




Staff Report  
City of Richmond, Virginia  
**Planning Commission**



<b>UDC 2025-12</b>	<b>Concept Location, Character, and Extent Review</b>	Meeting Date: 05/20/2024
<b>Applicant/Petitioner</b>	Scott Firestine, Director, Richmond Public Libraries	
<b>Project Description</b>	UDC 2025-12 CONCEPT Location, Character, and Extent review of the Greening Richmond Public Libraries: Hull Street Branch project, located at 1400 Hull Street.	
<b>Project Location</b>		
<b>Address: 1400 Hull Street</b>		
<b>Property Owner:</b> Richmond Public Libraries		
<b>High-Level Details:</b> <p>The applicant proposes sustainable stormwater and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to the exterior of the existing library and surrounding right-of-way.</p> <p>Improvements include removal of impervious area and non-native species; construction of bioretention basins and pervious pavers; construction of a tiny park with stone benches; installation of native plants and irrigation system; and interpretive signage.</p>		
<b>UDC Recommendation</b>	Approval, with Conditions	
<b>Staff Contact</b>	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
<b>Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews</b>	The design was informed by public questionnaires and the collaborative project management effort of Richmond Public Library staff, RVAH2O, The James River Association, and Four Winds Design.	
<b>Recommended Conditions</b>	1. Applicant to match using the existing brick pavers if any sidewalk is altered or added.	

## Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site is located in the Blackwell neighborhood. The property is situated on the corner of Hull Street and East 14 <sup>th</sup> Street. The property currently consists of the Hull Street Branch Library and associated corner pedestrian plaza, landscaping, and parking lot.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter and review and recommendation under 17.05.
Project Description	<p><b><u>The Applicant States:</u></b></p> <p><i>“The purpose of the project is to develop a series of bioretention basins and areas of pervious artificial turf and pavers designed to Virginia Department of Environmental Quality standards to infiltrate storm water discharge from a portion of the roof, sidewalks, and parking lot; reduce the heat island effect as possible; enhance the existing streetside plaza; and create a small public park that features shaded reading/ seating areas, play space for young children, and opportunities for education about the importance of native plants and managing stormwater runoff. Some impervious area and all non-native species will be removed with native plants added. The project strives to become a model of sustainable site development with educational components accomplished with an interpretive sign, special library programs, and community involvement and support.”</i></p> <p><i>“The design was informed by public questionnaires...Library users and residents identified the needs for shade, an outdoor gathering and children’s play spaces, and more seating. Per library leadership it was made clear that security and loitering are major issues at this branch and no free use outdoor seating can be added.”</i></p> <p><b><u>Staff Review:</u></b></p> <p>The purpose of the project is to develop a CONCEPT plan for the construction of sustainable stormwater and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to the exterior of the existing library and surrounding right-of-way.</p> <p>The narrative states that the goal of the project is to filter runoff while detaining stormwater so that excess volume can infiltrate to the ground and be recycled by landscaping plants.</p> <p>The site will provide greater landscaping, permeable pavers, and new public space. Native plants are proposed for added shade, wildlife habitat, and other ecosystems services.</p> <p>GRTC Bus Line 1B is located on the primary street frontage along Hull Street, a stop is located in front of the project site. Staff has provided a condition of approval that the Applicant work with GRTC to determine if the stop needs to be relocated or otherwise improved with a concrete pad, bench, shelter, etc.</p> <p>A new small park space is also provided with the project, including a seating area and landscaping.</p> <p>Staff has recommended that the Applicant revise plans to facilitate a 7ft clear space for the sidewalk along East 14<sup>th</sup> Street. Some existing utilities create a pinch point, and it would be very easy to take 2ft from the adjacent planter bed as sidewalk space.</p> <p>Staff has also recommended that the Applicant match using the existing brick pavers if any sidewalk is altered or added.</p> <p>Staff strongly supports the enhancement of the exterior of the library in terms of stormwater and landscaping, as well as the transformation of the space into a more usable location.</p> <p><b><u>UDC Review</u></b></p> <p>The UDC discussed artificial turf materials, sidewalk width, stormwater facilities, seating, the rear generator, and plantings.</p> <p>The UDC recommends approval of this application with amended conditions below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Applicant to match using the existing brick pavers if any sidewalk is altered or added.</li> </ol>