



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: November 16, 2015
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent Review of a parking lot expansion and a water quality treatment train in the vicinity of the Maymont Children's Farm, 800 Swan Lake Drive**

I. APPLICANT

Dr. Norman Merrifield, Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities
Norman Burns, Maymont Foundation

II. LOCATION

Maymont, 800 Swan Lake Drive

Property Owner:

City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character and extent review of a parking lot expansion and a water quality treatment train in the vicinity of the Maymont Children's Farm.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The Maymont Foundation has launched the Spirit of Generosity Campaign seeking to raise \$35 million with the goals of "expanding and improving Maymont's aging facilities and programs and achieving sustainability (via growth of operating endowment funds) so that future generations of residents and visitors can enjoy and explore Maymont". One of the projects associated with this campaign is to improve and expand the area near the Children's Farm to include barn addition and renovation, a new Animal Care facility, a new classroom building, restroom expansion and improvement, an expanded parking lot and roadway realignment and a future welcome plaza. The barn addition and renovation, new Animal Care facility and new classroom building were approved in September; this submittal encompasses the parking lot expansion and a water quality treatment train.

Since conceptual review, the applicant has determined that the row of mature Zelkova trees in the parking lot should be replaced at the same time that the new trees for the expanded lot are planted. The Urban Design Committee does not object to the planting of new trees in the parking area; however, the Zelkova trees provide a beneficial shade canopy. It would be the Committee's strong preference to see those mature trees retained for several years beyond the parking lot expansion to allow for the new trees to grow to a point where they provide shade, and then replace the Zelkova trees as specified.

That concern notwithstanding, the Committee finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan and with the recommendations made during conceptual review. Therefore, the Urban Design

Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval, with the following condition:

- That the applicant considers retaining the row of mature Zelkova trees in the parking lot for several years, allowing the newly planted trees time to grow and provide shade.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

Maymont is a 100 acre City park property located north of the James River and Kanawha Canal and south of Shield Lake Drive between Hampton Street and Park Drive, which in turn becomes the Boulevard Bridge over the James River. Maymont is a National Register Historic Place and a Virginia Historic Landmark. Since 1975, the nonprofit Maymont Foundation has maintained and operated the park and has carried out extensive preservation and restoration of the original estate buildings including the Dooley Mansion, a Romanesque-style dwelling completed in 1893, and a number of other period outbuildings.

The property lies within the R-2 (Single-Family Residential) zoning district and besides the Dooley Mansion is improved several newer buildings reflecting the mission of the Maymont Foundation, including the Nature Center and Children's Farm. In addition to these structures are formal and informal gardens, open spaces and wildlife habitats. Today Maymont is visited by over 500,000 people annually.

To the south of the park is the James River, to the east of the park is an area zoned R-5 and improved with single-family detached dwellings. To the north of the park is a group of single-family detached dwellings in the R-2 district, and both to the north and the west is the City's Byrd Park with Shields and Swan Lakes, the Carillon and Dogwood Dell amphitheater.

b. Scope of Review

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

c. UDC Review History

In May 2015 the UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the conceptual plans for the overall project, with the following conditions:

- That the applicant completes the Spottswood Road closing and new access drive land dedication process prior to final consideration of the entrance road portion of the project.
- That the final plans include detailed architectural plans and renderings for each building, indicating dimensions, building materials and finishes.
- That the applicant considers providing windows in the north façade of the new classroom building instead of the current blank façade.
- That the final plans include a landscaping plan and schedule showing plant species, quantity, location and size at the time of installation.
- That the landscaping plan seeks to utilize native, non-invasive species where possible.

- That the final plans include a lighting plan, showing make, model and finish for any light pole and fixture, as well as fixture light source and color temperature.
- That the applicant considers providing prominent bicycle parking in the vicinity of the vehicle parking lot.
- That the applicant considers the provision of an electric vehicle charging station in the parking lot.

In September 2015 the UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the final plans for a new Animal Care building, a new classroom building and associated site improvements in the vicinity of the Maymont Children's Farm.

d. Project Description

The Maymont Foundation has launched the Spirit of Generosity Campaign seeking to raise \$35 million with the goals of “expanding and improving Maymont’s aging facilities and programs and achieving sustainability (via growth of operating endowment funds) so that future generations of residents and visitors can enjoy and explore Maymont”. One of the projects associated with this campaign is to improve and expand the area near the Children’s Farm to include barn addition and renovation, a new Animal Care facility, a new classroom building, restroom expansion and improvement, an expanded parking lot and roadway realignment and a future welcome plaza. The barn addition and renovation, new Animal Care facility and new classroom building were approved in September; this submittal encompasses the parking lot expansion and a water quality treatment train.

