



City of Richmond

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

Meeting Minutes Urban Design Committee

Thursday, November 5, 2020

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
2020.066](#) Public Access and Participation Instructions - URBAN DESIGN
COMMITTEE

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

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.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Andrea Almond at 10:03 AM.

Roll Call

Present -- 6 - * Jill Nolt, * Andrew P. Gould, * Chair Andrea Almond, * John Reyna, * Charles Woodson and * Max Hepp-Buchanan
Absent -- 2 - * Andrea Quilici and * Emily Smith

Approval of Minutes

[UDC 2020 MIN](#) Minutes of the October 8th, 2020 UDC Meeting
[10](#)

A motion was made by Committee Member Woodson, seconded by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 6, 2020. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye -- 5 - Jill Nolt, James W. Klaus, Chair Andrea Almond, John Reyna and Charles Woodson

Abstain -- 1 - Andrew P. Gould

Secretary's Report

The Secretary's Report was delivered by Committee Secretary Alex Dandridge.

Urban Design Guidelines Update

Mr. Dandridge stated that he is still in the process of editing the Urban Design Guidelines, which includes incorporating recently received comments from DPW, as well as input from Committee Member Woodson regarding organic herbicides and pesticides, to include in the Landscaping and Maintenance Plan sections.

Mr. Dandridge stated that he would have a revised version ready soon, and would share it with Committee members via

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

CONSENT AGENDA

1. [UDC 2020-17](#) Final location, character, and extent review of Warwick Road Maintenance Facility Improvements; 6120 Warwick Road

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

This item was conceptually reviewed by the Committee at the August 2020 UDC Meeting. Committee Chair Almond asked if there was any public comment on this item. There was none.

A motion was made by Committee Member Max Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by

Committee Member Nolt, that this location, character and extent item be recommended for approval by the Planning Commission as submitted.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 5 - Jill Nolt, Chair Andrea Almond, John Reyna, Charles Woodson and Max Hepp-Buchanan

Recused -- 1 - Andrew P. Gould

REGULAR AGENDA

2. [UDC 2020-18](#) VCUHS Adult Outpatient Facility - Review of Hardscape and Landscape Encroachments on E. Clay Street between N. 10th and N. 11th Streets; 1001 E. Clay Street

Attachments: [Location & Plans](#)

[Location & Plans \(REVISED 10/30/2020\)](#)

[Staff Report to UDC](#)

The application was presented by Mr. Dandridge.

Mr. Dandridge: The subject right of way spans the length of E. Clay Street between 10th Street and 11th Street. This section of E. Clay Street is one-way, traveling from east to west. This block is defined by its historic character, being a preserved block of Richmond's Court End neighborhood, featuring an intact collection of Italianate and Greek revival buildings in a mostly redeveloped city center. The block is tree-lined with a wider than average sidewalk on the south side of the street with site furnishings.

In coordination with The Valentine Museum, VCU Health System will be making enhancements to the landscape and hardscape along E. Clay Street, which include the replacement of trees, the addition of new trees where trees have been removed, a new mid-block pedestrian crosswalk, and the addition of recessed brick pavers within the crosswalks across Clay Street at 10th and 11th street. The existing lighting along E. Clay Street will remain unchanged.

There are three pedestrian crosswalks being proposed: two 12-foot wide, recessed brick crosswalks at 10th Street and 11th Street, which match the recessed brick crosswalks present at 12th Street and E. Clay Street; and one 10-foot wide, striped, mid-block crosswalk proposed on E. Clay Street between 10th and 11th Street.

There are four bus parking areas being proposed along the north side of E. Clay Street. The bus parking areas will be marked by new, city-standard signage, and will be delineated from one another by diagonally striped pavement.

There are two historic markers within the project boundaries. One marker will remain in place and be protected during the construction phase of the project, and the other will be relocated closer to the entrance to the Valentine Museum.

The scope of the project includes the removal of one Willow Oak tree on the south side of E. Clay Street in front of the entrance to the Valentine Museum. The applicant has clarified that the Valentine Museum has requested that this tree be removed, as it creates problems for gathering groups of school children when entering, and its roots have up-lifted the brick pavers on the sidewalk, creating a tripping hazard. In place of this tree, a new brick paving design in the existing sidewalk is being proposed, marking the

entrance to the Valentine Museum.

The applicant is proposing to add six new Willow Oaks along this block of E. Clay Street, one on the north side of the street and five on the south side of the street. In addition to these new street trees, new tree wells will be installed, and the existing tree wells will be enlarged. The new tree wells will be six feet by six feet on the south side of the street closest to the façades of the existing buildings, and twelve feet by six feet for the tree wells that are closest to the curb of the street on both sides of E. Clay Street.

