



**City of Richmond, Virginia**  
**Department of Planning and Development Review**  
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To: Planning Commission  
From: Urban Design Committee  
File ID: UDC-090687-2021  
Date: May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of Pump House Park Accessibility Improvements, 1500 Pump House Drive; UDC 2021-21**

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**I. APPLICANTS**

Terry Moore, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

**II. LOCATION**

1500 Pump House Drive

**Property Owner:**

The City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for final location, character and extent review of ADA accessibility improvements at Pump House Park.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (DPRCF) has completed plans for site improvements for greater ADA-compliant accessibility to the historic Pump House building at Pump House Park. The scope of work includes the construction of accessible parking spots on Pump House Drive, and a switchback accessible ramp from the street to the pump house canal bridge.

This area is wooded, and trees will need to be removed for the construction of the accessible ramp. However, any trees that are removed will be replaced with native species, and the applicant will be contributing to the City of Richmond's tree replacement fund for tree loss that is not mitigated by the proposed native plantings.

The Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following conditions:

- The applicant consider using pervious pavement materials where possible
- Amount of railing utilized on the accessible ramp be minimized by using a thinner rail design.
- Accessible ramp railing be painted a color that blends into the surrounding landscape, submitted to staff for review.
- The concrete used to construct the accessible ramp and associated retaining wall be pigmented with a brown/ tan earth tone to better camouflage the ramp into the surrounding landscape.

**Staff Contact:**

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## **V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

Pump House Park is located at 1799 Pump House Drive and is situated at the south end of Byrd Park adjacent to the Pump House and James River & Kanawha Canals and near the James River. The primary entrance to the park and building, and only current public entrance, is from Pump House Drive via a steep asphalt driveway leading to a vehicular-grade bridge over the Pump House Canal. There is a ramp on the south side of the canal leading down to the building, but no ramp from Pump House Drive to the bridge. There is also a footbridge over the canal just to the east, but access is currently limited (by a locked fence); improvements for that access point are envisioned and are shown as future improvements in this submittal. The park is located in the 5th Council District; it is near the Carillon neighborhood (just to the west up Pump House Drive), but it is relatively removed from nearby development.

### **b. Scope of Review**

The improvements associated with this project are subject to location, character, and extent review as a “park or other public way” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

### **c. UDC Review History**

In January 2019, the Urban Design Committee reviewed the final location, character and extent of the Pump House Parking Lot Trail, 1704 Pump House Drive; UDC 2019-04. The Urban Design Committee recommended approval of the project with the following conditions:

- If any existing cobblestone or granite is removed, it be stockpiled or reused
- The applicant consider using pervious pavement materials where possible
- The applicant further study the western end of the trail connection to provide better pedestrian and cycling access to Pump House Drive

The Planning Commission subsequently approved the application with the Urban Design Committee’s recommended conditions of approval.

### **d. Project Description**

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (DPRCF) has completed plans for site improvements for greater ADA-compliant accessibility to the historic Pump House building at Pump House Park. This consists of a pathway and ramp traversing the slope between Pump House Drive and the existing vehicular bridge that crosses Pump House Canal to the building. This improvement was envisioned as part of the master planning for the park completed in 2019. This submittal is intended for Final Review of the site design.

In 2018 and 2019, DPRCF worked with stakeholder groups and community members to complete a master plan for renovations of the Pump House building and surrounding park. A major aspect of that visioning process was making the park and building more open and accessible, which includes a walkway access to the building that is constructed for ADA compliance.

DPRCF engaged Timmons Group (one of the master planning team members) in winter 2021 to provide design services for an accessible ramp between Pump House Drive and the Pump House Canal to begin implementation of the improvements envisioned in the master plan. Specific funding was available to DPRCF for this project. Timmons Group's landscape architecture, civil engineering, and structural engineering teams have worked together to plan and design this project for construction.

The site program will consist of the following features:

- Improvements to Pump House Drive to add two ADA-compliant parking spaces
- A concrete walkway ramping downslope from Pump House Drive to the vehicular-grade bridge that crosses the Pump House Canal. The ramp will have simple tubular steel railing.
- Concrete retaining walls along sections of the walkway to accommodate grading of the slope necessary for the walkway
- A slot drain along a portion of the walkway with a small outfall structure at Pump House Canal to manage storm water runoff
- Landscaping consisting of trees and shrubs

Landscaping on the site will focus primarily on RPA mitigation planting. An effort has been made to preserve all healthy existing trees to the greatest extent possible. All RPA mitigation tree planting will be counted toward the City's requirements for replacement of trees removed; however, the total replacement value will need to be met through payment into the City's tree planting fund. All disturbed areas will be seeded with lawn.

Landscape maintenance will primarily belong to DPRCF as the property owner. Care of trees on City-owned property is the responsibility of the Urban Forestry division of the Department of Public Works (DPW).

**e. Master Plan**

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) and that the city should strengthen the streetscape connections by installing pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, pathways, and trails where such infrastructure is missing (4.4.b) (pg. 104).

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

*"A preference should be given towards materials and construction techniques which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality" (page 9). The Guidelines are also very supportive of low-impact development and green building practices (page 10, 11).* The project proposes to utilize low-impact storm water run-off methods.

*Where possible, handicap ramps should be located so that they are sensitive to primary building elevations. The design of handicap ramps should relate to building architecture and exterior building materials. A ramp's base and its railings should be of an appropriate material and finish to complement the adjacent building.* The proposed accessible ramp will be located on the hillside adjacent to the pump house canal and the pump house building through a

wooded area. Staff finds that the placement of a switchback accessible ramp in this location is ideal due to the steep terrain leading down to the canal, but recommends that in order to ensure that views of the historic pump house building are not obscured or diminished, the applicant consider using a rail design that is thinner than the proposed pipe railing, and using a finish that blends into the surrounding landscape.

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**