



Staff Report

Staff Report City of Richmond, Virginia



UDC 2026-07	FINAL Review	Meeting Date: 7/16/2026
Applicant/Petitioner	Adel Edwards / Department of Public Works	
Project Description	UDC 2026-07 Location, Character, and Extent review of proposed street and transportation infrastructure improvements in Shockoe Valley, including Oliver Hill Way, North 18th Street, Venable Street, Mosby Street, and Leigh Street.	
Project Location		
Address: Includes Oliver Hill Way, North 18th Street, Venable Street, Mosby Street, and Leigh Street.		
Property Owner: City of Richmond and several private parcels		
High-Level Details: The project proposes significant streetscape improvements to all streets involved, includes bike lanes on Oliver Hill Way and 18th Street, shared use paths on other streets, and four new traffic circles.		
Staff Recommendation	Staff recommends not approving the current layout of two proposed traffic circles, allowing the applicant to find an alternative layout.	
Staff Contact	Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	Please see Applicant Narrative.	
Conditions for Approval	1) "Applicant to amend plans to adjust design of the intersection of Leigh Street and Mosby Street to be more pedestrian oriented, to be approved by Staff." 2) "Applicant to amend plans to add details that reflect a gateway to the historic district with the traffic circle located at Venable Street and Mosby Street, to be approved by Staff." 3) "Applicant to amend plans to reflect PAC recommendations regarding preparation for future art installations, to be approved by Staff".	

	4) "Applicant to amend plans regarding preparation for future gateway signage, to be approved by Staff". 5) "Applicant to amend plans to address Shockoe Institute entry point and signage needs, to be approved by Staff". 6) "Applicant to amend plans to adjust design of the access isle south of the main circle to be more visually appealing, to be approved by Staff."
--	---

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The Shockoe Valley Streets project includes work on Oliver Hill Way, North 18th Street, Venable Street, Mosby Street, and Leigh Street. Shockoe Valley is a previously industrial corridor that, in recent years, has been converting to residential uses. Several multifamily projects are in the process of approval or construction. The project is adjacent to the Union Hill Historic District and the Mosby Court redevelopment.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to Location, Character, and Extent review under Section 17.07 and design recommendations under Section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter.
Prior Approvals	UDC 2019-18 CONCEPT Approval
Project Description	The project proposes street scape improvements throughout the project area, significant improvements to the intersection of Broad Street and Oliver Hill Way, bike lanes along Oliver Hill Way and 18th Street, traffic circles along Venable Street and Mosby Street, and a new segment of the existing off ramp onto Oliver Hill Way. Landscaping, street trees, and lighting are included. There are opportunities for art and gateway/welcome to the city signage. The project received CONCEPT approval in 2019. The following conditions were provided: • Provide plans for the project indicating site characteristics which include: building footprints, parking areas, pedestrian routes, recreation areas, open areas and areas of future expansion. • Provide a landscaping plan that includes a complete plant schedule, the precise location of all plant materials, and a landscape maintenance analysis. The plant schedule must show number, size and type of each planting proposed. If existing trees are to be removed, their size, type and location must be noted on the landscape plan. • Provide the location of all lighting units, including wall-mounted, site and parking lot lighting. Other site details, such as benches, trash containers and special paving materials, should also be located. Include specification sheets for each item. • Provide samples of all proposed exterior materials such as sidewalk and multiuse path materials, if samples cannot be provided, photos or specification sheets will suffice • Demonstrate there was consideration for street tree enhancing technology (i.e. silva cell, structure soils, etc.) and why they may or may not be included in the project • Provide locations for the installation of shade trees and tree lawns when space allows • Maintain existing sidewalks/paths along sections of Venable and 18th Streets that are segmented by the new roundabouts to allow for enhanced permeability until future development takes place or until the land becomes privatized • Provide a study on the purpose and design of the residual land created by the roundabouts The plan provided details on adjacent existing conditions and future work, landscape plans, lighting plan. The requested "study" is provided as Appendix A. <u>Staff Analysis</u>

Project

Staff strongly supports streetscape improvements throughout the project area, including landscaping, street trees, sidewalk improvements, ADA compliance, etc. The Shockoe Valley is expected to see significant residential growth in the near future, but has infrastructure quality matching its industrial past. The improvements are needed to support quality of life for future residents.

