



City of Richmond

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

Meeting Minutes Urban Design Committee

Thursday, May 6, 2021

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

This meeting will be held through electronic communication means.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Andrea Almond at 10:00 AM.

[PDRPRES](#) Public Access and Participation Instructions - Urban Design Committee
[2021.120](#)

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

Roll Call

- Present --** 6 - * Emily Smith , * Chair Andrea Almond, * Charles Woodson, * Andrea Quilici, * Justin Doyle and * Max Hepp-Buchanan
- Absent --** 2 - * John Reyna and * Eva Clarke

Approval of Minutes

April 8, 2021

Secretary's Report

Mr. Dandridge stated that Committee Member Reyna had announced his resignation from the Urban Design Committee, due to relocation.

Vice Chair Election

Committee Chair Almond called for the nomination of a new Vice-Chair, Ms. Jill Nolt's term having ended in April 2021. Ms. Almond suggested that a Committee Member could volunteer for the position, to make their willingness known. Mr. Quilici stated that he would be glad to volunteer for the position.

A motion was made by Committee Member Woodson, seconded by Committee Member Doyle, that Committee Member Quilici be selected to be Vice Chair of the City of Richmond's Urban Design Committee. The motion carried by the following vote:

- Aye --** 5 - Emily Smith , Chair Andrea Almond, Charles Woodson, Justin Doyle and Max Hepp-Buchanan
- Abstain --** 1 - Andrea Quilici

CONSENT AGENDA

Committee Chair Almond asked if there was any motion from a Committee Member to move additional items to the Consent Agenda. There was none.

Mr. Brian Cople expressed concern about the second item and the need to prevent applicants from wrapping any traffic control poles. Mr. Dandridge stated that the current review is only for design and includes a condition that installation be done with the involvement of DPW staff.

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

A motion was made by Committee Member Quilici, seconded by Committee Member Smith, that the Consent Agenda be approved.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 6 - Emily Smith , Chair Andrea Almond, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle and Max Hepp-Buchanan

1. [UDC 2021-18](#) Final location, character, and extent review of the Byrd Park Tanks roof replacement; 600 S. Arthur Ashe Boulevard

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

A motion was made by Committee Member Quilici, seconded by Committee Member Smith, that this item be approved with the following condition:

- A physical sample of the new roof material be submitted to staff for review prior to construction.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 6 - Emily Smith , Chair Andrea Almond, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle and Max Hepp-Buchanan

2. [UDC 2021-22](#) Review of 14 pole wraps throughout the Jackson Ward neighborhood associated with the JXN Project

Attachments: [Location and Plans](#)
[Map](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[UDC Report to DPW](#)

A motion was made by Committee Member Quilici, seconded by Committee Member Smith , that this encroachment be approved with the following conditions:

- The applicant work with the Department of Public Works to obtain any additional encroachment permits associated with the pole wraps and honorary signage.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 6 - Emily Smith , Chair Andrea Almond, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle and Max Hepp-Buchanan

REGULAR AGENDA

3. [UDC 2021-15](#) Final review of a pedestrian plaza and a parklet at the intersection of Brook Road and W. Marshall Street.

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)

[Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

[Base Map](#)

The application was presented by Mr. Dandridge.

Mr. Dandridge: The Department of Public Works has recently expressed concern over the permanence over this parklet. Staff is expecting to continue to work with DPW to discuss this project, and how to address their specific concerns.

The subject rights-of-way consists of on-street parking directly in front of Art 180 and a section of pavement adjacent to Gallery 5.

This area is located within the Jackson Ward City Old and Historic District. W. Marshall Street in this location is one-way east-bound with a posted speed limit of 25 mph, and developed with apartment homes, offices, and businesses.

The Brook and Marshall Placemaking Project has three elements grouped together at the intersection of W. Marshall Street and Brook Road. The first element of the project is the installation of a pedestrian plaza near the front door of Gallery 5. The second element of the project, which will go through a separate application process, is an intersection mural in the trapezoid intersection of Brook and Marshall. Finally, a parklet will be installed in front of ART180, providing a gathering and education space for their program youth and surrounding community members. This application is for final review of an encroachment for the plaza and parklet.

In June of 2020, the City of Richmond received a \$25,000 Bloomberg Philanthropies grant, which has now been awarded. Venture Richmond is acting as the fiscal agent and is also contributing \$5,000 to the project as a grant match. The total project budget for all three elements is \$30,000.

Community engagement on this project has been underway for several months with neighboring businesses and community associations. A majority of those who attended the engagement events were in support of this place-making project.

The parklet will be in the parking spaces in front of the Art 180 Building, and will be 30 feet 5.5 inches long and approximately 6 feet deep.

The base of the parklet will consist of three 10 foot modular units that are constructed out of 2x4 joists. Decking boards will be installed perpendicularly over these joists. There will be a guardrail on the street-facing sides of the parklet constructed of horizontal wooden boards that are spaced 1 ½ inches apart to allow for visibility into the parklet.

The parklet roof is proposed to be a sloped glass solar panel array and/or polycarbonate paneling supported by 8 6x6 wooden posts, and will utilize a half round aluminum gutter system including rain chains anchored into planters. The solar roof will generate

electricity for light features, charging stations, and various low voltage devices that may be installed.

Angled bike racks will be installed on the west side of the parklet and spaced 3 feet apart, allowing adequate space for bike parking. There will also be a triangular planter on the west side of the parklet which will have storage for battery equipment associated with the photovoltaic roof once installed. The parklet will have a two-foot buffer zone on the street-facing side and a 4-foot buffer on east and west ends of the parklet. Bike racks and raised wooden planter beds will be placed in the buffer zones surrounding the parklet as additional physical barriers.

Inside the parklet there will be porch swings suspended from the ceiling. These swings are removable, allowing flexible use of the space. The porch swings are designed to be removed and placed between raised planters that will be located against the face of the Art 180 Building, creating seating areas outside of the parklet.

Staff notes that the proposed parklet will be anchored into the ground, which is not required by the City of Richmond's Parklet Design Guidelines; however, the applicant has clarified that it is not possible to meet design loads without anchoring this parklet to the ground, and that the connection to the ground is minimized, using grouted anchor bolts. If necessary, the assembly could be unscrewed from the anchor bolts and moved.

The pedestrian plaza will be located to the east of Gallery 5 in a triangular, underutilized portion of right-of-way, and will extend about 60 feet out from the corner on either side, until the two sides meet at a sharp point creating a triangular plaza. The plaza will have bike parking on both ends and will be surrounded by bollards spaced 10 feet apart. The bollards will be fixed, with the exception of those that will be within the firetruck turning radius, which will be collapsible. The bollards will all have the same exterior design and utilize reflectors.

The existing brick apron to the original fire engine bay on the corner of Gallery 5 will extend into the plaza space, and the existing asphalt may be painted as part of the intersection mural.

