

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
July 25, 2017, Meeting**

15. COA-019855-2017 (City DPRCF)

**2221 Jefferson Avenue
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

Construct a new pocket park

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The proposed project is for the construction of a pocket park on a triangle lot bounded by Jefferson Avenue, North 23rd, and East Clay streets in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The property is currently an undeveloped lot with one mature tree near the center of the lot and a split rail wooden fence around the perimeter. The proposed project is adjacent to Jefferson Mews, a Better Housing Coalition community. The Junior Board of the Better Housing Coalition initiated a design competition for the property as they recognized the potential of the underutilized lot to better serve the community at Jefferson Mews and the neighborhood as a whole.

The proposed pocket park is to be named the Two Hill Park and acknowledges the two adjacent communities of Church Hill and Union Hill by creating two hills on the property. The proposed water feature which will create a stream between the two proposed hills references the history of Jefferson Avenue being the location of a ravine. The applicant is proposing to install a decorative granite cobble stone feature at the eastern corner. The applicant proposes a mix of deciduous, flowering, and evergreen trees which are appropriate to the region's climate. The applicant proposes a monument sign and seat wall at the intersection of Clay Street and Jefferson Avenue. The sign will be constructed of brick with a cast stone cap and black aluminum lettering.

The Commission reviewed this project on December 15, 2015. The Commission made a recommendation to approve the application with the conditions that the proposed signage and any lighting plans must come back to the Commission for review and the planting schedule and maintenance plan be submitted for review by staff, the Commission of Architectural Review Chair, and the Urban Design Committee Chair. As the applicant did not return with an updated planting schedule and maintenance plan, the application was not forwarded to Planning Commission.

The Commission's *Design Review Guidelines* are oriented to modest site improvements associated with building renovations. Nonetheless, there are several sections of the Guidelines that are pertinent to the final review of this project. The City Old and Historic District code includes Section 30.930.7 (e) Standards for Site Improvements. Consistent with that section, the Commission

has adopted additional guidelines for site improvements as a part of the *Guidelines*, the following statements being pertinent to the proposed project:

When designing streetscape elements for locations within a City Old and Historic District, particular attention should be paid to the pedestrian scale and character of the District (page 72).

...it is particularly important that these elements support and reinforce, rather than detract from, the overall historic character of the district. (page 72)

Brick or granite pavers are the most appropriate choice in most Old and Historic Districts. (page 72, #4)

Landscape design should enhance the streetscape and contribute a strong aesthetic along street frontages. (page 72, #8)

Landscape plans should select plant materials based on their:

- a) suitability to the site and urban surroundings,*
- b) appropriateness to the local climate, soils and light conditions,*
- c) ability to provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest (page 72, #9)*

It is the assessment of staff that all of these criteria appear to be met by the proposed design. At present, the lot is undeveloped and underutilized due to its minimal landscaping and uninviting fence. The proposed landscaping improvements will enhance the neighborhood by creating an open space that fits into the existing urban fabric. Additionally, the proposed project is compatible with the landscaped traffic circles which have been constructed in the area. Staff has shared the proposed planting plan with the Chair of the Urban Design Committee, Andrea Almond. Ms. Almond has made recommendations regarding the planting which the applicant has incorporated in the revised planting plans dated 7/7/2017. Ms. Almond has noted that the proposed landscape plant provides a “nice mix of seasonally interesting and drought tolerant plans that are appropriately scaled for the space.”

The proposed use of brick and granite cobbles is consistent with the Guidelines as these materials are found throughout the District. The proposed design will create a distinct entrance to the Jefferson Avenue Corridor and provide a pedestrian amenity. In general, it will create a well-designed public amenity in the Church Hill neighborhood. The proposed sign is consistent with the Commission’s Signage Guidelines as it is easy to read, not internally illuminated, and constructed of materials found in the district. Staff recommends any lighting plan must come back before the Commission for review and recommendation to the Planning Commission.

As the project is proposed for publicly owned land, the applicant is not seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness under the City’s Zoning Code but rather a recommendation on public improvements to the Planning Commission. Staff will prepare a report with the Commission of Architectural Review’s recommendation and comments. **Staff is recommending that the Commission forward a recommendation of approval for the proposed improvements to 2221**

Jefferson Avenue as noted in the plans dated 7/7/2017 with the condition that any lighting plan must come back before the Commission for review and recommendation to the Planning Commission.