



# City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street  
2nd Floor of City Hall  
Richmond, VA 23219  
www.richmondgov.com

## Meeting Minutes - Draft Urban Design Committee

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Thursday, May 10, 2018

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

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### Call to Order

- Present** -- 6 - \* Chris Arias, \* Vice Chair Giles Harnsberger, \* Robert Smith, \* Andrea Quilici, \* Andrew P. Gould and \* James W. Klaus
- Excused** -- 1 - \* David Johannas
- Absent** -- 1 - \* Chair Andrea Almond

### Roll Call

- Present** -- 7 - \* Chris Arias, \* Vice Chair Giles Harnsberger, \* Jill Nolt, \* Robert Smith, \* Andrea Quilici, \* Andrew P. Gould and \* James W. Klaus
- Excused** -- 1 - \* David Johannas
- Absent** -- 1 - \* Chair Andrea Almond

### Approval of Minutes

1. [UDC MIN 2018-4](#) Minutes of the Regular Meeting on April 5, 2018

**Attachments:** [UDC MIN 2018-03 DRAFT](#)

**A motion was made by Committee Member Smith, seconded by Committee Member Quilici, that these Minutes be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

- Aye** -- 6 - Chris Arias, Vice Chair Giles Harnsberger, Jill Nolt, Robert Smith, Andrea Quilici and Andrew P. Gould
- Excused** -- 1 - David Johannas
- Abstain** -- 1 - James W. Klaus

### Secretary's Report

Mr. Son introduced the newest member to the UDC, Mr. James Klaus, a member of the Commission of Architectural Review since 2015 and its Vice Chair since 2017.

Mr. Son welcomed Drew Gould on his reappointment.

Mr. Son discussed having a Resolution of Appreciation for Mr. Green at the next meeting.

### Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

### CONSENT AGENDA

2. [UDC 2018-18](#) Final Location, Character, and Extent review of Riverview Community Park – playground, benches, and park sign, 1907 Texas Ave.

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)  
[Staff Report to UDC](#)  
[Location & Plans](#)  
[Supplement - Structures](#)

This Location, Character, and Extent Item was recommended for final approval, with the following modifications:

- The removal of seven “orbits” or stepping stone-like elements of the playground
- The extension of the mulch base by a three foot extension on all sides to accommodate the increase in the Fall Zone area

Additionally, this Location, Character, and Extent Item was recommended for final approval, with the following conditions:

- That benches be installed under existing and proposed trees, for the utilization of shade, whenever possible

**A motion was made by Committee Member Arias that the consent agenda items be recommended for approval. Committee Member Nolt seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:**

3. [UDC 2018-19](#) Final Location, Character, and Extent review of 29th Street Shared Use Path, 29th St. between M St. and N St.

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

This Location, Character, and Extent Item was recommended for final approval as submitted, and was forwarded to the City Planning Commission.

**A motion was made by Committee Member Arias that the consent agenda items be recommended for approval. Committee Member Nolt seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:**

## **REGULAR AGENDA**

5. [UDC 2018-21](#) Final Location, Character, and Extent review of Overby-Sheppard Elementary School window renovations, 2300 1st Ave.

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

Mr. Son: Overby-Sheppard Elementary School was opened in 1977, and all the windows have been broken and currently have Plexiglass installed in them, with some areas including a metal covering over the windows for additional security. The Plexiglass is currently faded with scratches and burn holes. Plexiglass can easily be shoved in and allow for someone to break into the building during or after school hours. The school had a break-in within the last year or so. The school is proposing to install a new, more secure window system. The proposal consists of nineteen window assemblies that will

consist of removing the existing clear panels of Plexiglass, the installation of new, horizontal mullions, and the installation of a combination of two types of glass. One will be a laminated glass, identified on the plan as clear, and the other will be a milky white glass, identified on the plan as "MW".

What you see is a product of a collaboration with a UDC Subcommittee, the staff from Richmond public schools, the principal, and a school board member talking about everyone's concerns. This is, essentially, the fruit of their labor. The intent of the project is to provide a more secure environment for students and staff during the day and when the school is not in session. The proposal seeks to replace existing Plexiglass panels that were originally used to replace broken glass with a combination of transparent laminated glass and frosted glass. In addition to increased security, the proposal seeks to prevent further vandalism and to reduce utility and maintenance costs.

Staff is generally supportive of this application as the resulting UDC subcommittee held an in-depth discussion and on-site analysis and compromised with all parties involved, including the principal of the school and the representatives from the Richmond Public School System. This application speaks to enhanced security by maintaining visibility to the exterior while simultaneously retaining the value of obscurity should an external threat arise. In terms of character, the existing building consists of many windowless facades, thus making windows a defining architectural feature of the building. Replacement of Plexiglass with transparent materials allows for the continuation of this feature. Therefore, staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approve the project as submitted.

Giles Harnsberger invites the applicant to speak.

The applicant, Bobby Hathaway, invites the Commission to ask questions.