Staff notes that the Department of Public Works does not support the use of bollards within the public ROW and suggests that the applicant consider other creative ways to delineate between the plaza and the travel lane. No furnishings are being proposed within the plaza, as the applicant has specified that this is a flexible space that could serve many purposes that benefit pedestrians. Lighting is not a component of this project. Gallery 5 will be responsible for the plaza space.

The project is scheduled to be completed at the end of August 2021.

While the City of Richmond's Urban Design Guidelines do not mention parklets specifically, the guidelines reference public parks:

"Public parks are integral to the quality of life found in any urban landscape. Parks should respond to the environment in which they are located and should be designed in accordance with their intended use" (pg. 9). Parklets are a unique way to reclaim right-of-way for public use, and respond to the need of gathering/green space in an urban setting. The proposed parklet and plaza will be open to the public for use. This place-making project will respond to its setting, providing a gathering and seating space that is shaded in a location that does not currently have these amenities.

The provision of plazas adjacent to buildings serving the public is encouraged. The design of such plazas should avoid large changes in grade from the street. Plazas should provide a pleasant transitional environment for pedestrians from the street to the building(s) it

serves. Public plazas should use landscaping, public art, and historic preservation to create inviting spaces. Adequate seating, lighting and trash receptacles should also be provided in the design of plazas. (pg. 14). The proposed plaza will have a gradual change in grade from the sidewalk to the street, being placed adjacent to an existing curb cut. Historic preservation will be taken into consideration, as the original brick pavers and ramp that make up the entrance to the original fire engine bay on the Gallery 5 building will be preserved and utilized as a component of the plaza. Public art in this space will consist of an intersection mural and painted asphalt within the plaza which will be reviewed in a subsequent application. No specific seating, lighting, or trash receptacles are being proposed with this plaza, as it is proposed to be a flexible space with no specific permanent use that would require such permanent amenities. Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that Planning Commission approve the final design with the following conditions:

- The parklet include a reflective feature
- Applicant work with the Department of Public works to find an appropriate solution to delineate the pedestrian plaza from the travel lane

Mr. Quilici asked if the Committee could approve bollards if they are determined to be appropriate for this location, even though they are not recommended by Department of Public Works. Mr. Dandridge stated that UDC could recommend approval of bollards, but that the application would undergo further review by City Planning Commission and the Department of Public Works, and that DPW would ultimately make the decision on whether to allow them or not.

Mr. Quilici stated that he would be asking the applicants if they had any alternatives to bollards that they could suggest.

Mr. Woodson recommended that instead of bollards, planters with plants in them could be used. Mr. Dandridge stated that this could be a workable alternative.

Mr. Quilici asked for clarification regarding the curved area of the plaza and the ADA element, and how they would work together. Mr. Dandridge, referring to a photo of Gallery 5, indicated where there is an existing ramp left over from an old firetruck bay, and how the sidewalk would merge into the ramp, which would gradually transition into the pedestrian plaza.

Mr. Dandridge stated that work on the street itself had recently been completed, and that he did not know if more improvements were planned.

Mr. Quilici asked if there was any plan to restore the currently damaged brick sidewalk to make sure it is safe. Mr. Dandridge suggested the applicant be asked.

Mr. Quilici asked if the different-colored paving material in the photo was asphalt. Mr. Dandridge stated that the paving is brick pavers with a granite curb, and then the apron pavers, then the asphalt street surface.

Ms. Susan Glasser, the applicant and Secretary to the Public Art Committee, asked if Mr. Sean Wheeler, the project architect, could address some of the questions raised about the plaza.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the existing curb cut for the firetrucks which used to use the building is brick, and asphalt has been poured over the brick and is now flaking off. The

applicants plan is to remove the overlayment of asphalt and then either patch or retreat the historic brick underneath. The part that is being uncovered may become part of a mural, which would be in a separate, future project application.

Mr. Quilici asked, regarding the parklet component, what factors would determine the inclusion or non-inclusion of the PV panels, and what the panels would be used for. Mr. Quilici also asked if the panels would be used for lighting, and whether there was a lighting plan for the project.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the PV panels would be grant-funded, and the funds were not certain as of yet. If the funding does come through, the applicants would then amend the application to include low-voltage lighting for the parklet, and also potentially site furnishings in front of Art 180.

Mr. Wheeler stated that depending on the amount of funding and how many PV panels the applicants can afford, they might also do something with the pedestrian plaza, but for now it is just geared toward the parklet. The low-voltage lighting would be provided for lighting, USB chargers, and possibly other similar amenities for public use.

Mr. Quilici stated that as he understood the design, the swings could be removed and placed behind the planters along the wall. Mr. Quilici asked if, when the swings are removed, there is still a bench or some sort of seating between the planters, with the removed swings being used as the seating surface.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the intention had not been for there to be a bench when the swing is missing, but rather that there would be a structure supporting the back of the swings; the structure holding the swings up would be on the planters themselves and on the back against the buildings, so there would be a void space which could be filled with the swing.

Mr. Wheeler stated that putting a swing on top of a bench would be problematic for securing it; the idea was that the bench would almost clip into it, but these details would have to be fine-tuned when the swings are actually in place.

Mr. Quilici asked if, when the swings are in place in the parklet, there will be no bench in between the planters on the wall, but just the structure. Mr. Wheeler stated that there will be the planters, with a piece of structure tight to the building to catch the swings.

Ms. Glasser stated that the idea was to allow the parklet to be as flexible a space as possible to allow student artists associated with Art 180 to do various activities, including ones requiring setting up tables.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the applicants had a presentation about the project, and if they should do that at this time. Ms. Almond suggested that the applicants do the presentation immediately.

The applicant presentation was provided by Mr. Wheeler.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the parklet was intended to have an open design so that students from Art 180 could use it for their presentations, and that this parklet project has been underway since before the pandemic started.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the roof structure is not a typical piece for a parklet, and in order to work it has to be anchored to the ground; this is why the applicants are proposing routed anchor bolts, which could easily be cut and asphalted over, allowing for the parklet

to be moved rapidly.

Because of cost concerns, the plan at this point is to use a translucent polycarbonate roof structure, which does not provide as much shade as the applicants would like; therefore shade canopies underneath the roof were planned.

The parklet will have significant southern exposure and a lack of tree cover, so a roof and shade were seen as important considerations. The architecture of the parklet is meant to be a modern interpretation of the iconic porches of Jackson Ward; the roof for the project was selected based on its usability for solar power and also to work with the intended typology.

The parklet's main structure would be constructed of stained, pressure-treated wood. The specific swing design has not been determined; one option would be to use 3 swings salvaged from a 2019 parklet project.

The parklet roof is a truss structure of tubular steel components which could be assembled off-site.

Mr. Woodson asked what kind of lighting would be used within the parklet structure. Mr. Wheeler stated that that has yet to be determined, but the assumption was that it would be some sort of low-voltage landscape light, potentially of a flexible design.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the Art 180 organization would be the custodians of the parklet, and that temporary art installations might have lighting needs, but that this would be dealt with in a later, separate application.

