



To: Urban Design Committee
From: Planning and Preservation Division
Date: September 8, 2016
RE: **Final Encroachment review of Dominion tower encroachments at 111 S 6th Street;
UDC No. 2016-36**

I. APPLICANT

Brian Jackson, Hirschler Fleischer representing Dominion Resource Services, Inc.

II. LOCATION

The streetscape public right-of-way surrounding the block of 111 S 6th Street bordered by S 6th Street to E Cary St to S 7th Street to E Canal St

Property Owner:

City of Richmond right-of-way; Dominion will retain ownership of the improvements

III. PURPOSE

The application is for the final encroachment review streetscape modifications surrounding a new building at 111 S 6th St, as well as for the review of a pedestrian bridge between neighboring towers across 7th St.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

Overall, Staff finds the encroachments to beautify the streetscape while still achieving the necessary security for the building use. While the Guidelines are not supportive of pedestrian bridges, they do contain design criteria for when a pedestrian bridge is necessary: that a bridge should span no more than the width of the right-of-way, be level, and be made of transparent and non-reflective glass. The proposed design meets all of these criteria, and has the additional benefit of offering an additional, open-air crossing space at the deck level that will add visual interest. The hardscaping plans are cohesive, and the planting plan will result in a better distribution of shade throughout the streetscape. Staff is appreciative of the sustainability components of the plan, including the addition of a recycling receptacle. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Director of Public Works grant approval of the encroachment request, with the condition that lighting be 3000K color temperature.

Staff Contact:

Kathleen Onufer, (804) 646-5207

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject right-of-way is surrounds the block of 111 S 6th Street and is located in the B-4 (Central Business District) zoning district in a prominent spot fronting Kanawha Plaza. Demolition of the existing building at the site is currently underway. The existing streetscape consists of concrete sidewalks, street trees in wells, and City streetlight and traffic signal mast arms at South 6th & E Cary St, as well as at South 7th & E Canal St. Metered on-street parking surrounds the block.

b. Scope of Review

The project involves the provision of functional encroachments as well as streetscape improvements to accompany a new 20 story building, including 17 stories of office use and extensive parking. This building is envisioned as part of a two building campus for Dominion; the encroachments include a pedestrian bridge that would link the proposed building with a second future building on the site of the current Dominion Tower, across S 7th Street. The improvements include: hardscaping, landscaping, lighting, bollards, and egress door swings.

The City owns the rights-of-way, but Dominion will perform all of the work and will be responsible for all of the maintenance, which puts the improvements in the category of encroachments. The UDC has reviewed a number of streetscape encroachments for similar projects, such as the neighboring Gateway Plaza building, in the last few years.

The encroachment process is administered through the Department of Public Works, which has requested that the Urban Design Committee (UDC) provide design advice on certain types of encroachments. The UDC does not have the authority to approve encroachments, but rather provides advice to the Department of Public Works.

c. UDC Review History

In 2013, the UDC reviewed a pedestrian plaza for the neighboring Gateway Plaza building that included many streetscape elements. In 2015, the UDC reviewed the neighboring Kanawha Plaza project, with multiple returns for different phases and elements of the project.

d. Project Description

This project involves the complete redesign of a block of streetscape surrounding a new building, as well as a future pedestrian bridge to link the new building with a second building to form one cohesive campus.

Pedestrian Bridge

The new building will include an amenity deck and roof garden, with plantings covering an area of nearly one acre. This roof garden is considered one of the primary sustainability features of the building, retaining stormwater and moderating the urban heat island effect. The pedestrian bridge would unite the podium and rooftop garden deck areas by providing an essential connecting between the office, dining, conference, and rooftop amenity functions. This bridge will allow pedestrian movement within an enclosed glass area, as well as on top of the connector itself, where it will connect the two roof garden amenity decks.

The bridge is designed to have a thin structural profile that maximizes transparency, with clear, non-reflective glass and aluminum cladding at the base. It's located approximately 34' above grade and will encroach a total of 867.23 square feet into the 7th Street right-of-way. The bridge has both an interior glassed in section, and also a walkway on top that unites the two rooftop spaces of the two buildings. A rendering is included in your packets.

Streetscape Encroachments

Hardscaping will consist of five different paving materials. Along the Canal St frontage, and wrapping S 6th & S 7th Streets up until the garage entrance, concrete unit pavers band the building, with vehicular covered concrete on the outside. The garage entrance will be plain gray concrete, and then the E Cary St frontage will be colored concrete. ADA ramps with cast iron detectable warning plates or pavers will be installed to City standards at each roadway crossing. On-street parking is retained where possible, with additional striping of on-street parking anticipated on E Cary St.