Staff strongly supports improvements to the Broad Street/Oliver Hill Way intersection. This intersection is heavily trafficked, as a primary entry from I-95, and remains difficult to traverse, especially for pedestrians. Improvements will enhance safety for all users, but especially pedestrian and bike users.

Staff strongly supports the additional bike infrastructure, protected bike lanes, and shared use paths throughout the project area. These inclusions meet a number of master plan goals and quality of life goals to serve the number of new residential units in the area. The plans address the design of parking adjacent to the bike lanes along Oliver Hill Way, which are flanked by bump outs to avoid issues in other parts of the City where such parking is mistaken for drive lanes.

Staff does recommend, however, that the Applicant consider the location of the pedestrian crosswalk across Oliver Hill Way at East Clay Street. With the off-ramp from I-95 at that location and the only destination on one side of the road being a parking lot – it may make more sense to leave that crossing out for pedestrian safety purposes.

The plan includes the addition of traffic calming via conversion of streets to two-way and installation of traffic circles at intersections.

Staff has several comments on traffic circle design.

The primary traffic circle, located at Oliver Hill Way and I-95 off ramp, proposes to acquire a large parcel of developable land to locate the traffic circle in the center of the parcel. The remaining space is not large enough, does not have proper access, and is too oddly shaped to allow for any significant future development. Additionally, a stormwater pond is proposed to the north side of the circle, which would be the most likely place to join an adjacent development already planned by the private owner. The layout should be refined, even if only moving the traffic circle's location to reconfigure adjacent usable space.

Staff recommends *not* approving this layout, allowing the applicant to find an alternative layout.

The circle proposed at the intersection of Venable and Mosby is the gateway to a commercial area within the Union Hill historic district. As such, it presents an opportunity to announce the historic district in design and signage.

Section 106 review is required by this project due to receiving federal funds. The Section 106 review concluded that this intersection should acknowledge the historic district in some way.

Staff recommends the plans be amended to include brick sidewalk material adjacent to the historic district, with standard materials used on the opposite side of the street.

The proposed traffic circle will create great opportunities for adjacent businesses to provide outdoor seating. The DPW should work with business owners to ensure they are aware.

Signage locations should be provided for future neighborhood identification signage.

And future art should be considered, especially within the traffic circle.

Proposed Condition:

“Applicant to amend plans to add details that reflect a gateway to the historic district with the traffic circle located at Venable Street and Mosby Street, to be approved by Staff.”

The circle located at the intersection of Leigh Street (Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge) and Mosby Street receives significant traffic during rush hour and is adjacent to a school. As such, Staff has worked with the applicant toward meeting the goal of the Master Plan of prioritizing pedestrian safety and not vehicular travel efficiency. However, Staff finds the traffic circle is still fairly auto-oriented – a traffic signal provides control for all pedestrian crossings, but the proposal controls only 1/8th of the crossings, via pedestrian stop light only on one leg of the circle.

The solution could include adding more pedestrian beacons, especially across a section of Leigh Street – however, there may be many other solutions that might be acceptable.

Proposed Condition:

“Applicant to amend plans to adjust design of the intersection of Leigh Street and Mosby Street to be more pedestrian oriented, to be approved by Staff.”

Residual Space

In addition to the above comments, with the current design there is a need to provide access to a property located immediately south of the main circle. The current plans include a standard access isle with green space surrounding. Staff recommends, if the access isle remains a similar design, that the Applicant works with Staff to enhance the visual appeal. Likely making the access isle a full cul-de-sac, with pedestrian paths along the isle will be sufficient.

Proposed Condition:

“Applicant to amend plans to adjust design of the access isle south of the main circle to be more visually appealing, to be approved by Staff.”

With all of that said, plans for the residual space from the main circle will need to return before the UDC for review. The funding sources of the current project limit what can be engineered for those spaces at this time. The project team has been in contact with the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture as well as with Planning Staff to work on a final proposal for that space – likely park space if the current design remains.

The future plans will be brought back before the UDC and Planning Commission for review.

SECTION 106 AND HISTORIC PLANNING

The project area is located directly adjacent to the future Shockoe Institute Campus.

