



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: July 17, 2017
RE: **Conceptual Location, Character, and Extent review of Sister City Waypoint Signage Installation, Kanawha Plaza, 701 E. Canal St.; UDC No. 2017-25**

I. APPLICANT

Marlaine Smith, Department of Parks, Recreation, & Community Facilities

II. LOCATION

Kanawha Plaza, 107 E. Canal St.

Property Owner:

CITY OF RICHMOND RECREATION & PARKS

III. PURPOSE

The installation of a waypoint sign is to help educate the Richmond community of the City's global presence and of all the noble work which our Sister Cities undertake globally.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This conceptual plan for the installation of a Sister City Waypoint Sign in Kanawha Plaza will add interest to the park by alluding to the City's position on a cultural and global scale. Staff finds the proposed location of the sign to be appropriate and believes it will enhance the surrounding garden by drawing people into the space, this sentiment is shared by The Sister Cities Commission, The Enrichmond Foundation, and the Department of Parks, Recreation, & Community Facilities.

Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission approve the conceptual design as presented.

Staff Contact:

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

Kanawha Plaza, the proposed site where the waypoint sign is to be placed, is an urban park encompassing 2.8 acres on two city blocks, partially located over top of the Downtown Expressway (Interstate 195). Kanawha Plaza is located in the B-4 (Central Business) zoning district and is isolated by roadways: S. 9th Street to the east carries 10 lanes of two-direction traffic; E. Canal Street to the north carries five lanes of two-direction traffic to the east of S. 8th Street (a recent configuration due to the construction of the Gateway Plaza building and the closing of a portion of S. 8th Street) and four lanes of one-way westbound traffic to the west of S. 8th Street; S. 7th Street to the west carries four lanes of one-way northbound traffic, and E. Byrd Street to the south carries four lanes of one-

way eastbound traffic. The posted speed limit on each of these streets is 25mph, and there is no on-street parking along of the street frontages of the park.

The former RMA parking deck and plaza and the WilliamsMullen law firm headquarters building are located to the east of Kanawha Plaza, the Federal Reserve Bank is located to the south, the Downtown Expressway emerges to the west, and on the north are the Dominion office tower and Gateway Plaza, home to the McGuireWoods law firm among other tenants.

Kanawha Plaza was originally designed by landscape architects Zion & Breen and completed in 1980. Zion & Breen also provided landscape design for the Philip Morris corporate offices and research center in Richmond and is best known for its design of Paley Park in New York City.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as part of a “public structure” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

The UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the design of the park in 1977.

Beginning in the early spring of 2015, Kanawha Plaza underwent extensive review by the UDC and the Planning Commission for a renovation to take place in phases including: improving the visibility and access to the park by re-grading the entire site, renovating the fountain and installing a splash pad, a permanent stage canopy, exercise equipment and a focal point at the terminus of S. 8th Street.

For further detail regarding the general renovation of the park in its entirety, the following files may be reviewed: UDC 2015-03(2), UDC 2015-03(3), and UDC 2015-03(4).

d. Project Description

The Richmond Sister Cities Commission shares the same mission as Sister Cities International: to create relationships based on cultural, educational, and information and trade exchanges, to create lifelong friendships that provide prosperity and peace through a people-to-people form of citizen diplomacy and to bring the world to Richmond and Richmond to the world.

The proposed waypoint signage is to help educate the Richmond community of the city’s global presence and all of the noble work that the city’s Sister Cities undertake globally. This signage will also assist Richmond in greeting delegations when they arrive in Richmond. It is the applicant’s hope to bring them to a premier Richmond Park to demonstrate that Richmond is dedicated to a visible Sister Cities Relationship.

The budget for the sign is \$1578.00, including installation. The Waypoint sign will be fully funded by The Richmond Sister Cities Commission.

e. Master Plan

Although signage for Kanawha Plaza was not specifically mentioned in the Downtown Plan, a general recommendation was to “improve Kanawha Plaza and enhance the park” (page 4.20).

The Downtown Plan further states that “additional foot traffic will improve safety by providing ‘eyes on the plaza.’” (page 4.29).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines contain several recommendations for signs, including that “a sign’s message should be easy to read and direct” (page 24).

Generally, the Guidelines impart, “sign lettering should be 4” to 14” high and should be in proportion to the area in which it will be displayed. One inch should be added to the lettering height for each additional 50’ between the sign and the viewer” (page 24). The Guidelines note that “signs should be placed so that they are sensitive to the signs of adjacent businesses” (page 23).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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