



Staff Report  
City of Richmond, Virginia



**Planning Commission**

<b>UDC 2024-30</b>	<b>Final Location, Character, and Extent Review</b>	Meeting Date: 6/18/2024
<b>Applicant/Petitioner</b>	Scott Firestine, Director, Richmond Public Libraries	
<b>Project Description</b>	UDC 2024-20 FINAL Location, Character, and Extent review of the Greening Richmond Public Libraries: Ginter Park Branch project, located at 1200 Westbrook Avenue.	
<b>Project Location</b>		
<b>Address: 1200 Westbrook Avenue</b>		
<b>Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND PUBLIC WORKS</b>		
<b>High-Level Details:</b> The applicant proposes sustainable stormwater and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to the exterior of the existing library and surrounding right-of-way. Improvements to the site include public space improvements, art, a new parking lot, enhanced landscaping and hardscaping, and green stormwater facilities.		
<b>Staff Recommendation</b>		
<b>Staff Contact</b>	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
<b>Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews</b>	The CONCEPT was approved on May 21, 2024 by the Planning Commission.	
<b>Recommended Conditions</b>	<p><u>CURRENTLY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS</u></p> <p>NA</p> <p><u>PREVIOUSLY APPROVED CONDITION ON THE CONCEPT PLAN</u></p> <p>1. Applicant to work with GRTC to determine if the adjacent bus stop should be relocated or improved for the FINAL Application.</p>	

**Findings of Fact**

<b>Site Description</b>	The site is located in the Ginter Park neighborhood. The property is situated on the corner of Westbrook Avenue and Brook Road. The property currently consists of the Ginter Park Branch Library and associated landscaping and parking lot.
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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 pavers designed to Virginia Department of Environmental Quality standards to infiltrate storm water discharge from a portion of the roof, sidewalks, and parking lots; reduce the heat island effect of the parking as possible; create an accessible route from public sidewalks into the building; and create a small public park that features shaded reading areas, play space for children, an interpretive edible plant space, and opportunities for education about the importance of native plants and managing stormwater runoff. Some impervious area and most non-native species will be removed with native plants added for shade, wildlife habitat, and other ecosystems services. The project strives to be 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><b><u>Staff Review:</u></b></p> <p>The purpose of the project is to develop a FINAL 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 proposed FINAL plans are almost exactly the same as the CONCEPT approval last month.</p> <p>In the CONCEPT review, Staff expressed, and UDC/CPC agreed, that further attention to the existing bus stop was needed in the FINAL plan set. The Applicant has addressed those concerns with GRTC and provided the necessary changes in the site plan.</p> <p>New gathering spaces are also provided with the project, including an arbor seating area and Childrens Garden. A small burm is proposed to create a sense of buffer from the street, while not being high enough to block views for the purposes of safety.</p> <p>Staff strongly supports the enhancement of this space in terms of stormwater and landscaping, as well as the transformation of the space into a more usable location rather than a front lawn type of design.</p> <p><b><u>Staff Recommendation:</u></b></p> <p>Staff recommends approval.</p> <p><b><u>UDC Recommendation:</u></b></p> <p>The UDC approved the item on Consent Agenda.</p>

## Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
<b>Master Plan</b>		
<b>Big Moves: Realign City Facilities</b>	<p><i>Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty</i></p> <p><i>Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.</i></p> <p><i>Beauty – Oftentimes, City facilities serve as beautiful landmarks that anchor a neighborhood and create a distinctive place through architecture and site design.</i></p>	<p><b>Big Moves: Realign City Facilities</b></p> <p>The project includes a number of sustainability green features that will be showcased for the community. The library will also facilitate learning opportunities to enhance knowledge of sustainability in the community.</p> <p>The addition of greater landscaping and site features will contribute to the beauty of the site and the ability of the library to anchor the neighborhood through distinctive place making.</p>

	<p><b>Objective 4.2</b> – Integrate public art into the built environment.</p> <p><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></p> <p><b>Objective 10.4</b> - Increase the number of low-emission vehicles.</p> <p><b>Objective 16.4</b> - Increase green stormwater infrastructure</p> <p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way</i></p> <p><b>Objective 17.3</b> Reduce urban heat</p> <p><b>Objective 17.7</b> Increase and enhance biodiversity</p> <p><i>b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities</i></p> <p><i>c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.</i></p>	<p><b>Master Plan Objectives</b></p> <p>Richmond 300 includes a number of sustainability objectives specifically relating to public facilities and City owned properties. Sustainable stormwater management is a primary concern and will be enhanced by this project. ROW stormwater will also be treated by this project, furthering RVA 300 Goals.</p> <p>Further landscaping in parking areas and the street sidewalk will reduce heat island effects.</p> <p>Native, adaptive, and pollinator plantings will be utilized.</p> <p>Art is proposed.</p>
<p><b>Urban Design Guidelines</b></p>		
<p><b>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3</b></p>	<p><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></p>	<p><b>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS</b></p> <p>The project will install pervious pavers in the in certain locations. The project will also install bio-retention facilities that will treat stormwater from both onsite and the ROW.</p>
<p><b>LANDSCAPING – Page 10</b></p>	<p><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></p>	<p><b>LANDSCAPING</b></p> <p>Landscaping is used to create interest and enhance the beauty of the existing site. Diverse species and long term maintenance is considered.</p>
<p><b>STORM WATER MANAGEMENT</b></p>	<p><i>Design guidelines encourage use of Low Impact Development design elements</i></p>	<p><b>STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT</b></p>

<b>AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT – Page 11</b>	<i>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>	Low impact stormwater practices are included with bio-retention facilities and permeable pavers.
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