



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: March 18, 2019
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of Southside Community Center Master Plan, 6255 Old Warwick Road; UDC 2019-13**

I. APPLICANT

L. Dexter Goode, Department of Public Works, Special Capital Projects

II. LOCATION

6255 Old Warwick Road, Richmond, VA, 23225

Property Owner:

City of Richmond C/O Chief Admin Officer

III. PURPOSE

The application is for the final location, character, and extent review of the Southside Community Center Master Plan, 17.98 acres in the Midlothian Planning District.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The plan proposes to develop a regional park for diversified recreational opportunities for the residents of the Midlothian Planning District. Since the conceptual approval in June 2018, it was clarified that a sidewalk along Old Warwick Road connecting the trail/boardwalk on the north side of the site to Warwick Road on the south side of the site does not fall within the scope of this project and will be addressed in a future, larger DPW infrastructure project. Additionally, bio-retention areas have been modified yet still uphold storm water requirements and water quality control.

Staff finds the project to be well-considered, with the renovation and repurposing of key structures, the continued utilization of specific existing paved areas, and the programming of compatible indoor and outdoor activities. Staff further finds the proposed plan improves the programming of the site, providing a better mix of active and passive uses as well as enhanced cohesiveness overall. Thus, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The 17.98 acre site is the former campus of the Richmond Outreach Center, formerly known as the ROC Church. In addition to the Gymnasium and the former sanctuary building, an assortment of pre-existing, poor condition buildings of various scale and utility are situated on site, including a small skate park, a multi-use field, three baseball fields, and expansive parking areas.

b. Scope of Review

The improvements associated with this project are subject to location, character, and extent review as a “park” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

At its regular meeting on June 18, 2018, the Planning Commission voted to recommend conceptual approval as submitted with the conditions set forth by the UDC at their June 7, 2018 meeting.

At its regular meeting on June 7, 2018, the UDC recommended that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval of the Southside Community Center Master Plan (UDC 2018-23) with the following conditions:

- That the final plans address, for any aspect of this proposal, sustainability as detailed in the Urban Design Guidelines such as, but not limited to:
 - The utilization of pervious pavement for the parking areas
 - An increase in programming to address stormwater drainage
 - Additional trees to be planted along the trail and within the parking lot islands
- That the final plan consider the position of the softball field to ensure stray balls do not negatively impact oncoming traffic
- That the final plan consider access between the trail and the parking lot to the north of the softball field
- That the final plan provide a comprehensive planting plan and schedule
- That the final plan provide a lighting plan, considering the use of LED with a 3000k correlated color temperature or less

At the regular June 2016 meeting of the UDC, the original application (UDC 2016-19) came forward for final review; however, all the subsequent staff reports, recommendations, and approvals referenced that the application came for conceptual review. The UDC recommended that the application be approved, conceptually, with the condition that:

- The final plans for any projects show how the project will address sustainability as detailed in the Urban Design Guidelines

The regular June 2016 meeting of the Planning Commission saw this proposal, UDC 2016-19, approved on the consent agenda with the conditions put forth by the UDC.

d. Project Description

The City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (DPRCF) plans to begin phased construction of the Southside Community Center Master Plan site adopted by the UDC and Planning Commission in 2018. The overall site redevelopment plans within provide construction documents and details needed to construct exterior park features in the approved master plan. These elements include an entry plaza and drop-off, playground, skate park, community garden, orchard, basketball court, softball field, multi-purpose field, and trails. Final plans for the community center building renovation/addition are not included in this UDC package, as funding does not currently allow for final design and construction of this facility.

The City of Richmond Department of Parks Recreation and Community Facilities purchased the Southside Community Center property in 2014 with the goal of creating a regional park to provide diversified recreational opportunities for the residents of the Midlothian Planning District. In the spring of 2015, the design team of Worley Associates and Timmons Group was engaged to prepare a master plan for the park. This master plan was adopted by the UDC and Planning Commission in 2016. In 2018, the master plan was revised and updated to meet the current needs of the City. This plan was adopted by the UDC and Planning Commission in the spring of 2018 and serves as the current site master plan.

Subsequently, the DPRCF contracted Worley Associates and Timmons Group for technical services to complete construction documents suitable for competitive bidding and construction. Currently, the city is receiving bids to demolish the existing buildings on site with the exception of the existing gymnasium and boxing trailer which will remain until the new community center is constructed. The site work will be phased as funding becomes available; these plans represent future conditions of the total site improvements.

The Southside Community Center Project is funded through the City of Richmond's Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Currently, there is approximately \$1,360,000 available for this project. These available funds are scheduled to be used for demolition of selected buildings on the site, site preparation and for the construction of a new skate park. The Department of Parks Recreation and Community Facilities has requested additional CIP funding totaling \$14,000,000 (\$7,000,000 in FY2020 and \$7,000,000 in FY2021).

Due to the necessary phasing of this project, construction will involve the following sequence and general timeline:

1. March 2019 – July 2019: Demolition of existing buildings on site (except for gymnasium and boxing trailer)
2. October 2019 – March 2020: Construction of Phase I site work (scope TBD based on funding)
3. TBD – Construction of Phase II site work (as funding allows)
4. TBD – Construction of Building / Community Center (as funding allows)

e. Master Plan

The Master Plan for this area does not designate this as an area for parks & recreation due to the fact that it was private property at the time; it is designated in the existing land use map of that plan as an institutional/semi-public use to reflect its former use as a semi-private recreation area. The general recommendations for this area are supportive of more parks & recreation access provided they can be adequately maintained, secure and safe for surrounding neighborhoods, and designed to take drainage concerns into account.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines note that “a preference should be given towards materials and construction techniques which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality. Lighting and landscaping should allow for surveillance and policing activities, but should be designed primarily to accommodate the intended use of the park” (p. 9).