



# City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street  
2nd Floor of City Hall  
Richmond, VA 23219  
[www.rva.gov](http://www.rva.gov)

## Meeting Minutes Urban Design Committee

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Thursday, April 8, 2021

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

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**This meeting will be held through electronic communication means.**

This meeting will be held through electronic communication means pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020. This meeting will be open to participation through electronic communication means by the public and closed to in-person participation by the public.

Committee members and other staff will participate by teleconference/videoconference via Microsoft Teams.

Special Guidelines for Public Access and Citizen Participation:

Audio of the meeting will be streamed live online at the following web address:

<https://richmondva.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.

To listen to the meeting's live stream at the web address provided, find and click the link that reads, "In Progress" in the farthest right hand column entitled, "Video".

Interested citizens who wish to speak will be given an opportunity to do so by following the instructions below.

[PDRPRES](#) Public Access and Participation Instructions - Urban Design Committee  
[2021.107](#)

**Attachments:** [Public Access and Participation Instructions - Urban Design Committee](#)

### Call to Order

### Roll Call

### Approval of Minutes

February 4, 2021

**A motion was made by Quilici, seconded by Hepp-Buchanan, that the February 4, 2021 meeting be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 5 - Jill Nolt, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan

**Excused --** 1 - Charles Woodson

March 4, 2021

**A motion was made by Quilici, seconded by Hepp-Buchanan, that the March 4, 2021 meeting be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 4 - Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan

**Excused --** 1 - Charles Woodson

**Abstain --** 1 - Jill Nolt

## Secretary's Report

### [UDC 2021-14](#) Updates to the City of Richmond Parklet Design Guidelines

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)

[Proposed Parklet Design Guidelines Amendments](#)

[Proposed Parklet Design Guidelines Amendments \(redlined\)](#)

Planning and Preservation staff have been working with the Department of Public Works to attempt to smooth the parklet permitting process. DPW has requested that Staff update the City of Richmond's Parklet Guidelines to remove the requirement of anchoring parklets to the street, so as to make removal easier and avoid drilling holes into pavement or curbing; and to include additional examples of safety measures which can be included in parklets. These edits are on pages 14 and 16, and have been made by staff and will need to be approved by the UDC and Planning Commission. The edit consists of removing the wording regarding anchoring parklets, and changing the graphic so that it does not show the anchoring. In place of the anchoring, a sort of leg or brace to go under the parklet will be depicted.

Ms. Yessenia Revilla, who helped design the parklet document, will make the proposed modifications.

The additional safety features are described in the proposed new language: "reflective elements may include but are not limited to signage, asphalt paint, collapsible bollards, cladding material, etc." as well as a bullet pointed item about the addition of bike racks, planters, collapsible bollards and other items that could serve as a physical barrier for enhanced safety for parklets.

Ms. Nolt stated that the parklet guidelines in their current form have been approved by Planning Commission, and this amendment if approved by UDC would then go to Planning Commission again for approval. Mr. Dandridge confirmed this.

Ms. Nolt asked if the changes would be made prior to submission to Planning Commission, or if the current draft proposal format would be submitted to Planning Commission. Mr. Dandridge stated that he planned to work with Ms. Revilla to revise the parklet document and make it more presentable before submitting to Planning Commission, but wanted to clear the changes with UDC before redesigning the document.

Mr. Quilici stated that at this point only one drawing would be needed for the parklet guidelines document, and suggested that the drawing at the top of the page be deleted and the drawing at the bottom showing the connection of the decking to the threshold be retained, since the threshold connection is an important element of the parklet

installation.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that, based on his long experience of working with parklets, he felt that the revised guidelines would be very helpful and reduce confusion and challenges. Ms. Nolt asked if Mr. Hepp-Buchanan recommended any additional changes, based on his experience. Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that he believed that UDC had had some other discussions about policy and approach, but that for the time being the changes proposed seemed helpful. Mr. Hepp-Buchanan deferred to Mr. Dandridge for any potential suggestions of additional revisions.

Mr. Dandridge stated that there have been discussions in two directions, one regarding changes to guidelines, the other regarding, as Mr. Hepp-Buchanan mentioned, policy and permitting. DPW is working on creating specific permitting language for parklets; currently they are denoted as encroachments, which creates confusion.

Mr. Dandridge stated that he would be meeting with DPW when they have language drafted for a parklet permit, rather than an encroachment; this language will iron out many details such as maintenance agreements, insurance requirements, and legal matters.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked if the Committee needed to have a public hearing on the proposed parklet guidelines.

Ms. Nolt stated that the floor could be opened up for any comments by members of the public in attendance.

Acting Chair Nolt asked if there was any public comment on the guidelines. There was none.

**A motion was made by Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Doyle, that this Location, Character and Extent Item be recommended for approval to the Planning Commission. The motion carried by the following vote:**

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

The five items on the consent agenda are new RPS monument signs for various locations. Staff recommends the basic conditions of approval that the UDC has been including on these types of reviews.

Staff is recommending that landscaping be included to complement each sign if landscaping is appropriate. Some of the sites have little landscaping, and having it isolated around a new sign could be awkward, but staff could possibly ask that a native tree be planted on site instead if a planting plan is submitted. Including this recommendation for each site creates the flexibility to plant a new tree.

Ms. Clarke asked what the proposed shutoff time would be for the signs. Mr. Dandridge stated that these details have generally, with projects of this kind, been specified during the permitting phase, and usually involve a late-evening shutoff time of around 10 or 11 PM. Mr. Dandridge stated that he could research past projects to double-check what shutoff times for the LED message boards had been recommended by staff. Mr. Dandridge stated that the box signs would stay lit, but that they are not as bright as the message boards.

