



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
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Meeting Minutes - Final Urban Design Committee

Thursday, February 5, 2015

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

Call to Order

Ms. Almond called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Chair Andrea Almond, Chris Arias, Doug Cole, Vaughn Garland, Giles Harnsberger, Vice Chair Andrea Levine and Robert Smith

Absent: 3 - Bryan Green, Jill Nolt and Claire Shirley

Staff Present

Mr. Jeff Eastman, PDR
Ms. Tara Ross, PDR
Mr. Jim Hill, PDR
Ms. Kathleen Onufer, PDR

Others Present

Mr. Don Summers, DPW
Mr. Lacy Salomone, DPW
Mr. Chris Sibold, Timmons Group
Dr. Norman Merrifield, DPRCF
Mr. Heywood Harrison, DPRCF
Ms. Debra Gardner, Deputy CAO
Robert Easter, KEi Architects
Guylaine Desrosiers, KEi Architects
Charles Snead, Snead Associates
Jim Ferrara, Dominion Resources
Mark Kronenthal, Mayor's Office
Don Mark, Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Graham Moomaw, Richmond Times-Dispatch

Approval of Minutes

[ID 2015-007](#) Regular Meeting of January 8, 2015

Attachments: [Regular Meeting of January 8, 2015](#)

A motion was made by Ms. Harnsberger, seconded by Ms. Levine, that the minutes from the January 8, 2015 meeting be adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Almond, Arias, Cole, Garland, Harnsberger, Levine and Smith

Secretary's Report

Mr. Eastman stated that at their January 20th meeting, the Planning Commission continued the Floyd Avenue bike boulevard item for 30 days to address the seven concerns of the UDC as well as three additional concerns of the Commission. The Commission also continued the Brown's Island Way fence and gate item for two weeks to the February 2nd meeting due to the attrition of Commission members over the course of the Floyd Avenue discussion. The applicant for that item later requested deferral to March 2nd Commission meeting.

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

There were no continuances or deletions.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Ms. Levine, seconded by Ms. Harnsberger, that the Consent Agenda item be recommended for approval to the Planning Commission as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

1. [UDC No. 2015-04](#) Final Location, Character and Extent Review of a salt dome to be constructed at 500 Forest Lawn Drive

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location Map](#)
[Application & Plans](#)

This Location, Character and Extent Item was forwarded to the City Planning Commission for their meeting on February 17, 2015.

REGULAR AGENDA

2. [UDC No. 2015-03](#) Conceptual Location, Character and Extent Review of renovations to Kanawha Plaza, 701 E. Canal Street

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location Map](#)
[Application & Plans](#)

Mr. Eastman stated that some of staff's concerns have been addressed in revised plans that the applicant will show.

Mr. Cole stated that based on all of the staff recommendations isn't it very difficult to give conceptual approval with all of these requirements because a lot of the key areas need more information. Mr. Eastman stated that they have some new renderings to show today and that some of these conditions are the type of stuff that you would see in a final design anyway. Mr. Eastman stated that this is an early conceptual and he believes that the applicant and team are working very hard to make this project move on a pretty tight timetable

Ms. Debra Gardner, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Human Services stated that Parks and Recreation are one of the agencies in her portfolio that is why she is here today. Ms. Gardner stated that in 2009 the city invested about sixty thousand dollars to replace the pumps in the fountain and in 2010 it was determined that the structure or elements beneath the Plaza Park needed to be repaired and the city embarked upon doing that. Ms. Gardner stated that in July repairs were done to the structure and then there was a structural assessment done to determine that the park was structurally sound. Ms. Gardner stated that in 2012 some of the other structural repairs began and in April 2014 they got the fountain back on and they spent a million dollars on structure repair and the pump repair. Ms. Gardner stated that in late summer Dominion came to the City with a generous offer to help them repair the park. Ms. Gardner stated that they cleaned up the vegetation and the Department of Social Services went down to the park monthly and provided services to the homeless people who were sheltered down there. Ms. Gardner stated that there are no homeless people down there now because it is dangerous with the retaining wall falling apart which could cause injury to someone. Ms. Gardner stated that when Dominion came to them they decided to try to enlist other partners in the area down there and they had several meetings with the immediate partners including the Federal Reserve who all were excited about the City being able to get the park and get some repairs and renovations. Ms. Gardner stated that they have had several meetings with the partners and stated that Dominion has been one of the biggest partners who stepped up and helped them spearhead the effort to get some conceptual plans drawn and to get the ball rolling.