In addition to the work under review in this proposal, the Maymont Foundation has also applied for a Special Use Permit for 1000 Westover Road and 1001 Spottswood Road to allow for an expansion to the Westover Road structure and to permit office use and accessory event space on that property, which is used as the headquarters for the Foundation. While the building at 1000 Westover Road will be expanded, the building at 1001 Spottswood Road will be demolished.

The Maymont Foundation is also seeking to close a portion of Spottswood Road and dedicate to the City a 0.215 acre portion of the property at 1001 Spottswood Road for the purpose of relocating the main entrance drive. Spottswood Road, which runs parallel to Park Drive approximately 60’ to the east, is the existing entrance to the park. The proposal calls for a new access road, about 90’ to the east of Spottswood Road, resulting in a slow curved entry into the park through the existing granite pillars and metal gate. The applicant wishes to move the entrance to provide more room between Park Drive and the entrance so that vehicles can make the turn into the park without impeding the flow of traffic on Park Drive. It also creates a more open gateway and an opportunity for signage. The proposed entrance will carry two-way traffic, while Westover Road will remain a one-way exit. The road closing and dedication of land to the City would require an ordinance to be approved by City Council, and the applicant has begun that process.

In the parking lot, the four existing paved parking rows will remain, and two more rows of parking will be added to the south in an area that is currently a grassy field. On the northern edge of the parking lot, an 8’ wide concrete sidewalk will be added along the entire length, connecting to the existing sidewalk on Westover Road and to a proposed sidewalk connecting to Park Drive and Shirley Lane on the west. Access to this sidewalk from the parking lot will be provided through islands that

protrude into the parking lot and are half ramp/sidewalk and half landscaping. Additional landscaped islands, also accommodating light poles, will be added to the central row of existing parking. These islands will be placed 2' from the existing island to allow for stormwater runoff. In the new section of parking lot, 6' square, raised tree wells will be provided, oriented as diamonds in the lot. All new islands and wells will have a cobblestone curb to replicate the existing condition. The existing parking lot will receive a milling and repaving with asphalt, and the new parking area will be composed of asphalt, with the exception of an 8.5' wide strip between two of the new parking rows, which will be finished with permeable pavers. The exact number of parking spaces currently provided is unknown since the lot is not striped. The existing and expanded parking area will be striped and will contain 211 spaces.

During conceptual review, a recommendation was made for the applicant to consider providing an electric vehicle charging station in the parking area. The applicant has researched the possibility of providing such a station but has found it to be outside of the current budget for the project. Additionally, the recommendation was made that the applicant consider providing prominent bicycle parking in the vicinity of the vehicle parking lot. The applicant's report notes that this will be considered with the future welcome plaza.

The parking lot expansion will require the removal of several trees in the grassy area to the south, but the large cedar trees will be preserved. The new tree wells in the expanded parking area will be planted with Greenspire Lindens, a deciduous tree growing 40' to 50' tall with a 35' to 40' spread. The applicant also proposes to remove the existing row of mature Zelkovas in the long center island of the parking lot, replacing them with 12 additional Greenspire Lindens. The tree wells will be underplanted with Mrs. Robb's Bonnet (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), a groundcover. A total of 22 lights will be provided in the parking area. The 24' tall, cast aluminum Spectra fixtures will contain a pulse-start metal halide bulb with a color temperature of 3800k. The fixtures and poles will be matte black.

The grading of the parking lot allows for stormwater runoff to drain to a 7,650 square foot bioretention area to the east. This bioretention area will be planted with trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. In addition to the bioretention area, the plans for stormwater management also include a Regenerative Step Pool Conveyance System (RSPCS), which will follow the natural contours of the hillside, ultimately draining to a created wetland basin. The RSPCS is an open-channel conveyance system containing shallow aquatic pools atop turf grass and an underlying sand/woodchip mix filter bed medium. In addition to being an educational opportunity, benefits of the step pool include providing groundwater recharge, reducing flow velocity and enhancing the removal of suspended particles and pollutants. The project design exceeds stormwater regulations.

The projects included in this proposal are privately funded through the Maymont Foundation. Construction will proceed when funding allows and after all approvals are granted.

e. Master Plan

The subject property is located in the Near West Planning District, as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan places the subject area in the Public and Open Space land use category, with primary uses including publicly owned and operated

parks, recreation areas, and open spaces, among others. There is no language in the Plan specific to the site or the proposed improvements.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines states that “public parks are integral to the quality of life found in any urban landscape”. In general the plan notes 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”. The guidelines note that “impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements”

The Guidelines note that landscape plans should “include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings” and that “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10). The Guidelines go on to say that “site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture” (page 10). 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).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

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