There are new trash receptacles and benches being proposed, in addition to the few site furnishings that currently exist on the south side of E. Clay Street.

The Urban Design Guidelines recommend that, “the selection of appropriate paving materials be based on compatibility with adjacent paving materials” (pg. 3). The brick pavers being proposed within the scope of this project match the existing paving found in the area in material and design.

The Guidelines state that, “curb-cuts for accessibility should be located at intersections. Mid-block curb-cuts are strongly discouraged. Curb-cuts should include tactile warning surfaces as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act” (pg. 8). All proposed accessible ramps within the scope of this project include tactile warning surfaces and are located at corners, with the exception of one mid-block, striped crosswalk. Staff finds that the length of this block does not constitute a mid-block crosswalk, and recommends against its inclusion in the scope of this project.

In regard to landscaping, the Urban Design Guidelines state, “Plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes” (pg. 10). In addition, the Guidelines recommend that “hardy ground covers, such as liriopé, should be planted under street trees, where appropriate” (pg. 21). There are six new Willow Oak trees being proposed within the scope of this project, which match the existing Willow Oak trees on site. New tree wells will match the existing in overall design, but will be enlarged, adding more room for root growth. Staff recommends that if there is adequate room for ground cover and other companion plantings in the enlarged tree wells, they be added for interest and erosion control, and to discourage pedestrian cut-through over the tree wells.

Regarding street trees, the guidelines state that “significant healthy trees should be preserved and maintained. Trees on public and private property should be appropriately trimmed around utility lines. Hazardous dead or dying trees should be removed and replaced” (pg. 10). The scope of this project includes the removal of one mature Willow Oak tree in front of the Valentine Museum entrance. On a site visit, staff determined that the tree contributes to the fullness of the current tree canopy, and observed minimal up-lifting of brick pavers due to the root growth of this tree. In addition to the removal of this tree, the addition of six new Willow Oak trees is being proposed.

The Guidelines recommend that, “site furnishings, such as benches and trash receptacles, should be appropriately styled and scaled to complement building architecture and to reinforce the character of the streetscape” (pg. 24). The scope of this project includes the addition of new benches and trash receptacles. During a site visit, staff noted that the design of the benches being proposed does not match that of the existing benches, being a more ornate design. Staff recommends that the applicant either match the style of the existing benches, or replace the existing benches with the proposed, ornate design upon the installation of the new furnishings.

The Guidelines state that “Existing granite curbing and storm water inlets should be

retained. Any new granite curbing should match existing curbs. Curbing should not be painted or striped. Other traffic control measures, such as signs, should be considered instead" (pg. 4). The scope of the project includes the disturbance of the existing granite curbing. Staff recommends that all granite curbing be preserved, restored, or replaced in-kind. There will be new signage marking the areas designated for bus parking, as well as the areas that are not designated for parking.

In regard to paving materials, the guidelines state that, "Materials that have an uneven surface should be avoided in pedestrian areas. However, historic features, such as existing cobblestone streets and alleys and stone crosswalks, shall be preserved" (pg.3). Staff has noted that this recessed brick design has been implemented in other crosswalk designs in the area, specifically at the intersection of 12th Street and E. Cay Street, and would recommend keeping crosswalk designs consistent along this stretch of E. Clay Street.

The Guidelines recommend that "On-site signage should be consistent in style and convenient to visitors, but should be inconspicuously integrated into the overall landscape" (pg.9). The applicant has confirmed that the new signage designating bus parking areas and no-parking areas will be consistent with the city standards; however, staff believes that there is an opportunity to design this signage to be more inconspicuous within the historic character of this block.

"The design of parking and internal circulation should give deference to existing historic and natural features in and around the site" (pg.4) Staff finds that the amount of striping being used on the street to delineate bus parking adds a new visual component that could distract from the historic character of the block. Staff recommends delineating this area in a way that is more sensitive to the look and feel of the block.

The Valentine Museum and the VCU Health System (VCUHS) will be making enhancements to the landscape and hardscape along E. Clay Street from 10th Street to 11th Street. These enhancements include the addition of new trees and tree wells, a new mid-block pedestrian crosswalk, designated bus parking, new site furnishings, and the addition of recessed brick crosswalks across E. Clay Street at 10th and 11th Streets.

Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Director of Public Works grant approval of the encroachment request with the following conditions: The applicant remove the mid-block crosswalk and associated curb-cuts from the scope of the project. All existing granite curbing be preserved, and if removed, be put back in place, or replaced with new granite curbing that matches the original. The applicant consider ways to delineate bus parking on the north side of the street in a way that is less conspicuous within the historic context of this block than the proposed diagonal striping. The new benches proposed match the simple design of the existing benches, or the existing benches be replaced with the proposed, ornate design upon installation of the new site furnishings. The applicant coordinate the relocation of any historic markers with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Ms. Nolt asked if the project had been reviewed by Traffic Engineering staff, specifically the material specified for the crosswalks. Ms. Nolt stated that her understanding was that, as part of the Vision Zero safety initiative, Traffic Engineering and the City were opposed to the use of brick in crosswalks, and that the painted ladder crosswalks were the only design likely to be approved.