Ms. Clarke stated that illumination during the night has a negative impact on insects, disorienting them and making them targets for predators, and asked that the illumination be as low as possible.

Ms. Clarke stated that the Summer Hill sign is proposed to be between two old trees,

and asked whether ground would be disrupted in the installation. Mr. Dandridge stated that the plans had not mentioned any expected damage or disruption to landscaping or trees.

Ms. Clarke asked whether the electric components of the box signs are contained within the box. Mr. Dandridge stated that the electricity for the sign would probably run toward the school building, and the electronic components would most likely be contained within the sign.

Acting Committee Chair Nolt asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

**A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Committee Member Quilici, that these items be approved with conditions as follows:**

**Aye --** 6 - Jill Nolt, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan

1. [UDC 2021-06](#) Final location, character, and extent review of a new monument sign at Blackwell Preschool; 238 E. 14th Street

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)  
[Staff Report to UDC](#)  
[Location & Plans](#)

**A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Committee Member Quilici, that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approve this item with the following conditions: the applicant consider adding landscaping around the proposed monument sign that complements the sign and grows to a mature height that will not impact the visibility of the signage. If landscaping is feasible in this location, final plant selection to be reviewed and approved by staff; any electrical equipment associated with the new monument sign be concealed within the sign and not be located on the exterior.**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 6 - Jill Nolt, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan

2. [UDC 2021-07](#) Final location, character, and extent review of a new monument sign at Mary Scott Preschool; 4011 Moss Side Avenue

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)  
[Staff Report to UDC](#)  
[Location & Plans](#)

**A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Committee Member Quilici, that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approve this item with the following conditions: The applicant consider adding landscaping around the proposed monument sign that complements the sign and grows to a mature height that will not impact the visibility of the signage. If landscaping is feasible in this location, final plant selection to be reviewed and approved by staff; any electrical equipment associated with the new monument sign be concealed within the sign and not be located on the exterior.**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 6 - Jill Nolt, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan

3. [UDC 2021-08](#) Final location, character, and extent review of a new monument sign at John Marshall High School; 4225 Old Brook Road

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)  
[Staff Report to UDC](#)  
[Location & Plans](#)

A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Committee Member Quilici that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approved this item with the following conditions; The applicant consider programming a late evening shut-off time so that the LED message board's illumination does not impact the surrounding residences; any electrical equipment associated with the new monument sign be concealed within the sign and not be located on the exterior; the proposed sign does not change messages, produce animations, or flash more than once every five seconds, per the zoning ordinance; the applicant consider adding landscaping around the proposed monument sign that complements the sign and grows to a mature height that will not impact the visibility of the signage. If landscaping is feasible at this location, the final plant selection should be submitted to staff for review.

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 6 - Jill Nolt, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan

4. [UDC 2021-09](#) Final location, character, and extent review of a new monument sign at Summer Hill School; 2717 Alexander Avenue

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)  
[Staff Report to UDC](#)  
[Location & Plans](#)

A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Committee Member Quilici, that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approve this item with the following conditions: the applicant consider adding landscaping around the proposed monument sign that complements the sign and grows to a mature height that will not impact the visibility of the signage. If landscaping is feasible in this location, final plant selection to be reviewed and approved by staff; any electrical equipment associated with the new monument sign be concealed within the sign and not be located on the exterior.

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 6 - Jill Nolt, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan

5. [UDC 2021-10](#) Final location, character, and extent review of a new monument sign at Martin Luther King Jr. Preschool; 1000 Mosby Street

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)

[Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Committee Member Quilici, that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approve this item with the following conditions: the applicant consider adding landscaping around the proposed monument sign that complements the sign and grows to a mature height that will not impact the visibility of the signage. If landscaping is feasible in this location, final plant selection to be reviewed and approved by staff; any electrical equipment associated with the new monument sign be concealed within the sign and not be located on the exterior.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 6 - Jill Nolt, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan

## **REGULAR AGENDA**

6. [UDC 2021-11](#) Final review of a Parklet for Ms. Bee's Juice Bar; 114 W. Brookland Park Boulevard

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)

[Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

[Letters of Opposition](#)

[Letters of Support](#)

Staff has received numerous letters of support for this project, as well as a couple letters of opposition.

The subject right-of-way consists of two 18-foot parking spots adjacent to Ms. Bee's Juice Bar located at 114 W. Brookland Park Boulevard in Richmond's Northside. West Brookland Park Boulevard in this location is two travel lanes, one eastbound and one westbound, with parking on both sides of the street. The posted speed limit is 25mph. This section of West Brookland Park Boulevard is a commercial strip consisting of businesses and some residential units.

The sidewalk in this location is narrow, with little space for seating or street tree plantings. The city has constructed several bump-outs in the Right-of-way which contain small ornamental street trees and ground cover plantings.

HKS Architects, Venture Richmond, and the City of Richmond are partnering with Brandi Battle, owner of Ms. Bee's Juice Bar, on designing, permitting, and installing a custom parklet adjacent to her and her neighbors' storefronts on West Brookland Park Boulevard. Parklets are a creative way to transform public right-of-way used for parking into usable, pedestrian-friendly spaces. Parklets are common in other cities across the county and have been considered an asset during the global corona virus pandemic, creating

additional outdoor spaces.