Mr. Wheeler stated that funding for solar panels had yet to be determined.

Mr. Woodson expressed support and appreciation for the project.

Ms. Almond asked if the applicants had discussed alternatives to bollards. Mr. Wheeler stated that they had not yet discussed alternatives, and that bollards had seemed like the best option as they take up the least space and would allow the most flexible use of the space.

Mr. Quilici asked if there was an explanation for DPW's opposition to bollards. Mr. Copple's input was requested by Ms. Almond.

Mr. Copple stated that the bollards will not function as intended as they have to be placed on a tangent, not on a curb. Mr. Copple stated that the bollards would be of a breakaway design, which means that they become projectiles in the event of a collision. Mr. Copple proceeded to enumerate other concerns of DPW, including the paint used.

Mr. Copple stated that the project does not meet the specified description of a parklet, as it has features that qualify it as a building which would require permits. Mr. Copple stated that it seemed as if the structure would require excessive amounts of time to assemble and also to repair, and it does not seem to be portable.

Mr. Wheeler stated that there is a water supply for the project. Mr. Copple suggested that in the event of a water main fault, it would be difficult to move this parklet, as opposed to existing parklets which are fairly rapidly movable. Mr. Copple stated that there were visibility concerns associated with the roof.

Ms. Almond stated that the DPW concerns listed by Mr. Copple seemed to be matters

outside of the purview of UDC, and that one of the staff comments for the project states that the applicant would have to work with DPW to address their concerns before proceeding with the project. Ms. Almond stated that from the perspective of UDC, the Committee has to make their recommendation on the design, and the discussion with DPU would take place afterwards.

Mr. Dandridge stated that he would be glad to address and administratively review any design changes or permitting matters that would result from DPW requirements.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the parklet is designed to be one piece when assembled, so it could be unbolted from its anchor bolts and move it with a lift. Mr. Copple asked how much it would weigh, and stated that existing City parklets weigh about 1500 pounds. Mr. Wheeler stated that the weight would depend on whether the parklet has solar panels, but that it would be not much more than that, due to being constructed out of wood.

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

A motion was made by Committee Member Woodson that this item be approved with the conditions recommended by staff. Committee Member Quilici seconded the motion.

Mr. Quilici expressed concern that the applicant should be aware of the need to work with DPW. Mr. Dandridge stated that there was already a condition to work with DPW regarding the bollards in the pedestrian plaza.

Mr. Dandridge suggested the current motion could be withdrawn and a new one be made requiring more extensive work with DPW as well as submit resulting design changes to Mr. Dandridge for administrative approval.

A motion was made by Committee Member Woodson, seconded by Committee Member Quilici, that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approve this item with the following conditions: the parklet include a reflective feature; Applicant work with the Department of Public works to find an appropriate solution to delineate the pedestrian plaza from the travel lane; Applicant continue to work with the Departments of Public Works and Planning and Development Review to adjust the design of the Parklet, including determining any associated permits that may need to be obtained.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 5 - Emily Smith , Chair Andrea Almond, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici and Justin Doyle

Abstain -- 1 - Max Hepp-Buchanan

4. [UDC 2021-19](#) Final location, character, and extent review of Tidewater Lock stairs replacement; Canal Walk between 12th Street and Virginia Street

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

Committee Chair Almond stated that she would have to abstain from review of this

project. Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that she would have to abstain as well.

Ms. Smith left the meeting at this juncture.

The application was presented by Mr. Dandridge.

Mr. Dandridge: The Tidewater Locks are located in Downtown Richmond, bordered by 12th Street to the west, 13th Street to the East, and the Downtown Expressway to the north. The project area is only accessible by foot, and is surrounded by high-rise apartment and office buildings.

Currently, the locks are accessed on foot using wooden stairs that abut a retaining wall that supports the hillside, connecting 13th street to the canal walk below. 13th Street in this location is cobblestone and closed to traffic, with two large planters blocking the entrance which connects to an adjacent parking lot. There is no formal landscaping in this location; however, the adjacent hillside is wooded, containing ivy, trees, and other wild flora. The stair case terminates into an open paved area continuing under a historic stone bridge and along the Kanawha Canal.

The retaining wall itself is beginning to degrade, creating a safety issue, and the stairs will need to be relocated. The existing stairs will be relocated a few yards south. Rather than switching back directly to the north side of the Canal Walk, the stairs will first land on the surface between the Tidewater Connection Locks, where a wooden deck will be constructed. The deck will include benches and landscaped areas, including stairs off of the proposed deck into a small green space. A metal decorative fence matching the existing will be installed along the edges of the canal where one does not currently exist. Improvements to this new "place" on the Canal Walk will include interpretive signage and a public art component (for future review).

From the deck, a connection will be built to the lower stretch of stairs that can be preserved from the existing stairway, providing access to the Canal Walk at the same point that exists today. Construction will be performed by Venture Richmond contractors and will be funded by Venture Richmond.

Staff notes that while the scope of this project does not include any proposed ADA accessibility improvements, there are existing ADA entrances to the Canal Walk near Virginia Street and as well near 14th Street and the turning basin.

In regards to the URBAN Design Guidelines:

Certain design considerations should be addressed in any project, regardless of the type of park. Historic elements should be surveyed and preservation should be considered for both facilities and landscapes. Impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements. (pg. 9) The scope of work will not impact any of the historic elements within the project area, such as the retaining wall and canal locks, and arched stone bridge and tunnel.

Landscape plans should include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings. Shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting. (10) The landscape plan contains a variety of native plant species including eastern red bud, blueflag iris, winter berry, serviceberry, Virginia sweetspire, and amsonia.

Site furnishings should be conveniently located for the pedestrian, but should not obstruct pedestrian circulation. Furnishings should be located where people congregate, such as at bus stops, in front of major attractions, and in parks and plazas. The placement of furnishings should not create visual clutter on the streetscape. (25) Proposed site furnishings are built-in benches on the proposed deck. The benches will be located in an area that is convenient to pedestrians and will not impede pedestrian flow.

Site furnishings should be durable, both in construction and finish, and be easy to maintain and to install. Site furnishings should have vandal-resistant features. Replacement parts or components should be readily available and easily installed. Finish colors should be easily matched. (25) The new stairs, deck, and benches are proposed to be wood. Staff recommends that all wooden elements be treated lumber and painted or stained a neutral color to protect the wood.

Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that Planning Commission approve the final design with the following condition: that the applicant consider the feasibility of utilizing a composite, maintenance-free, slip-resistant material for the stairs and decking. If that is not feasible, all wooden elements should be treated lumber, either painted or stained.

Mr. Quilici, as acting Committee Chair, asked if there were any questions for Mr. Dandridge from the Committee.

Mr. Woodson recommended to the applicants that they use Thompson's water seal.

