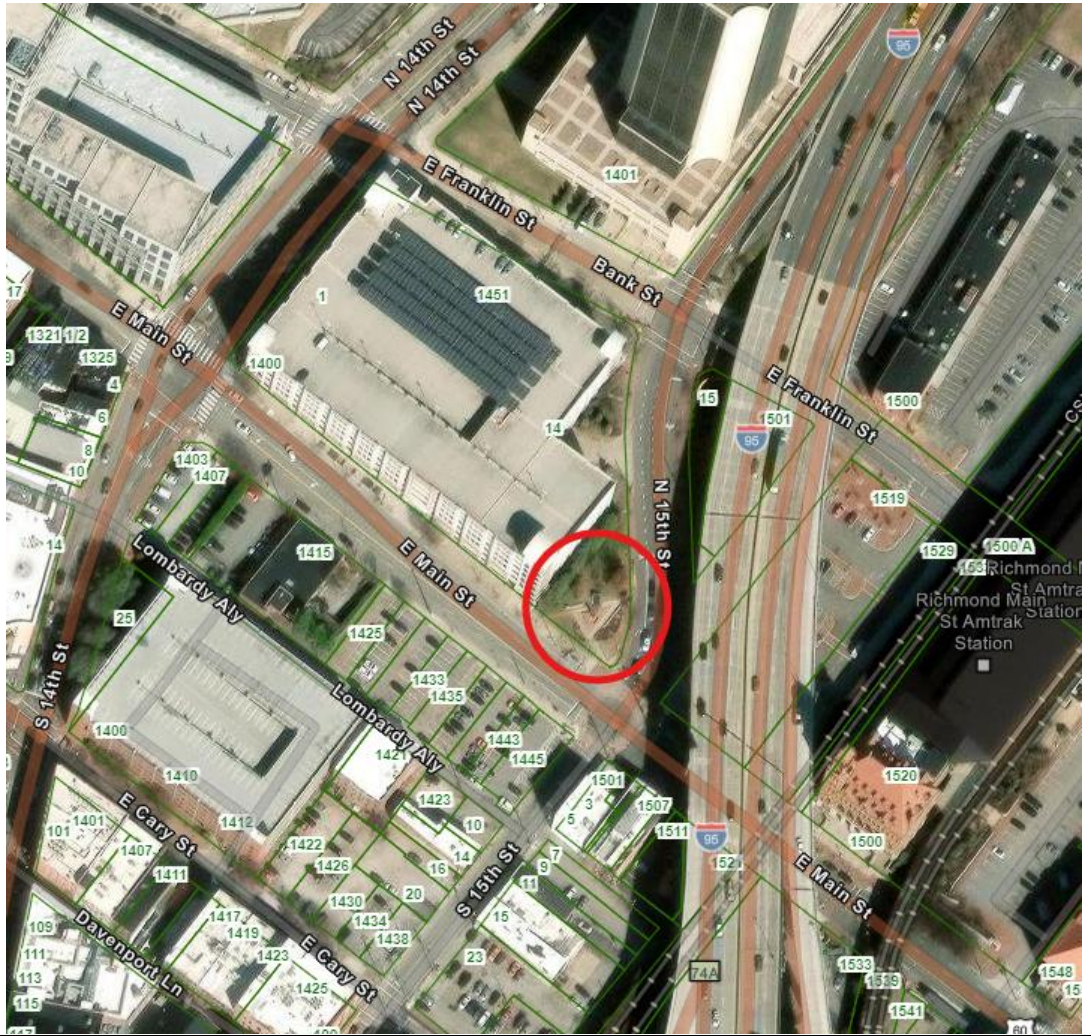




Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Urban Design Committee



UDC 2025-32	Final Review	Meeting Date: 10/16/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Dexter Goode / Department of Public Works (DPW), Special Capital Projects Group	
Project Description	UDC 2025-32 FINAL Location, Character, Extent review of the proposed renovation of Reconciliation Plaza, located at 1400 E Main St.	
Project Location		
Address: 1400 E Main Street		
Property Owner: Commonwealth Of Virginia Department Of General Services		
High-Level Details: This project is to renovate the existing Reconciliation Plaza, including repair work, landscaping, revision of some of the monument structures, and lighting.		
Staff Recommendation	APPROVAL, WITH CONDITIONS	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes – Raymond.roakes@rva.gov Kevin Costanzo - kevin.costanzo@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	The existing Plaza was approved in 2003. Please see Applicant Narrative for outreach details.	
Conditions for Approval	- Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, where applicable. - Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials and sustainable stormwater features, where appropriate, and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.	

	3. Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. 4. Staff recommends that, as part of this project, the sidewalk along North 15th Street be expanded to a more standard width. 5. Staff recommends that the proposed fountain be revised to be smaller and less complex, for maintenance purposes.

