



To: Urban Design Committee
From: Planning and Preservation Division
Date: April 8th, 2021
File ID: UDC-088960-2021
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of exterior alterations and accessibility improvements to the Round House located in Byrd Park; 621 Westover Road.**

I. APPLICANT

Terry Moore Jr., City of Richmond Department of Parks and Recreation and Community Facilities.

II. LOCATION

621 Westover Road

Property Owner:

City of Richmond Recreation and Parks

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of exterior alterations and accessibility improvements to the Round House located in Byrd Park.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The Round House is located in the Byrd Park State and National Register Historic District and is an octagonal, Colonial Revival style, one-story, masonry building with a full wrap-around covered porch constructed in 1914. This building is a contributing resource to the historic district and has a unique architectural form. The building is highly visible from all sides.

This applicant proposes exterior alterations and accessibility improvements to the Byrd Park Round House. The building is in need of general exterior repairs. The applicant proposes to replace a wooden accessible ramp, as well as other deteriorated wooden materials. The applicant proposes to replace the columns, rafter tails, decking boards, metal porch railings, accessible ramp, soffit, porch ceiling, gutters and downspouts, and decorative cornice with a faux wood composite material. The new accessible ramp will be concrete on a brick base, and the new railings will be metal and of a modern design.

The project also includes the installation of two 8-foot accessible parking spots along Westover Road and a new concrete sidewalk connecting to the existing sidewalk. A section of the existing concrete sidewalk between the new accessible spots and the western entrance to the Round House will be replaced in kind to ensure accessibility.

Staff is supportive of the overall plan, and recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval of the plan with the following conditions:

- Applicant consider retaining and repairing any original materials rather than replacing them with composite faux wood. If repair is not feasible, any replacement architectural

elements should match the original in design, specifically the fluted columns and decorative cornice

- Applicant utilize a new railing that is attached to the porch floor, not the columns, and that is minimally visibly obtrusive
- If any of the existing bushes are damaged or removed during the construction of the new accessible ramp, new shrubs for screening be replanted after being reviewed by staff

Staff Contact:

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The Round House is a 2,500-square-foot, octagonal, Colonial Revival style, one-story masonry building with a full wrap-around covered porch constructed in 1914. The building has always served as a public amenity for Byrd Park. The building has fluted Doric columns and a decorative cornice with a “star” design.

The subject property is located on a triangular parcel of open space in Byrd Park bounded by Westover Street and Swan Lake Drive to the south and Lakeview Avenue to the north. The existing building has an addition on the southern side, filling in some of the covered porch, as well a wooden accessible ramp on the southern side of the building. There is an existing sidewalk from the western side of the building that leads to Westover Road.

b. Scope of Review

The proposed alterations and improvements are subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as “public building or structure.”

c. Project Description

The Project Scope of Work includes exterior renovations to provide compliant ADA accessibility and to repair or replace failing exterior details consisting of the following:

1. Replacing the existing access ramp with concrete slab matching the stairs and masonry walls matching the porch support walls.
2. Replacing the existing railings with code-compliant guardrails and handrails.
3. Replacing the existing porch decking, porch ceiling, column enclosures, fascia beams, and rafter tails with composite faux wood materials that mimic the existing materials and match existing profiles.
4. In the interior of the building, demolition of the restroom area and reconstruction with a revised ADA compliant layout.
5. Adding two ADA-compliant parking spaces and installing and replacing sidewalk to create an accessible path from the spaces to the building.

No landscaping is being proposed in the scope of this project.

d. UDC Review History

The UDC has not previously reviewed projects at this location.

e. Master Plan

The Richmond 300 Master Plan states that *“public parks serve a vital role to the health and well-being of Richmond’s residents and its environment. As more residents live closer to the city’s center in either multi-family apartment buildings or in houses with very small yards, greater importance has been given to the City’s public parks system”* (pg. 99). It is important to maintain and update the City’s public parks and public buildings so that residents have access to high-quality resources that respond to the current needs of a community.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

“For significant older buildings, original building elements, materials, and features should be retained and repaired, as feasible. Building materials and elements from an earlier time which are not appropriate for the architecture of the building should not be added to create a false historical appearance” (pg. 17). On a site visit, Staff noticed that while there were several deteriorated rafter tails and other wooden elements around the downspouts, most of the wooden elements appeared to be intact and were not damaged beyond repair, but rather in need of maintenance. Staff recommends that the applicant consider retaining and repairing any original materials rather than replacing them with composite faux wood. Any faux wood replacement elements should match the original in design, specifically the fluted columns and decorative cornice.

The existing handrail on the porch does not appear to be original to the building, as the Round House was likely constructed without a porch railing. To more accurately portray the historic appearance of the porch while meeting all building code requirements, Staff recommends that the applicant install a new railing that is attached to the porch floor, not the columns, and is minimally visibly obtrusive.

“Where possible, handicap ramps should be located so that they are sensitive to primary building elevations. The design of handicap ramps should relate to building architecture and exterior building materials. A ramp’s base and its railings should be of an appropriate material and finish to complement the adjacent building. Unpainted wooden ramps are not acceptable. Landscaping may be planted adjacent to handicap ramps for screening. A preference is given to grade modifications that allow for handicap access through the building’s primary entrance, as opposed to separate ramp facilities” (pg. 19) The existing wooden accessible ramp is proposed to be replaced with a new concrete accessible ramp on a brick base. The brick base will relate to the brick exterior of the main building. Currently there are shrubs that screen the accessible ramp. Staff recommends that if any of the existing bushes are damaged or removed during the construction of the new accessible ramp, new shrubs for screening be replanted for screening the ramp.

VII. ATTACHMENTS

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