



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2022-16	Final Review Meeting Date: 10/03/2022
Applicant/Petitioner	Mark Lewis – Department of Public Works, SCPG
Project Description	Final Location, character, and extent review of the 1700 Monument Avenue (Former Lee Circle) Interim Condition
Project Location	
Address: 1700 Monument Avenue	
Property Owner: City of Richmond Recreation and Parks	
High-Level Details: The traffic circle located at 1700 Monument Avenue (Formerly Lee Circle) was acquired by the City of Richmond from the Commonwealth of Virginia on January 10, 2022 following the removal of the Robert E. Lee statue and pedestal in 2021. The City has determined a need to provide a temporary planting within the circle to be an interim condition until a permanent design is put into place that reflects the character and history of the site. The proposed plan is in character with the temporary landscape plans recently installed in the locations of other former confederate monuments along Monument Avenue and elsewhere in the City.	
UDC Recommendation	The UDC Recommends Denial.
Previous Reviews	The UDC and Planning Commission have previously reviewed removal of Confederate monuments in 2021; however, Lee Circle was not a part of those approvals.
Reason for Denial	The Urban Design Committee has determined that the proposal is not in keeping with the character of the site and how it fits into the larger neighborhood. The proposed use of the traffic circle changing from open lawn to closed landscape space does not match the adjacent landscaping along Monument Avenue, primarily the tree lined grass medians. The Committee also noted that the site is of historic importance as well as cultural and emotional significance to the residents of the City. The

	Committee underlined the importance of public outreach to inform the use of the Circle, even the temporary condition. The Committee also requested that the security fencing and jersey barriers be removed.
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Findings of Fact

Site Description	The subject project is located within a traffic circle at the intersection of Monument Avenue and North Allen Avenue. The project is located within the R-6 - Residential (Single Family Attached) zoning district. The subject property is located in a City Old and Historic District as well as a National Historic District and is designated by the State and Federal Government as a historic site. The location was the site for the Robert E. Lee Statue and pedestal, installed in 1888 and removed in 2021. The site is the largest traffic circle along Monument Avenue and a primary visual anchor along the street. The site currently sits vacant, secured until the interim condition is constructed. The site is primarily surrounded by residential neighborhood uses. Sugar Maple trees along the grass center median form an allée along the axis on Monument Avenue, which intersects the site.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to final location, character, and extent review under section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.
Project Description	The 1700 Monument Avenue Interim Condition proposal includes landscaping and irrigation within the center of the traffic circle located at the intersection of Monument Avenue and North Allen Avenue. The project will not affect existing right-of-way improvements. The landscape design includes plantings with the intent for year-round interest. Plantings will consist of native or pollinator species that do not require extensive maintenance. Maintenance will be completed by the City of Richmond Public Works, Urban Forestry Division. The plan includes consideration for sustainability with ecologically responsible native plant selection and soil preparation that will help facilitate stormwater to infiltrate onsite. Irrigation is proposed to help ensure the successful establishment of the proposed landscaping. The proposed plan is temporary - an interim condition that will stay in place until a final design is completed, in conjunction with the other former Confederate statue sites. While temporary, the time frame the improvements will be in place is undetermined. Plant species have been chosen that are easily removed with no heavily woody shrubs or large trees. The design is also intended to be sustainable across the undetermined time period in relation to maintenance, upkeep cost, and species longevity.

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	TEXT	STAFF ANALYSIS
Richmond 300 Master Plan		
Parks	<i>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. (pg. 99).</i> <i>The City of Richmond’s Master Plan, Richmond 300, speaks to the improvement of Public Parks in vision #4, stating that the City should encourage the creation of a balance of natural rather than hard landscape in creating and improving parks (4.3.k)</i>	The proposed project removes previously hardscaped area and enhances existing greenspace with quality landscaping and dedicated maintenance.
Urban Design Guidelines		
Sustainability	<i>A preference should be given toward materials and construction techniques which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality. Lighting and landscaping should allow for surveillance and policing activities, but should be designed primarily to accommodate the intended use of the park. (pg. 9)</i> <i>Site development should take measures towards conservation of natural resources. ...(And) utilize soil management/enhancement techniques to increase soil absorption. (pg.11)</i>	The preparation of the site for the proposed landscaping will help facilitate greater storm water absorption and greater green space. View from the street into the landscape area is facilitated to discourage inappropriate use.
Maintenance	<i>All park projects should include a maintenance plan which addresses all phases of the project (p.9)</i>	A maintenance statement is included in the application and includes weeding, mulching, pruning and debris removal, seasonal inspection, and necessary maintenance change with seasonal variations of temperature and rainfall.
Landscaping	<i>Landscape plans should include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings. (pg. 9)</i> <i>Plant Selection. Plant materials should be adaptable to existing soils, climatic and lighting conditions, and be disease</i>	The landscape plan consists of a diversity of native or adaptive species, both flowering and nonflowering, that are appropriate for locations with a consideration for hardiness in an environment with direct sun and surrounding road hardscape.

	<i>resistant. Native plant species are encouraged, but not required. (pg. 10)</i> <i>The Urban Design Committee supports the City Planning Commission's Resolution, dated April 2, 1991, which requires the submission of an analysis of required maintenance for landscape materials for all City Capital Projects. The Urban Design Committee also supports programs in which citizens or organizations can participate in the maintenance of landscapes on City-owned property. (pg. 10)</i>	
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