Findings of Fact

Site Description	Reconciliation Park is roughly 10,300 square feet and is located at the corner of East Main Street and North 15 th Street. The park consists of memorial statue, associated informational items, plaza, and green space. It is located on a primary entrance for the City both by vehicle from I-95 and pedestrians/bicyclist from Main Street Station.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to Location, Character, and Extent review under Section 17.07 and design recommendations under Section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter.
Prior Approvals	The park was originally approved in 2003.
Project Description	The City of Richmond is renovating The Reconciliation Plaza, originally constructed in 2007 as one of three locations across the globe (Richmond, VA - Liverpool, England – Cotonou, Benin) that recognized their respective roles in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The site has always been envisioned as a gateway into Shockoe Bottom and as an emotional anchor point along the Richmond Slave Trail. The site contains an approx. 12 ft sculpture by Richard Broadbent, a water feature with interpretive content, bench seating, plantings and a paving surface bounded by a concrete walk. The existing paver surface will be repaired using the same type of brick on the site, which will then be paved with concrete. The existing wooden bench seating, which was completely rotted, has already been removed, and the anchor locations have been filled with concrete. The new brick paving will cover these anchor locations. Where necessary, the existing paver surface will be reset. Any damaged areas on the existing walls will also be patched. Additional landscaping and highlight lighting will be provided. The fountain will be removed and replaced at a new location. Staff Analysis The subject plaza will receive several structural revisions, along with maintenance and landscaping improvements (as detailed above). This site is an important gateway both for vehicles from I-95 and pedestrians/bicyclists from Main Street Station. Staff strongly supports the update and improvement of this site. Staff notes that the sidewalk along North 15th Street is substandard in width. It should be a minimum of 5ft wide going around any obstacles such as tree wells. Staff recommends addressing this in conjunction with this project as landscaping locations will need to be revised. Proper sized sidewalk will contribute to the success of this space by ensuring pedestrian comfort and access. Staff additionally recommends the proposed fountain be simplified and reduced in size. Maintenance would be easier, contributing to the long term success of the space. The portion of the fountain that goes along the plaza wall could be removed. Staff supports approval of this application.

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
Big Moves: Realign City Facilities	<i>Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty</i> <i>Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.</i> <i>Beauty – Oftentimes, City facilities serve as beautiful landmarks that anchor a neighborhood and create a distinctive place through architecture and site design.</i> <i>Thriving Environment: City-owned buildings and land are opportunities for energy retrofits and green infrastructure to further Goals 15 and 16, as well as locations for new parks, urban agriculture, and resiliency hubs to further Goal 17.</i>	Big Moves: Realign City Facilities The project includes the stated goal of enhancing community space located in an underserved neighborhood. The park already serves as a community focal point and will greatly benefit from the high quality design and amenities proposed. <u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u>
	Objective 4.2 – Integrate public art into the built environment. <i>c. Link public art with major public facility initiatives (e.g., plazas, buildings, parks, bridges) and expand the definition of public art to include architectural embellishments of buildings, or landscape features.</i> Objective 15.4 - Reduce the amount of waste going to landfills. <i>f. Demonstrate sustainable consumption, sustainable building practices, and zero-waste behaviors in the design and expansion of City operations.</i> Objective 16.3 - Reduce water consumption by 10% per capita. <i>b. Encourage on-site graywater uses in public and private facilities.</i> Objective 16.4 - Increase green stormwater infrastructure <i>b. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way</i> Objective 17.3 Reduce urban heat <i>a. Encourage lighter-colored surfaces for roads and roofs to reflect sunlight.</i> <i>b. Identify opportunities for green roofs on public facilities</i> Objective 17.7 Increase and enhance biodiversity	Master Plan Objectives Staff recommends opportunities for public art be considered. Richmond 300 includes a number of sustainability objectives specifically relating to public facilities and City owned properties. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable stormwater management, and sustainable construction should be considered. <u>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</u> <u>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</u> <u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u>

	<i>b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities</i> <i>c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.</i> <i>g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.</i> Objective 17.8 Reduce light pollution. <i>b. Install hooded light fixtures on public rights-of-way and buildings to reduce light pollution and reduce effect on nocturnal species.</i>	
Urban Design Guidelines		
PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3	The design guidelines suggest compatibility, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, cost, and sustainability be considered when designing pavement areas. Impervious areas should be limited and pervious pavement materials should be introduced, especially in minimally used parking areas.	PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS <u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u>
	<i>(P.9) <u>Environment, Public Parks:</u> Successful public parks, both small and large, active or passive, share certain qualities, which include the ability to attract and entertain visitors, access and connectivity to surrounding areas, and safety and comfort.</i>	The park is a reflective and interpretive space. The proposed design is appropriate for this use and character.
	<i>(p.10) <u>Landscaping, Design:</u> Landscaping should not only provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest, but should also be designed to minimize human impact on the environment. Designs that include conservation landscaping, strategically minimize the urban heat island effect, or decrease stormwater runoff are strongly encouraged.</i>	Significant new and revised landscaping is proposed.
	<i>(P.10) <u>Landscaping, Species Diversity:</u> Landscape plans should include a diverse palette of plant species that include evergreen trees, flowering and shade tree species, shrubs, ground cover, and annual and perennial plantings.</i>	The proposal includes native species, and native grasses and flowering plants which will make the space pollinator friendly.