



City of Richmond

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

Meeting Minutes - Final Urban Design Committee

Wednesday, July 3, 2019

10:00 AM

2nd Floor City Hall Chambers

Call to Order

Roll Call

Present -- 5 - * Jill Nolt, * David Johannas, * Emily Smith , * Chair Andrea Almond and * John Reyna
Excused -- 3 - * Andrea Quilici, * Andrew P. Gould and * James W. Klaus

Approval of Minutes

1. [UDC MIN 2019-06b](#) Minutes of the regular meeting on June 6, 2019.

Attachments: [DRAFT UDC MIN 2019-06](#)

A motion was made by Nolt, seconded by Reyna, that these Minutes be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 3 - Jill Nolt, Emily Smith and John Reyna
Excused -- 3 - Andrea Quilici, Andrew P. Gould and James W. Klaus
Abstain -- 1 - David Johannas
Recused -- 1 - Chair Andrea Almond

Secretary's Report

The Secretary, Joshua Son, gave an update on the project UDC 2019-19, for security measures at Beth Ahabah, the UDC subcommittee which was formed to advise on the project met on-site on June 18th, and determined that the project would be divided into two applications: one for the bollards directly in front of the historic structure where it meets Ryland Street; and the second application regarding bollards on either side of Ryland Street, along West Franklin Street. The Department of Public Works is supportive of the bollards in front of the historic structure, but would like to discuss the second part of the project involving bollards along West Franklin Street on either side of Ryland. Once the applicant submits the bollard plan, it will be reviewed and approved administratively per DPW suggestions. The applicant will submit the bollard designs in front of the historic structure, and UDC will ask the Commission of Architectural Review to review for color, material, and form. The second application will come in for formal review by the UDC for recommendation to DPW.

Ms. Nolt asked if DPW had changed their earlier position re bollards, and were now in support of the plan as outlined by Mr. Son. Mr. Son stated that they did.

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items on the consent agenda.

REGULAR AGENDA

2. [UDC 2019-20](#) Final location, character, and extent review of streetscape improvements on the north and south sides of W. Broad Street from N. Hamilton Street to N. Laurel Street; UDC 2019-20

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[2019-20 Location & Plans](#)

Joshua Son: The proposed project spans just over two miles along West Broad Street, with termini located at North Hamilton Street on the west and North Laurel Street on the east. Improvements are planned on both the north and south sides of West Broad Street. As expected with a route of this length, the adjacent land uses vary greatly and include suburban office complexes, drive-through fast food restaurants, car dealerships, office buildings, museums, college campuses and residence halls, multi-family housing, retail shops, etc.

The proposed improvements are subject to location, character, and extent review as a "public way" under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

The project is intended to leverage committed funding to implement limited streetscape improvements within the project area to enhance the overall character, complement the Pulse corridor, and establish a more unified design vocabulary for one of the City's primary gateway corridors.

The project limits of work, as defined in the Smart Scale funding documents, is from Hamilton St. to Laurel St, north and south sides of West Broad Street. Furthermore, the limits of work are restricted to the area within the public right-of-way, from the back of curb to the right-of-way. In many cases, this includes sidewalk from back of curb to the face of existing buildings. In other cases, the right-of-way abuts open space or parking areas on private property.

In addition, there are some unique conditions where the right-of-way limits do not extend to a building face, resulting in areas that are visually and physically extensions of the work area, but outside of the project limits. The project site is impacted by many adjacent development projects in planning or construction. Where possible, this project will reference plans for proposed projects when those plans are available. Key adjacent property owners have been included in planning efforts, including representatives from VCU. Conceptual plans for integrating the residual City-owned green space near Wayne Street and Belmont Avenue are being considered relative to impacts on sidewalk improvements, but design or implementation of green space improvements are not part of the funded scope of work.

This project is being funded by Virginia's SMART SCALE (§33.2-214.1) program, the method of scoring planned projects included in VTrans that are funded by House Bill 1887. Funds for this project were awarded through SMART SCALE, Round 1 including Construction funds in the amount of \$5,410,000, VDOT Fiscal Year 2020.

