



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2023-13	FINAL Location, Character, and Extent Review	Meeting Date: 07/06/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Ryan Rinn – Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities	
Project Description	UDC 2023-13 FINAL Location, Character, and Extent review of the Calhoun Community Center Park Renovation Phase 1 located at 536 Calhoun Street	
Project Location		
Address: 436 Calhoun Street		
Property Owner: City Of Richmond Recreation & Parks		
High-Level Details: The Applicant proposes to renovate the existing park located at the Calhoun Recreation Center. The project received CONCEPT approval September of 2022. The current FINAL application is the first phase of construction and includes splash pad and renovation of several open spaces. The revitalization for this park is done in parallel to the larger Jackson Ward Community Plan and the planning of redevelopment for Gilpin Court through the Federal Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant from HUD. The proposed splash pad is included as an early action grant as part of the HUD program.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	Significant public outreach has been completed in conjunction with the Jackson Ward Community Plan, including direct outreach to residents of Gilpin Court. Residents had the opportunity to vote on what project was included as the early action grant leading the splash park to be included. The project received CONCEPT approval September of 2022.	
Recommended Conditions for FINAL	UDC recommends that final details on outdoor lighting continue to be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.	

	UDC recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. UDC recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. UDC recommends that the Applicant replace Dwarf Fountain Grass with another native species. UDC recommends that the Applicant work with Public Works to evaluate traffic calming in conjunction with the proposed splash pad.
PREVIOUSLY Approved Conditions for CONCEPT	<u>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</u> <u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u> <u>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</u> Staff recommends that a maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase to include landscaping, sustainability features, and public spaces. Staff recommends that a specific maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase regarding the splash pad that details future maintenance funding and anticipated life cycle of the mechanical equipment. Applicant to reassess the entrance and street crossing arrangement to align with pedestrian network on both sides of Calhoun Street, for the final submission. Maintain existing trees and provide further trees between the existing parking area and play area as well as along the road frontage nearest the parking area, where possible, for the final submission.

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site is located in the Gilpin neighborhood at the intersection of Calhoun Street and St. Peter Street. The site is zoned R-53 - Residential (Multi-Family) district, and consists of roughly 3.6 acres. The property currently consists of a playground, public spaces, community farm, basketball, and baseball fields. The project is bound to the south by Gilpin Court residential neighborhood, to the north by CSX train track ROW, and to the west by Calhoun Recreation Center. In the greater neighborhood, Interstate 95 is located roughly three blocks to the south.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 and 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter
Project Description	The purpose of the project is to “to enhance existing features in the park and revitalize access to recreational resources within the Gilpin Court community.” The site currently consists of playground, public spaces, community farm, basketball, and baseball fields. The basketball courts were recently improved and will be maintained. A paved public space will be renovated into a green space in the current phase (this may be further renovated at a later phase) and the existing service building will be removed. Columns supporting a canopy from the existing service building will be maintained and a new shade structure will be installed. A splash pad is proposed north of the shade structure along with further landscaping. Landscaping is oriented around the splash pad to encourage children to remain in the space. Seating is provided adjacent to the splash pad. Fencing will be replaced or removed around the existing playground, basketball court, and existing community garden. A gravel path is provided around the entire site for walking.

	The narrative states “Phase 1 elements will continue to focus on the goals of the park master plan to create flexible spaces that are multi-generational and high in impact to the community. The design objectives aim to remove as little existing vegetation as possible. Selective clearing of potentially hazardous trees and invasive species is necessary along the northern edge of the site, but no individual specimen trees are planned for removal at this stage in the design process.” In response to community discussion about lack of maintenance in the past, Staff during the CONCEPT review asked the applicant to provide an enhanced maintenance plan for the splash pad for the final application. The Applicant has provided the following detail: “PRCF currently maintains three splash pads in the city and maintenance and safety teams are practiced in keeping these amenities clean and in proper working order. The splash pad at the Calhoun Recreation Center will be prefabricated packaged system (AQUASMART™ Package F) by Aquatix/Landscape Structures that includes ground water spray to reduce vandalism.” It is the intent to construct and open the splashpad in time for the 2024 summer season. The Applicant report also states: “Safety, visibility, shade, and senior appropriate navigation/accessibility are major concerns for residents in the Gilpin Court community. Partners of this project acknowledge that despite the hours of operation, from sunrise to sunset, residents will likely still use the park facilities after the sun sets. Additional concerns voiced by the community and stakeholder groups aim to address the lack of storage on site (particularly for garden activities and pop-up events), disorganized placement of fencing, and proper screening of the dumpsters near the playground. Phase 1 improvements begin to create new opportunities for shade, multi-generational access and interaction, and safety.” No GRTC bus lines are located in the vicinity. Staff recommends approval with several standard conditions carried over from the CONCEPT approval. The proposal enhances an underserved public open and gathering space in an underserved community. The proposal also creates a high quality focal point with the splashpad and shade structure. The reduction and enhancement of fencing within the park will also help perceptions of safety and quality in the park and in this part of the neighborhood. The UDC recommends approval with conditions. The UDC discussed traffic calming along Calhoun Street in relation to the splash pad, maintenance of the splash pad, removal of the fencing around the basketball court, landscaping adjacent to the playground and splash pad, and altering plantings species due to concerns on invasives.
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Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
Big Moves: Realign City Facilities	<i>Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty</i> <i>Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.</i> <i>Beauty – Oftentimes, City facilities serve as beautiful landmarks that anchor a neighborhood and create a distinctive place through architecture and site design.</i> <i>Thriving Environment: City-owned buildings and land are opportunities for energy retrofits and green infrastructure to further Goals 15 and 16, as well as locations for</i>	Big Moves: Realign City Facilities The project includes the stated goal of enhancing community space located in an underserved neighborhood. The park already serves as a community focal point and will greatly benefit from the high quality design and amenities proposed. The proposal intends to re-use greywater from the splashpad for irrigation, if not cost prohibitive. Pavement will also be removed and used as a green space to reduce stormwater.

