



Mark Olinger
Director of Planning and Development Review
City of Richmond
900 E. Broad Street, Room 511
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Director Olinger:

This letter follows our recent letter dated, March 22, 2017 where we made comments and recommendations related to the Pulse Corridor Plan and update to the Riverfront Plan. As comments to planning staff are due by April 10, 2017, we would like to reiterate our position as to how both plans might potentially affect Church Hill.

As you are aware, protecting the historic viewshed from Libby Hill Park, while supporting height-appropriate development in this area continues to be at the forefront of our concern as the Pulse Corridor Plan advances. As we stated previously, we are encouraged by the recent staff recommendation changing the original Nodal designation to Neighborhood below Libby Hill Park near the East Riverfront BRT station. We are further encouraged that building heights will be determined by a city-initiated zoning process, which will allow for additional study and public comment regarding appropriate building heights as it relates to development in this section of the Pulse Corridor.

While these are positive amendments, there is still no specific language incorporated into the planning documents that outlines the importance of protecting the views from Libby Hill Park, and the Grace Street Overlook. The value of these views cannot be overstated and we would again request the following recommendations be incorporated into final drafts of the Pulse Corridor and Riverfront Plans:

1. Specific language be added to both the general description section and Station Area specific implementation recommendations that identify reasons why protecting these viewsheds should be a paramount consideration, including:
 - a. In 1851, Libby Hill Park was recognized as significant for its views and selected as a public location to highlight these views.

- b. Economic activity generated by this location that brings countless tourists, both local and beyond to learn Richmond's founding history, not to mention serving as a chosen site for weddings and various public festivals and functions specifically for the view.

Much of this language about the importance of the view from Libby Hill Park was stated clearly in the Downtown Master Plan and should be reintroduced into the Pulse Corridor Plan and Riverfront Plans in order to emphasize the critical relationship between the viewshed and the height of the buildings below, specifically buildings in the foreground in these areas:

- Parcels between Libby Hill and the river and Pear Street and Nicholson Street, including the Fulton Gas Works, the bus company, USP/Echo Harbor, and the land between Main Street and the CSX trestle east of the future roundabout
 - Parcels along and between Libby Hill Park and 21st Street along Main Street and Franklin Street
 - Parcels in the foreground of the Grace Street Overlook
2. Add specific language from the Downtown Master Plan identifying the USP / Echo Harbor parcel for potential inclusion in the James River Park system. As stated previously, and preferred by the general public, the CHA supports a continuous park from the Low Line to Rockets Landing to allow the maximum public park space and access along the James River. The maps should show the USP / Echo Harbor parcel with green hatching to indicate the potential park.
 3. Maps in the Pulse Corridor Plan should include approximate viewshed lines running from Libby Terrace to Rocketts Landing to the east, and along Main Street to the west. Additionally, viewshed lines from the Grace Street Overlook onto Shockoe Bottom below should also be included. Having the graphic representation of the viewshed lines superimposed on plan maps will support language stating the importance of these critical viewsheds and emphasize the need for language stating actual building heights that consider and protect these viewsheds.

There is a unique opportunity in this planning process to guide the correct balance between appropriate development, historic preservation and protection of Richmond's critical viewsheds. We believe our recommendations for the Pulse Corridor and Riverfront Plans help strike the proper balance and again request they be incorporated into final drafts and this process advances.

Sincerely,

John Sieg – President Church Hill Association of RVA