There are generally four to five typical conditions within the project area, based upon the overall width from back of curb to building face or ROW. Concept development plans were organized around these typical sections.

Each typical section is divided into three functional zones

- Amenity Zone (curbside)
- Pedestrian Zone
- Building Zone

The overall goal is to provide a minimum clear pedestrian zone of six feet in width, and a five foot minimum building zone for entry ingress/egress and furnishings.

Café seating: where possible, the goal is to preserve five to six feet of depth for café areas, while maintaining the minimum six foot pedestrian clear zone.

Clear zones of five feet are desired, where possible, around site furnishings, trees, railings and above ground utility features.

In terms of sidewalk paving, direction from Planning and Development Review was for simple design detailing, scored concrete, no troweled edges.

The VCU brick and concrete pattern: there is existing pavement and brick that will remain in place, closer to the VCU campus, near the Siegel Center and some of the newer construction. The project includes plans to enlarge existing tree pits, to be consistent with the proposed typical for spacing and size within the project limits. Brick collars around the existing trees will be removed and replaced with low plantings.

Tree Pit Dimensions: Typical 6'x12' tree planting area, with exception that in areas with limited sidewalk width the pits vary in width, with the minimum width being 4'-7", to provide a min. six feet (6') clear pedestrian zone. Low groundcovers, perennials, and shrubs will be planted in the tree pits that are low-maintenance and water efficient selections.

Tree selection will be informed by several factors: species form and proven hardiness in urban conditions; the presence of overhead power lines; adjacent parking conditions (i.e. on-street vs no on-street parking conditions); and existing tree species.

Large shade trees are proposed at roughly 42' foot spacing. Trees under existing overhead power lines are proposed at 30' feet on center.

Curb Extensions: Proposed curb chokers and parking-delineation islands have been shown in locations that meet the following criteria: create no change in existing drainage pattern; would provide safer pedestrian crossing; don't cause major impacts to curb ramps constructed with BRT project; and, allow for truck movements appropriate to intersection.

Street Furnishings: Bike Share: plans maintain existing locations; no new locations are proposed at this time. Bike Racks: Bike racks, including Bike Share facilities, will be set on an angle to the curb to reduce overall depth impact on pedestrian zone. Trash Receptacles: Final plans will reflect filed locating locations of trash receptacles within each block for ease of maintenance and aligned with anticipated use patterns. Bench Orientation: City standard benches have been located and grouped in appropriate areas, such as bus stop locations. Benches are perpendicular to the street, facing each other against tree pits.

Driveway Closures: Proposed locations for closure of existing driveways have been

coordinated with City staff and are shown based upon traffic safety, site layout, and adequate site access from other driveway locations. All closures would be tentative pending final City review and appropriate property owner input.

Lighting Program: Addition of new acorn light fixtures on existing metal poles within project limits, where there is currently no fixture today. Painting of existing steel poles between Laurel Street and Sheppard Street. Festoon Lights: City is interested in providing for overhead string lighting in selected areas, but the project program does not include design details for this element.

Overhead utilities exist along the western portion of the project corridor, from Sheppard Street to Hamilton Street, the western most limits of the project. Due to budget constraints, it will not be possible to bury the wires, and overhead utilities will remain.

Considering the variety of constraints, Staff finds that the project accomplishes the goal of improving the two mile stretch of West Broad Street. The plan calls for delineating spaces for Amenity, Pedestrian, and Building zones, allotting a six foot minimum clearance for the Pedestrian Zone, which is one foot more than current practice. In terms of paving, the project calls for new, simplified sidewalk finishes (in areas that are unimproved by VCU or other private property owners) which will help unify the aesthetic along the corridor. Lighting will be enhanced through additional acorn light fixtures on existing metal. Street trees are planned along the route and will vary depending on the width of the sidewalk and overhead utilities. Root path structures will not be part of this project as research has not proven these actually assist in enhancing or directing the growth/path of roots. Curb extensions, street furnishings, and driveway closures further speak to enhancements that align with the systems-based approach for the city's Vision Zero effort, an initiative to eliminate traffic fatalities for all travel modes.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission grant approval with the following conditions: that the applicant consider additional bike parking in areas of higher activity; and that the three (3) trees in the northeast quadrant at Hermitage and West Broad Street remain.