The project includes two primary vehicular entry points to the campus, at the intersection of Broad Street/Oliver Hill Way, and on the west side of Oliver Hill Way at Marshall Street.

Additional attention may be needed to the entry points and additional space for signage may be needed. Similar to other conditions, Staff recommends preparing for these instances in the current plans.

Additionally, the Section 106 review concluded that some for signage relating to the history of slavery in Shockoe Bottom be prepared. This would work well with the Shockoe Institute effort.

Proposed Condition:

“Applicant to amend plans to address Shockoe Institute entry point and signage needs, to be approved by Staff”.

MASTER PLAN

VISION GOAL

The project meets, in most areas, the “Equitable Transportation” goal of prioritizing people over vehicles by greatly enhancing pedestrian facilities and streetscape quality, providing additional bike lanes, and providing traffic calming in the form of traffic circles.

TRANSPORTATION DESIGN

The project meets Richmond300 transportation design goals of two-way street conversion, utilizing complete-streets and vision zero design goals, enhancing bike access within nodes, enhancing sidewalk quality, increasing ADA compliance.

SITE DESIGN

The project will meet, with proposed conditions, the Richmond300 site design goals of integrating art and history into projects, using urban design that enhances Richmond’s unique culture, and improving street furnishings and amenities.

SUSTAINABILITY

The project meets Richmond 300 sustainability goals of implementing green stormwater solutions and increasing tree canopy.

PUBLIC ART

The Master Plan iterates goals to utilize public art in major public projects to create unique features within Nodes and Priority Neighborhoods, acknowledge Richmond’s unique history, elevate place and character, and preserve cultural heritage.

This Application will be sent to the Public Arts Commission(PAC) for their input, after the UDC’s input. The PAC is tasked with determining what edits to the current plans might best allow for *future* to be included as a separate project and budget line item. This could include concrete pads and electrical access within traffic circles.

	Proposed Condition: “Applicant to amend plans to reflect PAC recommendations regarding preparation for future art installations, to be approved by Staff”. IDENTIFICATION SIGNAGE The Master Plan includes goals for creating unique neighborhood identification and wayfinding via signage. Staff proposes that the project area is an important gateway to the city, especially with traffic coming from I-95 and entering Shockoe and Broad Street. The plans should include consideration for future gateway/Welcome to the City signage, including necessary preparations within the current plans and possible future locations for such signage. Such locations could be the north-east corner of Broad Street/Oliver Hill Way, along Oliver Hill Way, or within the primary traffic circle. Preparations could include ensuring enough ROW space, adding a concrete pad, or electrical service. Such signage could be purely signage or combined with future artistic installations. Proposed Condition: “Applicant to amend plans regarding preparation for future gateway signage, to be approved by Staff”. STAFF RECOMMENDATION Staff recommends the plans be amended prior to approval, regarding the main circle and Leigh Street circle design. Staff recommends the following conditions: 1) “Applicant to amend plans to adjust design of the intersection of Leigh Street and Mosby Street to be more pedestrian oriented, to be approved by Staff.” 2) “Applicant to amend plans to add details that reflect a gateway to the historic district with the traffic circle located at Venable Street and Mosby Street, to be approved by Staff.” 3) “Applicant to amend plans to reflect PAC recommendations regarding preparation for future art installations, to be approved by Staff”. 4) “Applicant to amend plans regarding preparation for future gateway signage, to be approved by Staff”. 5) “Applicant to amend plans to address Shockoe Institute entry point and signage needs, to be approved by Staff”. 6) “Applicant to amend plans to adjust design of the access isle south of the main circle to be more visually appealing, to be approved by Staff.”
	<u>RVA300 Master Plan</u> Applicable Goals:
Vision Goals:	<i>Equitable Transportation (P.44)</i> <i>Richmond prioritizes the movement of people over the movement of vehicles through a safe, reliable, equitable, and sustainable transportation network. Walking, biking, and transit options are the most convenient and used forms of transportation in Richmond...</i>

