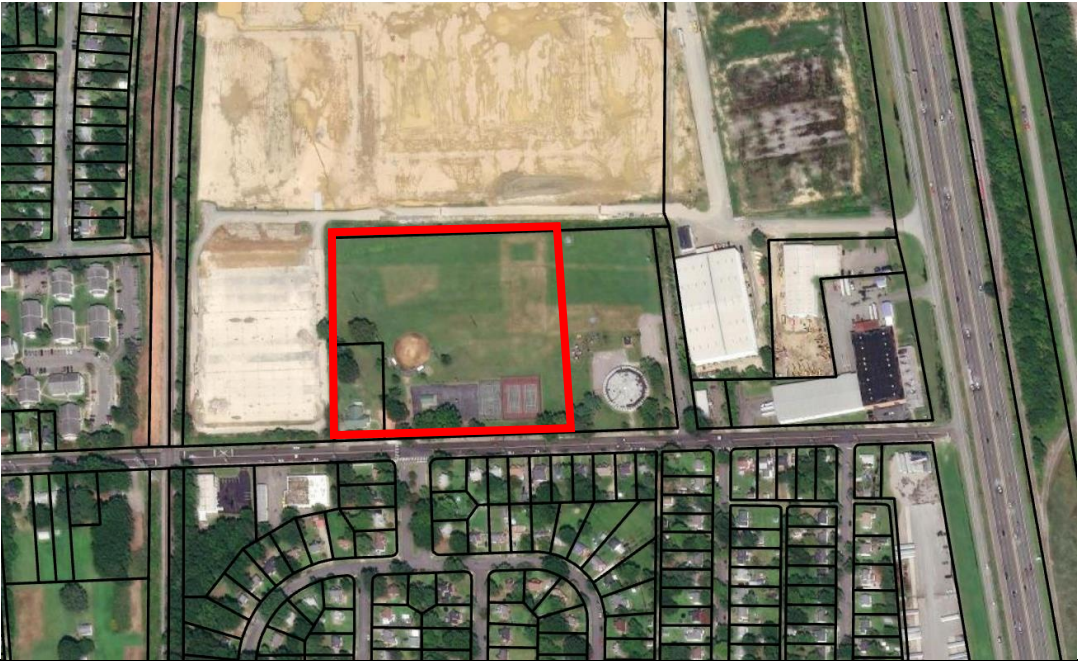




Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2023-10	FINAL Location, Character, and Extent Review	Meeting Date: 6/20/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Nissa Dean, Deputy Director, Department of Parks and Recreation	
Project Description	FINAL location, character, and extent review of the construction of a new community center and related landscape and site improvements	
Project Location		
Address: 2015 Ruffin Road		
Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND RECREATION & PARKS		
High-Level Details: The applicant proposes a concept to construct a community center, splashpad, walk trail, and sports fields. Improvements to the site include public space improvements, a new parking lot, and enhanced landscaping and hardscaping.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	CONCEPT Approval was received in September of 2022. Significant public outreach has been completed to inform the proposed goals and features of the design, including surveys and neighborhood meetings.	
Conditions for Approval	• The UDC recommends that outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant, as shown on plans. • The UDC recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. • The UDC recommends that the Applicant provide bird safe glass, to be approved by Staff. (Staff recommends removal of this condition, see Staff analysis below) • The UDC recommends that the Applicant amend plans to provide location for trash receptacles with lid covers, to be approved by Staff. • The UDC recommends that the Applicant revise plans to provide a further light north of the sports field, to be approved by Staff. • The UDC recommends that the Applicant consider future possibilities of community gardens and farmers markets, to be approved by Staff if needed.	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site is located in the Davee Gardens neighborhood in Broad Rock at the intersection of Ruffin Road and Davee Road. The site is zoned R-4 – single-family residential district, and consists of roughly 8.50 acres. The property currently consists of a playground and basketball, tennis, and baseball fields. The project is bound to the south by largely residential uses and industrial uses to the north, east, and west. In the greater neighborhood, Interstate 95 is located to the east and the Phillip Morris complex to the south.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 and 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter
Project Description	This is the FINAL Application to construct a new community center and associated site and landscape improvements. The project site currently consists of tennis, basketball, and baseball fields along with a small community building. Basketball, Soccer, playground, and splashpad are proposed. The existing small community building will be maintained. A walk path and parking lot is also included. The site will be buffered by landscaping from industrial uses to the north and west. GRTC Bus Line 88 is located on the primary street frontage along Ruffin Road, and a bus stop is located in front of the project site. The Applicant will work with GRTC to improve the stop. The architecture is meant to be a recognizable landmark within the neighborhood by utilizing differing materials uses, variable roof forms, and differing massing. The proposed community center will include net zero design goals and receive LEED Silver designation, as required by City Policy. The building will also be designed to facilitate disaster response and emergency shelter during inclement weather. The site will be prepared for electric vehicle charging stations but the actual stations will need to be installed as a future project. The building will be solar ready. Pervious pavement will be used in the parking area. Site improvements to landscaping will use primarily local species and will maintain several well established trees along the street, protected through construction. Site improvements to hardscape will include a walk path (a request from the community) through the rear of the property. New play areas are provided. Seating, picnic tables, trash receptacles, and bike parking will be provided throughout the site. A splash pad is proposed at the northern corner of the building to enhance the facilities for families with small children. A basketball court will be created and the existing baseball field will be replaced with a soccer field. Not all improvements that were shown in the previously approved CONCEPT plan could be made with the current stage of the project due to budget and inflation related constraints. However, future stages of the project are shown on the plans to a full final build out that reflects the CONCEPT. Staff recommends approval of the FINAL Application for community center and associated site improvements. The proposal creates a high-quality community center, public space, and both passive and active park space in a previously underinvested neighborhood. The proposal includes pedestrian and bicycle improvements and a number of sustainability considerations. The UDC recommends approval with the Staff recommended conditions and an additional 4 conditions. The UDC Members discussed bird safe glass, trash cans with lids, community gardens, and lighting. Upon further review after the UDC meeting, Staff and the City Attorney's office has determined that it is within the review parameters of the Planning Commission and Urban Design Committee to recommend bird safe glass, but not require it. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission remove the condition referring to bird safe glass.