The base design of the parklet consists of 3 modular units that can be assembled and disassembled easily, as they are not anchored to the ground. Composite decking placed perpendicularly over a frame constructed of 2x4s will be utilized for the flooring of the Parklet. An accessible, slip resistant ramp from the surface of the sidewalk to the surface of the parklet's deck will be utilized to ensure ADA compliance.

The parklet will be 28 feet long and 6' 5 1/2 inches wide, and located in two 18-foot parking spaces. On the south side of the parklet, there will be a 2 foot buffer zone between the outer wall and travel lane.

On the two ends of the parklet there will be 4-foot buffer zones, with a waste/recycling receptacle on the western end and a bike rack on the eastern end serving as additional physical barriers. The parklet will have a lightweight shade canopy supported by 8-foot metal structural posts painted yellow. Walls will be between 3 and 4 feet tall. Both the walls and shade canopy will be constructed of individual hexagonal panels that vary between red cedar and opaque and transparent yellow acrylic materials. All dimensions of the proposed parklet and buffer zones are in compliance with the City of Richmond's Parklet Design Guidelines.

The parklet will feature two standing tables, three single stools, one bench, and eleven rectangular planters. All furniture, including planters, tables, stools, and benches, will be constructed of red cedar and maintained by Ms. Bee's Juice Bar.

The interior planters will contain dwarf sunflowers and the exterior planters will contain echinacea and will be located within the 2 foot buffer zone between the parklet and the travel lane, serving as a physical buffer. All planters will be 24 inches above the ground, and maintenance will be performed by Ms. Bee's Juice Bar.

There are two water utility access points located on the sidewalk adjacent to the proposed parklet. The City of Richmond Parklet Design Guidelines state that parklets must be placed so that they "maintain at least 5 feet of clearance to utilities (including manholes and valve boxes), loading zones or handicapped parking spaces." The proposed parklet will be closer than 5 feet to two water utility access points. Staff notes that the parklet is not in keeping with this specific requirement, but still believes that this location is acceptable for the placement of a parklet for the following reasons:

- Water access points are not being covered by the parklet
- The parklet is a modular design and not anchored into the ground, and can be removed during an emergency.
- The applicant has submitted letters of support from adjacent businesses
- The parklet furthers goals of the Richmond 300 plan, creating seating and shade on a corridor that is currently underserved by those public

The City of Richmond's Master Plan, Richmond 300, in objective 17.1 speaks to increasing the number of Richmond residents within a 10-minute walk to high-quality open space to 100%, prioritizing low-income areas with a high heat vulnerability index rating. Richmond 300 identifies Brookland Park Boulevard as having a moderate to high heat vulnerability rating (figure 44 pg. 171). Objective 17.1.f suggests that the City promote the Parklet Program and encourage the development of parklets throughout the City (pg.168) On a site visit, staff noted that this portion of West Brookland Park has few street trees, confirming the area's vulnerability to heat. The proposed parklet will have a canopy that will provide shade to its users. Staff finds the installation of a parklet in this location is a creative way to add more public open space to this urban setting, increasing residents' and visitors' access to a public park.

While the City of Richmond's Urban Design Guidelines do not mention parklets specifically, the guidelines reference public parks:

"Public parks are integral to the quality of life found in any urban landscape. Parks should respond to the environment in which they are located and should be designed in accordance with their intended use" (pg. 9). Parklets are a unique way to reclaim right-of-way for public use, and respond to the need of gathering/green space in an urban setting. The proposed parklet will be sponsored by Ms. Bee's Juice Bar, but will be open to the public for use. The parklet will respond to its setting, providing a gathering and seating space that is shaded in a location that does not currently have these amenities.

The Guidelines note that "site furnishings, such as benches and trash receptacles, should be appropriately styled and scaled to complement building architecture" (page 24). The Guidelines also note that "site furnishings should be durable, both in construction and finish, and be easy to maintain and to install" (page 25). Staff finds that the parklet design and all related furnishings and materials are in substantial compliance with the City of Richmond's Urban Design Guidelines and Parklet Design Guidelines.

Staff finds that the proposed parklet is in substantial compliance with the City of Richmond's Urban Design Guidelines, the City of Richmond's Parklet Design Guidelines, and furthers the objectives of the Richmond 300 Master Plan by constructing a creative public space that will add to the vibrancy, activity, and usability of the right-of-way on Brookland Park Boulevard.

Therefore, Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that Planning Commission approve the final design with the following conditions:

- The parklet include furnishings accessible to all potential users, including a wheelchair accessible table
- A reflective element be added to the exterior of the parklet

This item will move on to Planning Commission, then to the Department of Public Works for final approval.

Ms. Nolt asked if the current review was a final review. Mr. Dandridge confirmed that it was.

Ms. Nolt asked if technical documents had been received regarding the parklet design. Mr. Dandridge stated that they had been received and could be shown and reviewed as needed.

Mr. Nick Cooper introduced himself as co-applicant and parklet designer.

Mr. Cooper stated that the applicants have been trying to get more parklets operational since the Covid pandemic began, in order to create safe and usable outdoor spaces and help local businesses, and that this application is a continuation of that effort.

Mr. Cooper stated that he wished to emphasize that the submitted parklet design is modular and thus easily built and dismantled as needed.

Mr. Cooper stated that shade was a priority in this parklet design, as the applicants are aware in can be lacking in urban settings. Mr. Cooper stated that the overall design is in response to the aesthetic and branding of the Ms. Bee's Juice Bar brand and stylistic vernacular, and that the designers felt it was important to create something artistically unique and positive that contributes to the neighborhood and the City.