The applicant representative, Mr. Alex Dahm, stated that the applicants would consider using a composite material, as recommended by staff, and that these would probably be more cost-effective, in the short term and long term. Mr. Dahm stated that Venture Richmond has been successful at maintaining wood surfaces for very long periods of time.

Mr. Quilici asked if there was a plan for any kind of lighting for the interior of the stair structure, or if existing radiant lighting would be sufficient for evening usage.

Mr. Dahm stated that there is some existing ambient lighting, but that the applicants would like to add lighting as feasible. Mr. Dahm stated that there was formerly some down-lighting, which fell and had to be removed, and the applicants would like to replace it, though this is not in the scope of the current project.

Mr. Quilici asked if there is currently enough light for night-time safety. Mr. Dahm stated that there is currently sufficient lighting, and that this area of the canal is very active both day and night.

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

A motion was made by Committee Member Doyle that this item be approved with the following condition: the applicant consider the feasibility of utilizing a composite, maintenance-free, slip-resistant material for the stairs and decking. If that is not feasible, all wooden elements should be treated lumber, either painted or stained.

Committee Member Woodson seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 3 - Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici and Justin Doyle

Excused -- 1 - Emily Smith

Abstain -- 2 - Chair Andrea Almond and Max Hepp-Buchanan

5. [UDC 2021-20](#) Final location, character, and extent review of Gillie's Creek Park Picnic Shelters; 4425 Williamsburg Road

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)

[Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

[Base Map](#)

Gillies Creek Park is located at 4425 Williamsburg Avenue, and the picnic area is located on the easternmost side of the park along Government Road, between Stony Run Road and Admiral Gravelly Boulevard. The park's BMX track and playground are located just to the west of the project area. The primary entrance to this area of the park is from Government Road.

The project area currently has picnic tables scattered around a gravel lot surrounded by woods. There are no shelters or grill stations for visitors. There is also no access and circulation pattern for vehicles and pedestrians.

The project proposes to delineate access drives, parking, picnic spots with shelters and grill stations, provide universal/ADA-compliant access to the shelters, and revegetate and beautify disturbed areas. DPRCF engaged with Timmons Group for design services in winter 2021. The design was developed with The Department of Parks and Recreation staff and the Gillies Creek Park Foundation, which has also consulted other partner groups.

The site program includes the following:

Resurfaced gravel lot with drive aisles and parking delineated, with two-way and one-way traffic designated with signage and the gravel edged with 8 in. x 8 in. timbers

Eight (8) picnic shelters with picnic tables and charcoal-style barbecue grills. Of these: Six (6) shelters are 8 ft. x 9 ft. and can accommodate one (1) built-in picnic table.

Two (2) shelters are ADA-accessible. ADA accessibility includes one (1) parking space, sidewalk access, the picnic table, and the grill station.

Two (2) shelters are 12 ft. x 12 ft. and can accommodate two (2) free-standing picnic tables

Tree planting, reseeding, and mulching the site including existing wooded areas within and adjacent to the picnic areas.

Landscaping on the site will focus on revegetating and reseeding the ground plane where it is currently exposed or gravel. All healthy, existing trees will be preserved. Three dead trees within the project area will be removed. The ground plane of the existing wooded areas will be seeded and/or mulched and some additional trees will be planted around the site. New plantings will be opportunities for community engagement and education in the fall of 2021.

Specific trees for the new plantings will be selected in consultation with the City's arborists, but may include some of the following recommended native species: Red maple; Serviceberry; River birch; Redbud; Flowering dogwood; Tulip poplar; Southern red oak; Pin oak; Willow oak; American sycamore.

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 Department of Public Works.

The Guidelines note that “site furnishings, such as benches and trash receptacles, should be appropriately styled and scaled to complement building architecture” (page 24). The Guidelines also note that “site furnishings should be durable, both in construction and finish, and be easy to maintain and to install” (page 25).

The proposed site furnishings will be constructed of durable material, and will be a color that complements the surrounding environment. Staff notes the a teal color is being used for the metal tubing elements on the proposed picnic tables, and recommends that the picnic tables’ metal elements match those of the picnic shelters, being either a dark green or black color.

The Guidelines also note that, “Site furnishings should be conveniently located for the pedestrian, but should not obstruct pedestrian circulation. Furnishings should be located where people congregate, such as at bus stops, in front of major attractions, and in parks and plazas. The placement of furnishings should not create visual clutter on the streetscape. Furnishings may be grouped together, where appropriate. However, trash receptacles should be placed in the vicinity of bench groupings, but not directly adjacent, because of wasps and other insects in summer months” (pg. 25). The proposed site furnishings are conveniently located off of the access drive through the park, and will not obstruct pedestrian circulation. The furnishings will be placed in an area that is currently frequented by groups for picnicking, and will continue to serve this purpose. Staff notes that there are bike recreational facilities on site, and a bike lane on Government Road, and recommends that bike racks be incorporated into the design of the site.

Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that Planning Commission approve the final design with the following conditions: Applicant include the installation of bike racks in the project area; design and location to be reviewed by staff; metal components of the proposed picnic table match the color of the proposed picnic shelters, being either black or green rather than teal; final landscaping plan be submitted to staff showing tree removal and location of new plantings.

Mr. Woodson asked if the reseeding in the plan would be done with grass, and suggested that white clover be used, as it is good for pollinators and would probably require less cutting.

Mr. Dandridge stated that the reseeding plan does appear to call for grass, but that there will be varied planting opportunities in many parts of the project area, especially around the woods, to which the applicant will probably be open.

The applicant representative, Ms. Kathryn Giles Garrison of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities, stated that that was a great suggestion. Ms. Garrison stated that the applicants are looking for a sustainable type of ground cover, and that she would discuss the suggestion of varied planting with her staff.

Mr. Quilici asked what type of waste receptacle would be used. Ms. Garrison stated that the City standard would probably be used.

Ms. Garrison stated that the Parks department receives many requests for additional waste receptacles, and that there are currently 7 located in this park, and 2 on site, which are supercans. Ms. Garrison stated that her guess was that the department would be able to add 2 new cans as part of the current plan, and that these would be accessible

for the picnic shelters.

Mr. Scott Wiley of Timmons Group stated that the supercans now present on site were deemed ideal by Parks department staff due to their movability for events and ease of use, but that immobile waste furnishings could be added as well if there is a demand for them.

Mr. Quilici asked if there is currently lighting in the park, and if any is being added.

Ms. Garrison stated that lighting is not included in the plan, because the park closes at dusk and also because this is not a capital project and the focus is on the parking area. Ms. Giles stated that additional lighting should be installed in future, including lighting for the rest rooms.

Mr. Quilici asked if there was a projected completion date for the new path shown in project drawings. Ms. Garrison stated that the plan was to begin phased implementation within the next two months, following approval from Planning Commission, in such a way that existing park users are not displaced.

Ms. Garrison stated that this is a workforce development project, so the applicants do not wish to contract out the work, but rather to have it be an educational experience for the participants in this program.

