



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: February 19, 2019
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of Bellemeade Green Street, along Minefee Street from Harwood Street to Gunn Street; UDC 2019-05**

I. APPLICANT

Jonet Prevost-White, Department of Public Utilities

II. LOCATION

Minefee Street, from Harwood Street to Gunn Street

Property Owner:

City of Richmond Department of Public Works

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of streetscape modifications on Minefee Street to enhance the functionality and ecological sustainability of the street.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The project transforms Minefee Street into a “Green Street”, integrating the flow of people and stormwater to create an environment that is safe and inviting, as well as ecologically functional. A range of sustainable stormwater practices will be implemented, such as swales and permeable parking surfaces. Raised crosswalks, a buffered bike lane, and planting strips along Minefee Street will increase community connectivity through landscape and infrastructure design. The addition of a community garden, public art, and pavilion will further strengthen community character.

The proposed plans reflect revisions made by the applicant team that address concerns raised by the Department of Public Works.

Staff finds that the proposed improvements are consistent with the recommendations of the Master Plan and the Urban Design Guidelines. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following conditions:

- That for the entire length of the proposed bike lane, there is a 2' wide painted buffer strip provided on the eastern side
- That the proposed floating parking area is replaced with a mural or some other programming that retains the space for future green development along the corridor
- That two-way bike traffic is incorporated into the plan in some form, specifically that a return route is created and clearly defined

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The project spans the length of Minefee Street between Harwood Street and Gunn Street, just under half a mile. Minefee Street has a posted speed limit of 25 MPH and consists of a two-lane divided street flanked with on-street parking on either side. Hillside Court Community Center is located in close proximity to the northern end of Minefee Street, whereas Bellemeade Community Center is located on the southern end where Minefee Street transitions into Gunn Street. Minefee Street crosses several residential zones: R-6 (Single-Family Attached), R-5 (Single-Family), and R-48 (Multi-Family). It is predominantly surrounded by a residential neighborhood consisting mostly of single-family, detached homes.

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 way”.

c. Project Description

This project builds upon the work of the Bellemeade Walkable Watershed Plan, completed in 2012. The plan worked towards integrating the flow of people and stormwater, calling for environments that are safe and inviting for people as well as ecologically functional and sustainable. Minefee Street was identified as an opportunity for implementing a Green Street, connecting Hillside Court with Goode’s Creek.

The James River Association (JRA) funded the design of this project with various grants and corporate donations. Once the design is approved by the UDC and CPC, the JRA will move forward with soliciting funds for implementation and construction. Construction timing will be dependent on when funding becomes available. The JRA is also partnering with Groundwork RVA on future landscape maintenance of the streetscape with their GreenTeam program. There is already a GreenTeam that works in the Oakgrove-Bellemeade Elementary School area.

The Green Street proposal calls for a range of sustainable stormwater practices to be implemented along Minefee Street. These practices slow stormwater, allow it to naturally infiltrate back into the ground, and keep it from flowing directly into the storm drains and Goodes Creek.

Ultimately, these practices help to create a healthier watershed and a healthier Chesapeake Bay. Alongside the environmental elements, streetscape improvements aim to create a more inviting, safe, educational, and beautiful neighborhood. A bicycle/pedestrian pathway connects to the Bellemeade Community Center and the Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School; this serves as a safe route for community members and students to cross over Goode’s Creek to these destinations. Future interpretive elements along this pathway will explain the natural processes of the new Green Street. These environmental and infrastructural improvements work together to make a healthier and more connected neighborhood.

The project team has had multiple meetings with the two neighborhood civic associations (Bellmeade and Hillside Court) where the project has received support. We have also met with various City departments to review the design, including DPU, Transportation, and Parks.

d. UDC Review History

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

e. Master Plan

This project falls within the Old South Planning District of the Master Plan. The Land Use Plan illustrates Minefee Street surrounded by Single-Family (Low-Density) Residential; however, at either terminus of Minefee Street there are areas of land to remain Public & Open Space (page 275).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines state “curb cuts for handicapped accessibility should be located at intersections” and that “the selection of appropriate paving materials should be based upon the desired visual image, compatibility with adjacent paving materials, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, and cost” (page 3).

The Guidelines further note that “simpler paving designs are more compatible with diverse building styles and better unify the various design elements found on City streets” (page 3).

The Guidelines also note that “existing granite curbing should be retained” and that “the number, size and location of curb cuts should be examined for potential conflicts with pedestrian and vehicular circulation” (page 4).

In regard to connectivity and parks, the Guidelines state “successful public parks, both small and large, active or passive, share certain qualities, which include the ability to attract and entertain visitors, access and connectivity to surrounding areas, and safety and comfort” (page 9).

As to landscaping, the Guidelines note that “landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest”. In addition, “landscape plans should include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings” and that “plant materials should create spaces by providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas” (page 10).

When it comes to maintenance, the Guidelines state that “maintenance should be considered when selecting landscaping materials” and that “significantly healthy trees should be preserved and maintained” (page 10).

Lastly, the Guidelines state that “entrances and pedestrian walkways should enhance the streetscape and delineate an edge between pedestrian walkways and the street” (page 20).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

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