Mr. Cooper stated that the project had been vetted by his firm's engineers and that it meets all force requirements of the parklet guidelines. Mr. Cooper stated that fundraising

would be the next step after approval, and that the applicants hoped to get the project underway as soon as possible.

The business-owner and co-applicant, Mrs. Brandi Battle-Brown, stated that she believed the parklet would be a valuable contribution and attraction, and an amenity for members of the public as well as their pets.

Ms. Clarke stated that she is very supportive of the project, and expressed concern that there should be more seating within the parklet, and suggested that the bench be L-shaped to accommodate more people. Ms. Clarke stated that the high stools appear to create accessibility issues for wheelchair-bound and elderly visitors, as well as being awkward for parents with strollers.

Mr. Cooper stated that the number of stools shown in the drawing referred to is incorrect, and indicated on a different drawing that the 7 yellow hexagons represent 7 low stools. Mr. Cooper stated that the reason for the minimal amount of stools and tables is that the space is envisioned to be flexible and versatile, allowing seating to be removed for standing events such as presentations or lessons in beekeeping or health education, as well as for seating to be added as needed. Mr. Cooper stated that due to the modular design, it is easy to add more tables or chairs.

Mr. Cooper expressed agreement with Ms. Clarke, stating that it would be a great idea to at least add a built-in L-shaped stool on the edge of the parklet, and perhaps build fewer of the tables.

Mr. Quilici asked if the hexagonal shapes shown in the drawing at the edge were usable for seating. Mr. Cooper stated that some of the hexagons are for seating and some are for planting, and that it would be an easy matter to punch out more along the long back edge and create more stools of varying heights.

Mr. Quilici expressed concern about the bike rack location, and whether there would be enough space to fit a bike rack and bikes for proper usage. Mr. Quilici stated that the trash and recycling appear to be oriented so that people must stand in the road to use it, and asked if a different configuration or a different bin design could be used.

Mr. Cooper stated that the bike rack orientation shown in the drawing was incorrect and should actually be rotated 90 degrees, and that the applicants are working with Yessenia Revilla of Planning and Development Review to decide upon an appropriate trash container and configuration.

Ms. Nolt asked about the height of the parklet roof and how this would relate to the existing storefront and signage, and whether the roof would block some signage. Mr. Cooper stated that the canopy height was designed to be sufficiently tall without blocking the signage of the storefronts. Mr. Cooper indicated a new perspective drawing in his possession, too recently done to be included in the submission materials, which shows the view from across the street. Mr. Cooper stated that from across the street, behind the parklet, it can be seen that the shade canopy is right underneath the storefront signs.

Ms. Nolt asked what the clear height inside the parklet would be. Mr. Dandridge stated that he believed it would be 8 feet. Mr. Cooper confirmed this.

Ms. Clarke stated that the parklet roof looks like a greenhouse, and asked if it would really provide shade. Mr. Cooper stated that there would be two kinds of panel used for the roof, one of which blocks all light, and another kind which allows a small amount of light. Mr. Cooper stated that shade is planned to be about 80%, but that this could be

modified to be even more opaque if that is deemed necessary.

Ms. Clarke asked if the parklet would be a year-round structure, and if heating equipment would be used in winter.

Mr. Cooper stated that ideally there would be year-round use of the parklet, and that a suitable heating machinery would need to be researched by the designers, something which would generate sufficient heat but not enough to compromise the canopy structure.

Ms. Nolt asked about drainage and potential water retention of the hexagonal elements of the roof, and whether the roof would have a pitch to it to facilitate drainage. Mr. Cooper stated that there would be a slight roof slope from the sidewalk toward the street, with some drainage diverting to the planters and the rest running off, and that there would be no seams in the hexagonally segmented roof. Ms. Nolt asked how the roof is distinctly made up of hexagons and yet at the same time a continuous sealed sheet, as described by Mr.

Cooper. Mr. Cooper stated that there would be a continuous sheet of Plexiglas on the top of the parklet, over the modules. The frames would still be visible, as in the diagram submitted with the project plans, but the roof would still perform and shed water as one continuous sheet. Mr. Cooper stated that there would be two seams at the one-third modular dimension: 8' 8" and 9' 3.5".

Mr. Quilici asked for confirmation that other than the roof, the parklet would be open for ventilation; that the roof structure would allow light to penetrate, and that the roof would be positioned about 2 inches above the parklet structure. Mr. Cooper confirmed all of these items.

Mr. Quilici asked if the roof would be engineered to withstand snow load during winter. Mr. Cooper stated that the columns are 8 inches thick and there are steel support beams, and that the project's structural engineer addressed all possible loads on the canopy.

Mr. Quilici asked, since the plexiglas is separated by a couple inches from the wood parklet structure to allow air flow, how it would withstand snow load. Mr. Cooper stated that the slope is defined by the columns, not created by the arrangement of the Plexiglas roof component, and there is no difference of elevation from the hexagon layer to the Plexiglas layer on top of it.

Mr. Woodson asked about the fireproof rating of the parklet, and the likelihood, in the event of a fire, of it spreading from the parklet to nearby storefronts. Mr. Cooper stated that the parklet would be mostly made of wood and thus not as fire-resistant as it could be if made of concrete or steel, and that he did not believe the designers had done a .

Mr. Quilici asked if there was any fire-resistance requirement in the parklet guidelines. Mr. Dandridge stated that he did not believe there was.

Mr. Doyle stated that he likes the design, and just wanted to emphasize the point about bike rack and trash locations. Mr. Doyle asked how adjacent business owners feel about the parklet project concept.