Ms. Nolt asked if the acorn lighting fixtures being proposed were the predominant fixture along this stretch of Broad Street, or if this is the designated type of fixture to be used in this area. Mr. Son stated that this is part of the catalogue of lights which the City owns, and that there are acorn lights along Broad Street.

John Oliver with Kimley Horn, the consultant firm working with DPW on the application, said that there are sporadically located existing acorn lights in the VCU section of the project corridor. The proposed fixture will mimic these and be installed in a consistent pattern from Sheppard Street to Laurel Street.

Ms. Nolt pointed out that other light fixture types have been introduced recently, and that the proposal under consideration is a re-invention of the streetscape, and asked if other lighting fixtures had been considered – also in light of ongoing discussion and preparation for cantennas and their attendant hardware and wiring.

Ms. Nolt asked if the proposed acorn fixture had a clear top, as opposed to a dark sky cap. Mr. Oliver stated that it did, and that this was the model provided by the Department of Public Utilities, and that if the darker cap is desired, the Committee should request it so that DPU can provide it.

Ms. Nolt asked about the new light fixture model being rolled out in Manchester, what its

status was and whether something like it had been considered for Broad Street. Mr. Oliver stated that the message from Mark [Olinger] and PDC had been to mimic what was already in place along Broad Street, for consistency.

Mr. Son pointed out that there is varying existing lighting along the corridor, for example tall LED lights on private property belonging to the Sauer Company.

Mr. Oliver stated that the proposed lighting fixtures will be attached to existing cobra lights in order to provide illumination for pedestrians.

Ms. Nolt asked if there had been coordination with VCU about, and if they were amenable to, the retrofitting of tree wells adjacent to VCU, stating that in her experience VCU has paid for, designed, and maintained such areas. Mr. Oliver stated that there has been coordination with VCU staff person Jeff Eastman about the project, and that there would need to be more checking in.

Ms. Almond stated that VCU in the past has been very unreceptive to suggestions that they modify their tree wells and remove the pavers from them, and emphasized that communication with them would be important.

Ms. Nolt asked what was the most constrained walkway portion of the corridor, and if it is constrained due to a building or due to a property line. Mr. Oliver stated that most of the constraints are due to buildings, and that west of Sheppard Street there is generally only 12 feet, and sometimes only 11 feet, of right-of-way from face of curb to building face. The most pinched condition for a planter is 4' 7", with the 6-foot pedestrian area being prioritized and the planter pinched as necessary. The planters east of Sheppard Street are less constrained, measuring 5 ½ - 6 feet.

Ms. Nolt asked if there had been discussion about property owners adjacent to the corridor also doing improvements, so that the whole streetscape would be transformed. Mr. Oliver stated that there had been some coordination, including with the old Seaboard Building at 3600 West Broad; and the owners of the old Quality Inn, with whom Mark Olinger has been in discussion about possibly adding to the sidewalk width within their property.

Mr. Reyna asked if any recycling centers were planned along the corridor. Mr. Oliver stated that the addition and future maintenance of those was being discussed with DPW. Ms. Almond asked about the guy wires which run where tree wells are planned, and if there was a plan to move the wires. Mr. Oliver stated that there were no plans to move wires, but rather the tree wells and tree species selected were planned to work around the wires. Mr. Oliver stated that a problem wire situation was currently being discussed with Dominion Energy, and other areas would be as well.

Ms. Almond stated that pedestrian-friendliness had not been taken into account in the installation of guy wires along the corridor, which is a bigger issue with Dominion. Mr. Oliver stated that the current project affords an opportunity to address that, and suggested that the Committee make that recommendation.