Mr. Arias: I wonder what the decision was to go away from the metal to the milky white throughout the meeting?

Mr. Hathaway: What was indicated in the meeting was that it would be a combination of both, because we wanted to have as much natural light coming into the facility as possible. This is what we understood as you recommending.

Mr. Arias: I thought that the back side of the building would have metal panels to increase the security, and the front side around the offices and cafeteria was going to have the translucent material.

Mr. Hathaway: We hadn't finalized the cost. To do the metal panels in the back should help lower the cost. We can provide that.

Mr. Arias: I thought that better satisfied your concerns about security and glass breakage. Most of our concern was the light in the front corridors and around the office and cafeteria. I would be ok with that.

Mr. Quilici: Why do you think that having metal panels would make it more secure?

Mr. Hathaway: Along the back hallway where it is not as visible from the street, we had talked about having metal panels on the lower half and clear glass on the upper half.

Mr. Gould: There is a maintenance issue here. Part of the reason why there is Plexiglass there now is that was replacement to original glass that had been broken. In

my mind, on the back side of the building where there is less visibility from the street, it's more susceptible to vandalism. The more glass there is, the more chance that it is going to be broken.

Mr. Quilici: I would argue that glass prevents more control over that area, if something has to happen while the school is in session.

Mr. Hathaway: We propose for the lower portion to be metal and the upper portion to be clear. The upper, clear portion would be at about 4.5 feet. The adults would be able to see outside of the building, and the children would not be seen and be protected.

Mr. Quilici: That makes sense. I agree.

Mr. Quilici: Why did you decide to go with milky white at all, rather than translucent? I agree with allowing more natural light within the building. That's a good reason to have glass. Is it just aesthetic, or was it a security reason?

Mr. Hathaway: I think it was a security reason. It doesn't expose the kids when they are walking through the building.

Mr. Quilici: However, an adult standing would be able to see outside?

Mr. Hathaway: Yes.

Mr. Arias: Kids would be allowed to see outside, also, to prevent completely isolating them. Looking at the whole of the building, it was a matter of evaluating where security was necessary and where light coming into the building was desired. It was a balance between all.

Mr. Quilici: Have you considered having all clear glass but using film instead? Would that be more economical?

Mr. Hathaway: If we use all glass there, then, that would drive the cost up. If we include the metal panels, that will keep the cost down for us, and chances are, we can get funding for that. The maintenance part of it, if we use glass, will surely be more expensive.

Mr. Klaus: Is the new glass less breakable than what was there previously?

Mr. Hathaway: Yes, it is.

Mr. Klaus: Almost every single window has been broken?

Mr. Hathaway: Every single window has not been replaced, but 95 percent of them have been replaced.

Ms. Nolt: I think that this is a great compromise from what we saw the last time. I just want to applaud the people who worked behind the scenes to find a solution that is agreeable to everyone. I know that budget may still be an issue. I wonder if there is a way of considering the bronze panels. I would be ok with adding that onto the recommendation. I think, that, otherwise, it's a good path forward.

Mr. Arias: I think that we were clear on where light was desired and security was desired.

Mr. Quilici: I understand the cost issue. I am of the opinion that the more natural light you have, the better. Even if it's milky white, I find that helpful.

Ms. Harnsberger: The budget is not something that the applicant has control over. I think that it's better to control the recommendation. I think that this is a good compromise.

**A motion was made by Committee Member Nolt that this item be recommended for approval with the following Staff recommendations and conditions:**

**-If there are budgetary constraints to the scope of the application, elevations labeled 12,13,14,15, and 16 may substitute the milky white glass material (MW) with bronze paneling.**

**Committee Member Gould seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 7 - Chris Arias, Vice Chair Giles Harnsberger, Jill Nolt, Robert Smith, Andrea Quilici, Andrew P. Gould and James W. Klaus

**Excused --** 1 - David Johannas

**6. [UDC 2018-20](#) Final Location, Character, and Extent review of modifications to Canal Walk improvements, the Canal Walk between 10th and 12th Streets**

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)  
[Staff Report to UDC](#)  
[Location & Plans](#)  
[Supplement - Benches and Dimensions](#)

Mr. Son: To update the committee, whatever happens here will move to the Planning Commission for final review. With that "Final Review" designation, recently, there have been some changes that have been brought forward, such as proposed wood-slatted benches and dimensioning of the replacement of the planters along the way.

The applicant seeks approval of the proposed screening of the steel walkway structural system as well as a proposed landscape change from tree wells to fiberglass planters. Railings, trash cans, street lights, and other side amenities are still consistent with existing architectural elements on sight. We don't anticipate that this change will take away from the character intended from the original design but will provide for the project's continued implementation.

Careful planning is required to ensure that public improvements completed by the city result in a public space that respects and spotlights the city's history, is interesting, entertaining, and accessible. The application that you are seeing is being presented for final review, as developed with input from Public Works, Public Utilities, ECD, and PDR, along with Venture Richmond and the developer.

