



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Urban Design Committee

UDC 20204-07	CONCEPT – Location, Character, and Extent	Meeting Date: 2/8/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Heywood Harrison, Parks and Recreation	
Project Description	CONCEPT Plan review for redesigned Blackwell Park located at 1400 Maury Avenue.	
Project Location		
Address: 1400 Maury Avenue		
Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND RECREATION & PARKS		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>This project proposes a new CONCEPT plan for renovated Blackwell Park. The CONCEPT includes sport fields and courts, community garden, walking trail, natural play space, fitness court, and shade structure. The park is adjacent to the recently approved Winfree Cottage relocation and will include a connection as part of the Winfree project.</p>		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	Please see Applicant Narrative.	
Conditions for Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where applicable. • Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. • Staff recommends the inclusion of public art, where feasible. • Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant to provide storage space for the community garden for FINAL application.

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The project is located at 1400 Maury Avenue in the Blackwell Neighborhood. The site consists of 12 acres (542175 sqft.).
Scope of Review	<p>The project is subject to general location, character, and extent review under section 17.07 and project recommendations under section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter.</p> <p>Items the UDC could directly review include the General Location, such as if this use is appropriate for this location according to the Master Plan; General Character of site improvements, such as the appropriateness of overall landscaping themes; and General Extent, such as does this project meet its stated goals or interfere with other City priorities or goals.</p> <p>Items the UDC could make specific recommendations on include the site improvements, such as materials, plantings, and site layout.</p>
Prior Approvals	NA
Project Description	<p>The applicant states in the narrative: “The Blackwell Park project aims to transform the existing park area by adding functional site features that promote community-preferred recreation activities and site elements. Park improvements will feature several forms of stormwater best management practices (BMPs) to improve site drainage, enhance aesthetic and habitat value, and serve as an environmental education tool.”</p> <p>The site currently consists of green open space, a sports field, and restroom building.</p> <p>The project proposes two new sports fields, three new sports courts, and a fitness court. A community garden, walking trail, native meadow, and natural play area are also proposed. The existing restroom building is intended to remain. Minor amount of trees would need to be removed, if any. Reforestation is proposed on the southern end of the park.</p> <p>Green roofs are proposed for the roof of the dugout structures. The green roof is low maintenance due to difficulty of access. Seating will be provided near the sport courts. Seating will also be provided adjacent to the play area and fitness area. A traffic light is proposed to facilitate midblock street crossing from the adjacent school site. A water source will be provided for the community garden. Storage space has been requested to be provided to all community gardens, Staff recommends this be detailed in the FINAL application plans.</p> <p>The recently approved Winfree Cottage relocation site is adjacent. A pedestrian connection between this park and the cottage site was included in the cottage approval.</p> <p>CSX Railroad owned property precludes, at the current time, connection to Dinwiddie Avenue from the proposed park. Planning Staff has communicated to Parks Staff that future development is expected in the currently industrial area south of Dinwiddie Avenue. A connection would be highly desirable in the future if the CSX property were to become usable.</p> <p>Staff recommends approval with the attached standard conditions. Staff finds that the proposal meets best practices for park design and includes a number of different uses for all ages, abilities, and interests. The proposal also includes significant green and natural space.</p> <p>Recommended Conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where applicable. Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. Staff recommends the inclusion of public art, where feasible.

	<p>4. Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</p>
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Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
Big Moves: Realign City Facilities	<p><i>Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty</i></p> <p><i>Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.</i></p> <p><i>Beauty – Oftentimes, City facilities serve as beautiful landmarks that anchor a neighborhood and create a distinctive place through architecture and site design.</i></p> <p><i>Thriving Environment: City-owned buildings and land are opportunities for energy retrofits and green infrastructure to further Goals 15 and 16, as well as locations for new parks, urban agriculture, and resiliency hubs to further Goal 17.</i></p>	<p>Big Moves: Realign City Facilities</p> <p>The project includes the stated goal of enhancing community space located in an underserved neighborhood. The park already serves as a community focal point and will greatly benefit from the high quality design and amenities proposed.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>
	<p>Objective 4.2 – Integrate public art into the built environment.</p> <p><i>c. Link public art with major public facility initiatives (e.g., plazas, buildings, parks, bridges) and expand the definition of public art to include architectural embellishments of buildings, or landscape features.</i></p> <p>Objective 15.4 - Reduce the amount of waste going to landfills.</p> <p><i>f. Demonstrate sustainable consumption, sustainable building practices, and zero-waste behaviors in the design and expansion of City operations.</i></p> <p>Objective 16.3 - Reduce water consumption by 10% per capita.</p> <p><i>b. Encourage on-site graywater uses in public and private facilities.</i></p> <p>Objective 16.4 - Increase green stormwater infrastructure</p> <p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way</i></p> <p>Objective 17.3 Reduce urban heat</p> <p><i>a. Encourage lighter-colored surfaces for roads and roofs to reflect sunlight.</i></p>	<p>Master Plan Objectives</p> <p>Staff recommends opportunities for public art be considered.</p> <p>Richmond 300 includes a number of sustainability objectives specifically relating to public facilities and City owned properties. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable stormwater management, and sustainable construction should be considered.</p> <p>Greater landscaping will be provided in what is not open lawn space.</p> <p>Lighting details will be established at a later stage, but should include sustainability considerations.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>

	<p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green roofs on public facilities</i></p> <p>Objective 17.7 Increase and enhance biodiversity</p> <p><i>b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities</i></p> <p><i>c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.</i></p> <p>Objective 17.8 Reduce light pollution.</p> <p><i>b. Install hooded light fixtures on public rights-of-way and buildings to reduce light pollution and reduce effect on nocturnal species.</i></p>	
<p>Urban Design Guidelines</p>		
<p>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3</p>	<p><i>The design guidelines suggest compatibility, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, cost, and sustainability be considered when designing pavement areas. Impervious areas should be limited and pervious pavement materials should be introduced, especially in minimally used parking areas.</i></p>	<p>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS</p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>
	<p><i>(P.9) <u>Environment, Public Parks:</u> 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></p>	<p>The park includes a number of activities for all ages, abilities, and interests.</p>
	<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 increases the amount of landscaping in what is currently open lawn. Minimal, if any, trees will be removed and many more will be planted through a reforestation effort.</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</i></p>	<p>The proposal includes native species. The proposal also includes a specific native species meadow that will be pollinator friendly.</p>

	<i>species, shrubs, ground cover, and annual and perennial plantings.</i>	
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