Mr. Robert Easter, President of KEI Architects stated that they are working with Charles Snead of Snead Associates and VHB a local engineering firm and Janet Daniels a local structural engineering firm and consultations from OJB Landscape Architects out of Texas and San Diego. Mr. Easter showed photos of the park and the current conditions and gave a brief presentation.

Mr. Cole inquired how deep is the dirt and Mr. Charles Snead stated that it is actually only a few inches of soil over the support beams right over the highway and stated that most of it is granulated concrete and crushed granite. The trees are planted over top of the mounds. Mr. Snead stated that they only have about 3' of soil on the mounds where the trees are growing.

Mr. Easter gave the Committee the background of where process begin. Mr. Easter stated that what they are hoping to have today is the Committees approval on the conceptual plan and stated that they do agree with 99.3 percent of the recommendations from staff and they have been talking with staff and one of the main issues was the use of the synthetic turf. Mr. Easter stated that they can demonstrate that they have a product that they think would be favorable to the Committee.

Mr. Cole inquired if it would be done by September and Mr. Easter stated that as much as they can afford to do and the one thing that limits on what they can do is going to be the resources. Mr. Easter stated that phase one is a 3 to 5 million project and they don't have all of the resources as of yet. Mr. Cole inquired what will they see by September and Mr. Easter stated that they hope they will see everything that is up there.

Mr. Garland inquired if that would include a fountain and Mr. Easter stated yes.

Mr. Arias stated that originally the Kanawha Plaza was in celebration of the Canal and this was the location of the turning basin for the boats and inquired if there was anything in the design that embrace the original ideas for the plaza and carry them forward. Mr. Easter stated that was not necessarily a focus that they had when they developed the design.

Ms. Gardner stated that one of the reasons that they kept the fountain is because it was

to mimic the river and they plan to continue to carry that through the park.

Ms. Harnsberger inquired if the splash pad was intended to engage youth or a visual and Mr. Easter stated both. Ms. Harnsberger stated that they do want people to play in it and Mr. Easter stated yes and stated that the hope is that the jets will keep people from swimming in the fountain. Ms. Harnsberger stated that she appreciates that they relocated it.

Mr. Smith inquired about the opportunity for people to stop and sit and Mr. Easter stated that there is furniture in the plan that includes tables and chairs in the area where people purchase food and beverages so they are able to sit down and there is also site furniture in other areas.

Ms. Gardner stated that one of the things when they stated out they had like benches and they were trying to figure out how to incorporate seating without enticing homeless people to come and live. Ms. Gardner stated that they looked at doing seating that can be removed.

Mr. Smith stated that on the rendering of the splash pad that it seems to be two separate things and they had this idea of the river and rocks and a separate section and Mr. Easter stated that right now they are still in the design process for determining where these components are going to be and stated that it is their hope that they will bring it at the next UDC meeting more definitive detail about how those actual components will interact. Mr. Smith stated that it will be great to have it all one and stated that if it were separate it would feel disconnected. Mr. Easter stated that the challenge is making them one to the point that you feel like both of them are accessible and stated that they will look at that.

Ms. Levine stated that this is a great opportunity for a sculpture garden and stated that it is a great opportunity to open up the conversation with the Public Arts Commission so they are not confining the creative concepts to what can be applicable here.

