




Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



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| UDC 2024-31 | FINAL Location, Character, Extent Review | Meeting Date: 6/18/2024 |
| Applicant/Petitioner | Adel Edward, Department of Public Works | |
| Project Description | UDC 2024-31 Location, Character, and Extent review of the proposed Fall Line Trail segment at Bryan Park, located at 4308 Hermitage Road. | |
| Project Location |  | |
| Address: 4308 Hermitage Road | | |
| Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND RECREATION & PARKS | | |
| High-Level Details: | | |
| <p>The “FallLine Trail” is a significant and exciting project between the State, surrounding counties, and City of Richmond. The Trail will extend from Ashland to Petersburg, passing through a significant portion of the City of Richmond.</p> <p>This Application is to construct the first segment of the FallLine Trail, through Bryan Park. This segment will be the link with Henrico County’s portion.</p> <p>This Application is the first FallLine segment proposed by the City. This segment will be used to inform a future CONCEPTUAL plan layout of the entire system. The future CONCEPT will return to Bryan Park and address this segment with finalized items such as parking, signage, restrooms, etc.</p> | | |
| UDC Recommendation | Approval, with Conditions | |
| Staff Contact | Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov | |
| Conditions for Approval | <p><u>Recommended Conditions:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Applicant to revise plans to show the removal of currently proposed physical barrier fixtures where the trail runs on existing pathways within the park, to be approved by Staff.2. It is recommended to the Applicant that existing brick path sidings are not removed to the maximum extent possible. | |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. It is recommended to the Applicant that wayfinding signage be finalized to be provided at the corner of Hermitage Road and Bryan Park Avenue prior to issuance of any future FallLine Trail approvals. 4. It is recommended to the Applicant that the installation of a pedestrian traffic signal, located at Hermitage Road and Bryan Park Avenue, be completed prior to issuance of any future FallLine Trail approvals. 5. It is recommended the Applicant to show 11 trees have been planted within the park. |
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Findings of Fact

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| Site Description | The path is proposed to go along the edge of Bryan Park, along Bryan Park Avenue, and then extend through the park to connect to Bellevue Avenue. |
| Scope of Review | The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.07 and review recommendation under 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter. |
| Prior Approvals | NA |
| Project Description | <p>NOTE: This project is the first FallLine segment proposed by the City. This segment will be used to inform a future CONCEPTUAL plan layout of the entire system. The future CONCEPT will return to Bryan Park and address this segment with finalized items such as parking, signage, restrooms, etc.</p> <p><u>The Applicant states:</u> “The purpose of this project is to construct a segment of the Fall Line Trail through Bryan Park. This trail is designed as a paved, shared-use path. All proposed disturbance is located on City of Richmond-owned and maintained land or right of way.”</p> <p>“Bryan Park hosts numerous recreational facilities today, including playgrounds, soccer fields, pickleball courts, and hiking trails along Youngs Pond. Facilities are accessed by a network of paved roads, many of which are closed to the public most of the year. One of these roads is a dam over Youngs Pond, which is expected to be replaced as part of a stream restoration project by others (DPU). Separated walking and biking facilities are minimal through the park, and wheelchair access is limited.</p> <p>The proposed trail alignment is set such that it utilizes either an “on-road” or an “off-road” typical section. The “on-road” section uses gore striping and flexible post bollards to create a separated facility within the existing pavement of roads that are typically closed to vehicular traffic. The “off-road” section is designed as a typical 10’ shared-use path with a minimum of 2’ graded shoulders on either side.</p> <p>Along Bryan Park Avenue, the project proposes a road diet to re-set the southern curb line further into the road and place the proposed shared-use path within the width of the reclaimed pavement.</p> <p>These facilities will provide accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelchair users through the park and ultimately as a connection to other segments of the Fall Line Trail into City of Richmond and Henrico County.</p> <p>The desire of this project is to impact as few existing trees as possible. To this end, a tree survey was conducted along the trail alignment. The project does not intend to provide landscaping or tree replanting, but the Friends of Bryan Park has discussed separate opportunities to plant trees along the trail after construction has finished and within their own budget, or in cooperation with DPR.”</p> <p>Staff Review Staff has informed the Applicant that a CONCEPT of the full FallLine Trail system layout is needed prior to receiving any further segment applications. That CONCEPT should address signage, common markings, art (if applicable), restrooms, parking, and other general items. General items can then be applied in specificity through a series of future FINAL approvals for each segment of the trail. The CONCEPT should also address the full layout and alignment of the trail.</p> <p>However, the Bryan Park segment in the current application is an opportunity to inform the full system in needed signage, layout, and other questions; as well as build public excitement in the effort.</p> <p>Planning Staff’s primary concern is safety where the path crosses public streets. Henrico County is responsible for installing a Pedestrian Traffic Signal (HAWK) at the intersection of Hermitage Avenue and Bryan Park</p> |

Avenue, as well as associated crosswalks. Staff has provided a condition that recommends the installation of the pedestrian traffic signal be completed prior to issuance of any future FallLine Trail approvals. Staff believes the HAWK is integral to the safety of users on the trail system. And the trail system is anticipated to have fairly significant usage by a number of different kinds of users, including young users. Hermitage Road at this location is a heavily trafficked street as well, including a number of users exiting and entering I-95. Pedestrian safety in this location is limited and controlled crossings are limited along this stretch of the street. Staff believes this HAWK is integral to the safety of users on the trail system.