	<i>new parks, urban agriculture, and resiliency hubs to further Goal 17.</i>	<u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u>
	Objective 4.2 – Integrate public art into the built environment. <i>c. Link public art with major public facility initiatives (e.g., plazas, buildings, parks, bridges) and expand the definition of public art to include architectural embellishments of buildings, or landscape features.</i> Objective 15.4 - Reduce the amount of waste going to landfills. <i>f. Demonstrate sustainable consumption, sustainable building practices, and zero-waste behaviors in the design and expansion of City operations.</i> Objective 16.3 - Reduce water consumption by 10% per capita. <i>b. Encourage on-site graywater uses in public and private facilities.</i> Objective 16.4 - Increase green stormwater infrastructure <i>b. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way</i> Objective 17.3 Reduce urban heat <i>a. Encourage lighter-colored surfaces for roads and roofs to reflect sunlight.</i> <i>b. Identify opportunities for green roofs on public facilities</i> Objective 17.7 Increase and enhance biodiversity <i>b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities</i> <i>c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.</i> <i>g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.</i> Objective 17.8 Reduce light pollution. <i>b. Install hooded light fixtures on public rights-of-way and buildings to</i>	Master Plan Objectives Opportunities for public art are provided onsite and in surrounding ROW. Richmond 300 includes a number of sustainability objectives specifically relating to public facilities and City owned properties. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable stormwater management, and sustainable construction should be considered. Landscaping will be greatly increased from the current site design, reducing urban heat island effect. Lighting details will be established at a later stage, but should include sustainability considerations. <u>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</u> <u>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</u> <u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u>

	<i>reduce light pollution and reduce effect on nocturnal species.</i>	
Urban Design Guidelines		
PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3	<i>The design guidelines suggest compatibility, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, cost, and sustainability be considered when designing pavement areas. Impervious areas should be limited and pervious pavement materials should be introduced, especially in minimally used parking areas.</i>	PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS <u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u>
STREET DESIGN – P.6	<i>Intersections should be designed to serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in a safe manner.</i>	Street Design Adjacent intersections include pedestrian improvements and street murals.
LANDSCAPING – Page 10	<i>Plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes. Site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture. Plant materials should create spaces by providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas. In addition, landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest. Species diversity, plant selection, and long term maintenance should be considered.</i>	LANDSCAPING A significant portion of the site will be green space. Landscaping is used to create interest and natural connections for pedestrians throughout the site.
STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT – Page 11	<i>Design guidelines encourage use of Low Impact Development design elements that that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, minimize, and detain stormwater runoff are applied to not only open space, but also rooftops, streetscapes, parking lots, and sidewalks.</i>	STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT Stormwater specifics will be finalized at a later stage, but should include low-impact design combined with landscaping to compliment an attractive and accessible outdoor space and public realm. The applicant should consider opportunities for permeable paving in the proposed parking areas and pedestrian paths for the final plan design. <u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u>
SITE FEATURES – Page 14	<i>The site should respond to its users through its design and by providing an appropriate array of amenities to serve those users and should incorporate sustainable design aspects. Plazas are encouraged and should provide pleasant transition from street to building while being designed in inviting and accommodating ways for a diversity of</i>	A large number of uses are included in the proposal, including sports fields, play areas, public space, exercise space, natural areas, skate friendly plaza, and community farm.

	<i>users. Operational features and parking should be screened from view.</i>	
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