




Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2024-37	FINAL Location, Character, and Extent Review	Meeting Date: 8/20/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Jerry Li, Machete Group – Representative of the Property Owner	
Project Description	UDC 2024-37 FINAL Location, Character, and Extent review of the proposed Diamond District Stadium located at 3001 North Arthur Ashe Boulevard	
Project Location		
Address: 1701 Fairfield Way		
Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND PUBLIC WORKS		
High-Level Details: The project is to construct the new 10,000 seat baseball stadium for the Richmond Flying Squirrels. The Stadium is included in the Diamond District Project, but this review is to approve only the Stadium design. Site improvements around the Stadium are governed, at a high level, by the Public Realm Design Standards reviewed by the UDC and CPC in July 2024 and approved by Director Vonck of PDR, as per the development agreement for the Diamond Project.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	

Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	NA
Conditions for Approval	<p><u>UDC Recommended Conditions of Approval</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The UDC recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant. 2. The UDC recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. 3. The UDC recommends the applicant incorporate public art, where feasible. 4. The UDC recommends that the Applicant explore additional brick proportions and detailing visible from Arthur Ashe Boulevard. 5. The UDC recommends that the Applicant include additional shade and seating. 6. The UDC supports consideration for solar power generation. 7. The UDC recommends that the Applicant include for Planning Commission review, renderings of the view from Arthur Ashe Boulevard, the Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge, and renderings showing architecture during the night time. 8. The UDC supports changes to the architectural façade that make it more iconic and monumental.

Findings of Fact

Site Description	<p>The site is located in the Diamond District, south of the existing stadium and adjacent to Arthur Ashe Boulevard. The site is zoned TOD-1 Transit Orientated Development.</p> <p>The property is currently vacant.</p> <p>The adjacent infrastructure and public space will be governed, at a high level, by the Public Realm Design Standards for the Diamond Project.</p>
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 has requested that this application be reviewed at FINAL approval rather than go through CONCEPT first, due to timeline and funding issues. Staff does not see an issue with this as the Diamond District is a very complex project, where changes to the plans can create ripple affects across the whole district on fitting all of the structures and infrastructure – whereas the specific review is only on the Stadium. Further, the Stadium is a design by specialist in stadium design, such expertise should be deferred to. With that stated, the following is the Staff review of items within the purview of the UDC.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff Summary</p> <p>The applicant states: “The proposal is to construct a new 10,000 seat stadium to house the Richmond Baseball Team, the Richmond Flying Squirrels. ...The design includes a mix of seating products and amenities and will have an industrial, warehouse feel meant to pay homage to Richmond’s railway lineage. In addition to Squirrels games, the venue will host a broad array of events, from concerts and movie nights to holiday parties and charity galas. “</p> <p>The project scope consists of the Stadium along with parking and utility areas to the rear. It does not include most of the space adjacent to the stadium, including the entrance plaza – which will be governed by the Diamond District Public Realm Design Standards.</p> <p>The proposed architectural design includes a prominent main public entrance on the future “Festival Street” at the north east corner of the play field, primary bank of seating to the west, and a number of amenities located to the north and east of the play field. The amenities include beer garden and cabanas, kids play area, lawn</p>

