



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2025-33	Conceptual Review	Meeting Date: 10/21/2025
Applicant/ Petitioner	Jeannie Welliver / Department of General Services	
Project Description	UDC 2025-33 CONCEPT Location, Character, Extent review of phase 1 of the proposed Shockoe Project North Memorial, located at 1554 E. Broad St.	
Project Location		
Address: 1554 E. Broad Street		
Property Owner: City of Richmond		
High-Level Details: This project is to construct phase 1 of the Shockoe project north memorial. The project proposes a reflection pool, memorial spaces, story wall, and reflective spaces.		
Recommendation	UDC recommends approval with conditions.	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes – Raymond.roakes@rva.gov Kevin Costanzo - kevin.costanzo@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	UDC 2025-08 Shockoe Master Plan previously approved in April of 2025.	
Conditions for Approval	1. Submit a detailed landscape plan at Final Review demonstrating a native and diverse plant palette, maintenance plan, and minimal disturbance to existing vegetation. 2. Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where applicable.	

	3. Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. 4. Staff recommends the inclusion of public art, where feasible. 5. Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. 6. Confirm that ADA-compliant access routes are integrated throughout the descent, reflection area, and Hush Arbor spaces. 7. Provide material examples for stone, bronze, and hardscape finishes for review at Final Submission. 8. Explore opportunities for interpretive signage and wayfinding consistent with the Shockoe Project Master Plan and community consultation. 9. Staff recommends the Applicant consider altering plans for FINAL submission to ensure visibility into the memorial from the larger site.
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Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site lies at the eastern edge of downtown Richmond within Shockoe Valley, bounded by Oliver Hill Way, Marshall Street, and I-95. The City-owned parcel forms part of the broader Shockoe Project civic precinct that includes Lumpkin’s Slave Jail Pavilion and the future National Slavery Museum. The parcel currently consists of an open grassed field with limited tree canopy.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to Location, Character, and Extent review under Section 17.07 and design recommendations under Section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter.
Prior Approvals	The larger project’s master plan was approved by UDC and CPC in April 2025 as UDC 2025-08. This is the memorials first Conceptual submission.
Project Description	<u>The Applicant States:</u> <i>“The Shockoe Project is a City of Richmond initiative with its epicenter in Shockoe Valley, where hundreds of thousands of human beings were bought and sold. The project includes established projects and proposed projects including: the Richmond Slave Trail, the Reconciliation Statue, Shockoe Institute (under construction), National Slavery Museum, Lumpkin’s Slave Jail Pavilion, a Memorial honoring the hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans traded here, a Memorial honoring the Shockoe Bottom African Burial Ground, Winfree Cottage and the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground.</i> <i>This submission requests conceptual approval for the schematic design of the Memorial to the Shockoe Bottom African Burial Ground. The other elements of The Shockoe Project will be submitted at a later date as they advance.</i> <u>Staff Review:</u> Staff reviewed the submitted application, narrative, and concept presentation in the context of the Urban Design Guidelines and the Richmond 300 Master Plan. The proposal establishes a civic landscape designed to serve as a reflective public space that recognizes the historic and cultural significance of the Shockoe Bottom African Burial Ground. The design utilizes a carved earth form and accessible pathways to create a sequence of spaces organized around water, stone, and vegetation. The landscape approach reflects a naturalized character; however, additional detail will be needed regarding species selection, maintenance responsibilities, and long-term management. The use of native, non-invasive plantings is recommended to support the ecological conditions of the site. Given the site’s

location within a flood-prone area near Shockoe Creek, incorporation of permeable paving and low-impact stormwater management strategies should be further developed at Final Review.

Lighting design should be refined to ensure it provides adequate safety and accessibility while avoiding unnecessary glare or spillover. Site furnishings, such as benches and offering niches, should be durable, easily maintained, and consistent in material and finish with the overall design. The proposed use of stone and bronze materials is compatible with the natural setting and the memorial function but should be reviewed further for constructability and long-term durability.

The proposal creates a “room” that is cut off visually from the larger site. While this offers privacy and addresses the memorial nature of the project – it does not deter vandalism or other bad actors. This site in the near term will be alone in the larger field setting, further increasing the isolation of the “room” design. Staff recommends the Applicant reconsider the design for the FINAL application to increase visibility into the interior of the site. This could be as simple as instead of having a full wall around the interior space, the wall panels could be staggered to allow visibility through.

Overall, the conceptual submission is consistent with the intent of the Urban Design Guidelines and demonstrates sensitivity to the site’s context and purpose. Future submissions should address the noted considerations related to landscape maintenance, material detailing, accessibility, and environmental performance.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. Submit a detailed landscape plan at Final Review demonstrating a native and diverse plant palette, maintenance plan, and minimal disturbance to existing vegetation.
2. Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where applicable.
3. Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.
4. Staff recommends the inclusion of public art, where feasible.
5. Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.
6. Confirm that ADA-compliant access routes are integrated throughout the descent, reflection area, and Hush Arbor spaces.
7. Provide material examples for stone, bronze, and hardscape finishes for review at Final Submission.
8. Explore opportunities for interpretive signage and wayfinding consistent with the Shockoe Project Master Plan and community consultation.
9. Staff recommends the Applicant consider altering plans for FINAL submission to ensure visibility into the memorial from the larger site.

UDC REVIEW

UDC discussed wood backs to seating, ADA compliance, design aesthetic, and visibility from the street.

The UDC **approved** with Staff conditions. (please see above)

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Reference Text	Staff Analysis
Urban Design Guidelines	<i>Public Parks – Design (p. 9)</i>	<i>Memorial design supports placemaking and universal accessibility, fulfilling civic and cultural objectives.</i>
	<i>Landscaping – Design (p. 10)</i>	<i>A diverse, native palette will reinforce ecological health and seasonal interest.</i>
	<i>Green Site Design (p. 11)</i>	<i>Incorporation of permeable and vegetated systems will align with LID and Chesapeake Bay Preservation goals.</i>
	<i>Lighting (p. 18)</i>	<i>Downward-focused, low-intensity lighting will preserve contemplative character.</i>
	<i>Site Furnishings (p. 21)</i>	<i>Simple, durable benches and offering elements should complement the natural material palette.</i>
	<i>Community Character – Streetscapes (p. 17)</i>	<i>Edge treatments along Marshall Street and Oliver Hill Way should maintain clear pedestrian access and visual continuity.</i>
Master Plan	<i>Richmond 300 Big Moves – Reconciliation & Healing (R300 p. 194); Reconnect the City (p. 199)</i>	<i>Advances key Master Plan goals by reclaiming sacred ground and creating inclusive civic space.</i>