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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: July 6, 2017  
RE: **Conceptual Location, Character, and Extent review of Riverview Community Park, east of the 1800 block of Texas Ave.; UDC No. 2017-24**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Deborah Morton, Department of Parks, Recreation, & Community Facilities

**II. LOCATION**

East of the 1800 block of Texas Ave.

**Property Owner:**

CITY OF RICHMOND RECREATION & PARKS

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for the conceptual location, character, and extent review of a park design to accommodate citizens in the areas neighboring Texas Avenue.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

Staff finds that this conceptual plan for Riverview Community Park will enhance the community by addressing the recreational interest and needs of surrounding citizens of all ages. This project aligns with the Guideline's notion that "Public parks are integral to the quality of life found in any urban landscape. Parks should respond to the environment in which they are located and should be designed in accordance with their intended use." The park will include: a playground, a skate park, a community garden, a picnic area, a walking trail, and a low-impact parking area.

Lastly, this park has widespread community support with active participation in the design and development provided by: The Friends of Riverview Community Park (FoRCP), Richmond Area Skateboarding Alliance (RASA), Maymont Civic League, and Richmond Young Professionals Kiwanis (RYPKC).

Therefore, Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend the Planning Commission approve the conceptual design with the following recommendations:

- Where appropriate, plant shade trees to further enhance passive and active recreation

**Staff Contact:**

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**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The proposed project is located on the northern part of a property with the address of 1807 Texas Avenue. The proposed site is situated to the east of the

1800 block of Texas Avenue, between Treasure Island Trail on the west and Mount Calvary Cemetery on the east.

Located in an R-5 district, the site is surrounded by single-family detached homes to the north and south with the cemetery to the east. The property the site is located on connects to the Texas Beach parking lot.

There currently exists an abandoned basketball court that, over the years, has been converted into a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) skate park.

**b. Scope of Review**

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as part of a “public park” under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

**c. UDC Review History**

Staff was unable to find any existing records related to projects involving this site.

**d. Project Description**

The proposed project will transform a formally abandoned lot into a vibrant, accessible green space for the residents of Richmond. There is no public park playground within walking distance of the many young children living in the Maymont (Riverview) community. Additionally, there is no full-scale skate park north of the James River in Richmond, and the closest community garden is over a mile away. This project will meet the strong needs for community space. The older residents in the community have asked for a walking trail around the perimeter of the park site in order to have an off-street location for daily exercise. This proposal has widespread community support with active participation in the design and the development of the park being provided by the following groups:

The Friends of Riverview Community Park (FoRCP) - A non-profit organization under the Enrichmond 501c3 umbrella made up of volunteers from the Maymont (Riverview) community, FoRCP was founded to support the creation and ongoing maintenance of the entire Riverview Community Park site.

Richmond Area Skateboarding Alliance (RASA) – A non-profit organization under the Enrichmond 501c3 umbrella made up of volunteers from the greater City of Richmond, RASA was formed to support the creation of skate parks in Richmond and they are dedicated to supporting the construction and maintenance of a skate park at the Riverview Community Park site.

Maymont Civic League – The Maymont Civic League is the neighborhood association for the Maymont (Riverview) neighborhood. Members of this group have been advocating for changes to the site of the planned Riverview Community Park for many years, and when plans for a park at this site started emerging from the community, the Maymont Civic League members were immediately ardent supporters of the park project. The Civic League submitted a letter of approval of the project in January 2015, and a letter requesting the name be officially be designated as Riverview Community Park in June 2016. (Both of these letters are included as attachments to this application.)

Richmond Young Professionals Kiwanis (RYPKC) – A young professionals organization in Richmond, VA with a focus on making a positive impact in the

community, RYPKC is hoping to support this project with financial and in-kind support. RYPKC also plans to support the neighborhood in volunteering for clean ups and long term support of the park.

The proposed Riverview Community Park is an all-ages community park that will consist of a playground, skate park, community garden, picnic area, walking trail, and an additional parking area:

**Playground** – After requesting bids from three playground manufacturers (Kompan, Miracle, and Landscape Structures), FoRCP in partnership with RYPKC and Parks and Recreation selected the Kompan bid as being the best value and the best fit for the location. Kompan’s quote meets the quality and cost specifications requested and includes some playground elements that will be an enticing addition to the types of play structures available to children in the City of Richmond. Because Kompan needs to have a four-month lead time to construct orders, we’re hoping to begin construction four months after hearing from the Urban Design Committee and Planning Commission. Ideally this means we could be installing playground equipment by November 2017. Installation of playground equipment will depend on final City of Richmond approval.

**Skate Park** – Local skateboarders have been using an abandoned basketball court on the site as a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) skate park for several years. With the support of the JRP Easement Holders, RASA hopes to improve and expand the skate infrastructure at this location to create the first skate park north of the James River in the City of Richmond. Improvements to the current platform have already started and RASA is poised to continue construction as soon as funding is secured.

**Community Garden** – City Council approved the location of a community garden in the Riverview Community Park in the spring of 2017 (Res. No. 2017-R016). FoRCP hopes to construct several raised beds on the site, fill them with organic soil, and make them available to community members interested in participating in the program.

**Picnic Area** – The Maymont (Riverview) community has no centralized picnic area for block parties and other events. In order to meet the demand of the community, we plan to build and place several picnic tables near the park kiosk area for local events and meet ups. These picnic tables will be constructed immediately after receiving UDC approval.

**Walking Trail** – The older residents of the Maymont (Riverview) community have requested a walking trail around the perimeter of the site as an off-street exercise location for the community. This walking trail will also serve the dual purpose of connecting the various planned elements of the site to one another and to the bike and car parking areas. The walking trail will be made of recycled crushed concrete. We plan to install this trail immediately after receiving UDC approval.

**Parking Area** – To limit parking in the alley or on the grass, there will be a parking area installed using recycled crushed concrete. The parking area will hold approximately twelve vehicles.

The total budget for the park is \$176,600.00.

**e. Master Plan**

The subject property and adjacent rights-of-way are located in the Near West planning district as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan suggests development and land use must be respectful of both the natural and manmade environment (page 227).

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Environment section of the Urban Design Guidelines state that “Active parks should have adequate facilities (i.e. sports fields, trash receptacles, benches, running paths, etc.) to accommodate intended users.” The General Characteristics section maintains that “successful public parks, both small and large, active or passive, share certain qualities, which include the ability to attract and entertain visitors, access and connectivity to surrounding areas, and safety and comfort.” Furthermore the Design Considerations section suggests that “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. 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).

The Guidelines express support for low-impact development, the goal of which is to “mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source” (page 11).

The Public Facilities section of the Urban Design Guidelines contains relevant suggestions on site programming such as “connectivity from the site to adjacent areas should be considered” (page 14).

**VI. ATTACHMENTS**

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