Ms. Nolt asked about the smaller tree types planned for the westernmost corridor portion, and stated that Broad Street being so broad, bigger trees should be used wherever possible. Mr. Oliver stated that this was because of overhead lines on both sides of the street, up to Sheppard Street.

Mr. Johannas asked if, with the 30-foot-spaced smaller trees and the 42-foot-spaced larger trees, expressed concern about the lack of extent of the resulting shade canopy.

Mr. Johannas asked about the 5-7 feet allotted for the café corrals, and whether this might ever be increased.

Mr. Oliver stated that this limit was based on the space remaining from required sizes for 5 ½-6 foot planting width and 6 foot pedestrian width. Ms. Nolt asked if this matches the City's outdoor dining guidelines. Mr. Oliver stated that it does, although it does not match some currently existing outdoor dining arrangements, some of which are larger.

Mr. Johannas pointed out a problematic and hazardous handicapped ramp placement at the northeast corner of Lombardy and Broad, where there is insufficient sidewalk and four lanes of traffic turning into two, and asked if this could be addressed. Mr. Oliver agreed that it is not ideal, and stated that it is beyond the project scope but that they could look at some ideas.

Mr. Johannas asked about pedestrian barriers in the plans, and what their purpose is. Mr. Oliver stated that these are to distinguish work areas from pedestrian areas, and were added in light of recent crashes involving pedestrians, to indicate to construction personnel where pedestrian access should be located; that pedestrian access should always be on either one half of the street or the other; and to show that where there is a pedestrian detour there needs to be a pedestrian path as well.

Mr. Reyna asked for details about pocket park planned for the wedge-shaped space across Broad Street from Altamont Street, bordered by Belmont Avenue. Mr. Oliver stated that this is a more long-range, future project about which he does not have details. He said that he believed a funding source for this project had not yet been identified. Mr. Son stated that, since the space in question is public property, any designs that are generated would come before UDC for location, character and extent review.

Ms. Almond requested that a few more native species be added to the plant palette, adding that she understands that an attempt has been made to coordinate with Pulse stop plantings. Ms. Almond asked that the Yoshino Cherry and Forest Pansy be replaced with native species, the former due to poor drought performance, and the latter due to its pollination being compromised as it is a non-original color.

Ms. Nolt suggested that the ornamental trees should have a larger – 2-2 ½ inch – caliper than currently specified, to establish them faster.

Mr. Oliver stated that the plant palette was developed in consultation with the Urban Forestry division of Public Works, and that they could continue working on it with them; and that they can suggest larger sizes depending on the budget and bid awarded for the project

Ms. Nolt stated that the trees should be the priority over ground plantings in the budget, as they will have the most impact on the streetscape.

Ms. Almond asked which city arborist is connected to this project. Mr. Oliver stated that it is Janine [Lester].

Mr. Oliver pointed out, in regard to the tree planting, that the Pulse project removed much of the parking adjacent to curbs, so there are vehicles traveling in that lane very close to the trees. This factors into tree species selection. Branches extending into the street at 12' or lower will tend to be hit by vehicles. Ms. Nolt stated that some of the trees selected tend to have low branches growing outward, which would be problematic. Mr. Oliver stated that different objectives need to be balanced, and that the applicants would have to make sure the architect and Urban Forestry take these factors into account.

Ms. Almond asked if there was any public comment. Hearing none, she closed public comment and opened the floor for Committee discussion and a motion.

Ms. Nolt stated that the applicants seem to have been working with city arborist, and should continue to do so, and examine the plant palette. Even if only 1 or 2 shade-giving trees can be fitted per block, these types of trees should be given priority.

Ms. Nolt recapped the discussion about guy wires, and the need to work around them for the plantings; and also the recommendation that the acorn light fixtures have dark caps to mitigate light pollution.

Mr. Reyna asked Mr. Son if the City has specific locations in mind for bike parking. Mr. Son stated that the comment about bike parking had been a general one, based on experience and the establishments along the corridor.