Mr. Quilici suggested that this project could be an opportunity to make the entire project area be ADA accessible, with a combination of dedicated ADA and ADA-accessible spaces. Mr. Quilici suggested that for example the path could be extended to connect the parking, the barbecue area, and the shelter. Mr. Quilici suggested that making the project area, including tables and barbecue areas, ADA-accessible, should be possible without increasing the project cost by much.

Ms. Garrison stated that she did think it would be a positive message to make the whole site accessible, and stated that the picnic tables currently present are accessible, and additional accessible round picnic tables are already planned, in response to community requests.

Regarding parking and ADA accessibility, Mr. Wiley indicated the striped concrete parking spaces depicted in plan drawings, and the path from that area to the ADA-accessible seating and barbecue area. Mr. Wiley stated that greater accessibility could be considered, but it would increase cost and the ADA measures planned already are considerable for a project of this scale. Mr. Wiley stated that the budget and funding for the project have not yet been worked out, and that this information will determine how extensive the ADA measures can be.

Ms. Almond stated that she knew that some of the larger trees on site had died due to motorists parking too close to them, and asked if the proposed timber edging seemed sufficient to prevent cars from parking wherever they like and in the process potentially inflicting more tree damage. Mr. Wiley stated that this was a good point, also raised by staff, and that the proposed edging is in use elsewhere in the park, and that it creates a substantial 6- or 7-inch lip, and seems to be effective.

Ms. Almond stated that going too far in the direction of ADA accessibility could mean getting rid of things like edging, in the interest of making park surfaces flush, so it is necessary to be strategic about which surfaces are used to make an accessible pathway.

Mr. Wiley stated that another consideration is the way that the project will be done by workforce personnel, whose skill set will be better suited to installing the timber edging than, for example, concrete.

Mr. Doyle asked about community engagement with and response to the park and the project currently under review, and what community recommendations had been worked into the project.

Ms. Garrison stated that applicants had met with community members for feedback 4 or 5 times and also distributed a combination flier and comment sheet, and had received overall positive community feedback.

Most of the feedback had been to the effect of "it's about time" and specific requests had included: round tables for playing dominoes, which Parks and Recreation has and can add underneath the shelters; additional rest rooms, which are not currently feasible; and additional park amenities such as a basketball court or horseshoe pit. Community members had expressed appreciation about the planned accessibility improvements.

Ms. Garrison stated that the subject area is a very well-used area of the park that has not gotten much attention for a long time.

Mr. Doyle asked if a larger picnic shelter for larger community events had been considered. Ms. Garrison stated that this had been planned at the outset, but park users had expressed concern about too many people having to share one space, and expressed a preference for multiple smaller spaces.

Mr. Woodson asked if there was any signage identifying the park. Ms. Garrison stated that there is no signage in the project area, though there is a nearby sign identifying the BMX area. Ms. Garrison stated that some signage is needed, and there is a question as to what this specific part of the park should be called, and how best to name it in a way respectful of the place and history. Ms. Garrison stated that community involvement would be important for this naming.

Mr. Dandridge stated that there is a Gillies Creek Park sign on Government Road, near this location.

Committee Chair Almond asked if there was any public comment. There was none. Ms. Almond stated that she did not see a need for color coordination between existing site furnishings and new. Mr. Woodson and Mr. Doyle and Mr. Hepp-Buchanan expressed agreement.

A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan that this item be approved with the following conditions: applicant include the installation of bike racks in the project area; design and location to be reviewed by staff; final landscaping plan be submitted to staff showing tree removal and location of new plantings; pending financial resources, the Department of Parks Recreation and Community Facilities consider additional accessible picnic and parking amenities on site.

Mr. Quilici suggested a condition be added to include more ADA amenities, if the budget allows for it. Mr. Hepp-Buchanan and Mr. Doyle agreed to the amendment.

Committee Member Doyle seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 5 - Chair Andrea Almond, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle and Max Hepp-Buchanan

Excused -- 1 - Emily Smith

6. [UDC 2021-21](#) Final location, character, and extent review of Pump House Park ADA accessibility improvements; 1500 Pump House Drive

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Base Map](#)
[Location & Plans Updated](#)
[Letter of Support](#)

The application was presented by Mr. Dandridge.

Mr. Dandridge: Pump House Park is located at 1799 Pump House Drive and is situated at the south end of Byrd Park adjacent to the Pump House and James River & Kanawha Canals and near the James River. The primary entrance to the park and building, and only current public entrance, is from Pump House Drive via a steep asphalt driveway leading to a vehicular-grade bridge over the Pump House Canal. There is a ramp on the south side of the canal leading down to the building, but no ramp from Pump House Drive to the bridge.

There is also a footbridge over the canal just to the east, but access is currently limited (by a locked fence); improvements for that access point are envisioned and are shown as future improvements in this submittal.

The park is located in the 5th Council District; it is near the Carillon neighborhood (just to the west up Pump House Drive), but it is relatively removed from nearby development.

In January 2019, the Urban Design Committee reviewed the final location, character and extent of the Pump House Parking Lot Trail, 1704 Pump House Drive; UDC 2019-04. The Urban Design Committee recommended approval of the project with the following conditions: If any existing cobblestone or granite is removed, it be stockpiled or reused; the applicant consider using pervious pavement materials where possible; the applicant further study the western end of the trail connection to provide better pedestrian and cycling access to Pump House Drive.

The Planning Commission subsequently approved the application with the Urban Design Committee's recommended conditions of approval.

Proposed work consists of a pathway and ramp traversing the slope between Pump House Drive and the existing vehicular bridge that crosses Pump House Canal to the building. This improvement was envisioned as part of the master planning for the park completed in 2019. This submittal is intended for Final Review of the site design.

In 2018 and 2019, DPRCF worked with stakeholder groups and community members to complete a master plan for renovations of the Pump House building and surrounding park. A major aspect of that visioning process was making the park and building more open and accessible, which includes a walkway access to the building that is constructed for ADA compliance.

DPRCF engaged Timmons Group (one of the master planning team members) in winter 2021 to provide design services for an accessible ramp between Pump House Drive and

the Pump House Canal to begin implementation of the improvements envisioned in the master plan. Specific funding was available to DPRCF for this project. Timmons Group's landscape architecture, civil engineering, and structural engineering teams have worked together to plan and design this project for construction.

The site program will consist of the following features:

- Improvements to Pump House Drive to add two ADA-compliant parking spaces
- A concrete walkway ramping downslope from Pump House Drive to the vehicular-grade bridge that crosses the Pump House Canal. The ramp will have simple tubular steel railing.
- Concrete retaining walls along sections of the walkway to accommodate grading of the slope necessary for the walkway
- A slot drain along a portion of the walkway with a small outfall structure at Pump House Canal to manage storm water runoff
- Landscaping consisting of trees and shrubs

Landscaping on the site will focus primarily on RPA mitigation planting. An effort has been made to preserve all healthy existing trees to the greatest extent possible. All RPA mitigation tree planting will be counted toward the City's requirements for replacement of trees removed; however, the total replacement value will need to be met through payment into the City's tree planting fund. All disturbed areas will be seeded with lawn.