Staff is generally supportive of the proposed modifications to the Canal Walk between 10th and 12th streets. The structural system for the walkway was originally proposed as concrete but is now proposed as steel. Railings, trash cans, street lights, and other side amenities are still consistent with existing architectural elements on sight. Therefore, staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approve as submitted.

Amelia Wehunt: Our approach was to bring as many parties to the table as possible to get the best project for the best value. We looked at using concrete versus steel, access and constructability, construction costs, long-term maintenance and inspection, and, then, of course, the aesthetic. This will still be the exposed, aggregate walk that was previously envisioned. It's just the guts underneath that will be a little different. Because those guts are different, the face of that now requires a screen, instead of previously, where we would be looking at concrete. We are seeking final approval for these limited changes.

We have discussed the realignment of the 10th street stairs. We have updated the street light spacing to match up with the steel columns that you will now see in that structural system. To better coordinate with the white building and for the existing residents there, we have looked at maintaining the same light fixture but to limit light spilling over into their windows. Again, we have talked about the proposed change from concrete to steel that has led us to screening the walkway face and needing to switch to planters in lieu of tree wells. There is a bench material change to better match the aesthetic of the white building and The Locks tower.

This is what hasn't changed. We have tried to keep as many things the same as possible. We are keeping that exposed aggregate walkway. We are keeping the light fixtures. We're keeping the railings, the trash cans, the landscape plan previously shown in that phase two area, and the tree wells in the phase two area.

Ms. Nolt: I am ok with the planters. I think that it needs a bit more thought to their location. We certainly want to put in a recommendation that we maintain the five foot clear width, because that is really going to allow this to be successful as a walk. I think that there is just need for some study of where the planters are in association with the elevation of the buildings so that it's better organized and better connected. I am still ok with it being random (in design), it would just need to be more random. I just think that it needs to be thoughtful to the window openings and the wall locations of the adjacent buildings. Ultimately, the location of the trees should be between the window locations so that you can get a lot of visibility into the activated storefront, especially if there is going to be retail or restaurants. Placing the tree wells so that they don't obscure the views from the windows and the views into the windows would be the preferred approach. The applicant should further investigate or further study the locations for coordination with the building facades.

Ms. Harnsberger: If some spaces are activated and you can see clearly into them with others that have a tree that you can see from inside, that creates some diversity. I support the way that she framed it when she said that the elevation should be provided and the relationship should be described so that we understand what the intention is.

Ms. Nolt: I think that the motivation for the team is that they want the project to be successful and want the spaces inside to be rented or leased in the future. It does give them the benefit of the doubt that they are going to further study it. We have done this kind of recommendation in the past, and it seems that there is a positive outcome from it.

Ms. Harnsberger: I would just be cautious about saying that all the windows and doors should be clear of tree planters, because that is, also, kind of a mechanical response that ends up with a mechanical-looking solution. So, a further study to optimize views would work.

Mr. Son: Do you want to specify five foot clear as you are moving from east to west or, also, between the planters?

Ms. Harnsberger: I would say from east to west.

Ms. Nolt: We don't have enough information to be specific. If those residential buildings in the future are going to turn in the retail, you might find that you want to do a grouping of planters on both ends so that there is an open area in the middle for a storefront for future retail. We just don't have that information. I just think that there needs to be some logic as to how they are located.

**A motion was made by Committee Member Harnsberger that this item be recommended for final approval with the following conditions:**

**-The new steel structure and screen are not painted but maintain a galvanized metal finish**

**-The proposed benches are a true wood bench, as specified in the plans**

**-The lighting fixtures are a 3000k light color and should match the color of existing lighting**

**-A five foot clearance be maintained between the guard rail on the southern side of the walkway and the planters**

**-The planter boxes are placed in a way that considers the façade of the building openings and the possible future commercial uses of the buildings**

**Committee Member Nolt seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 7 - Chris Arias, Vice Chair Giles Harnsberger, Jill Nolt, Robert Smith, Andrea Quilici, Andrew P. Gould and James W. Klaus

**Excused --** 1 - David Johannas

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Son: We are having a presentation for the next meeting regarding the Urban Heat Island Effect in the City of Richmond and incorporating that into the Urban Design Guideline updates. As we discussed last meeting, I was supposed to reach out to Alexander Rawles to understand the process for altering the composition of the UDC moving forward. In his email, he responded that there is no defining protocol for suggesting city code amendments to the Land Use Committee. Essentially, just getting support from the committee and Mark Olinger—as long as there is support there, there can be a presentation made to either Chair Robertson or Member Larson.

Ms. Harnsberger: One thing that I had brought up in a previous meeting is that we have never had somebody who is a right of way or transportation expert, and I think that it factors into so many of the projects, including this one. I think that it would be really helpful, especially with the Complete Streets Ordinance that passed. I think that we talked about the Static Arts position, as well. It may be worth a subcommittee discussion.

## **Adjournment**