	<p>terrace, picnic terrace, and art and history walk. A secondary entrance will be provided at the beer garden to the northwest of the baseball field.</p> <p>The primary entrance to the stadium is designed to compliment an entry plaza governed by the Diamond Design Standards, and includes a focal point tower, black metal features, and brick materials for building facades. As stated earlier, the design is a highlight of the industrial past and prevailing design theming of the City of Richmond. This entry way and plaza will face the primary intersection along the Festival Street which also acts as the primary focal point for the larger district.</p> <p>Parcels immediately to the northwest of the stadium are separate future uses to include a hotel at the corner of the future “Festival” Street and Arthur Ashe, and a future commercial space directly north of the stadium. The future proposed hotel will block views of the stadium from the primary entrance to the Diamond District at the corner of Arthur Ashe and Festival, once constructed. The hotel will be the focal point for that entrance. However, Staff finds that the proposed architecture of the stadium facing that focal point meets expectations, in the meantime and until construction of the hotel.</p> <p>The bridge over the CSX train tracks along Arthur Ashe Blvd, adjacent to this site, is slated to be replaced in the next 5 to 10 years. The bridge provides an elevation change as vehicles and pedestrians approach from the south. The elevation both blocks views of the rear of the stadium and provides some elevation that reveals the upper portions of the stadium structure. Further landscaping has been planting along the bridge to shield utilitarian uses at the rear of the stadium, and Stadium placemaking signage is proposed on that section of the stadium structure that is visible from the bridge.</p> <p>The stadium will share a loading dock with the future hotel.</p> <p>While the surrounding infrastructure and access is governed at a high level by the Diamond Design Standards, there will be a time period between the opening day of the stadium and the build out of the Diamond District, where a full compliment of infrastructure will not be installed. It is the intent to install a first section of the “Festival Street” from Arthur Ashe to the current Sports Backers Stadium to serve the site while both existing stadiums are demolished. During this time, also, the existing parking areas will remain to serve the stadiums. Proper pedestrian access will be installed to the parking areas and maintained during demolition and other surrounding construction. An access road will be constructed at the southern-most boarder of the Diamond District to provide utilitarian services to the Stadium without encroaching upon pedestrian focal areas along Festival Street.</p> <p>The Design Standards also give significant attention to bicycle and pedestrian safety and access. The Science Museum/MovieLand Path project previously approved in June of 2024, in conjunction with future work on the Arthur Ashe Blvd Bridge, will create a direct pedestrian and bicycle link to points south, especially to Scotts Addition and the GRTC Pulse Station at the Science Museum. The Fall Line trail is also intended to connect to the pedestrian network of the Diamond District, providing enhanced access to the north and east.</p> <p>The full build out of the Diamond District will see a parking garage dedicated to the Stadium users, with the central park area providing direct access to the Stadium entrance.</p> <p>The amenities provided within the Stadium for game go-ers appeal to a wide variety of users and ages. The amenities are both compelling to Richmond users, as well as adding to the visual interest on the interior and exterior of the Stadium. The children’s play area will be baseball themed and include landscaping trees to soften that space.</p> <p>Staff does recommend for the Applicant to thoroughly consider the need for shade in the seating and access areas to the east and north of the field, especially considering climate change and a potential for a hotter wetter future. However, the primary seating area is well shaded, especially considering that baseball games will typically happen later in the day.</p> <p>Staff recommends APPROVAL with standard conditions as recommendations.</p> <p>Staff finds that the stadium includes high quality architecture and design, especially considering focal points of the larger Diamond District. Staff finds the interior design to be high quality and appealing to a wide range of users. The construction of the final product and development of the larger District have been marked goals of the City and completion will be a major milestone in the City’s economic and civic development.</p> <p>Staff recommends the following standard conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The UDC recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.
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	<p>2. The UDC recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</p> <p>3. The UDC recommends the applicant incorporate public art, where feasible.</p> <hr/> <p>UDC Recommendation</p> <p>The UDC discussed planting species, shade for activity areas within the stadium, how parking will be facilitated, architectural quality as viewed from the future Festival Street – including the provision of fencing along that façade, accessibility for the children’s play area, if the proposed architecture was unique within Richmond or among similarly situated baseball stadiums, architectural quality as viewed from the bridge on Arthur Ashe Boulevard (A.A. Blvd), materials used on the roof that are visible from the A.A. bridge, quality of materials visible from A.A. Blvd, lighting to break up facades, disappointment in City Staff that the project was brought before the UDC as a FINAL application rather than providing a CONCEPT review.</p> <p>Public comment was provided with concern over the quality and uniqueness of the architectural design, playground design, accessibility, view from the highway.</p> <p>The UDC added the following recommended conditions:</p> <p>4. The UDC recommends that the Applicant explore additional brick proportions and detailing visible from Arthur Ashe Boulevard.</p> <p>5. The UDC recommends that the Applicant include additional shade and seating.</p> <p>6. The UDC supports consideration for solar power generation.</p> <p>7. The UDC recommends that the Applicant include for Planning Commission review, renderings of the view from Arthur Ashe Boulevard, the Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge, and renderings showing architecture during the night time.</p> <p>8. The UDC supports changes to the architectural façade that make it more iconic and monumental.</p>
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Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
	<p>P.70: Future Land Use Designation: Industrial</p> <p><i>Primary Uses: Industrial and open space.</i></p> <p><i>Secondary Uses: Retail/office/personal service.</i></p>	<p>The Diamond District is designated for the future land use of Destination Mixed Use. Summarized as - Key gateways featuring prominent destinations, such as retail, sports venues, and large employers, as well as housing and open space.</p>
	<p>Priority Growth Node: Greater Scotts Addition</p> <p><i>The Diamond is demolished and a new multi-purpose stadium is constructed along Hermitage. Uses along Hermitage, a public plaza, and the crescent park complement the new stadium development.</i></p> <p><i>Visitors to Greater Scott’s Addition have the option to safely arrive by foot, bike, transit, or car.</i></p>	<p>Master Plans are general guidance, and the new Stadium was closely re-aligned with the recommendation to Hermitage Road.</p> <p>But the construction of the new Stadium, and the larger Diamond district directly satisfies a primary recommendation in RVA300.</p> <p>Access by all modes have been thoroughly planned through the Diamond District Public Realm Design Standards.</p>

Urban Design Guidelines	
BUILDING PROPORTION – Page 15	<div> <div> <i>Building massing should be compatible with the surrounding uses; although, important public buildings may require larger sizes. Visual impact can be minimized via design techniques such as setbacks or varying surface and roof planes. Height and roof design should be sensitive to surrounding uses, but may be taller on corners to frame access to the block.</i> </div> <div> Architecture The proposed architecture is consistent with civic architecture throughout the City and consistent with both a highlighted and focal point civic façade, as well as appropriately addressing sides of the structure for more utilitarian uses. Focal points include the main entrance the Stadium on Festival Street, and the main entrance to the District at the corner of Arthur Ashe Blvd and Festival Street. </div> </div>
FAÇADE DESIGN. – Page 18	<div> <div> <i>Building materials should be compatible with surrounding uses and not cause visual confusion by using numerous different materials on a single façade. Material quality and design should complement those on the existing building and be sufficiently durable and sustainable.</i> <i>Building design should take cues from the surrounding area. An easily recognizable, inviting and accessible entrance should be included and ground level design should be comfortable for the pedestrian. Large expanses of blank or undifferentiated wall are not appropriate building elevations, especially at the street level. Access for users of differing mobilities should be included; handicap ramps or other handicap considerations should be incorporated into the façade design and to a high design quality.</i> </div> <div> The proposed architecture is consistent with civic architecture throughout the City and consistent with both a highlighted and focal point civic façade, as well as appropriately addressing sides of the structure for more utilitarian uses. </div> </div>