Mr. Cooper stated that he believed there to be an additional parklet proposal in the works by the business located two doors down from Ms. Bee's. Mr. Cooper stated that it was hoped that an approval for Ms. Bee's project would facilitate the approval of similar projects nearby and simplify their process.

In terms of neighborhood sentiment, Mr. Cooper stated that the applicant had done her due diligence of having her project vetted by the property owner and by the nearby business owners.

Ms. Brandi Battle-Brown stated, regarding neighborhood support, stated that she had consulted with the owner and with nearby businesses and had actually secured approval in writing.

Ms. Clarke stated that she had read that there was some opposition to the parklet based on its taking up in-demand parking space, and asked why the parklet was not located in front of Ms. Bee's business, and the bump-out removed, thus creating a parking space. Ms. Battle-Brown stated that she had suggested the same thing, but that they had been unwilling to move it. Ms. Battle-Brown stated that she would be renting additional parking space in the back of the building, which would be available for her own and other area customers.

Mr. Cooper asked if that had been the only negative feedback which the applicants had been asked to address. Ms. Clarke stated that this was the only item she had seen.

Ms. Nolt stated that the curb extension is built in place and therefore might be difficult to remove, and asked if the applicants had considered building the parklet over it, moving the plants and leaving the curb and accommodating it under the platform of the parklet, thus picking up one additional parking space. Mr. Cooper stated that this had been the applicants' idea originally, but the applicants had been told that this could not be allowed.

Mr. Cooper stated that the benefit of having it was that it provided another level of buffer from the sidewalk edge.

Ms. Nolt asked who had informed the applicants they could not remove the curb extension. Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that this opposition would have come from the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Woodson asked if the gutter was unimpeded so as to allow rainwater drainage and avoid debris buildup.

Mr. Cooper stated that it was, and that the applicants had been intentional in lifting up the parklet to provide clearance.

Acting Committee Chair Nolt asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

Ms. Nolt reminded the Committee that they had received copies of the letters of support, as well as letters of opposition to the project.

Ms. Nolt stated that it seemed as if all Committee concerns and questions had been addressed.

Mr. Buchanan stated that Venture Richmond, with whom he works, is involved with a Picnic in a Parklet program, but has no direct connection to this project, nor any financial investment of any kind. Ms. Nolt asked if

Mr. Dandridge would advise Mr. Hepp-Buchanan to recuse. Mr. Dandridge stated that his understanding was that any involvement in a project would be grounds for recusal.

**A motion was made by Committee Member Woodson that this item be approved with the following conditions: the parklet include furnishings accessible to all potential users, including a wheelchair accessible table; a reflective element be added to the exterior of the parklet; more flexible seating be provided within the**

parklet; the bike rack and trash/recycling bin on either side of the parklet be rotated 90 degrees.

Mr. Quilici asked if the points about bike racks, trash location, and seating should be addressed in the motion. Ms. Nolt stated that a second should occur first before tailoring the motion.

Mr. Quilici suggested that the aforementioned items be added as amendments to the motion. Mr. Woodson agreed to incorporating the suggestions about the bike racks, trash cans, and maximizing the flexible seating as suggested by Ms.

Clarke

Committee Member Clarke seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

**Aye --** 5 - Jill Nolt, Charles Woodson, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle and Eva Clarke

**Abstain --** 1 - Max Hepp-Buchanan

7. [UDC 2021-12](#) Final location, character, and extent review of exterior alterations and accessibility improvements at the Round House located in Byrd Park; 621 Westover Road

**Attachments:** [Location & Plans](#)  
[Staff Report to UDC](#)

The subject property is located on a triangular parcel of open space in Byrd Park bounded by Westover Street and Swan Lake Drive to the south and Lakeview Avenue to the north. The existing building has an addition on the southern side, filling in some of the covered porch, as well a wooden accessible ramp on the southern side of the building. There is an existing sidewalk from the western side of the building that leads to Westover Road.

The Round House is a 2,500-square-foot, octagonal, Colonial Revival style, one-story masonry building with a full wrap-around covered porch constructed in 1914. The building has always served as a public amenity for Byrd Park. The building has fluted Doric columns and a decorative cornice with a "star" design.

The Project Scope of Work includes exterior renovations to provide compliant ADA accessibility and to repair or replace failing exterior details consisting of the following:

1. Replacing the existing access ramp with concrete slab matching the stairs and masonry walls matching the porch support walls.
2. Replacing the existing railings with code-compliant guardrails and handrails.
3. Replacing the existing porch decking, porch ceiling, column enclosures, fascia beams, and rafter tails with composite faux wood materials that mimic the existing materials and match existing profiles.
4. In the interior of the building, demolition of the restroom area and reconstruction with a revised ADA compliant layout.
5. Adding two ADA-compliant parking spaces and installing and replacing sidewalk to create an accessible path from the spaces to the building.

No landscaping is being proposed in the scope of this project.

"For significant older buildings, original building elements, materials, and features should be retained and repaired, as feasible. Building materials and elements from an earlier time which are not appropriate for the architecture of the building should not be added to

create a false historical appearance” (pg. 17). On a site visit, Staff noticed that while there were several deteriorated rafter tails and other wooden elements around the downspouts, most of the wooden elements appeared to be intact and were not damaged beyond repair, but rather in need of maintenance. Staff recommends that the applicant consider retaining and repairing any original materials rather than replacing them with composite faux wood. Any faux wood replacement elements should match the original in design, specifically the fluted columns and decorative cornice.

