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To: Planning Commission  
From: Urban Design Committee  
Date: July 20, 2015  
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of the Richmond Justice Center identifying sign, 1701 Fairfield Way**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Christopher Beschler, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Operations

**II. LOCATION**

Richmond Justice Center, 1701 Fairfield Way

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond General Services

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of the Richmond Justice Center identifying sign.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This project involves the installation of a freestanding, two-sided identifying sign in front of the Richmond Justice Center at 1701 Fairfield Way. The new jail was opened in 2014 to the south of the previous jail, which was built in 1965. The proposed sign materials match those utilized on the jail building, and will be cast by the same company that cast the concrete for the jail building. The Urban Design Committee finds the proposal to be consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

**Staff Contact:**

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The Richmond Justice Center is located at the southeastern corner of the intersection of Fairfield Way and Oliver Hill Way on a property zoned M-2 (Heavy Industrial). The new jail was opened in 2014 to the south of the previous jail, which was built in 1965. Once the new jail fully opened, the old jail was demolished and that site now contains surface parking for visitors and employees.

The areas to the north, west and south are zoned either M-2 or M-1 (Light Industrial) and are improved with industrial buildings, warehouses, and government facilities constructed primarily since 1960. The Mosby Court public housing project and Oliver Crossing apartments, zoned R-53 (Multi-Family Residential), are located to the east, separated from the jail by a steep wooded bluff.

**b. Scope of Review**

The proposed sign is a part of the larger project to replace the City Jail, which is subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as a “public building”.

**c. UDC Review History**

The UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the plans to construct the new jail in November 2011. The UDC review and the Planning Commission approved the landscaping and site plan for the jail in December 2013 and January 2014, respectively.

**d. Project Description**

This project involves the installation of a freestanding, two-sided identifying sign in front of the Richmond Justice Center at 1701 Fairfield Way. The sign is proposed to be installed adjacent to the vehicular entrance on Fairfield Way, perpendicular to the street. The sign will be set back 25’ from Fairfield Way and 15’ from the vehicular access drive to the parking area.

The sign will be 4’ 7¾” tall, 11’ 8” long and 1’ 6¾” wide and will be constructed of pre-cast concrete in a beige color atop a black pre-cast concrete base. The sign materials match those utilized on the jail building, and will be cast by the same company that cast the concrete for the jail building. The sign contains the text “Richmond City Justice Center” in 6” tall metal lettering (to match lettering on the building façade) set into a reveal. Below this text is the street address in 4” tall lettering, and below that is a removable plate containing the name of the sheriff. This plate is held to the sign with security screws and is designed so that when a new sheriff is elected the plate can be replaced. At the top corner of the sign opposite the “Richmond City Justice Center” text is an 18” bronze medallion of the City’s seal, recessed into the concrete. No lighting is proposed, but there are street lights in the vicinity as well as lights in the parking area. No additional landscaping around the base of the sign is proposed.

The project cost is approximately \$10,000, with funding coming out of the overall budget for construction of the Justice Center. Once all approvals are in place, casting and installation should be complete in approximately one month.

**e. Master Plan**

The subject property is located in the East Planning District, as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan places the subject area in the Public and Open Space use category, with primary uses including government facilities.

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Urban Design Guidelines impart that “sign lettering should be 4” to 14” high and should be in proportion to the area in which it will be displayed. The Guidelines also note that “freestanding signs should be landscaped with appropriate evergreen shrubs, ground cover planting, annuals and/or perennials” (page 24).

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

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