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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: February 8, 2018  
RE: **Conceptual Location, Character, and Extent review of a new outdoor classroom pavilion for Patrick Henry School of Science & Art, 3411 Semmes Ave.;**  
**UDC File No. 2018-8**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Thomas Kranz

**II. LOCATION**

3411 Semmes Avenue

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond Recreation & Parks

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for conceptual Location, Character, and Extent review of a new outdoor classroom pavilion for Patrick Henry School of Science & Art (PHSSA).

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The project involves the installation of a new outdoor classroom pavilion adjacent to the main PHSSA building. The space is located within Forest Hill Park and would consist of an open design concept that includes a roof structure, weather-proof storage, picnic-type tables, power, lighting, fans, and potential security sensors. The space would accommodate 24 students with additional guest seating in an amphitheater-like design for larger gatherings and performances. The proposed project is meant to blend in with its surroundings using environmentally sensitive design.

Staff finds the location and character of the space appropriate and is supportive of the proposal.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval with the following conditions for final review:

- That the applicant consult with DPU – Water Resources Division to ensure all design and plans are in compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act regulations.

**Staff Contact:**

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**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The site is located within Forest Hill Park, adjacent to Patrick Henry School of Science and Art. Nestled among a group of trees, the proposed site lies in the southern most point of the park adjacent to Reedy Creek. The proposed site is

located on a parcel zoned R-5 (residential, single family). It is predominantly surrounded by a forested area in close proximity to a commercial corridor where Semmes Avenue unites with Forest Hill Avenue.

**b. Scope of Review**

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

**c. Project Description**

To support the mission of the school and enhance learning in a nature environment, PHSSA received a grant to support creating an outdoor classroom environment. The grant funding combined with donated services, school PTA and community support is expected to initiate the project’s first phase. By successful fundraising and additional donor contributions, complete construction of the full pavilion design may be realized with initial construction, or is achievable within the next year. First phase budget is targeted for \$25,000 and total project budget is estimated at \$65,000.

The school goals of a new pavilion classroom are:

- Enhance the science + art programs
- Be functionally flexible
- Visually fit the environment and be environmentally sensitive
- Provide physical accessibility and appropriate scale
- Be an amazing and inspiring space

The program for PHSSA academic uses and functionality consist of:

- Accommodating 24 students / 4 picnic-type tables typically plus extra capacity with added bunch seating area
- Providing an Instructor demo table (mobile)
- White-board (enclosable/protected) within secure/weather-proof storage cabinet
- Potential use as a stage or stage-like function
- Additional guest seating in amphitheater-like terraces for larger gatherings and performances
- Power, lighting, fans and potential security (lighting) sensors

The desired schedule and process includes:

- UDC/City concept review
- Finalize an inspired design, phased to meet the resources acquired
- UDC/City Final review and approval requirements prior to permitting
- Ground Breaking celebration on Earth Day, Sunday April 22, 2018

**d. UDC Review History**

Staff was unable to identify any prior projects involving this property.

**e. Master Plan**

This project falls within the Old South Planning District of the Master Plan. In addition to illustrating the property to remain as a public use, the area is part of the legally protected non-tidal wetlands “Adjacent to (Reedy Creek)...is a minimum 600 foot wide swath of riparian land designated as a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area” (page 271).

The plan further notes that “Development of any City facilities should be sensitive to the environmental resources and conditions on site and maximize their use for educational purposes” (page 281).

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Urban Design Guidelines impart that “Impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements. A preference should be given toward materials and construction techniques which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality” (page 9).

The Guidelines also note that “Building materials should be aesthetically and structurally durable, of high quality, and require little maintenance. Where appropriate, substances which resist graffiti should be applied to building materials to reduce maintenance requirements” (page 17).

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

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