The existing handrail on the porch does not appear to be original to the building, as the Round House was likely constructed without a porch railing. To more accurately portray the historic appearance of the porch while meeting all building code requirements, Staff recommends that the applicant install a new railing that is attached to the porch floor, not the columns, and is minimally visibly obtrusive.

“Where possible, handicap ramps should be located so that they are sensitive to primary building elevations.

The design of handicap ramps should relate to building architecture and exterior building materials. A ramp’s base and its railings should be of an appropriate material and finish to complement the adjacent building.

Unpainted wooden ramps are not acceptable. Landscaping may be planted adjacent to handicap ramps for screening. A preference is given to grade modifications that allow for handicap access through the building’s primary entrance, as opposed to separate ramp facilities” (pg.19) The existing wooden accessible ramp is proposed to be replaced with a new concrete accessible ramp on a brick base. The brick base will relate to the brick exterior of the main building. Currently there are shrubs that screen the accessible ramp. Staff recommends that if any of the existing bushes are damaged or removed during the construction of the new accessible ramp, new shrubs for screening be replanted for screening the ramp.

Staff is supportive of the overall plan, and recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval of the plan with the following conditions:

- Applicant consider retaining and repairing any original materials rather than replacing them with composite faux wood. If repair is not feasible, any replacement architectural elements should match the original in design, specifically the fluted columns and decorative cornice
- Applicant utilize a new railing that is attached to the porch floor, not the columns, and that is minimally visibly obtrusive
- If any of the existing bushes are damaged or removed during the construction of the new accessible ramp, new shrubs for screening be replanted after being reviewed by staff

Michael Gibson of Mosely Gibson Architects introduced himself and stated that Mr. Heywood Harrison of Richmond Parks and Recreation was also present online, and that the applicants could answer any questions as needed.

Mr. Doyle asked about the two proposed parking spaces, and asked if on-street accessible spaces with possibly a ramp to the new sidewalk had been considered, so as to avoid adding more impermeable paving to the park grounds. Mr. Gibson stated that the existing grades are such that on-street accessible parking is not possible without changing the grades, which in turn would adversely affect drainage. Mr. Gibson stated that there is currently parallel parking along the line where the parking spaces are being placed, and that another location at the south side of the park was considered for the parking, but that this would have required removing a tree.

Ms. Nolt asked if angled parking lot had been considered to make parking in the accessible parking spaces easier. Ms. Nolt asked also if some additional length in the parking space could be considered, in case of longer vehicles. Mr. Patrick Hill of Timmons Group stated that to his knowledge the street is two-way, therefore the parking was configured at a 90 degree angle to accommodate parking by motorists coming from either direction. Mr. Hill stated that the minimum length specification for ADA accessible spaces is 18 feet, and that the proposed spaces are currently planned to be 20 feet, but that longer parking spaces could be considered.

Ms. Nolt stated that the road has no sidewalk, which requires pedestrians to step into the shoulder/gutter area to avoid oncoming vehicles, hence her suggestion of longer parking spaces to leave the gutter area open for pedestrians. Mr. Hill stated that this made sense. Regarding the addition of impermeable paved surface, Mr. Hill stated that if the on-street parking were to be bumped out with a parallel configuration like normal street parking, the width required to make those spaces ADA-compliant would add a considerable amount of paved area. Mr. Hill stated that the perpendicular spaces were chosen so as to minimize the impervious surface required for the accessible parking.

Mr. Quilici stated that the main entrance to the building appears to be opposite the park, and that it appeared that a wheelchair-bound person would have to enter at the back. Mr. Quilici asked where the main entrance is located. Mr. Gibson stated that the main entrance is north. Mr. Quilici stated that it appeared that a wheelchair-bound person entering the building would have to go to the back of the building and either enter through the bathrooms or go around from the back to get to the front of the building. Mr. Gibson stated that a wheelchair-bound person would have to come up the ramp and then go around to the north side. Mr. Gibson stated that the crosshatched area on the north side in the proposal drawing indicated an area of the deck that slopes upward 6 or 7 inches to the assembly area.

Mr. Gibson stated that a wheelchair-bound person would not be able to enter at the back.

Mr. Quilici suggested that since the ramp is not original and is being redesigned, a universal accessibility design be considered, allowing all visitors, including those with impaired mobility, has the same opportunity to access the building.

Mr. Harrison stated that he did not know how universal accessibility could be done without significantly changing the appearance of the building, and that mainly the applicants are replacing the existing, old wooden ramp. Mr. Harrison stated that most visitors do not directly enter at the main entrance, and that in fact most visitors to the roundhouse enter by taking the stairs located at the bottom of the ramp, then walking the ramp to the front door.

Mr. Dandridge pointed out that the ramp entrance has the most bulletins and signage, which would seem to indicate its being primary. Mr. Harrison stated that this entrance is nearest to street parking on Westover Road, and thus most used. Mr. Quilici stated that this makes sense, but that nonetheless it seemed like there would be an opportunity to better integrate the ramp with the architecture of the building, as currently it disrupts the original appearance of the building, and also to begin to implement universal accessibility at park spaces in Richmond.

Mr. Gibson stated that he had considered these same ideas when first approaching the redesign, including possibly relocating the ramp, and had ended up making the same conclusion as Mr. Harrison. Mr. Gibson stated that there are existing stairs to the basement which used to be where bathrooms were located but is now only used for

storage, and a sidewalk to those now vestigial stairs, and a ramp for porch access. Mr. Gibson stated that there is a layering of existing circulation...