A line of stainless steel bollards will demarcate the vehicular colored concrete from granite stone pavers at the main entrance. At the entrance, stairs will be granite stone treads and risers with an illuminated handrail, and the ramp will be granite stone pavers. A stainless steel recycling and trash receptacle will be placed by the main entrance; model specifications are in the plans. The items at the entrance are within Dominion's property line and thus are not encroachments, but are part of the overall site and streetscape design scheme.

The general planting scheme for the entire project is to use native and adaptive trees, shrubs, grasses and groundcovers for the streetscape improvements, building perimeter plantings, and roof garden amenity deck. The planting palette is similar to the ones proposed for the Gateway Plaza building as well as Kanawha Plaza. A total of 28 new swamp white oak trees will be provided in wells, with dwarf mondo grass as groundcover. The existing 18 trees, nine maples, six zelkovas, and three oaks, will be removed, for a net gain of ten street trees. Currently 7th St has no street trees – the proposed encroachments add street trees on the 7th St frontage and distribute them more evenly across the site. Tree wells are proposed with uplighting using a BK Lighting Denali series fixture.

There is a large ornamental planting area, including a sunken garden across the Canal St frontage of the building and wrapping the corners with 6th and 7th St, including the primary building entrance on 7th St. This planting area will contain ornamental grasses, shrubs, and groundcovers of height 24"-36". Plants will be selected in consideration of height, visual interest, texture, seasonal color and blooms, and the deep shade conditions in the sunken garden area. A wall clad in granite stone will divide two sections of the planting bed and define the sunken section. A proposed schedule is in the plans. All planting areas are proposed to have an automatic irrigation system.

While the applicant pursued full LED lit streetscape as a goal of this project originally, other city reviews have determined that the project must adhere to current City standards for the streetlighting: a high-pressure sodium cobrahead light on an aluminum pole to be maintained by the City of Richmond. Pedestrian light fixtures will be Bega Single Pole-Top LED, mounted on a 15' pole, and maintained by Dominion. Color temperature will be no greater than 3000K. Specifications are in the packet.

There are five egress door swing encroachments into the right of way; all are swing encroachments of under 2.13'. These encroachments are for emergency

exits, or other mechanical space access that will be used intermittently, as opposed to a primary entrance to the main building or retail spaces.

A minimum of 5' clear width within the right-of-way has been provided throughout the walkway around the entire perimeter of the project. The sidewalk width overall is variable due to parking bumpouts and other features, but generally Cary, 7th, and Canal Street all have a total sidewalk width of approximately 13' and 6th Street has a width of approximately 11'.

e. Master Plan

The subject property is located in the City Center Focus Area, as defined by the 2008 Downtown Master Plan, and is placed in the Urban Core character area. The Plan contains very specific language about the site two blocks to the east, which has a common program to this project. It “should be developed as a signature gateway building” (page 4.28). The Plan further notes that the “building should engage the pedestrian and respect the human scale” and that “the ground floor should be dedicated to active, street-oriented uses such as offices, office lobbies, hotel lobbies, or shops, in order to engage pedestrians and contribute to the vitality of the street” (page 4.28). Though not specific to the property, the Plan advocates for the planting of street trees to create desirable addresses and enhance the pedestrian environment (page 4.21).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines do “not support the use of pedestrian bridges. If they are used, the bridge should span no more than the width of the right-of-way. Pedestrian bridges should be level, with little to no incline. The materials used for the construction of pedestrian bridges should not be opaque or made of reflective material, so as to minimize the obstruction across the public right-of-way.” (p. 28). Generally, the Guidelines do “not support the encroachment of door swings into the public right-of-way. Recessed entries are encouraged. When a recessed entry is not feasible, the encroachment of the door swing into the public right-of-way should be minimized as much as possible.” (p. 28).

The Community Character section of the Urban Design Guidelines contains several suggestions on having streetscape elements, including furnishings, paving, and lighting, reflect their surroundings and match existing context. The Guidelines state that “lighting fixtures should be consistent with the existing fixtures in the surrounding area. The finish on street lights and site furnishings should coordinate. The replacement of cobra head light fixtures is encouraged by the UDC” (p. 23). Additionally, the Guidelines state that “appropriate landscaping should be used to clearly define entrances and pedestrian walkways (p. 20)”.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**