Transportation Design	<i>RVA300 Objective 9.4 – Streets, Bridges, and Connections (Pg.154) Strengthen the street network by preventing superblocks and encouraging gridded street networks and two-way streets.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 9.4 – Streets, Bridges, and Connections (Pg.154) Where feasible, convert one-way streets to two-way streets in consultation with the City’s Transportation Engineers, evaluating balancing the needs of various uses—sidewalks, on-street parking, bicycle infrastructure, and transit access.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 1.3 - Complete Neighborhoods (Pg.112) Increase the number of transportation options viable at each Node and Priority Neighborhood by utilizing a Complete Streets approach to allocating space in the right-of-way</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 7.1 – Equitable Transportation (Pg.137) Reduce all traffic-related deaths and serious injuries to zero by implementing the Vision Zero Action Plan.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 8.1 – Equitable Transportation (Pg.141) Implement traffic-calming measures to slow down traffic.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 4.4 - Complete Neighborhoods (Pg.130) Strengthen the streetscape connections by installing pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, pathway, and trails where such infrastructure is missing.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 8.1 – Equitable Transportation (Pg.141) Improve pedestrian experience by increasing and improving sidewalks and improving pedestrian crossings and streetscapes, prioritizing low income areas.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 8.1 – Equitable Transportation (Pg.141) Construct ADA-compliant sidewalks and street crossing and retrofit existing sidewalks with ADA-compliant ramps, per federal requirements.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 8.2 – Land Use and Transportation (Pg.142) Expand, improve, and maintain on-street bike networks as shown in the Future Connections Map, which amends the networks proposed in the Bike Master Plan and in the Pulse Corridor Plan; prioritize the creation of separated, buffered bike lanes.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 10.2 – Emerging Transportation Technology (Pg.157) Prioritize improvements to public transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure over the accommodation of Autonomous Vehicles.</i>
Site Design	<i>RVA300 Objective 4.3 – Complete Neighborhoods (Pg.129) Integrate natural features, history, culture, and art to enhance public open spaces throughout the city.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 1.4 – Complete Neighborhoods (Pg.112) Implement urban design and architecture strategies that maintain and enhance the unique character of Richmond’s residential districts.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 8.1 – Equitable Transportation (Pg.141) Improve street furniture, plant shade trees, and install pedestrian-level lights and other streetscape improvements</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 8.3 – Land Use and Transportation (Pg.142) Install amenities (e.g., shelters, benches, parking, maintenance tools, restrooms, bike parking, water fountains with bottle-refill stations) along enhanced transit routes and greenways (see Goal 12).</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 8.3 – Land Use and Transportation (Pg.142) Increase the number of bike racks on sidewalks and/or use the curb to provide on-street bike parking.</i>
Public Art	<i>RVA300 Objective 1.3 - Complete Neighborhoods (pg.112) Utilize public art and the public realm to create unique features within Nodes and Priority Neighborhoods.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 4.2 - Complete Neighborhoods (pg.128) Integrate public art into the built environment to acknowledge Richmond’s unique history and neighborhood identity, and engage the creative community, focusing public art efforts in areas that do not have public art today.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 4.2 - Complete Neighborhoods (pg.128) Develop public art projects within Nodes and Priority Neighborhoods to elevate the place’s unique character through creative placemaking.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 4.2 - Complete Neighborhoods (pg.128) Utilize public art projects to preserve the cultural heritage of places, prioritizing areas that are experiencing major changes in demographics and development.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 4.2 - Complete Neighborhoods (pg.128) Link public art with major public facility initiatives (e.g., plazas, buildings, parks, bridges) and expand the definition of public art to include architectural embellishments of buildings, or landscape features.</i>

Identification Signage	<i>RVA300 Objective 1.3 – Complete Neighborhoods (Pg.112) Develop marketing plans, including signage, graphics, and branding, to differentiate the Nodes and Priority Neighborhoods from one another and retain, create, and attract/retain businesses</i>
Sustainability	<i>RVA300 Objective 16.4 – Thriving Environment (Pg.191) Increase green stormwater infrastructure throughout the city, prioritizing areas with a high heat vulnerability index score.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 16.4 – Thriving Environment (Pg.191) Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way; explore creating green infrastructure guidelines within the Better Streets manual.</i> <i>RVA300 Objective 17.2 – Thriving Environment (Pg.196) Increase city-wide tree canopy from 42% to 60% (see Figure 46) and seek to achieve a 30% tree canopy in all neighborhoods, prioritizing areas with a high heat vulnerability index rating and low tree canopy coverage.</i>