Mr. Gibson stated that he believes the proposed design works well, in that it keeps the "back of house stuff" to the back of the building, which the non-original entry ramp in front is incorporated into that area.

Mr. Quilici stated that there are many existing sets of stairs going down, and suggested that one of the existing staircases be redesigned and integrated better with the new design, so as to lose the "no man's land" between the disused basement stairs and the new ramp.

Mr. Gibson stated that the removal of an existing staircase would be a matter for Parks and Recreation to consider. Mr. Harrison stated that he was not very familiar with the basement layout, nor with how the back stairs are used to access the basement, but that the entrance near the ramp seemed to be better than the one located in the back. Mr. Harrison stated that he would have to discuss with Parks and Recreation staff to determine if it is even possible to eliminate the existing set of stairs near the ramp.

Mr. Quilici stated that it would be great if it were possible for everyone to enter the building in a dignified manner, without a separate back entrance for handicapped visitors. Mr. Harrison stated that he could not promise that it would be possible, but that the applicants would consider it.

Mr. Hill asked Mr. Gibson whether the slopes of the planned ramps would be a "hindrance to moving that over further"

Mr. Gibson stated that a switchback, or something like it, would be the result. Mr. Hill stated that it would project out fairly far.

Ms. Nolt asked whether the restrooms are at the same elevation as the assembly space on the inside, or whether they are at the same elevation as the porch. Mr. Gibson stated that they would be at the same elevation as the assembly space on the inside.

Ms. Nolt asked if the exterior door that provides access to the restrooms is accessible. Mr. Gibson stated that the applicants would be adding a landing which would add one step at the threshold to the door, where currently there is just a dropoff. Ms. Nolt stated that a wheelchair-bound person would then have to go around to the front door and through the assembly area, where an event may be in progress, in order to access the restrooms. Ms. Nolt asked if the restrooms in question are open for public use. Mr. Harrison stated that those restrooms are only open during times that the building is open. Mr. Harrison stated that currently the restrooms are not accessible, and that part of the applicants' intention was to make the restrooms accessible to the users of the space when the building is open.

Ms. Nolt asked if the door could be removed or permanently locked, so that there is not inconsistent restroom access and also so that the step leading to the ramp could be eliminated, as it appears to be an obstruction if the ramp remains in that location.

Ms. Nolt stated that if a switchback is put in place which causes the ramp to bring visitors to either the west or east side of the building, then the step would be less of an issue.

Mr. Gibson stated that there is a distance of five feet or more between the top landing of the ramp and the stoop for the door, so all requirements for clearances and such are met.

Mr. Gibson stated that the door is not much used for exterior access and that the applicants had meant to get rid of the door but were asked to keep it in order to maintain the maximum occupancy allowance of the building. Ms. Nolt asked what the maximum occupancy of the building is. Mr. Gibson stated that he would have to check his notes. Mr. Quilici stated that it was probably more than 60. Ms. Nolt stated that she believed a capacity of 50 or more requires two exits.

Ms. Nolt suggested that, if it is not required by code, the door be rendered unusable.

Mr. Gibson stated that the occupancy allowance of the building is well over 100 people.

Mr. Quilici suggested that, since the floor all around the building is being redone, the possibility be explored of raising all the surrounding ground to the level of the finish floor, thus being able to eliminate the ramp in the front and the step in the back and have a more seamless means of navigating the building. Mr. Gibson stated that he had wanted to avoid altering the building that much, thinking that staying truer to the original construction might be more of a priority. Mr. Heywood stated that this could also add significantly to the budget. Mr. Quilici stated that, if the entire wood floor is removed, as is planned, then perhaps it is not much of a further step to shim the floor or otherwise address level issues which affect accessibility. Mr. Quilici pointed out that the ramps are not historic, so there is no preservation reason for keeping them.

Mr. Woodson stated that he was not in favor of the railings at the front of the building and would prefer a traditional wood style, though these would require further maintenance.

Ms. Clarke expressed agreement with

Mr. Woodson regarding the railing.

Mr. Woodson left the meeting at this juncture.

Mr. Gibson stated that the actual railing system would be a cable system, with the post and top rail being actually more prominent than in the drawing, but the other parts, being thin cables, would not be as visually prominent as in the drawing. Mr. Gibson stated that the railing system, being cable, is removable and minimal, and also signals clearly that it is not historic and thus not misleading.

Ms. Nolt suggested that the visibility of the railing could be reduced even more by eliminating some of the guardrail system, where it is only 30 inches off grade, and just having a handrail for part of the run. Ms. Nolt stated that the guardrail would in reality be less prominent than it seems in the drawing, but that it would still be desirable to reduce the amount of guardrail, particularly as there are areas where the visual layering of several cable guardrails would become very noticeable.

Mr. Gibson stated that eliminating the guardrail would be possible only along the ramp, the porch where the ramp connects being actually the lowest point of the porch. Mr. Gibson stated that he had considered raising all the landscaping surrounding the porch, so that no guardrails are necessary, but that this seemed unfeasible and possibly not in keeping with the historic siting of the structure.

Ms. Nolt asked how many inches would be required to take that approach, and put a slope on the planting beds.

Ms. Nolt stated that she realized that could not be eliminated where there are areaways to the basement, but suggested that where there are planting beds the slope could be

graded up. Mr. Gibson stated that around the front, the grade is about a foot from the porch. Mr. Gibson stated that where the ramp connects is the minimum height, which is 32 inches or thereabouts. Mr. Harrison confirmed this and stated that the ramp location is the lowest point.