Mr. Garland stated that this is a unique moment because this park is for an urban environment which means that most of the people that are going to be using it is going to be people coming out for lunch and stated that now structures are being built to house certain meetings that are going on so people are getting out of their buildings and coming out to these beautiful structures in the park. Mr. Garland stated that they are meeting and engaging at the park and stated that he would rather see that in the way of coming from the Public Art instead of seeing it be reconfigured to bringing children down to it.

Mr. Easter stated that has been an ongoing debate and that is one of the things they had discussed because there is a residential community that are not going to be interested in the weekday but they are going to be interested in the weekend. Mr. Easter stated that they also realize that they have opportunities to do more structures and they want to have those structures occurring where those holes are and they want know that the structures are supportable by the structure that exists would have to be out in place to close those holes.

Mr. Snead stated that the entire oval area is designed to be synthetic turf and stated that majority of the area is built over the highway so they have less than 12" of mostly gravel and granite dust underneath this area. Mr. Snead stated that it is not conducive to organic matter that might support a healthy lawn area so they are proposing to use a synthetic grass which varies from sports turf in that it is looser material and it doesn't hold the heat because it is less dense. Mr. Snead stated that it allows air to circulate through it. He showed the Committee samples of the synthetic turf.

Ms. Almond stated that she has used this before on projects and it gets really hot. Mr. Snead stated that with the studies they have seen the playing surfaces that are denser get the hottest and are 50 to 70 degrees warmer turf and stated that the taller grass is rated at 20 to 25 degrees hotter than natural grass. Mr. Snead stated that in the middle of the summer or in the middle of the day it not somewhere you want to sunbathe and July through September are going to be the worst times to be out on the synthetic turf fields.

Ms. Harnsberger inquired if there is grass there now and Mr. Snead stated that there is some lawn over the highway. Mr. Snead stated that there is some weedy lawn.

Ms. Levine inquired how the material is maintained and Mr. Snead stated that it is maintained with a power broom that is big rotating power brush which fluffs up the fiber and stated that it is filled with granulated sand.

Mr. Smith stated that he is fine with grass even if it is not perfect and if he is going to be somewhere for a certain period of time he would rather have grass.

Ms. Harnsberger stated that it is not going to impress tourist and Mr. Snead stated that color is a very natural green grass and it will give you a perfect green lawn every day.

Mr. Garland stated that it looks cheap and fake and will give people a weird idea.

Mr. Easter stated that the design of this park is not centered around artificial grass and whatever is approved by the City is what will be there. Mr. Easter stated that there are challenges to the process of maintaining the park so they are trying to do something that requires less maintenance. Mr. Easter stated after all has been said and done there is a determination that nothing happens if that's the product then that won't be the product but they strongly recommend that it be the product.

Mr. Smith stated that it sounds like there will be maintenance issues regardless and there are heat issues in the prime summer months when they want people to be there. Mr. Easter stated that is understood. Mr. Smith stated that he is feeling that is something that needs to be considered. Mr. Easter stated that they hear the comment and they will go back and discuss with the design team and participants it will be taken into consideration.

Ms. Levine stated that wouldn't it also makes sense to have natural grass as far as bird life and insects and all the other things you want to attract to a city space versus using a synthetic product. Mr. Snead stated that the remaining areas of natural scape are all native plants and stated that they are trying to balance the area and stated that it is less maintenance.

Ms. Almond stated that she understands that it is low maintenance but the surface could be damaged pretty easily by vandals. Mr. Easter stated that he think with regard to the large open space they will obviously have more conversation with staff and the partners. Ms. Almond inquired if they could talk about the soil depth and how they are incorporating trees versus shrubs across the park and Mr. Snead stated that the turf area is a 4" granulated fill underneath that area and that trees in the area over the highway will need to be in raised 2' planters with irrigation and all other trees will be in natural soil at grade. Ms. Almond stated that the trees that are shown in the ring that are going to be on raised planters are not going to be a big as they are shown and Mr. Snead stated no that they are going to be small trees and they are going to be stewartia, crape myrtle or eastern red bud.