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 designing a new public facility with equity and beauty in mind. The programming of the new community facility will include educationally minded assets such as a multimedia library, community garden and food forest, indoor play area, and youth/teen center. A number of sustainability and environmentally friendly features are included. The building will be design as LEED Silver and environmental resiliency is a goal of the plans for landscaping.
	Objective 2.1 - Align new facilities and improve existing City owned facilities. <i>f. Implement programs to improve the energy efficiency of City-owned buildings</i> 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 10.4 - Increase the number of low-emission vehicles. <i>b. Seek opportunities to install electric charging stations on publicly owned land, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.</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	Master Plan Objectives 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. Sustainability features that are planned to be included: energy efficiency and green site improvements. Project makes the site ready for electric vehicle charging stations. Richmond 300 establishes that City facilities should be considered in larger resiliency efforts. Community Centers are traditionally considered in municipal resiliency plans as they operate as community centers and conveniently placed municipally owned spaces. Lighting will be dark sky compliant.

	<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 17.6 Increase the resiliency of infrastructure and community assets. <i>h. Increase local renewable energy generation (see Goal 16).</i> <i>h. Identify community facilities to serve as resilience hubs and update systems to be more resilient.</i> Objective 17.7 Increase and enhance biodiversity <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	<i>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.</i>	PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS Bio-swales will be included to reduce stormwater runoff. Pervious pavement will be used for the parking area.
LANDSCAPING – Page 10	<i>Plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes. Site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture. Plant materials should create spaces by</i>	LANDSCAPING A significant portion of the site will be green space. Several well established trees will be maintained and protected throughout construction. Landscaping is

	<i>providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas. In addition, landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest. Species diversity, plant selection, and long term maintenance should be considered.</i>	used to create interest and natural connections for pedestrians throughout the site.
STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT – Page 11	<i>Design guidelines encourage use of Low Impact Development design elements that that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, minimize, and detain stormwater runoff are applied to not only open space, but also rooftops, streetscapes, parking lots, and sidewalks.</i>	STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT Bio-swale is provided to reduce stormwater runoff.
BUILDING SETBACK – Page 14	<i>The guidelines state that new buildings should have the same or similar setback as existing buildings on the same street. There will be situations, however, where a different setback would be appropriate for the type of building and the desired environment. Examples would include larger public buildings, such as schools and recreation centers, located within urban residential areas. In certain cases, a new building should be constructed with a minimal setback to reinforce the traditional street wall.</i>	The proposed addition will largely meet the established minimum setback trends along the street. The proposed building is also a vertical orientation of usable space which maximized the outdoor greenspace on the site by limiting the footprint of the building.
SITE FEATURES – Page 14	<i>The site should respond to its users through its design and by providing an appropriate array of amenities to serve those users and should incorporate sustainable design aspects. Plazas are encouraged and should provide pleasant transition from street to building while being designed in inviting and accommodating ways for a diversity of users. Operational features and parking should be screened from view.</i>	The primary façade and surrounding site circulation is oriented to pedestrian users in both massing and design. A number of outdoor spaces add interest and usable space for pedestrians. This diversity of uses will enhance pedestrian activity throughout the site.
BUILDING PROPORTION – Page 15	<i>Building massing should be compatible with the surrounding uses; although, important public buildings may require larger sizes. Visual impact can be minimized via design techniques such as setbacks or varying surface and roof planes. Height and roof design should be sensitive to surrounding uses, but may be taller on corners to frame access to the block.</i>	The façade is broken up into different sections by using different materials, textures, and architectural features.
FAÇADE DESIGN. – Page 18	<i>Building materials should be compatible with surrounding uses and not cause visual confusion by using numerous different materials on a single façade. Material quality and design should complement those on the existing building and be sufficiently durable and sustainable.</i> <i>Building design should take cues from the surrounding area. An easily recognizable, inviting and accessible entrance should be</i>	Materials are planned to be locally sourced and recycled where possible. The proposed façade of the addition introduces a modern, bright, and inviting glass, wood, and stone materials.

	<i>included and ground level design should be comfortable for the pedestrian. Large expanses of blank or undifferentiated wall are not appropriate building elevations, especially at the street level. Access for users of differing mobilities should be included; handicap ramps or other handicap considerations should be incorporated into the façade design and to a high design quality.</i>	
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