The proposed path will connect through to Bellevue Avenue, located at the southern corner of Bryan Park. This avenue has low traffic counts and a sidewalk on the southside of the street that connects through to Hermitage Road. Staff has recommended to the applicant that the FallLine connect to the southern side of Bellevue to utilize the exiting sidewalk for an interim condition until the future trail is addressed on Bellevue.

The project includes road diet changes to Bryan Park Avenue to reduce the width of the street and add the proposed path as a sidewalk. The proposed street changes will enhance safety along this street section, as well as provide a traffic separated FallLine Trail path.

The path enters Bryan Park on existing internal paths, and extends on existing paths in several locations throughout the park. A white painted line and flex post separation is proposed between the FallLine and the rest of the existing internal paths. In most locations, the left-over space is 6ft wide, but in some locations is reduced to 4ft. Staff questions why the entire width of existing internal paths could not be utilized, and if the left-over space is enough to be usable – especially for maintenance vehicles.

Staff suggests that alternative ways to mark the FallLine Trail from other internal paths should be used.

A portion of the trail on existing interior paths include a drainage “flume” (slightly larger and deeper than a typical gutter) on the side of the path. Space has been provided from the elevation change for the flume to provide users an opportunity to avoid falls. But if the entire existing paths are utilized, this issue is more effectively addressed.

A majority of the FallLine Trail in Bryan Park is a new path. The proposed alignment provides easy access to a number of locations with picnic tables, ample shade, restrooms, and various amenities within the park. The trail also shows off a number of the most aesthetic locations within the park.

In some locations, Bryan Park includes existing brick sidings to existing interior roads. The Park is a nationally designated historic place, for a number of reasons and time periods. One reason being the early 1900’s construction of the current park layout. The brick paths are listed in the national registry application as being non-contributing and likely constructed between 1950 and 1970.

The project proposes to replace some of the sections of brick sidings with the asphalt path. Staff has recommended that the brick be maintained as much as possible. Staff suggests that the proposed path can be placed adjacent to the brick, so the brick can remain, with the goal to maintain some of the existing longtime character of the park, even if the items are noncontributing.

The Applicant has stated, and Staff has reviewed and confirmed, an intent to preserve existing trees to the maximum extent possible.

Staff recommends approval, with conditions.

The proposed FallLine Trail route is shown in the Master Plan as a shared use path.

Staff strongly supports the increase in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Staff is excited to see a section of the FallLine Trail move toward construction.

The path of this segment of the trail goes by aesthetically pleasing locations as well as need locations such as parking, picnic tables, shade, and restrooms.

UDC recommends approval, with conditions.

The UDC discussed how existing park users will interact with the new trail, connections to Henrico County, and the larger scope of the FallLine Trail. The UDC had concerns over trail separation from existing paths and tree loss. The UDC generally agreed with Staff analysis of trail separation.

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

| | Text | Staff Analysis |
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| Master Plan | | |
| | The path is shown on the Richmond 300 Future Connections map as being a shared use path. | |
| | Objective 17.2 Increase city-wide tree canopy from 42% to 60% | Construction is planned to preserve maximum amount of existing tree specimens. |
| | Objective 8.2 Develop greenways throughout the city connecting Nodes, Priority Neighborhoods, and adjacent localities; focus efforts specifically in South Richmond and including, but not limited to, the following greenways: Ashland to Petersburg, James River Branch, Kanawha Canal, Manchester Canal, and South Bank of the James River (see Future Connections Map for the network of greenways). | No specifics were given within the master plan of the general character of the FallLine Trail. Only consideration to rough alignments and direction to determine the final alignments in certain parts of town such as Downtown and Southside. |
| | VUU/Chamberlayne Node Construct the Ashland to Petersburg Trail which is proposed to be located along Brook Road and will serve as a bicycle/pedestrian connection between Ashland and Petersburg running through Richmond (see Goal 9). | |
| | Other references within the Master Plan to determining the FallLine route through downtown, Monroe ward, Manchester, and Route 1/Bellemeade. | |
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| Urban Design Guidelines | | |
| Street Design | Pedestrian crossings (p.7) Pedestrian crossings should generally be confined to intersections. Midblock crosswalks should be discouraged, except for instances of extremely long distances between intersections. In these instances, a signalized crossing is preferred. Pedestrian crossings should be clearly marked and refuge islands should be provided where necessary. | Staff has suggested that the proposed pedestrian stop light (HAWK) be installed prior to any future approvals to ensure that significant numbers are not using the path before a safe crossing is provided for Hermitage Road. |
| Public Parks | Design Considerations (P.9) 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. A preference should be given toward materials and construction techniques that improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality. Lighting and landscaping should allow for surveillance and policing activities, but should be designed primarily to accommodate the intended | Staff has provided comments on the historic character of the existing park. Signage will be addressed at a later phase. |

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| | use of the park. On-site signage should be consistent in style and convenient to visitors, but should be inconspicuously integrated into the overall landscape. | |
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