to find a very close match in materials. Mr. Harrison affirmed this also.

Mr. Quilici stated that he understood no additional trees or landscaping is planned, and asked if this was due to budget constraints. Mr. Buckley stated that this was mainly a matter of budget, and that there are some large existing canopy trees at the site, and that the focus is on preserving those trees. Mr. Quilici asked if it would be possible to add any trees, perhaps on the west side, to complete the existing row of trees on Northampton Street. Ms. Almond expressed agreement with Mr. Quilici, and stated that with small series of projects on a site, each with a limited budget, it is easy to continually defer landscaping, but that it is important that landscaping not be neglected. Ms. Weatherford stated that the applicants have discussed landscaping around the building with Parks and Recreation, who have recently done extensive pruning to the shrubbery at the front entrance, and there are plans to add low shrubs or landscaping in future, but just not as part of this project.

Committee Chair Almond asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

Mr. Quilici mentioned the staff suggestion to add murals on the blank wall on the site, which faces a fire station, and suggested that a smoother material be substituted for the current material, so that it would be more suitable for the addition of a mural in future. Ms. Almond asked if the stucco material would be too challenging.

Mr. Quilici stated that the stucco appears to be fairly rough, so this could make a mural difficult. Mr. Harrison stated that there is a mural on the corner of Northampton which was added a few weeks ago; this indicates that, though it is a challenging surface to work with, it is possible to create murals on it.

A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Committee Member Quilici, that this item be recommended for approval by the Planning Commission with the following conditions:

- Metal coping along the edges, enabling the wall to withstand impact from skateboards
- The applicant consider ways to break up the expanse of blank wall on the east side of the new addition, which is visible from Williamsburg Road
- The installation of bike racks next to the basketball and tennis courts be included in the scope of work
- The planting street trees along the southern end of Northampton Street on the east side to complete the existing row of trees

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 5 - Emily Smith , Chair Andrea Almond, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici and Max Hepp-Buchanan

Recused -- 1 - Andrew P. Gould

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Woodson stated that VCU is, for the first time ever, working on a sustainability policy, and that Mr. Woodson would be serving on their advisory committee. Ms. Smith stated that there was an earlier plan for 2015-2020 and asked how this tied in with the current plan. Mr. Woodson stated that he did not know, but expressed optimism given the make-up of the advisory committee and stated that he had submitted recommendations for sustainable and safe lawn care practices.

Ms. Almond stated that the Public Art Commission, on which she also serves, would be discussing the library project, which was reviewed by UDC in December, at their next

meeting later in January. Ms. Almond stated that the PAC will also be helping to coordinate a large public art project at South Side Community Center in connection with the skate park being installed there.

Adjournment