



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: June 2, 2014
RE: **Final Location, Character, and Extent review of a green alley connecting T and S Streets between N. 26th and N. 27th Streets; UDC No. 2014-18**

I. APPLICANT

Yongping Wang, City of Richmond, Department of Public Works

II. LOCATION

The interior of the block between S and T Streets, parallel to N. 26th and N. 27th Streets.

Property Owner:

The land that will be acquired to create the new alley will come from the adjacent properties, which are owned by the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and several private property owners. An Ordinance that would allow the City to acquire the necessary portions of the adjacent properties will be introduced to City Council on May 12th 2014.

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character and extent review of a proposed "green" alley connecting T and S Streets between N. 26th and N. 27th Streets.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project involves the construction of a new, 20' wide "green" alley with permeable pavers and a subsurface drainage system connecting T and S Streets between N. 26th and N. 27th Streets in the Church Hill North neighborhood. The proposed alley is one component of the Church Hill North Model Housing Block initiative, which is a demonstration project showing how affordable, infill single-family housing can be a catalyst for broader community revitalization. The Urban Design Committee finds that an alley is desirable in this location because it creates an uninterrupted pedestrian environment at the street and moves services such as trash pick-up to the rear of houses and away from the street.

The Committee is very supportive of this type of innovative "green" alley system which has many benefits over traditional alley paving materials, including reducing the rate and quantity of stormwater runoff, reducing stress on the sewer system, recharging ground water, and filtering silt, pollutants, and other debris. The Committee finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines and the Citywide Master Plan. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval of the proposed alley as submitted.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6307

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The project site is located in the interior of the block bounded by S, T, N. 26th and N. 27th Streets. The block is located within the Single-Family Attached Residential (R-6) zoning district and is mostly vacant with only a few occupied single-family residential structures. Surrounding the block is mostly single-family land uses as well as a mix of commercial, office, and institutional land uses. Traffic on all four streets is two-way, with posted speed limits of 25 mph.

A public gravel alley exists on the north side of the block, providing limited access to a fraction of the properties within the block. The majority of surrounding blocks have north-south oriented alleys within their interiors, most of which are constructed of gravel.

b. Scope of Review

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

c. Project Description

The project consists of constructing a new “green” alley connecting T and S Streets between N. 26th and N. 27th Streets. The project is funded through the Neighborhoods in Bloom program and seeks to restore the physical character of the neighborhood and complement other future projects in the area. The proposed alley is one component of the Church Hill North Model Housing Block initiative. The Model Block site is bounded by T Street to the north and S Street to the south, Nine Mile Road to the northwest and includes both 26th and 27th Streets. This area was chosen for the creation of a demonstration project showing how affordable, infill single-family housing can be a catalyst for broader community revitalization. One of the principles in the Model Block initiative is to incorporate alley access for all lots. The plan notes that alley access should be used to respect the historical development pattern. Furthermore, the plan notes that alley access creates an uninterrupted pedestrian environment at the street, and moves services, such as trash pick-up, to the rear of houses and away from the street.

The new alley will be approximately 360' long. It will be a total of 20' wide with a 10' wide permeable paver system and a 5' wide concrete pavement apron on each side of the paver system. The alley will be slightly graded across its horizontal and vertical axes in order to drain runoff. The permeable paver system will be comprised of “Xteriors old world cobble stone” concrete pavers with a subsurface drainage system. A concrete pavement entrance will provide a flush transition between the alley and S and T Streets. The new alley will align with the alleys found in the blocks to the north and south.

A total of 16 existing trees will be removed to make room for the alley. Two existing concrete pads and an existing fence will be demolished to clear the right-of-way for the new alley. A utility pole at the south entrance of the proposed alley will be relocated to the west of the south entrance of the new alley. There will be a staging area for the construction in the northeast corner of the block, just to the east of the northern terminus of the new alley.

d. UDC Review History

In December 2009, the UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved a similar project which consisted of the same type of “green” alley being retrofitted into an existing north-south alley connecting E. Main and E. Cary Streets between S. 4th and S. 5th Streets.

e. Master Plan

The subject block is located within the East Planning District of the Richmond Citywide Master Plan. While there is no specific language in this section of the Master Plan pertaining directly to the project, there is significant emphasis on community stabilization and revitalization. These goals will be furthered by the proposed alley by providing better access, increasing property values, and promoting redevelopment. Overall, the Citywide Master Plan is very supportive of improving water quality, decreasing stormwater runoff, and providing increased amenities and access to residents.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines are supportive of low impact development stormwater management practices and specifically states, “developments should also promote impact minimization techniques through alternative stormwater management practices” (p. 11).

The Guidelines also state, “Consideration should be given to the massing of impervious material, the heat impact of paving material, and the stormwater runoff caused by paving material. Preference should be given to pervious pavement materials that allow for stormwater recharge” (p. 3).

The Guidelines further state, “Parking should be relegated to remote areas of the site so that the orientation of buildings can be given a direct connection to the public right-of-way. Off street parking should be located behind a building and to the rear of the property or within the building” (p. 4).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

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