



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: October 20, 2014
RE: **Conceptual Location, Character and Extent review of an athletic field and associated improvements at Hickory Hill Community Center, 3000 Belt Boulevard**

I. APPLICANTS

Heywood Harrison, Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

II. LOCATION

Hickory Hill Community Center, 3000 Belt Boulevard

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for conceptual location, character and extent review of an athletic field and associated improvements at Hickory Hill Community Center.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project would establish a new multi-purpose playing field on land adjacent to the Hickory Hill Community Center. The two properties on which the field will be located are to the south of the community center and currently bisected by Platinum Road, which was closed to public travel by Ordinance No. 2014-140-135, adopted on July 14, 2014.

The Urban Design Committee finds that the proposed improvements will make active use of land that is currently underutilized. The Committee further finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Master Plan and the Urban Design Guidelines. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval with the following conditions:

- That the final plans show any trees that are to be removed as part of the project, indicating the species type and caliper size for any tree larger than 4" in caliper that is proposed to be removed.
- That the final plans include a landscape plan, including plant species, quantity, and size at the time of installation; and that the plans include new trees across the vacated Platinum Road adjacent to the CSX rail line, to continue the existing vegetative buffer.
- That the final plans provide details on the lighting, proposed scoreboard, any proposed benches/bleachers and trash receptacles.
- That the applicant receives Board of Zoning Appeals or other necessary approval for the field lighting prior to submission for final review.
- That the final plans indicate how the playing fields will be connected to the parking areas.
- That the applicant considers burying the overhead power lines that are to be relocated as part of the construction.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject properties are located on the west side of Belt Boulevard south of its intersection with Terminal Avenue and lie within the R-4 (Single-Family residential) zoning district. The two properties on which the field will be located total 5.43 acres, not including the Platinum Road right-of-way, which was closed to public travel by Ordinance No. 2014-140-135, adopted on July 14, 2014. The portion of the property on which the community center, softball field, tot lot, parking areas and walking track are located contains another 6.98 acres. The western edge of all three properties abuts a CSX rail line, and there is a vegetated buffer that runs the distance of this edge. With the exception of a property located north of the community center that is zoned B-3 (General Business), all of the surrounding properties are zoned R-4 and are improved with detached residential dwellings.

The subject properties are the site of a former landfill that has not been used for more than 25 years. The City has several other parks facilities that have been constructed on former landfills, including the golf driving range, the Norrell playing fields, and Canoe Run Park.

b. Scope of Review

The improvements associated with this project are subject to location, character, and extent review as a "park" in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

c. Project Description

This project would establish a new multi-purpose playing field on land adjacent to the Hickory Hill Community Center. The two properties on which the field will be located are to the south of the community center and currently bisected by Platinum Road, which was closed to public travel by Ordinance No. 2014-140-135, adopted on July 14, 2014. The property north of Platinum Road is already used as an informal playing field.

The applicant's report notes that there are two major use types on the existing playing fields at this site: general and casual "walk up" recreation activities on the grounds as well as structured recreation programs and activities associated with the Community Center. The City's Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities is interested in developing a new athletic field for the property that will incorporate both use types.

The proposed improvements would include demolition of Platinum Road, which is no longer in service, the relocation of overhead power lines, and grading of the field. There are significant undulations in the land which will need to be graded, and all drainage will occur naturally and through the use of swales where necessary to convey runoff away from the field. The standard sized multi-use football and/or soccer field will be reseeded, and field goals and a wireless scoreboard for multiple sport score keeping will be installed. The field will be surrounded by a 4' tall chain-link fence coated in black vinyl. The lighting would be to recreational standard and provide adequate illumination for night sports

playing using the new light "cut off" shade technology. Parking for the new field will be provided by the existing parking lots, which contain 82 parking spaces.

The City will be funding the project, which has a budget of \$500,000.

d. UDC Review History

In 1997 the UDC and Planning Commission recommended approval of plans that authorized the renovation of the early 1900s structure and the 1950s additions to allow them to be used as a community center. The plans also included new landscaping, a parking lot expansion and the addition of a tot-lot and a walking trail.

e. Master Plan

The subject properties are located in the Broad Rock planning district as defined by the citywide Master Plan, which recommends Public and Open Space uses for the site, a designation that includes publicly owned and operated parks, recreation areas and open spaces (page 135). The Plan notes that "additional public park space and community facilities are needed throughout the district" (page 146).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Public Park section of the Urban Design Guidelines has a number of recommendations pertinent to the proposal, including that "active parks should have adequate facilities (i.e. sports fields, trash receptacles, benches, running paths, etc.) to accommodate intended users". Further, the Guidelines note that "successful public parks...share certain qualities, which include the ability to attract and entertain visitors, access and connectivity to surrounding areas, and safety and comfort" (page 9).

Lastly, the Guidelines state that "impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements" and that "lighting and landscaping should allow for surveillance and policing activities, but should be designed primarily to accommodate the intended use of the park" (page 9).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**