Jakob Helmboldt, Pedestrian Bicycle Trails Coordinator, introduced himself. Mr. Helmboldt stated that bike racks will be installed on a case-by-case basis, with an attempt to balance placement in high-demand areas with spatial needs and avoiding overcrowding of streetscape features. Ms. Nolt asked if this would be based on current demand, with an option to install more based on future demand. Mr. Helmboldt confirmed that both those approaches would be pursued, while being careful in high-demand areas, e.g., restaurants, to supply needed racks while avoiding creating jammed conditions around the dining amenity itself.

Mr. Johannas asked if creating bike corrals in car parking lots on side streets had been considered. Mr. Helmboldt stated that bike corrals have been in discussion for some time, and hopefully will begin to be installed soon, if not in this project than elsewhere. Many parking spaces were lost in the installation of the Pulse stops, so sensitivity about car parking spots is in order. Mr. Johannas stated that Scott's Addition is at 125% efficiency according to the latest parking report, and that this density of over-parking will likely cause more people to use bikes and other alternative transport. Mr. Helmboldt expressed agreement, stating that neighborhoods want bike parking but not at the expense of car parking. Mr. Johannas stated that at neighborhood meetings in Carytown and especially Scott's Addition he was surprised at community lack of concern about the overstressed parking situation, which is likely to only get worse.

Ms. Nolt suggested that perhaps the concept design for the not-yet-designed park across from Scott's Addition should include a bike corral. Mr. Helmboldt stated that the space in question has been considered for a bike-share area.

Mr. Johannas asked about placement of scooter stations. Mr. Helmboldt stated that this is at the discretion of the vendors, which at the moment is Bolt with other companies likely to follow soon.

Mr. Johannas stated that San Francisco has a system for scooters involving photographing the scooter in its parking spot. Mr. Helmboldt stated that the premise of a dockless scooter is negated by allotting designated spots for them, but that policing of scooters by the vendors is important, so they are not left lying around in a disorderly fashion.

A motion was made by Nolt, seconded by Reyna, that this final Location, Character, and Extent item be recommended for approval with the following conditions.

-That the applicant demonstrate there was consideration for additional bike parking in areas of higher activity

- That the three (3) trees in the northeast quadrant at Hermitage and West Broad Street remain
- That the applicant include a cap on light fixtures to address Dark Sky requirements
- That the applicant coordinate locations of power poles and guide wires so that pedestrian amenities and plantings are fully coordinated prior to construction
- That the applicant work with the city arborists to:
 - refine the plant pallet utilizing more native species
 - refine the plant pallet utilizing tree species that will provide as much shade canopy as possible
 - select the best applicable trees for the conditions of the streetscape
 - demonstrate there was consideration for utilizing larger caliper trees to achieve the desired streetscape as quickly as possible

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 5 - Jill Nolt, David Johannas, Emily Smith , Chair Andrea Almond and John Reyna

Excused -- 3 - Andrea Quilici, Andrew P. Gould and James W. Klaus

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Son stated that the new UDC application is now on the website and should be fully accessible. The Committee is now paperless, except for three hard-copy applications at each meeting: one for the public; one for the Committee; and one for staff record-keeping.

Ms. Almond stated that she has agreed to take the UDC spot on the Public Art Commission, the first meeting of which was the previous week [Thursday, June 27]. There is a new Public Art Secretary, Susan Glasser, taking the position vacated by Ellen Parker. There is also a new Public Art Master Plan, several new members of the Commission, and a budget of over a million dollars with which to strategize about new public art. There is a focus on getting more clarity about the 1% for the Arts ordinance which affects capital projects, as it seems in the past this ordinance has not been observed. Ms. Almond stated that applicants coming before UDC have often, when questioned about the 1% for the arts component, stated that they are not sure it applies in their case, and then there has not been follow-up. Most of the projects in question should have incorporated a 1% for the arts component, and most did not. Committee members should continue to ask such questions of applicants, and can expect more support from the Public Art Commission going forward.

Adjournment