Mr. Dandridge stated that DPW had reviewed the project and had recommended against using brick pavers in crosswalks. Given the context of the area, and the fact that this particular design has been implemented in the next block over, Mr. Dandridge stated that

he had determined that the brick pavers should be used in the interest of maintaining a consistent design along E. Clay Street.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked what materials would be used for the crosswalks that cross 10th Street and 11th Street. Mr. Dandridge stated that he believed the crosswalks traversing E. Clay at 10th and 11th Street would consist of brick pavers with a granite curbing on each side. Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked about the crossings 10th and 11th Streets.

Mr. Brenton Barefoot, senior project manager with JLL, stated that the crossings of 10th and 11th Streets were not considered within the scope of this project, and that currently they are pavement, and the plan would be to continue with them as pavement pending any future projects which might alter them.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked if these crossings are painted in a ladder style. Mr. Dandridge stated that they are. Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that the crossings and intersections in the area would then be mismatched, with the E. Clay Street crossing having brick pavers and those across 10th and 11th Streets paved and painted ladder style. Mr. Dandridge confirmed this but stated that future plans could potentially address this inconsistency, and that since the brick paver design has been implemented further along E. Clay Street, he would anticipate that if it is an appropriate design, it would be matched.

Ms. Nolt asked for clarification regarding which intersection was being referenced as a precedent for the brick crosswalks. Mr. Dandridge stated that the location is 12th Street and E. Clay Street. Ms. Nolt stated that on Google maps it appeared that the crosswalks both south to Marshall Street and north to Leigh Street, there are painted crosswalks in both directions.

Mr. Brian Copple of the Department of Public Works stated that he had submitted DPW comments prior to a meeting which DPW had with VCU staff. Mr. Copple stated that brick crosswalks are considered problematic for accessibility and maintenance reasons and are not supported by the FACS for multi-lane streets.

Mr. Copple stated that brick pavers can be considered acceptable for low-volume streets as long as they have a white transverse line.

Mr. Copple stated that DPW will not approve a mid-walk crossing, and that DPW staff had already spoken with VCU about this, and VCU had agreed not to install mid-walk crossings.

Mr. Copple stated that this project is essentially a repair project, including repairing some of the ADA accessible ramps, removing some broken sidewalk sections and replacing the top lane at the northwest corner of 10th and Leigh.

Mr. Copple stated that DPW does not see this project interfering with any future developments, and therefore are in support of it. Mr. Copple stated that the project will include involvement of Urban Forestry staff to assist with removal and replacement of trees.

Mr. Woodson suggested that instead of removing the willow oak which is causing sidewalk buckling, the applicants expand the tree well, keep it mulched, and retain the tree. Mr. Woodson pointed out that the sidewalk in this area is rather wide.

Mr. Copple stated that the willow oak in question is slated for removal, that to his

understanding Ms. Janine Lester of Urban Forestry had agreed to the removal, and that the tree would be replaced with several oak trees.

Mr. Barefoot stated that though the plan did require approval, Ms. Lester had stated her agreement to the removal of the oak in question, the installation of the replacement trees, and other changes around the entrance to the Valentine Museum.

Mr. Dandridge stated that the plan had originally included planting two crape myrtles; this had been revised to include willow oaks, both to respond to the removal of the existing tree and to provide more shade trees for the area.

Mr. Bill Martin stated that some trees adjacent to trees are problematic, and that the tree slated for removal was planted in the 1970s as part of a plan to create a community plaza, and should not have been planted in the first place. Mr. Martin stated that the tree creates problems with long-term preservation, access, and safety and aesthetics for the Valentine Museum, and that these problems would increase with an expansion of the tree well. Mr. Martin stated that the tree removal is part of an overall streetscape program to enhance safety and aesthetic consistency for the neighborhood, and that this streetscape program could potentially be extended through the Public Health and Safety Complex, if a project including this receives approval.

Mr. Copple stated that one consideration when DPW met with the VCU Health team was that Clay Street will change with the redevelopment of the Public Safety Building between 9th and 10th Streets, becoming a two-way street from 8th Street to 12th Street and ultimately from 5th Street to 12th Street. DPW did not wish current VCU plans to interfere with long-term transportation plans for the area. Mr. Copple stated that as the plan is currently proposed, DPW staff feel confident that it will not create any conflict.