Mr. Quilici expressed support for the idea of the guardrail not being visibly prominent and not appearing deceptively historic, and suggested considering the railing solution used at the Potters Field site, which has stainless steel elements and a kind of mesh, and which is very effective at being barely noticeable visually. Mr.

Quilici expressed support for Ms. Nolt's suggestion of limiting the extent of the cable as much as possible, and also for the idea of eliminating some ramps and railings by raising the surrounding landscaping. Mr. Quilici stated that integrating the ramp with the architecture would help to eliminate the need for the various types of railings.

Acting Committee Chair Jill Nolt asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

**A motion was made by Committee Member Quilici that this item be deferred to allow for the opportunity to consider the following for re-submittal: explore incorporating the new accessible ramp design into the architecture of the building, rather than having it be a separate entity, providing universal access; explore raising the porch floor to match that of the finished floor of the building as a solution addressing accessibility issues; explore raising the slope of the ground around building to eliminate the need for a porch guardrail; explore the utilization of permeable paving materials within the accessible parking spots along Westover Road; provide different options of railings that are minimally visibly obtrusive, including photos and material specifications for those options.**

**Mr. Clarke stated that building parking spaces within City public space concerned him, and that Byrd Park has many roads running through it which provide on-street parking opportunities. Mr. Clarke asked that if there is any way to utilize existing infrastructure in Byrd Park to designate two handicapped spaces, this would be a much preferable option. Mr. Clarke stated that if this is not possible, the use of some sort of permeable surface for the parking spaces would be appreciated.**

**Mr. Quilici expressed agreement with Mr. Clarke, and stated that if the traffic is two-way it would probably be difficult to set up parallel parking, but if it is one-way, it should be possible to designate two ADA accessible spaces.**

**There was general discussion as to whether the section of road under discussion is one-way or two-way, but no clear conclusion. Mr. Harrison stated that he believed the section in front of the Roundhouse to be two-way.**

**Mr. Gibson stated that the Roundhouse is rented out for events, and that it would be desirable to have the parking close enough to be usable for those events. Mr. Clarke suggested that the two parking spaces closest to the ramp be designated for ADA accessible use.**

**Committee Member Clarke seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:**

**Aye -- 5 - Jill Nolt, Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke and Max Hepp-Buchanan**

**Excused -- 1 - Charles Woodson**

**OTHER BUSINESS**

## Hull Street Streetscape Improvements

Mr. Dandridge stated that he had consulted with the City's legal department, and it had been determined that location, character and extent review was not triggered with this project, and therefore the UDC did not need to formally review the Hull Street improvements.

Mr. Dandridge stated that he had intended to discuss this project briefly at the current meeting toward the possibility of a subcommittee or informal review to look at the project; however, the project manager had reached out to Mr. Dandridge and informed him that about another month would be needed to assemble project information. Therefore Mr. Dandridge suggested that the May UDC meeting might be the suitable time to discuss the project.

Mr. Quilici asked why the project was not slated for UDC review.

Mr. Dandridge stated that the reasoning for not having UDC review the project was that that all the changes would be in-kind and in the right of way, and that the usage of the right-of-way would not be changed. Mr. Dandridge stated that some of the items in the public right of way would include bump-out planting areas and pre-approved City trash cans Manchester light fixtures and other furnishings. Mr. Dandridge stated that he did however think that someone on the UDC would have to review the planting plan.

Mr. Quilici stated that he found it hard to accept that this project would not be reviewed by the UDC, given that the work is in the right of way and entails the location of bike racks, trash cans, and streetlights which are items for which the UDC could provide useful feedback.

Ms. Nolt stated that the project did not seem significantly different from other streetscape improvement or traffic calming plans that UDC had previously reviewed.

Ms. Nolt stated that even if the usage of the right of way was not changed, the character and extent of the right of way would change. Mr. Dandridge stated that the installation of Manchester streetlights would change the character, but this is a pre-approved design; all pavement materials would remain the same.

Mr. Dandridge stated that if this project did not trigger a formal review, he did want to at least have an informal meeting with the applicant or set up a UDC subcommittee to discuss the project. Mr. Dandridge stated that his current information from the City's legal staff was that UDC would not review, but that he could continue to meet with the City's legal team regarding UDC's responsibility in this matter.

Ms. Nolt proposed that a subcommittee be formed to be engaged with the project to some extent, if it does not come before the UDC for formal review.

Mr. Quilici asked for confirmation that this subcommittee would only review the landscape. Mr. Dandridge stated that the landscape was his main concern, but that a subcommittee could comment on the project as a whole.

Ms. Clarke stated that she would like to be on the subcommittee, to be involved with planting selection and make sure they are native plants and appropriate and of good quality. Mr. Doyle stated that he would also be interested.

A motion was made by Committee Member Nolt that a subcommittee be formed made up of Ms. Clarke and Mr. Doyle for the purpose of considering review of streetscape elements for the Hull Street Streetscape Improvement project.

Committee Member Quilici seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

Aye – 5 - Andrea Quilici, Justin Doyle, Eva Clarke, Max Hepp-Buchanan, Jill Nolt

Excused – 5 –Chair Andrea Almond, Drew Gould, Emily Smith, John Reyna, Todd Woodson

Mr. Quilici and Mr. Dandridge expressed their thanks to Ms. Nolt for her service on the Committee, and her willingness to step in and lead the meetings as needed.

## **Adjournment**

Acting Committee Chair Nolt adjourned the meeting at 12:13 PM.