



Staff Report
 City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2023-17	FINAL Location, Character, Extent Review	Meeting Date: 9/18/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Deborah Morton, Deputy Director, City of Richmond PRCF And the Maymont Foundation	
Project Description	FINAL Location, Character, and Extent review for expanded animal enclosure walkways at Maymont Park located at 1000 Westover Road.	
Project Location		
Address: 1000 Westover Road		
Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND RECREATION & PARKS		
High-Level Details: The Maymont Foundation requests to expand animal enclosures and replace and expand the existing walkway accessing such enclosures.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	NA	
Conditions for Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UDC recommends that outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant. UDC recommends that any proposed metallic decking be secured as to not make metallic sounds as guest walk across, that any proposed decking be non-slip, and that any use of metal materials within the walkway not be brightly metallic in appearance and blend into the natural background. 	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	Maymont in a privately operated park owned by the City of Richmond Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities. The project location only extends to the section of animal enclosures.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 and 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

Prior Approvals	NA
Project Description	<p>The Applicant states “As Maymont approaches its hundredth anniversary as a public space in 2025, the Maymont Foundation is embarking on a \$11.75 million series of enhancements designed to enrich guest experience, expand accessibility and capacity, and ensure a more resilient future. The Maymont Foundation has secured an \$8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded under a program to boost tourism throughout the country, and the Maymont Foundation will raise \$3.75 million in private funds.”</p> <p>The project proposes to expand and enhance the various animal enclosures as well as to replace and expand the existing walkway providing viewing opportunities of the enclosures to the public. The walkway is proposed to be grey galvanized steel decking with weathered steel posts and welded wire panel siding.</p> <p>Due to the specialized nature of these enclosures and the need to view them, the UDC’s review is solely the aesthetics of the proposal. As such, the UDC should not review the enclosure design or the layout of the walkway, but instead the general aesthetics of the walkway such as material use.</p> <p>The Applicant requests the use of metal material for the walkway due to the reduced need for maintenance and enhanced safety features. The use of metal walkways also allows a smaller footprint and thus reduce disturbance of natural area. The Applicant further outlines benefits in the Applicant’s Report.</p> <p>Staff has worked with the Applicant to ensure that the proposed decking adequately fits into the Character of the animal enclosure section, which Staff has defined as an area to appreciate nature. As such the proposed decking needs to not detract from that enjoyment and immersion. Staff has identified three goals – that the decking not make metallic sounds as guest walk across, that the decking be non-slip, and that the use of any metal not be brightly metallic in appearance and blend into the natural background. The Applicant has tailored plans to meet these goals and has offered dark color decking, weathered steel posts and railing siding that is minimalistic in size to blend into the background. While the specific construction detailing is outside of the review of the UDC, the Applicant has agreed to design the structure of the decking to meet the goals stated above and recommended as a generalized condition of approval.</p> <p>Staff recommends approval with the attached conditions. The proposal is for a much needed update to the existing wood paths and will replace with materials that are long lasting and low maintenance.</p>

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
	Objective 17.2 Increase city-wide tree canopy from 42% to 60%	Construction is planned to preserve maximum level of existing tree specimens.
Urban Design Guidelines		
	<i>(P.9) Environment, Public Parks: 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.</i>	The proposal is an expansion of offerings for one of the premier parks within the City and the proposal increases safety and comfort via the new walkway.

	<p><i>(p.10) <u>Landscaping, Design:</u> Landscaping should not only provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest, but should also be designed to minimize human impact on the environment. Designs that include conservation landscaping, strategically minimize the urban heat island effect, or decrease stormwater runoff are strongly encouraged.</i></p>	<p>The proposal is designed to minimize human impact on the environment by using robust materials that reduce the footprint of ground disturbance.</p>
	<p><i>(P.10) <u>Landscaping, Species Diversity:</u> Landscape plans should include a diverse palette of plant species that include evergreen trees, flowering and shade tree species, shrubs, ground cover, and annual and perennial plantings.</i></p>	<p>Proposal includes limited plantings but the species proposed are native species. Construction is planned to preserve maximum level of existing tree specimens.</p>