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 Department of Public Works (DPW).

"A preference should be given towards materials and construction techniques which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality" (page 9). The Guidelines are also very supportive of low-impact development and green building practices (page 10, 11). The project proposes to utilize low-impact storm water run-off methods.

Where possible, handicap ramps should be located so that they are sensitive to primary building elevations.

The design of handicap ramps should relate to building architecture and exterior building materials. A ramp's base and its railings should be of an appropriate material and finish to complement the adjacent building. The proposed accessible ramp will be located on the hillside adjacent to the pump house canal and the pump house building through a wooded area. Staff finds that the placement of a switchback accessible ramp in this location is ideal due to the steep terrain leading down to the canal, but recommends that in order to ensure that views of the historic pump house building are not obscured or diminished, the applicant consider using a rail design that is thinner than the proposed pipe railing, and using a finish that blends into the surrounding landscape.

It is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following conditions: the applicant consider using pervious pavement materials where possible; amount of railing utilized on the accessible ramp be minimized by using a thinner rail design; accessible ramp railing be painted a color that blends into the surrounding landscape, to be submitted to staff for review.

Ms. Almond asked the applicants if they were amenable to staff comments, especially in regard to the railing on the ramp.

Mr. Trevor Buckley of Timmons Group stated that the applicants are reconsidering and

have selected another product that will have a slimmer profile and a more modern look. Mr. Buckley stated that the color scheme, and its blending into the landscape, had not yet been focused on by the applicants, but that they would discuss and integrate these details into the information shown for the ramp and the structural details for the wall.

Mr. Michael Burton of Parks and Recreation stated that his involvement with the project was minimal but that he could state that the recommendations made by staff would not be a problem, and that he could relay this to Mr. Bryce Wilk, who was more involved with the project.

Mr. Quilici asked how far out of the ground the concrete retaining wall and what its visual impact from the other side would be, and expressed concern that, with two walls, there might be an excessive amount of visible concrete. Mr. Quilici asked whether the concrete could be limited by being integrated with the planting plan.

Mr. Wiley of Timmons Group stated that the plans called for integrating canal stones which are already stockpiled on site, and calling upon Parks and Recreation to place in the hillside during construction. Mr. Wiley stated that the plans show how the canal stones would be integrated into the hillside to promote existing features.

Mr. Wiley stated that the planting plan and the deployment of the canal stones will help to screen some of the concrete, and that the maximum height of the concrete sections would be 3 feet.

Mr. Buckley stated that the height varies but would be in that range, with 3 feet about the maximum. Mr. Buckley stated that he had passed along this information to Mr. Dandridge, but had been a bit late to include it in the actual application materials.

Mr. Buckley stated that the ground cover would be updated to a meadow-type seed mix that is adapted for partial-shade areas. The ground cover will fill in the spaces around the proposed shrubs, including a strip at the bottom of the lowest section of the retaining walls, and should help to blanket the expanse of concrete visible from the Pump House building.

Mr. Quilici asked for clarification about the position of the handrail, and whether it would be positioned directly on top of the concrete, or set back. Mr. Quilici stated that he liked one option which seemed as if it would allow a planting between the railing, perhaps of ivy or something similar. Mr. Quilici stated that the location of the concrete gap had not been clear in some presentation materials, and it had appeared that there was an area of dirt between the concrete wall and the path.

Mr. Quilici stated that another idea to consider would be a seating area or other stopping point for pedestrians along the path.

Mr. Buckley stated that earlier drawings had shown a foot gap between the footing of the railing and the wall, but that the applicants had decided to shift the railing to the top of the wall, for reasons of economy and practicality and also because the gap seemed awkward. Mr. Buckley stated that plantings along the side of the wall or at the bottom of the wall could be considered.

Regarding the seating question, Mr. Buckley stated that the applicants were considering using some of the existing granite blocks, mentioned by Mr. Wiley, along the straight middle section of the walkway for seating.

Mr. Quilici stated that if the railing were in front, this would prevent pedestrians from sitting on the blocks.

Mr. Quilici suggested that the granite seating blocks could be made accessible if the railing is interrupted by the landing. Mr. Quilici suggested that in general the seating proposed along the path should be made more accessible than it currently appears in the plans.

Mr. Quilici suggested that the concrete wall at the landing area along the path could be raised to be usable as seating, as this would provide a nice view along the canal.

Mr. Woodson expressed appreciation for the project's attention to tree preservation, and reminded the applicants that removal of healthy trees requires a permit for each tree. Mr. Buckley stated that the applicants had referred to the City's existing tree survey, but on-site research revealed twice as many trees as were on the 2013 survey, all of which were noted by the applicants. Mr. Buckley stated that the path had been adjusted to make space for some larger trees on site.

Ms. Almond asked how many trees would be removed for the project, and noted that the project narrative mentions paying into the tree fund, which seemed to indicate that replacement with new trees on site would not be feasible. Mr. Buckley stated that the trees are rated according to DBH [diameter at breast height] value and that less than half of them are being removed.

Mr. Quilici stated that, if and when the Pump House is restored, there could be evening activities at the site, and asked if the project plan called for lighting conduits for potential future use, as it would probably be cheaper to include them now rather than to add them later. Mr. Buckley stated that this was a good point and would be taken into consideration.

Mr. Doyle expressed appreciation that Pump House drive would be used for ADA accessible parking spaces.

Mr. Doyle stated that from the plans it appears that the trench grate drains into the canal, and asked if that is accurate and if so, if any consideration had been given to bioretention areas adjacent to the accessible pathway. Mr. Buckley stated that that was correct: the slot drain would flow out to the canal, though the design had since been updated and would include pipes of various sizes running along the ramp as part of the stormwater retention plan. Mr. Buckley stated that the design meets stormwater compliance requirements, but that a bioretention feature would be a nice, possibly preferable, addition, although space would be a consideration as the applicants are trying to minimize any disturbance past the retaining wall.

Mr. Buckley stated that project funding comes from an art grant to improve accessibility, and limits to this funding would also be an issue when considering the addition of a bioretention feature.

Mr. Woodson asked for confirmation that wetlands would not be disturbed in the course of the project. Mr. Buckley confirmed that they would not be disturbed.

Mr. Quilici asked about use of pervious pavers in the project. Mr. Buckley stated that the project has a limited budget, and that this and the limited time-frame to execute the project are the main reasons pervious pavers had not been included in the project. Ms. Almond pointed out that staff comments had included the recommendation that pervious pavers be used if possible.

Mr. Buckley stated that cost, time constraints, and the stormwater management aspect would all be factors making it difficult to use pervious pavers.

Mr. Wiley stated that the time frame for the project is very tight, and that if not awarded to a contractor by the end of June 2021, there is concern that it would have to be shelved for a significant amount of time.

