



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: June 20, 2016
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of streetscape modifications along E. Franklin Street between N. 14th and N. 15th Streets; UDC No. 2016-22**

I. APPLICANT

Kevin Newcomb, Department of Public Works

II. LOCATION

E. Franklin Street between N. 14th Street and N. 15th Street

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for the final location, character, and extent review of streetscape modifications along E. Franklin Street between N. 14th and N. 15th Streets.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The UDC was curious about the lack of trash cans in the plans; Staff reported that the limited nature of the plans, as well as the fact that both sides of the block are bordered by state parking garages, and thus do not generate as much trash demand as a commercial corridor, and that there was a desire to retain clear width on the sidewalk for pedestrians. The UDC also asked how the proposed tree wells interact with the existing trees on the south side of the project; the applicant reported that the City arborist is being consulted in regards to the species and has recommended Black gum for those tree wells. Finally, the UDC wanted clarification about the retention of existing lighting in the project; Staff reported that they supported retaining the existing light fixtures, which are on state property and adequately light the streetscape, rather than adding an additional set of light fixtures.

The UDC finds the proposal to be directly supportive of one of the key elements of the Downtown Master Plan, and generally consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines. Further, the improvements proposed are also consistent with the recent efforts to “green” the area and establish connections between Main Street Station and Capitol Square. The UDC is supportive of adding street trees throughout the City and especially in highly visible locations such as this. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval.

Staff Contact:

Kathleen Onufer, (804) 646-5207

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject right-of-way is along E. Franklin Street between N. 14th and N. 15th Streets and is located in the B-4 (Central Business) zoning district. The James

Monroe Building, a Commonwealth of Virginia office building and parking deck, is located on the north side of the block and a Commonwealth parking deck is located on the south side. To the west of the subject right-of-way are additional Commonwealth office buildings and parking decks, and to the east is Main Street Station.

E. Franklin Street contains two westbound and eastbound travel lanes, with on-street parking on each side. On-street parking is restricted to two hours from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is prohibited from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. The roadway is composed of concrete with some asphalt patches, and the sidewalks are composed of concrete. At present there are no street trees, though there are some canopy trees adjacent to the parking deck on Commonwealth property on the south side of the road. Also, there are no ornamental street lights, and only two cobrahead fixtures; one at the southeastern corner of the intersection of E. Franklin and N. 14th Streets, and one at the entrance to the parking deck under the James Monroe building. The Commonwealth has installed some pedestrian-scaled lights on their property on the south side of the road, in addition to building-mounted lights on the parking deck.

b. Scope of Review

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

c. UDC Review History

In October 2013 the UDC recommended and the Planning Commission granted approval of streetscape improvements to N. 14th Street between E. Main Street and E. Franklin Street, which included median plantings and street trees in both bioretention filter wells and tree wells enhanced with structural soil.

d. Project Description

This project involves the provision of ADA-compliant curb ramps at intersections, traffic sign relocations, and the installation of ornamental street lights, tree wells, and street trees on E. Franklin Street between N. 14th and N. 15th Streets. The project limits include most of E. Franklin Street, with the exception of the loading dock to the James Monroe Building, and wraps around the corners of N. 14th and N. 15th Streets. The proposed improvements along Franklin St maintain the existing roadway width, travel lanes, and number of parking and loading zones, as well as leave an existing loading dock for the Monroe building as is. The existing sidewalk is 10’ wide and concrete material.

Eight new tree wells will be installed along the subject right-of-way, roughly parallel to one another (three wells on the north side at approximately 65’ spacing and five wells on the south side at approximately 57’ spacing). The new tree wells will be 5’ by 5’, leaving another 5’ of passable sidewalk for pedestrians. No tree species are proposed at this point, and the applicant’s report notes that the City’s Urban Forestry group will determine the species to be planted.

The plans also propose the installation of three ornamental street lights along the north side of E. Franklin Street, spaced approximately 60’ apart. The selected light is the “Charleston” fixture, painted black and mounted atop a 6’ black pole. The lights will be placed 30” from the back of curb per City lighting standard atop a

24"x24" concrete foundation. No additional pedestrian lighting is proposed on the southside, as the existing white ornamental lights on the Commonwealth property on the south side of the street will remain in service.

Accessible ramps will be installed on the northeast corner of Franklin Street at 14th Street, and also along the northwest corner of the intersection of Franklin Street at 15th Street. Truncated dome strips will be installed on the exposed aggregate ramp on the southeast corner of Franklin & 14th St. Underground conduit work will require the ADA ramp at the southwest corner of Franklin and 15th Street be reset. Work will match the existing brick paver arrangement along 15th St. At all curb ramps along the project corridor, truncated domes will be colonial red. Any existing yellow truncated domes at ADA-compliant ramps will also be replaced with colonial red for color consistency.

The project cost estimate is \$300,000, with 50% of the funding coming from the City and 50% from VDOT revenue sharing. Construction is anticipated to begin in spring of this year and be completed within three months.

e. Master Plan

The subject right-of-way is located in the Shockoe focus area, as defined in the Downtown Master Plan. A key recommendation in this section of the plan applicable to the proposed improvements is to "enhance the pedestrian realm" by replacing concrete sidewalks with brick, where possible and to plant street trees regularly along the edge of the sidewalk (page 4.59). This section further calls for the installation of historic pedestrian-scaled lighting to enhance the safety and character of the district (page 4.59). "Green" is one of the seven foundations of the Downtown Plan, and an implementation step for this foundation is to initiate an ambitious street tree campaign (page 3.11).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Community Character section of the Urban Design Guidelines contains several suggestions on landscaping, noting that "generally, new street trees should be located a minimum of 35' from each other and three feet from the curb" and that "generally, a street tree should be no closer than 12 feet from a streetlight" (page 21). The Guidelines also encourage alternatives to metal tree grates, unless a precedent has been established in the area (page 21). Finally, the Guidelines state that "lighting fixtures should be consistent with the existing fixtures in the surrounding area.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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