

Frank L. Robinson

December 16, 2015

Mr. Jeff Eastman
Senior Planner, Planning and Preservation Division Secretary
Urban Design Committee
Department of Planning and Development Review
City of Richmond
City Hall, Room 511
900 East Broad Street,
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Maymont Horticulture Building

Dear Mr. Eastman:

I have been asked to review and comment on the current plans of the Maymont Foundation regarding a proposed Horticulture Building and adjoining facilities.

Two of the most significant responsibilities of leadership for a non-profit organization are to manage resources well, and to plan for long-term needs in order to ensure the organization will thrive for the public good.

I believe Maymont Foundation is demonstrating both qualities in the proposed new additions. These have been thoughtfully designed and sited.

Horticulture is one of the fundamental responsibilities of the Maymont staff, maintaining the invaluable collection of trees and historic gardens on the property. Their work, and that of the hundreds of community volunteers who help with the horticultural care, (exceeding 6500 volunteer hours for horticulture alone in 2015), is essential to the safety, beauty and daily experience of the gem that is Maymont Park. The Horticulture Building will provide a centralized operating base for the staff, but also much needed facilities for volunteer check-in, work assignments and orientation.

In addition to the "regular" volunteers, as you no doubt know, there is a growing trend for corporate volunteer workdays benefitting non-profit organizations. As these groups are looking for team-building opportunities through their volunteer efforts, they often come in dozens at a time, requiring space for meeting, training and dining. In 2015, nearly 1200 corporate volunteers participated in such efforts at Maymont. There are currently no adequate facilities to accommodate their needs - while their work benefits the Park and Richmond citizens.

Frankly, this facility is long overdue at Maymont Park. Current staff, volunteer, storage and maintenance accommodations are patch-worked among structures built more than half a century ago. To continue to sustain the 100-acre Park, its many public programs and its structures, while serving more than 500,000 visitors annually, (and growing), it is only reasonable that 21st century facilities will be required to ensure its continued success.

The plans demonstrate consideration for public safety by containing maintenance vehicles within the park, while using adjoining parking areas at the Nature Center as the primary access for volunteer parking, maintenance and deliveries. The existing impervious cart path provides efficient internal circulation for maintenance equipment and staff, avoiding any additional paved road development.

The structures are appropriately residentially scaled, and architecturally allied with the nearby Nature Center. Given the depressed topography of the site, the visual impact from the perimeter will be minimal. With additions to the landscape plantings, the structures will be virtually concealed within a few years.

Given the current vitality of City of Richmond, there is no doubt that the use of the Park, and the demands on its staff and infrastructure, will continue to grow, highlighting the importance of Maymont Foundation's current master planning and fundraising efforts.

I understand that some concern has been expressed about the addition of these structures within the surrounding neighborhood. Having led Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden through its major expansion over the past two decades, I fully appreciate the concerns of neighboring residents. Change is uncomfortable for us all, and it is often difficult to translate schematic drawings into three-dimensional realities.

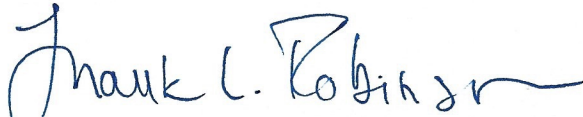
Experience, and the thorough analysis and thoughtful planning already demonstrated by Maymont's leadership, make me confident that the structures will have a neutral-to-positive impact on the area in the long term, while assuring that Maymont, as the area's greatest asset, can continue to do its work efficiently while maintaining the highest standards.

The Maymont Foundation has unfailingly sustained the Park for the benefit of its neighbors and all City residents. The Foundation's ongoing effort to raise private philanthropic funds to continue and expand its service to the community is a testament to its commitment, integrity and its vision.

I enthusiastically encourage the Department of Planning and Development Review to support this over-due and much-needed facility for the benefit of Maymont Park and its future generations of guests.

