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To: Planning Commission  
From: Urban Design Committee  
Date: June 19, 2017  
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of renovation and addition to Richmond Fire Station #21, 2505 Jefferson Davis HWY; UDC No. 2017-15**

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**I. APPLICANT**

L. Dexter Goode, Project Manager, Special Capital Projects

**II. LOCATION**

900 East Broad Street, Room 602, Richmond, VA, 23219

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond Public Works

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of a renovation and addition to Richmond Fire Station #21 to extend the usable life of the building and to meet the needs of a modern fire department.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The proposed renovation and addition to Fire Station #21 will help meet the needs of a modern fire department while extending the usable life of a structure built at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The project entails the addition of amenities to the surrounding community such as an exterior water fountain and a public toilet. Improvements to an alleyway will improve accessibility and enhance the pedestrian nature of the current walking path. Landscaping will occur within 6 months of final construction or no later than the next optimal planting season. The addition of exterior lighting promotes safety while minimizing light pollution by directing light downward.

The Urban Design Guidelines note that site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture; screening should be used for parking areas; synthetic reinforced stucco is not appropriate, yet many different materials on a building should be avoided.

The Committee finds that the project is in keeping with the scale and appearance of the existing fire station, and is supportive of the renovation and addition which will allow the Fire department to continue to providing service to the surrounding areas.

Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted with the following consideration:

- That a UDC sub-committee meet with the applicant and the city arborist to discuss a landscape plan that is to be implemented within 6 months of final construction or no later than the next optimal planting season.

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## V. FINDINGS OF FACT

### a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject property is located on the east side of Jefferson Davis Highway, south of its intersection with Atwell Drive and lies within the B-3 (General Business) zoning district. The property is improved with a fire station, which was constructed in 1900.

### b. Scope of Review

The proposed project is subject to general location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as identification for a “public building”.

### c. UDC Review History

The UDC reviewed the conceptual proposal for this project in the early spring of 2017 with a recommendation for approval with the following consideration:

- That the applicant work to include plantings that help beautify the streetscape of Jefferson Davis HWY, and include a landscaping plan with the final submittal

Due to the nature of the Richmond Stormwater Management Permit, inclusion of the landscaping component at this phase would trigger additional review, increasing costs and extending the timeline of the project, negatively impacting the fire department and its mission. It was agreed that the applicant would engage in a discussion with staff and the city arborists to determine the best landscaping plan within 6 months of final construction or no later than the next optimal planting season.

### d. Project Description

The City intends to renovate, and add onto the existing station to extend the usable life of the building and to meet the needs of a modern fire department.

The community uses the adjacent alleyway as a pedestrian pass through to Jefferson Davis Highway, and as such this station is visited by walkers and joggers quite often. Therefore the plans will call for an exterior water fountain and a public toilet which will be available without disturbing the fire fighters in the station.

The renovation of the building exterior will include the replacement of the existing windows, patching, repairing, and painting of the existing stucco, and replacement of existing paving. Interior renovations will include new partitions, finishes, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems. The station will be fully accessible at the conclusion of the project.

The building program calls for individual sleeping quarters, station officer’s office, a day room, kitchen, storage, decontamination facilities, laundry facilities, and exercise space.

The program functions could not be accommodated in the existing space so two building additions are proposed on the north and south sides of the existing station. The building additions will be constructed of masonry walls with a stucco finish to match the existing building. The roof line of the south addition will come in just below the existing roofline of the kitchen area to minimize the visual

appearance of the addition, and to simplify construction of the roof. The larger addition to the north will have a roof line slightly higher, closer resembling the existing flat roof portion of the building.

Alongside the abandoned alley to the south of the building, grass will be planted and asphalt improvements will be made to accommodate a walking path, making the walkthrough area much more pedestrian friendly.

A motorized security gate will be added to the main entrance to the parking, granting access to authorized personnel.

The project budget is approximately \$1,350,000 for building and site construction only. The project is funded through the Fire Department's Capital Improvement Projects fund (8929).

**e. Master Plan**

The subject property is located within the Broad Rock planning district as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Master Plan recommends Single Family (low density) uses for this property, and defines the primary uses in this land use category as single-family detached dwellings at densities up to seven units per acre (page 133). The Master Plan also recommends enhanced landscaping with a greater emphasis on pedestrian streetscape amenities to improve the image of the corridor and aid in the revitalization of adjacent residential neighborhoods (page 153).

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

In terms of landscaping, the Environment section of the Urban Design Guidelines notes that site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture (page 10).

The Public Facilities section of the Urban Design Guidelines notes that screening should be used for parking areas (page 14). It also notes that synthetic reinforced stucco is not an appropriate exterior building material because of its lack of durability and maintenance requirements. Synthetic reinforced stucco should not be used on the first floor of buildings where it is subject to wear and tear and vandalism. Super-reinforced synthetic stucco, however, may be appropriate for the first eight feet of building above grade. The section further notes that new materials should be appropriate for the size and architectural style of the building. Many different materials on a single building lead to visual confusion and should be avoided (page 17).

The Community Character section of the Urban Design Guidelines notes that exterior lighting should be well-conceived and properly installed according to a general lighting plan. Exterior lighting should also avoid light pollution by directing light downward (page 22).

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

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