Mr. Arias stated that there is significantly increased hardscape to the area and inquired what material are they planning to put down and Mr. Snead stated that there will be a

combination of different pavers and it will everything from concrete pavers in the drive aisle for the vendors to set up and for maintenance crews to get into the site. Mr. Snead stated that as they work with their budget there will be a combination of crushed granite and stamped concrete and exposed aggregate. Mr. Arias stated that he is concerned about drainage and that the part of the charge for UDC is to consider and promote the idea to reduce the burden of the City's water systems and increase the amount of permeability in the drainage and it keep it away from our overburdened system. Mr. Arias stated that there are a lot of areas here where they can divert some of the water from their sewer system.

Mr. Easter stated that one of their original thoughts was using the synthetic turf as capture space for rain water and the site is intended to slope from a high point to a low point and grading will provide an opportunity to improve visibility to the stage area. Mr. Easter stated that the synthetic turf does provide opportunity for storm water capture and for recycling of that water for use in the water feature. Ms. Almond inquired if they will be using it for storage and Mr. Easter stated yes. Ms. Almond inquired if they were using it over the expressway and inquired if that was okay with the engineers and Mr. Easter stated that it is not over the expressway so they have the opportunity there to capture, store and recycle filter and reuse the water.

Mr. Snead stated that they wouldn't store it over the expressway they will channel it for in-piping from the expressway area.

Ms. Almond stated that between the corner and the new gateway building there is a traffic median that has been installed and inquired if they would consider adding that planting to the scope of this project for consistency. Mr. Easter stated that is a conversation that they will have with the City and Public Works.

Ms. Harnsberger inquired if the applicants could address staff comments in final plan and Mr. Easter stated that they will and that many of the comments that were in the staff reports they have already started to address and some of them were useful information to help them move forward. Mr. Easter stated that they discussed the traffic and parking lanes and sidewalks and they think it is important to incorporate them. Ms. Harnsberger stated that with Kanawha Plaza one of the major challenges has been access and stated that it would make a much stronger application to see that accounted for and it would be great if Public Works will work with them on that.

Ms. Almond stated that the walls that open to the expressway are there any plans to do something with the facades like plantings and Mr. Easter stated that they wanted to create a water feature along those walls and they are having conversations with the RMA about the removal of the walls but there are some minor structural issues with them so they have not incorporated any plans to reface or refinish them.

Mr. Arias inquired when phase II was going to happen and Mr. Easter stated that the City would like it to be pushed forward as quickly as possible but that is a significant financial undertaking and most of the resources that would have to be brought to bear to make that happen are going to come from outside sources including some transportation grants and so they don't have a timetable on the process.

Mr. Arias stated that those walls are an eyesore for the whole park and inquired if they can lower them.

Ms. Levine inquired if they could do some murals and Mr. Easter stated that they could take a look at it.

Mr. Cole stated that he knows that Parks and Rec is strapped for cash but the most beautifully designed park is not beautiful if it is not maintained. Mr. Cole stated that

Venture Richmond has done a fabulous job with the canal walk and inquired if they could take over the maintenance and Mr. Easter stated that is part of the discussion.

Ms. Gardner stated that they are discussing this now with the City Attorney because the only mechanism they have for collecting private donations would be through some other entity and not the City. Ms. Gardner stated that they have approached Venture Richmond and are seeing if they can add Kanawha to their lease so they would do the programming.

Ms. Harnsberger inquired about the parking in the northwest corner and Mr. Easter stated that one of the things that they are concerned about if a vendor vehicle comes into a lane and coming out of that lane will take them right onto the ramp to the RMA. Mr. Easter stated that one of the things that they are looking at is having an area where they can come in and then turn and go north on 7th Street. Mr. Easter stated that the concern for them is making sure the vehicles that uses this lane aren't funneled onto the RMA and the other is to provide something that allowed for the support of functions. Mr. Easter stated that one thing they talked about with staff and would have to talk to Public Works about was the possibility of looking at the lanes on 7th Street and how they can incorporate parking and expanding the sidewalk.

