



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: June 18, 2018
RE: **Conceptual Location, Character, and Extent Review of the Southside Community Center Master Plan, 6255 Old Warwick Road; UDC 2018-23**

I. APPLICANT

Chris Frelke, Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

II. LOCATION

6255 Old Warwick Road, Richmond, VA, 23225

Property Owner:

City of Richmond C/O Chief Admin Officer

III. PURPOSE

The application is for the conceptual location, character, and extent review of a long-range master plan for a regional park on 17.98 acres in the Midlothian Planning District.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds the project to be well-considered with the renovation and repurposing of key structures, the continued utilization of specific existing paved areas, and the programming of compatible indoor and outdoor activities. Staff further finds that the public process improved the programming of the site, providing a better mix of active and passive uses as well as enhanced cohesiveness overall.

Thus, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval as submitted, with the following conditions:

- That the final plans address, for any aspect of this proposal, sustainability as detailed in the Urban Design Guidelines such as, but not limited to:
 - The utilization of pervious pavement for the parking areas
 - An increase in programming to address stormwater drainage
 - Additional trees to be planted along the trail and within the parking lot islands
- That the final plan consider the position of the softball field to ensure stray balls do not negatively impact oncoming traffic
- That the final plan consider access between the trail and the parking lot to the north of the softball field
- That the final plan provide a comprehensive planting plan and schedule
- That the final plan provide a lighting plan, considering the use of LED with a 3000k correlated color temperature or less

Staff Contact:

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The 17.98 acre site is the former campus of the Richmond Outreach Center, formerly known as the ROC Church. In addition to the Gymnasium and the former sanctuary building, an assortment of pre-existing, poor condition buildings of various scale and utility are situated on site, including a small skate park, a multi-use field, three baseball fields, and expansive parking areas.

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. UDC Review History

At the regular June 2016 meeting of the UDC, the original application (UDC 2016-19) came forward for final review, however all the subsequent staff reports, recommendations, and approvals referenced that the application came for conceptual review. The UDC recommended that the application be approved, conceptually, with the condition that:

- The final plans for any projects show how the project will address sustainability as detailed in the Urban Design Guidelines

The regular June 2016 meeting of the Planning Commission saw this UDC 2016-19 approved on the consent agenda with the conditions put forth by the UDC.

d. Project Description

The City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities purchased the Southside Community Center property in 2014 with the goal of creating a regional park to provide diversified recreational opportunities for the residents of the Midlothian Planning District.

In the spring of 2015 the design team of Worley Associates and Timmons Group was engaged to prepare a master plan for the park. Located at the intersection of Old Warwick Road and Warwick Road/Old Carnation Street, the 17.98 acre site is the former campus of the Richmond Outreach Center, also known as the ROC Church. In addition to the Gymnasium and former sanctuary building, an assortment of pre-existing buildings of various scale, condition, and utility are situated onsite.

Other elements include a small skate park, a multiuse field, three baseball fields, and expansive parking areas.

The first meeting with the community was held on November 19, 2015 and consisted of a short presentation of various program elements that could be included in the regional park. Residents were informed of the phase I Gymnasium renovation project. All age groups were represented with a common theme of “giving the children a place to go” coming through again and again.

The design team took the results gained from community meeting #1 and explored how the various program elements fit on the site. Diagrams and schematics were prepared and evaluated to guide the next phase of the design.

On February 18, 2016 the design team held a second community meeting to walk residents through the master plan. Each element of the plan was isolated and explained including the long term possibilities for the existing buildings. An update was provided on the phase I Gymnasium renovation project and plans to relocate the existing baseball fields. Feedback was again obtained through public comment and written response.

Based on input received at the community meeting #2, and coordination with Parks & Recreation, the design was revised to form the final master plan.

The master plan is a tool that will provide the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities the ability to identify individual projects and the appropriate funding sources, including the City's Capital Improvement Program and the private sector.

Since the original master plan two major decisions have been made by the Parks/ Recreation and Capital Projects divisions over the last year that have caused the need for this master plan to be updated.

1. All of the existing buildings, except for the existing Gym and accessory building to the west are in disrepair and costing the city a great deal of money to maintain and operate in their current condition. There is an increased need to demolish these buildings as soon as possible and update the master plan to reflect the best use of this land.

2. The expense of the pool and related facilities relative to the low demand from the community are difficult to justify and the project budget will no longer support this program element.

To date, approximately \$2.25 - \$2.5 Million is now allocated for the construction of this project in the capital improvement fund for Parks and Recreation.

e. Master Plan

The Master Plan for this area does not designate this as an area for parks & recreation due to the fact that it was private property at the time; it is designated in the existing land use map of that plan as an institutional/semi-public use to reflect its former use as a semi-private recreation area. The general recommendations for this area are supportive of more parks & recreation access provided they can be adequately maintained, secure and safe for surrounding neighborhoods, and take drainage concerns into account.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines notes that "successful public parks, 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" (page 9). Further, the Guidelines state that "a preference should be given towards 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” (p. 9).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

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