Mr. Gould asked if there had been exploration of the use of water-permeable substances that are also walkable. Mr. Gould stated that he was aware that products exist which are more pedestrian-friendly than mulch, but still allow water access.

Mr. Copple stated that this sort of product was being considered for the area, and that Ms. Lester had some good ideas about it. Mr. Copple recommended that UDC members reach out to Ms. Lester for further discussion.

Mr. Gould stated that the removal of the willow oak seems in opposition to much of what the UDC stands for.

Mr. Woodson stated that he liked everything about the plan as proposed, except for the removal of the willow oak.

Committee Chair Almond asked if there was any public comment on this item.

Mr. Martin stated that the Valentine has been working with VCU for a decade and is grateful for their support, and that the current plan is one minor but important step as part of a much larger plan to make improvements to the campus.

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

Mr. Woodson stated that he liked everything about the plan as proposed, except for the removal of the willow oak.

A motion was made by Committee Member Gould that this item be approved, with staff conditions and the additional condition that the willow oak in front of the Valentine remain.

Committee Member Woodson seconded the motion.

Ms. Nolt stated that there are times when a tree should be removed for the sake of the future of a space. Ms. Nolt stated that the streetscape in the project area is a unique one, and that reorganizing the tree wells in a logical way, with 6 new trees, makes sense for a holistic streetscape experience while also addressing some practical issues for the Valentine.

Ms. Nolt stated that the six replacement trees will be of a 4" caliper, which is much larger than what is typically seen in projects reviewed by UDC, and the trees wells will also be larger, creating better conditions for growth. Ms. Nolt suggested that tree well specifications such as structural soils, soil cells, or irrigation could be discussed. Ms. Nolt stated that she is in favor of removing the one tree and ultimately getting six good trees on the block.

Mr. Reyna expressed support for the proposal including the removal of the tree, and stated that the removal of the tree creates a better urban space and a more usable urban design.

Ms. Almond expressed agreement with Ms. Nolt and Mr. Reyna, and stated that removing the tree supports the Valentine's functionality and experience. Ms. Almond suggested that the condition of irrigation in the tree wells be added.

A motion was made by Mr. Hepp-Buchanan that the earlier motion be amended to include removing the tree.

Mr. Gould stated that he would consider this amendment, if the applicant would be amenable to additional measures to enhance growth of existing and replacement trees.

Ms. Nolt seconded this motion and it carried by the following vote:

A motion was made by Gould, seconded by Nolt, that this encroachment be recommended for approval to the Richmond Dept of Public Works with the following conditions:

- The applicant remove the mid-block crosswalk and associated curb-cuts from the scope of the project.**
- All existing granite curbing be preserved, and if removed, be put back in place, or replaced with new granite curbing that matches the original.**
- The applicant consider ways to delineate bus parking on the north side of the street in a way that is less conspicuous within the historic context of this block than the proposed diagonal striping.**
- The new benches proposed match the simple design of the existing benches, or the existing benches be replaced with the proposed, ornate design upon installation of the new site furnishings.**
- The applicant coordinate the relocation of any historic markers with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.**
- The applicant consider methods to preserve and maintain the health of the existing trees, as well as the proposed trees, considering irrigation and other structural measures to support and enhance tree growth.**

The motion carried by the following vote:

- Aye --** 5 - Jill Nolt, Andrew P. Gould, Chair Andrea Almond, John Reyna and Max Hepp-Buchanan
- No --** 1 - Charles Woodson

OTHER BUSINESS

Urban Design Guidelines Update

There was no update given on the Urban Design Guidelines, as that was mentioned in the Secretary's Report.

Mr. Dandridge stated that VCU had provided feedback on UDC comments on the pedestrian bridge, including proposed color selections, and that this had been forwarded to UDC members. This would not be voted on by UDC members as it is to be approved by staff.

Mr. Gould stated that envisioning the colors as they would actually look, just from the swatches provided, was difficult.

Mr. Dandridge stated that since this is not up for a vote, he would be more comfortable discussing with Committee members one-on-one. Mr. Dandridge stated that he could provide photos of the swatches at the project site alongside the buildings, to better enable Committee members to envision the color choices in context.

Mr. Woodson stated that he had recently visited the site of the new curb feature at the northwest corner of Bellevue Avenue and Fauquier Avenue [UDC 2020-14]. Mr. Woodson stated that the project is coming along, though they did have some complications. Mr. Woodson stated that he believed it had been changed to an administrative encroachment and that the applicants had been charged a fee and required to commission a survey. Mr. Woodson stated that he was anxious to see that project go through.

Adjournment

Committee Chair Andrea Almond adjourned the meeting at 10:49 AM.