Mr. Cole inquired who parks there and Mr. Easter stated that the intent was for anyone that is doing work to support functions that are going on in the park and stated that it could have been a place where on the weekends visitors can park. Mr. Cole stated that it looks like it could be incorporated into a dead zone.

Ms. Guylaine Desrosiers with KEI Architects stated that the parking area behind the stage is also considering for those that are preparing for the concerts and stated that you will have speakers, singers and bands that will have to have access the stage behind.

Mr. Easter stated that the reason they feel that lowering is important but the main reason is to provide an out for vehicles and stated that staff concerns is that they are eliminating a sidewalk in doing this and stated that they could address the way that it is configured.

Mr. Snead stated that the amount of demolition that has to occur around the site is going to disrupt existing concrete, trees and sidewalks.

Mr. Cole stated that this is one of the very unique places in our City that doesn't happen very often and with the new configuration of the Gateway Building they now have 8th Street dead end into this space. Mr. Cole stated that they have an opportunity to create some kind of focal point. Mr. Easter stated that one of the suggestions that was made by staff was looking at the possibility of a reconfiguration of the fountain so that it could blend into the 8th Street water feature and stated that as they develop the plan for how the fountain is being used and how that area is being configured and stated that they want to keep a fountain there.

Mr. Snead stated that they want to renovate the fountain in its current location because of the expense of building a new one and the mechanics of the fountain are working. Mr. Snead stated that architecturally it looks a little rough but they have been working with conceptual ideas of using waterproof concrete to change the look of the fountain to more mimic a river condition look by adding artificial jumping fish.

Mr. Cole stated that he likes the fountain that is there now and when it's not operational it doesn't look that bad it just needs to be cleaned up a little bit. Mr. Snead stated that as part of the renovation they would like to incorporate a bio material that is ecological sound that would allow the fountain to run all year long.

Mr. Garland stated that there is a way of keeping that spirit alive with the new Gateway Building with the water so that it feels like a flowing river.

Mr. Cole stated that he encourages them to look at the Gateway Building because they have some cool pavement patterns that represents the water flow so that it could tie them all together.

Mr. Arias stated that he would like to see the fountain stay as is and that he likes the history of the park and would like to see some of that maintained. Mr. Arias stated that he doesn't want to see artificial grass and would like for them to move forward and maintain a little of the old and bringing in the new with a consciousness toward the environment.

Mr. Garland stated that this is an important moment for the City and while he appreciate the need to redesign the Plaza because it is not being used now. Mr. Garland stated that this could be a moment where they can use this space to jump off from this very urban sky scraper environment into the river and the south side neighborhoods. Mr. Garland stated that he hopes this becomes a Gateway for people coming across the river and biking into the urban environment. Mr. Garland stated that it is a good idea to extend the park out into 8th Street Bridge to the river if possible and have that be a walking pedestrian pathway.

Ms. Almond stated that she agrees with Mr. Garland and stated that she was the thinking about the green space design competition and stated that one of the components of that challenge was addressing specifically the design interventions of different scale of user groups that would use the parks meaning big events, the stages and people eating lunch. Ms. Almond stated that also thinking about the people at Dominion wanting to have their staff meeting outside and eat lunch and inquired where are the spaces for that. Ms. Almond stated that there is more interim or gathering sizes that needs to be looked at to cover all the spaces for user.

Mr. Smith stated that he would like to have an idea of what could be accomplished by September and stated that he is opposed to the artificial turf. Mr. Smith stated that he would like for them to maintain the sidewalks as much as possible and stated that if they redesign the fountain he definitely want it to connected to the river and the gateway building. Mr. Smith stated that he likes the focal point at the bottom of 8th Street and states that he does have a concern with too much hardscape and stated that it is a loss less green than it has to be.

Mr. Smith stated that he recommends that the lighting color temperature be 3000k and that they use full cut off fixtures and wants to see the lighting plan.

