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To: Planning Commission  
From: Urban Design Committee  
Date: June 19, 2017  
RE: **Final review of Intermediate Terminal – Parking Lot Improvements, 3115 Water St.;  
UDC No. 2017-21**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Don Summers, Department of Public Works, Division of Capital Projects

**II. LOCATION**

3115 Water St.

**Property Owner:**

CITY OF RICHMOND PUBLIC WORKS

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for review of the final location, character, and extent of parking lot improvements to the area around the Intermediate Terminal building, part of an interim public access strategy for the downriver segment of the Riverfront Plan.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The Urban Design Committee finds the proposed interim parking lot improvements are reasonable and attractive, and that they further the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines for public parks with regard to sustainability especially.

Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval.

**Staff Contact:**

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**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The site is bordered by the Virginia Capital Trail, paralleling Wharf Street to the east, the James River to the west, the Intermediate Terminal building and a former concrete pad to the north, and a boathouse for local colleges to the south.

The proposed project area is a large expanse of hardscape mostly made up of cobblestone, gravel, and asphalt. Up until the point of construction, this area has been used as an unofficial parking lot and contains a single tree, concrete planters and a few Jersey walls spaced out sporadically for safety.

Adjacent to the proposed project area is the site of the former concrete pad, unofficially known as the Sugar Pad. The site remains a popular fishing area and is an overall popular gathering space for the community.

The Intermediate Terminal building to the north is planned to be developed into a Stone Brewing World Bistro and Gardens in the near future. Rail lines have been removed as part of the Capital Trail and abutting Wharf Street has been vacated.

**b. Scope of Review**

This project is reviewed under Section 17.07 for location, character, and extent as a public way, ground, and open space.

**c. Project Description**

This project involves improvements to an existing cobblestone parking lot area to better delineate vehicular use and pedestrian spaces, while maintaining emergency and public works access to the dock. Simultaneously, this project will reduce the amount of impervious cover on site, removing existing gravel and cobble in areas where landscape improvements will be made to help soften, beautify, and program the site.

The construction program involves the installation of erosion and sediment control measures, safety measures, and the maintenance of a functional construction entrance that works in concert with the use of the Capital Trail. Demolition includes removal of gravel, portions of cobble, and other incidental work. A new concrete sidewalk will connect the dock to the Capital Trail and will be separated from the cobble parking lot and adjacent lawn area with a 6" curb.

A new section of curb will allow space for a generous landscape island in the parking lot, also separating vehicular parking from the functional dock area.

One Willow Oak is proposed in the large island while a River Birch is proposed at the east end of the site where some seeding will establish a new stand of grass.

Granite canal stone will be incorporated into the green space as informal seating along the dock and river front along with three Willow Oaks.

Black metal railing will allow the public to more comfortably observe activity along the river while maintaining the majority of the dock without railings as it always has been.

**d. UDC Review History**

Staff was unable to find any existing records related to projects involving the station.

**e. Master Plan**

The Richmond Riverfront Plan, adopted by Richmond City Council in November 2012 as a part of the City's Master Plan and Downtown Plan, is the City's vision document for the Riverfront.

According to the plan, the downriver end of the study area encompasses everything between Pear Street and Rocketts Landing, from Dock and Wharf Streets to the river. All downriver parcels should actively improve and engage the Riverfront. They should incorporate passive and active Riverfront recreation opportunities, including a variety of docks and watercraft launches that take

advantage of the adjacent navigable channel and flat water. Terraces at Lehigh and Intermediate dock should provide direct access down to the river's edge.

Intermediate Wharf is specifically called out in the plan: The Intermediate Wharf, a City-owned parcel, fronts the James River with three distinct bulkhead structures. The elevated paved slab (which has since been leveled) has been used as a multi-purpose platform for various events, including the Tall Ships Festival. The plans note that interim grass and trees are tentatively scheduled for late spring 2017. Future upgrades to this area may include a timber wharf edge for large ocean-going water craft berthing.

The plan further stated that Dock rehabilitation efforts remain ongoing with decking to be returned to Intermediate Dock, completion is anticipated in early 2017. Schematic design efforts are anticipated to begin in late 2016, with an eye toward an interim public access strategy for the short term, and a longer-term configuration with greater public amenities.

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

In regards to paving and surface materials the guidelines state “consideration should be given to the massing of impervious material, the heat impact of paving material, and the storm-water runoff caused by paving material. Landscaping should be used to break up large expanses of impervious paving material” (page 3).

The Public Parks section of the guidelines mentioned that “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 which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality” (page 9).

The guidelines mention that “plant materials should create spaces by providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas” in terms of landscaping. (page 10).

Under the Storm Water Management and Low Impact Development section, the guidelines note that “site development should take measures towards conservation of natural resources. Where feasible, developments should also promote impact minimization techniques through alternative storm water management practices” (page 11).

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

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