Mr. Wiley stated that the applicants are running concurrent application steps so as to expedite the project, and that it had also been submitted to Water Resources for initial review and application.

Mr. Wiley stated that the project grant is only \$100,000, and anything beyond that would have to come from Parks and Rec's operating budget which is already stretched very thin.

Ms. Almond asked if it would be within the project budget to do a color mix in the concrete to make it either brown or gray so as to blend better visually with the hillside. Mr. Wiley asked what concrete elements should be colored. Ms. Almond stated that either all concrete elements should be colored, or none of them. Mr. Wiley stated that this could certainly be considered and should not add much to the project cost.

Committee Chair Almond asked if there was any public comment.

Ms. Elizabeth Price of Historic Richmond stated that Historic Richmond is supportive of the proposed changes, and had been working closely with Friends of the Pump House and Parks & Rec on an incremental preservation project focused on the site, of which this project is a crucial component.

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

A motion was made by Committee Member Quilici that this item be approved with the following conditions: the applicant consider using pervious pavement materials where possible; the amount of railing utilized on the accessible ramp be minimized by using a thinner rail design; the accessible ramp railing have a finish, or be painted a color that blends into the surrounding landscape, submitted to staff for review; the concrete used to construct the accessible ramp and associated retaining wall be pigmented with a brown/ tan earth tone to better camouflage the ramp into the surrounding landscape.

Committee Member Doyle seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 5 - Chair Andrea Almond, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle and Max Hepp-Buchanan

Excused -- 1 - Emily Smith

7. [UDC 2021-17](#) Conceptual location, character, and extent review of Whitehead Road drainage and sidewalk improvements; 1615 Whitehead Road.

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

The application was presented by Mr. Dandridge.

Mr. Dandridge: The subject improvements are proposed along .23 miles of Whitehead Street. Land use along the corridor is mostly R-3 (Single-family residential). Currently there is one lane in each direction with a posted speed limit of 35 mph. There are occasional turn lanes and intersections with neighborhood roads. This portion of Whitehead Road is surrounded by a wooded area. There are currently no sidewalks.

This project aims to resolve the flooding of Whitehead Road at the crossing of Pocosham Creek, and the lack of designated pedestrian amenities along the roadway.

The existing 36" culverts will be replaced with a triple 8'x6' concrete box culvert, and Whitehead Road will be raised by approximately one foot within the vicinity of the stream crossing.

The existing roadway has minimal room for pedestrians to walk, including children who utilize Whitehead Road for access to and from G.H. Reid Elementary School. New sidewalk, curb, and gutter will be constructed along both sides of Whitehead Road from Greenbank Road to Daytona Drive. New accessible ramps and crosswalk striping will be provided at the beginning and end points of the project.

Whitehead Road has narrow travel lanes and steep dropoffs immediately adjacent to the pavement. The narrow lanes and shoulder conditions are hazardous to vehicles.

The proposed improvements will provide a 21' wide travel way plus the addition of city standard curbing with 18" wide concrete gutter pans.

Approximately 0.18 acres of wetland impacts will occur as part of the project. A United States Army Corps of Engineers joint permit application has been submitted to obtain authorization for these impacts, with mitigation planned to be in the form of wetland credits to be purchased by the City. Nutrient credits will be purchased to satisfy stormwater management permit requirements. A Resource Protection Area (RPA) planting plan will be included in the final construction drawings to reestablish impacted trees within select areas within the City-designated RPA area.

The existing properties along the roadway consist of a mixture of single-family homes, vacant lots, and the Residences at Brookside apartment complex. Of the eighteen (18) private properties adjacent to the roadway within the project limits, fourteen (14) require right of way and/or public and private easement acquisition prior to project construction. All property owners have been notified of the project through various mailings and phone calls, and site meetings have been held with several owners to date. Owner outreach will continue up until and throughout the property acquisition phase. Right of way and public and private easement plats have been developed for all properties and submitted to the City Attorney for review.

This project has been through multiple plan reviews by the Department of Public Works and the Department of Public Utilities in 2019 and 2020. Final plans are expected to be completed and approved in 2021.

The Guidelines note that “intersections should be designed to serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in a safe manner” (page 7). The scope of work calls for the construction of new 5-foot sidewalks on either side of Whitehead Road, as well as crosswalks at all major intersections. Staff recommends that the “ladder” striped crosswalk design be utilized in all proposed crosswalk locations, as this design is more visible than the “parallel lines” striped crosswalk design.

Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend the Planning Commission approve the conceptual design with the following conditions for final review: “Ladder” striped crosswalk design be utilized at all pedestrian crossings, including Derwent Drive and Daytona Drive.

The applicant, Mr. Jakob Helmboldt, Pedestrian and Bicyclist Coordinator for the Department of Public Works, stated that he had sent additional comments and sidewalk and ramp details, specifically regarding ADA requirements, which he could re-forward to Mr. Dandridge to be shared with UDC members. Mr. Dandridge stated that he would forward this information to UDC members.

Mr. Bill Boston, Capital Improvement Program Manager for Stormwater for Richmond Department of Public Utilities, asked that this information be shared with him as well so that he could pass it along to project consultant Michael Hogan of RK & K.

Mr. Quilici stated that he had read that the path was used sometimes by children going to school, and asked if it would be possible to continue the sidewalk to the school, at least along one side.

Mr. Boston stated that he believed that there were plans in the works with DPW and Councilman Jones to extend the sidewalks, outside of the boundary limits of the current project. Mr. Boston stated that the current project does provide significant access for pedestrians via sidewalks and ramps, aside from the stormwater aspect of the project, and that the applicants are doing the maximum to enhance safety with the budget available to them.

Mr. Doyle stated that box culverts can impede the movement of fish and other aquatic species, and asked the applicants to speak to that concern.

Mr. Hogan of RK & K stated that, in coordination with the Army Corps of Engineers, all 3 box culverts would be countersunk a minimum 6 inches below the streambed elevation, so there won't be any obstruction there. In addition a low-flow diversion would be installed, using stone on the upstream side of the culvert so that during normal flow the water would go through usually 1 cell and no more than 2 cells; and during times of increased flow, water would flow through all 3 culvert cells.

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

A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan that this item be approved with the following condition: Ladder, stripped crosswalk design be utilized at all pedestrian crossings, including Derwent Drive and Daytona Drive.

Committee Member Quilici seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

OTHER BUSINESS

[Presentation](#) Streeterly Concept - Kevin Vohnk, Acting Director
[05.2021](#)

The discussion concerns were presented by Mr. Kevin Vonck, Planning and Development Review Acting Director.

Mr. Vonck: The City does have some policies in place regarding outdoor dining, including the Better Streets Manual and the temporary outdoor dining guidelines. Hopefully Covid restrictions will not last forever and some of the temporary items will have to be removed.

The goal of this discussion is to get some direction about some things that businesses have asked PDR about, and how these could be responded to in future.