Thank you.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank L. Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frank L. Robinson

President Emeritus
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

From: [Ellen LeCompte](#)
To: [Eastman, Jeff R. - PDR](#)
Cc: [Norman Burns](#); [Pettus LeCompte](#)
Subject: Maymont Horticultural Building
Date: Wednesday, December 30, 2015 2:18:14 PM

Mr. Jeff Eastman
Senior Planner, Planning and Preservation Division Secretary
Urban Design Committee
Department of Planning and Development Review
City of Richmond
City Hall, Room 511
900 Est Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Eastman,

As a resident of Byrd Park and near neighbor to Maymont, having attended several neighborhood presentations I am writing to voice my husband, Pettus', and my support for the proposed Maymont Horticultural Building,

It is very clear to us that the much needed project has been thoroughly examined by a number of experts from Maymont, its Board, The City and the community, examining several location options and taking into consideration a comprehensive list of environmental, aesthetic, cost and visitor impact criteria. We are completely satisfied that the view-shed across the park is essentially preserved - the affect on the view is limited to an absolute minimum as demonstrated by photographs and drawings. The buildings, which are attractive, will have a very low profile and be beautifully landscaped, enhancing an area currently overgrown with scrub vegetation. More importantly, only one tree of any size will have to be removed and that one is mostly dead and at the end of its life cycle. Even better, several additional trees in keeping with the historic Shields Grove will be planted. Our understanding is that the grassy area adjacent to Hampton St. will also be preserved.

An huge benefit is that overall traffic on Hampton Street will be decreased as vehicles which have had to go off site frequently for fuel now will stay on property and as well as volunteers parking at the Nature Center, not traveling down Hampton Street, freeing up much needed space in the Hampton Street parking lot and on the side streets in the residential area. Since there is no public access to the area there will no additional traffic into the park from that driveway. Especially reassuring is that the fuel depot is extremely environmentally protected – a concrete bunker, etc. - and not a large footprint. Best of all, safety for pedestrians in the park will be greatly increased since vehicles will no longer have to travel on the road from the

Hampton Gate to the current work area behind the Dooley Garage.

We also appreciate that any potential light pollution will be minimized by under-eaves down lights - no tall street lights such as the ones Byrd Park currently has!

It is particularly encouraging that visual "blights" in the park will be removed from the view of the public (service vehicles are currently parked in the historic area and Children's Farm.) Not only will this mean that historic buildings can be properly interpreted as the Dooley's intended, the overall appearance of the park from a maintenance perspective will be much easier, efficient and less intrusive. Because parking will be in a covered area, this will extend the life and cut down on maintenance of vehicles so that money can be freed up for other park enhancements.

We would like to applaud Maymont for the thoughtful and serious approach to this long overdue Horticultural Building and their responsive approach to input from the neighborhood as demonstrated by several revisions made after community meetings. Living in Byrd Park, we are particularly relieved with the positive effect this will have on traffic in the area and the safety for guests while preserving openness of the landscape and architectural integrity of this treasured park enjoyed by so many families and visitors.

Sincerely,

Ellen LeCompte

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Richmond, VA 23220

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ellenlecompte906@gmail.com

From: [Lorna Wyckoff](#)
To: [Eastman, Jeff R. - PDR](#)
Cc: [Norman Burns](#); [Duane Deskevich](#); [Bruin Richardson](#); [Jennifer Mullen](#)
Subject: Maymont Horticultural Building
Date: Sunday, January 03, 2016 7:03:52 PM

Mr. Eastman,

I would like to register my support of Maymont and its plan for a new Horticultural building. While I appreciate the concerns of the neighbors to the east of Maymont, I wish to point out the following:

Maymont does not exist from one vantage point, one stretch of roadway, or one vista. It is not mere 100 feet or so along a sidewalk. It is an extensive complex of multiple attractions and places to visit, enjoy, walk, explore, sit. Like the adjacent park, it is all part of a vast and amazing urban experience. The proposed building is necessary to park operations, enhances and assists in the maintenance of this remarkable facility, and like the Nature Center, will blend into the landscape. I fully support and trust the stewards of Maymont who dedicate their time, money and energy to this unique urban resource.

Thank you,

Lorna Wyckoff
716 Westover Rd.
Richmond, VA 23220

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