



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: March 21, 2016
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of improvements to the West End Branch Library; UDC No. 2016-09**

I. APPLICANT

Claes Tholand, Special Capital Projects Group

II. LOCATION

5420 Patterson Avenue, Richmond, VA, 23226

Property Owners:

City of Richmond General Services

III. PURPOSE

This application is for review of a 1000 square foot addition to the existing library building, as well as a number of site improvements.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project involves the construction of a 1000 square foot addition to the existing West End Branch Library as part of an extensive interior renovation and IT upgrade, as well as a set of site improvements to include: a new driveway, parking and entrance improvements, new lighting, changes to landscaping and plantings, and a generator and enclosure to fully update the West End Branch Library.

The renovation and expansion of the West End Branch Library was identified in the 2011 update to the Richmond Master Plan for this area as “an integral piece of the redevelopment of this area” and a “key destination” (pg. 181). The renovation and expansion has been designed in a way that promotes some consistency across the City’s branch libraries, responds to the specifics of West End Branch Library site context, and creates new library amenities and enhances its value as a destination. Therefore, it is the UDC’s recommendation that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following considerations:

- To distribute some plantings to the front of the exiting building
- To expand the bike racks for the library, to match the existing bike rack.

Staff Contact:

Kathleen Onufer, (804) 646-5207

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The existing library building is 7,400 square feet and was constructed in 1977; the main purpose of the renovation and addition is to reorganize and improve the interior of the library to meet the needs of a modern facility. It is located within an R5 single family residential district on Patterson Avenue, near the intersection of Patterson Ave and Westview Ave/Glenburnie Rd, where a number of zoning

districts, including B2, R5, and RO2 come together. The expansion of the library will utilize two neighboring parcels that the City of Richmond purchased to the East that are currently vacant; the expanded library will be bordered by the Post Office, retail and commercial uses.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as a public building and structure under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

In 1976, the UDC reviewed the West End Branch Library design, and in 1979 the reviewed a planting plan for the property.

d. Project Description

This project involves the construction of a 1150 square foot addition to the existing West End Branch Library as part of an extensive interior renovation and IT upgrade, as well as a set of site improvements to include: a new driveway, parking and entrance improvements, new lighting, changes to landscaping and plantings, and a generator and enclosure to fully update the West End Branch Library.

The existing library building, in addition to interior renovations not under UDC review, will have some exterior alterations. Deteriorated painted wood siding will be replaced with metal panels that will not require ongoing painting and maintenance, currently a draw on library resource and make the exterior look less dated. All brick portions of the building will remain and will be cleaned as part of the project, and the existing standing seam metal roof will be replaced in kind. A new aluminum storefront vestibule with tinted insulated glazing will be installed under the existing canopy on the Patterson façade.

The addition to the library building is designed to match the configuration, scale, and materials of the existing building. Glass is proposed on the north and south elevations of the addition in order to improve the natural light within the library, as well as a sense of transparency from the outside. New brick on the addition will match existing brick. A patio will be located behind the new addition.

The building addition will be on the eastern side of the existing branch library where a current access driveway is located. The City has purchased two vacant lots directly to the east of the current library property, and will be building a new eastern driveway on those properties, as well as providing landscaping and other site improvements to create one unified library property.

The existing western access drive will remain; it currently has break in the concrete median on Patterson Ave. and thus allows for both left and right turning movements. The proposed eastern drive will be a right-turn only, same as the current entrance is, as it is too close to an intersection to permit a new break in the median to allow left-turns into the library property.

The location of the proposed new eastern driveway retains three existing oak trees on the site, as well as a significant oak to the southeast, while also avoiding an existing utility pole to the west. Shifting this entrance as far east as possible has allowed the library to make better use of greenspace and site improvements,

as they will now be adjacent to the library building instead of across a drive or parking area.

Other site work includes the addition of three parking spaces to replace two that will be absorbed into a new generator area at the western rear of the library—screened with a 6' high PVC privacy fence, as has been done at other branch libraries, and one that will be converted into an island in order to comply with current City parking lot design standards.

Site lighting for the parking lot and driveways will be replaced at the library's request, as the parking lot is currently dark. LED fixtures are proposed for the parking lot lighting.

Three existing smaller trees on the Patterson Ave. side of the building are proposed to be removed at the library's request, as they have grown into the roof of the building. Also to be removed is a diseased maple on one of the purchased properties, and three crepe myrtles from the area where the addition will go. Efforts were made where possible to significant trees on the site.

Landscaping will include new plantings for the disturbed area around the addition and relocated driveway. Existing established landscaping around the building will be left in place except as NOTED. New landscaping plantings were chosen to match what has been planted at other library branches during recent renovations, and include Black Gum, Natchez White Crape Myrtle, and Emerald Green Arborvitae trees. Shrubs include Indian Hawthorne, Red Knock Out Rose, and Limelight Hydrangea. Groundcover and perennials include Sweet Flag, Fountain Grass, Karl Foester Feather Reed Grass, and Turf Type Tall Fescue. The larger trees are proposed for the islands and to line the new drive, and the project includes an underground irrigation system.

The existing bike rack will remain at the request of public library, as it is in good condition and was installed within the last two to three years.

New signage made of brick and metal panels and featuring dimensional letters will be ground-mounted just to the east of the western driveway.

e. Master Plan

The subject corridor is located within the Far West Planning District as defined by the citywide Master Plan. An amendment of the Richmond Master Plan in 2011 specifically identified that the “West End Branch of the Richmond Public Library should be considered a key destination point for the Libbie/Patterson Service Center. Renovation and/or expansion of the library should be an integral piece of the redevelopment of the area” (pg. 181).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

In general, the Urban Design Guidelines note that “the quality, design, and condition of all public facilities sets the image of the City, and sends a message about the values placed upon the services provided” (page 13). The Guidelines also note that building materials “should be appropriate for the size and architectural style of the building” and that “many different materials on a single building lead to visual confusion and should be avoided” (page 17). Building

materials should also be “aesthetically and structurally durable, of high quality, and require little maintenance” (page 17).

The subsection on materials continues to say that “building textures and their combinations should add continuity and not conflict or detract from each other” and that “textures should be appropriate for the size, proportion and architectural style of the building and its surroundings” (page 17). Referring to building colors, that Guidelines note that they “should be coordinated and compatible with each other and with adjacent buildings” (page 17). The Guidelines also state that “windows, projecting cornices, and architectural details, such as decorative masonry bands in an accent color, may be used to break up flat building planes” (page 19).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

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