The three zones of the sidewalk are the frontage zone, the buffer zone, and the travel zone. Dining is discussed in the Better Streets Manual as being in the frontage zone right in front of the building, with the idea that businesses maintain a path for pedestrians.

What has not been discussed much is dining in the buffer zone. Other items that go in the buffer zone are discussed in the Better Streets Manual: trees, benches, street furniture, stormwater management, pole signs, et cetera, but there is not explicit discussion about dining in that area. The appropriateness of having outdoor seating in that area is called into question when there are wait staff traversing the sidewalk in a manner disconnected from the actual restaurant structure.

There is now dining in the curbside zone, including by way of parklets. These are public parklets, but what about private parklets, or as Jason Alley has called them, "streeteries"

Other configurations likely to happen would include dining in the buffer zone and the curbside zone, as well as potentially occupying all three sidewalk zones.

The City has had questions from businesses as to whether they could be allowed to use the whole sidewalk and ask pedestrians to go into the street. This is done for construction sites, so there is a question of whether the City would ever allow this for dining.

There are also questions about dining on sidewalks less than 10 feet wide, which the Better Streets Manual currently recommends against – would there be cases or contexts in which the City would allow it? The Manual calls for maintaining at least 5 feet of clear space for pedestrians.

As dining establishments reopen, they are asking not necessarily to increase their capacity, but to spread it out – if regulations limit the number allowed inside, can they find ways to fit them outside instead?

What are ways we can update the Better Streets Manual, which dates from before the pandemic, to allow for more outdoor dining options while still recognizing the sidewalk's function as transportation corridor.

Mr. Vonck stated that it was not necessary to discuss all of these ideas at the current meeting, and that he would share the presentation slides, and Committee members could follow up if they wished after the meeting. Businesses are approaching PDR about options available to them, as reopening is underway, so it is useful to get this conversation started.

Mr. Quilici asked if it would be appropriate to look at what innovative things other cities are doing with outdoor dining, and whether Richmond had done research on this.

Mr. Vonck stated that it is important to have guidelines in place, but also look at things contextually, and the nuances of how a space functions on the ground; having a starting point is good, but it is also important to take instances on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Vonck stated that the City has been taking outdoor dining instances on a case-by-case basis, but what might be lacking is the starting point, in the form of guidelines that cover all iterations. For example, the curbside zone section deals with food trucks, but doesn't mention parklets or other possible temporary uses. Since the requests will come, it will be important to have the guidelines up front so that businesses know in advance if an application is not worth pursuing.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that there are numerous examples across the country of innovative outdoor dining and seating, and cited as a good and useful example the city of Tulsa which allows public, private, and temporary parklets and has many models of covered outdoor dining areas with different permitting costs. The temporary parklets are permitted for up to 120 days and do not require any platform structure, but rather enclose an outdoor seating arrangement with some sort of barricade.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that there are whole city blocks of some urban commercial centers that have become covered dining areas for restaurants, which is an option Richmond should pursue. Permit fees should be commensurate, for example private parklets should incur higher fees, but not prohibitive.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that Richmond has already approved a modular parklet design that is simply a platform and railings, which can be constructed for about \$3000 or less, depending on lumber prices, and stated that restaurants should be able to pursue this as a private dining option with a different but not prohibitive fee structure.

Mr. Vonck stated that there are degrees of temporary usage, e.g., tables that are put out for a day or a season; or permanence, e.g., covered structures. Mr. Vonck stated that the country is still in recovery mood so it is appropriate to be experimental and have pilot projects and the like, with the understanding that some options might not work and will have to be altered or eliminated.

Mr. Vonck stated that it is not the job of government to generate revenue off public space, but as has been pointed out by some restaurant-owners, if seating returns to pre-pandemic levels, so will the tax yield of those businesses.

Mr. Doyle stated that he is in favor of the idea of dining everywhere, and of the parklets recently approved, but has concerns about dining places that impinge on pedestrian walkways. Mr. Doyle asked how the specified seating areas could be enforced. Mr. Vonck stated that this could be addressed via the RVA 311 complaint system, but could also be emphasized more in the project application requirement language.

Mr. Vonck stated that there are concerns about shifting the pedestrian zone to the curbside zone, as this part of the sidewalk is not always ideal for the purpose and can create tripping hazards.

Mr. Woodson stated that culinary businesses have difficulty staying afloat in the best of times, so whatever can be done safely to assist them should be done.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that he is supportive of dining in the buffer zone of the sidewalk, though this can be a less-than-ideal dining experience in locations without on-street parking to act as a buffer between diners and motorists. Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that dining in the buffer zone increases activity on the street and contributes to a vibrant streetscape, and that waitstaff traversing the sidewalk does not bother him as long as it is done in a fair way. Mr. Doyle, Mr. Woodson, and Mr. Quilici expressed agreement with Mr. Hepp-Buchanan.

Ms. Almond stated that in general the UDC is in favor of whatever can be done to facilitate outdoor dining, and that as per the earlier parklet discussion, DPW would have to be an integral part of the process.

Ms. Almond asked if the streetery initiative would be part of the parklet initiative, or under a larger general organizational heading of some sort.

Mr. Vonck stated that projects under the parklet program are by definition for public use, but that private usage should be explored, as well as under what conditions dining in the buffer area might be appropriate, and also how to preserve popular and useful outdoor dining options into the post-recovery period.

Mr. Woodson asked when the UDC would return to review of the Urban Design Guidelines. Mr. Dandridge stated that this would occur when staffing situation improves, as he is currently too busy with other core work of Planning and Preservation.

Mr. Vonck expressed support for Mr. Dandridge's statement, and stated that there are vacancies in the department, and so core functions become the priority. Mr. Vonck stated that it is hoped that with the new fiscal year, more staff can be brought on board to work on longer-term projects.

Ms. Almond stated that it is important that people recognize the staffing shortage and make allowances accordingly, and offered to pitch in if Committee members could assist with any aspect of the Guidelines preparation.

Mr. Quilici raised the issue of potential changes to the Guidelines in light of the changing situation as regards Covid-19. Mr. Dandridge stated that this is a good point, and encouraged Committee members to look at the guidelines and suggest any revisions that come to mind in light of this.

Ms. Almond stated that there are two potential new members for the positions recently vacated by Jill Nolt, Architecture, and Drew Gould, Civil Engineer. The new appointees are up for confirmation at the City Council meeting of May 24, 2021, and they are Amelia Wee Hunt of Timmons Group for the Civil Engineer position and Jesse Gemmer for the Architect position.

Ms. Almond stated that hopefully, if they can be sworn in in time, the new appointees would begin in June.

Mr. Vonck stated that the City Council is currently discussing the disposition of Confederate monuments, and there is potential for discussion about removal of monuments at the June UDC meeting, toward a recommendation for the Planning Commission. This will be following a review by the Commission of Architectural Review at their May meeting. CAR and Planning Commission review are both required by the City charter.

Adjournment

Committee Chair Almond adjourned the meeting at 12:53 PM.