Ms. Levine added some information about the Public Arts aspects with the introduction of sculptures or public art to begin conversations early.

Ms. Harnsberger added that the applicant consider meeting the parking needs for vendors on S. 7th Street and maintaining a public right of way across that area. Ms. Harnsberger added that the applicant include all of the proposed changes to the adjacent streets in their next application and Public Works to include the public right of way in the location, character and extent review.

A motion was made by Ms. Almond, seconded by Ms. Levine, that this Location, Character and Extent item be recommended for conceptual approval with the following conditions:

- **That the applicant considers ways to provide year-round interest in the fountain design, regardless of whether or not the water is running.**

- That the design in the area around the fountain ties into the landscape plans for Gateway Plaza and recognizes the intended connection to the river.
- That the splash pad ties into the fountain design.
- That a focal point is provided at the terminus of S. 8th Street.
- That the design of the Plaza looks at different scales of gathering spaces for user groups.
- That there is a general reduction of hardscape in the overall plans.
- That the proposed synthetic turf is replaced with real grass.
- That the final plans include representative renderings of key areas of the park.
- That the final plans include a tree survey for the park and the adjacent street trees indicating tree species, caliper size, health and whether or not it is to be removed.
- That the final plans include a grading plan.
- That the applicant endeavors to retain as many existing healthy trees as possible, or phase the replacement of trees over multiple years.
- That the final plans include a landscape plan and schedule to include plant species, location, quantity, and size at the time of installation.
- That the final plans include the planting of street trees on all park frontages where appropriate.
- That the applicant considers alternate locations for the splash pad that are more interior to the site.
- That prior to final consideration the applicant works with the Department of Public Works to ensure that every pedestrian crossing to the park contains a pedestrian countdown signal, preferably with an audio component, and ladder-style crosswalks.
- That prior to final consideration, the applicant works with the Department of Public Works to explore the opportunity of creating a curbed pedestrian refuge at S. 7th and Canal Streets as has been created at the corner of S. 9th and E. Canal Street, and to incorporate such a feature into the overall plans for the site if it is deemed a possibility.
- That the parking needs that are currently shown internal to the site be met along S. 7th Street.
- That pedestrian access along S. 7th Street be provided regardless of the resolution of the parking
- That prior to final consideration, the applicant works with the Department of Public Works to explore the opportunity of creating curb extensions at the adjacent street intersections that lead into the park.
- That the applicant confirms with the Department of Public Works that there is sufficient right-of-way for a designated and separate food truck lane.
- That the final plans include all of the proposed Public Works projects in the right-of-way that will be done in conjunction with the project.
- That the final plans include details on the proposed lighting, including but not limited to pole and fixture model(s), height, finish, light source and light color temperature.
- That the proposed lighting fixtures have a maximum color temperature of 3000k.
- That the lighting fixtures be full cut-off.
- That the final plans include a photometric diagram.
- That the final plans include a signage package.
- That the final plans include details on the proposed stage canopies, including but not limited to structural components, materials, dimensions and finishes.
- That the final plans include details on all proposed site amenities, including but not limited to: handrails, fences, moveable furniture, benches, trash cans, bike racks, exercise stations and water fountains.

- That the applicant considers locating a bike rack near the park entrance point at the terminus of S. 8th Street.
- That the incorporation of public art includes involving the Public Art Commission and other appropriate stakeholders in regards to sculpture in the park or treatment of the blank walls over the expressway.
- That the service road shown in plans presented at the Urban Design Committee meeting on 2/5/2015 be integrated to not be so noticeably different than the design of the Plaza around it.
- That any Phase 2 improvements are submitted to the UDC for separate review at such time in the future as plans are more defined.

The item was forwarded to the City Planning Commission for their meeting on February 17, 2015.

Aye: 7 - Almond, Arias, Cole, Garland, Harnsberger, Levine and Smith

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Adjournment

Ms. Almond adjourned the meeting at 11:56 a.m.