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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: April 10, 2014  
RE: **Agenda Item #7, Final Location, Character and Extent review of streetscape improvements to N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, between E. Main Street and E. Cary Street; UDC #14-15**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Todd Hopkins, Department of Public Utilities

**II. LOCATION**

N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, between E. Main Street and E. Cary Street

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for the final location, character, and extent review of new street trees, stormwater planters, pedestrian streetlights and stamped asphalt crosswalks along N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street between E. Main and E. Cary Streets.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This project involves the installation of new street trees and pedestrian scaled streetlights on both sides of N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street between E. Main and E. Cary Streets, as well as new crosswalks at the intersections. In July 2011 the UDC recommended and the Planning Commission granted approval of a previous iteration of this project. More detailed review of the subject block, including topographic and utilities surveys, caused the plans to be altered.

This project results in a significant reduction of impervious area from the right-of-way in this block and will provide water quality treatment for over 34,000 square feet drainage area from the right-of-way. It is the opinion of Staff that these benefits, combined with a healthier long-term installation for the street trees and a consistent streetscape, outweigh the loss of the existing street trees.

Staff continues to find the proposal to be directly supportive of one of the key recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan that "streetscape elements should be used to highlight 10<sup>th</sup> Street as a special street and to create a visual connection from the Capitol to the River". Staff also finds the proposal to be consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines and with the previous project approval by the Planning Commission. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

**Staff Contact:**

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The subject right-of-way is along N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street from E. Main Street to E. Cary Street and is located in the B-4 (Central Business) zoning district. North 10<sup>th</sup> Street forms an important link between Capitol Square and the James River. The SunTrust office tower occupies the western side of the subject block as a superblock without an alley, while the eastern side of the block has two buildings separated by an alley. The northern building contains street-oriented commercial and apartments above, while the southern building appears to have ground floor offices with several floors of parking above. This block of N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street contains one lane in each direction, with limited on-street parking on a portion of the western side of the block.

The eastern sidewalk on N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street is 14' in width and contains a "double" row of staggered, mature shade-producing trees. The western sidewalk is 15' in width and contains a single row of less mature trees on the southern portion of the western side of the block. The site slopes considerably downward from north to south.

**b. Scope of Review**

The proposed improvements are subject to location, character, and extent review as a "public way" under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

**c. UDC Review History**

In July 2011 the UDC recommended and the Planning Commission granted approval of a previous iteration of this project. More detailed review of the subject block, including topographic and utilities surveys, caused the plans to be altered.

**d. Project Description**

This project involves the installation of new street trees and pedestrian scaled streetlights on both sides of N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street between E. Main and E. Cary Streets, as well as new crosswalks at the intersections. The previous iteration of this project involved the installation of stormwater planters, some new trees and also retention of some existing trees. In this application, all of the existing trees would be removed. At present, there are 14 trees on the subject block. Twelve are Lindens ranging in caliper from 7 to 10 inches and two are Redbuds roughly 3.5 inches in caliper. The Applicant's Report states that the current canopy coverage is calculated to be 4,196 square feet but that four of the lindens are dead or dying. The Report further states that assuming these trees were to be removed, post-removal canopy is calculated to be 2,880 square feet. The proposed planting plans would yield a calculated 10 year canopy coverage of 6,023 square feet.

On both sides of the street north of the alley, the plans call for the installation of tree wells that are recessed 6" from the sidewalk surface. The recessed tree wells, 5' in width and varying from 19' to 30' in length, are designed to increase potential root volume for the proposed street trees. The two tree wells at the

intersection with E. Main Street are proposed to be planted with seedless Sweet Gum trees (40'-50' high, 25'-30' wide at maturity), 2.5" in caliper at the times of installation, while the remaining wells are to be planted with Littleleaf Linden trees (40'-50' high, 15'-20' wide at maturity), also 2.5" in caliper at the time of installation. The wells will also be heavily planted with groundcover sedge and an extensive mix of daffodil and crocus bulbs and will then be mulched. The recessed beds will be occasionally interrupted by brick bands for placement of lights and for passage by pedestrians.

On both sides of the street from the alley southward, the plans call for the installation of a series of tree wells and stormwater planters. The tree wells, 5' to 7'6" in width and 10' in length, will be flush-mounted with the sidewalk surface and will contain Littleleaf Lindens in all wells except the two at the intersection with E. Cary Street, which will be planted with seedless Sweet Gum trees. The stormwater planters, 5'6" in width and 8' in length, are located between the tree wells and are designed to detain and treat stormwater runoff from the roadways. The system, similar to those reviewed by the UDC and approved by the Planning Commission and subsequently built along 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, links planters through a series of weir channels and underdrains, allowing for increased infiltration and treatment prior to its connection to the existing City storm sewer. The planters will contain dwarf red osier dogwood shrubs and will be occasionally interrupted by brick bands for placement of lights and for passage by pedestrians. On the eastern side of the street, provision is made for the placement of canal block bench seating in the sidewalk under the trees.

In all, the proposed tree wells and stormwater planters will result in a reduction of 2,600 square feet of impervious area from the right-of-way in this block. In addition, the stormwater planters will provide water quality treatment for a 34,413 square feet drainage area from the right-of-way.

The proposed streetlights are a Charleston fixture on a fluted 12' tall Hanover pole, all painted black. The top of the Charleston fixture will be solid, while the bottom will be composed of clear polycarbonate. The light source is a 150watt high pressure sodium bulb. This is the same light setup as was used on the similar S. 14<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape project between Bank and E. Main Streets.

At the intersections of N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street with E. Main and E. Cary Streets, the plans call for the crosswalks on N. 10 Street to be composed of stamped asphalt in a red brick pattern. The crosswalks along E. Main and E. Cary Streets will be re-stripped. The sidewalks on N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street at the intersections with E. Main and E. Cary Streets will be composed of red brick, while the remainder of the sidewalk on the block will be composed of concrete with the exception of the aforementioned brick bands.

The estimated construction budget for this project is \$950,000, and is being funded through the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and Capital Trees, which have also received private donations from local corporations and foundations. Construction is slated to begin in fall of this year.

**e. Master Plan**

One of the seven foundations of the Downtown Plan is “Green”, and an implementation step for this foundation is to initiate an ambitious street tree campaign (page 3.11). The subject right-of-way is located in the City Center focus area, and a key recommendation in this section of the plan applicable to the proposed improvements is to “plant and maintain proper urban street trees to create desirable addresses and enhance the pedestrian environment” (page 4.21). Specific to the subject right-of-way, the Plan notes that the State Capitol “should be reconnected to the river. With the construction of the Capitol Visitor’s Center underground entrance at its terminus, 10th Street has gained a certain amount of significance. Streetscape elements should be used to highlight 10<sup>th</sup> Street as a special street and to create a visual connection from the Capitol to the River (page 4.27).

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Community Character section of the Urban Design Guidelines contains several suggestions on landscaping, noting that “generally, new street trees should be located a minimum of 35’ from each other and three feet from the curb” and that “generally, a street tree should be no closer than 12 feet from a streetlight” (page 21). The Guidelines also state that “generally no more than two species of street tree should be used along a single block face of a roadway” and that “if two tree species are selected, they should uniformly alternate along the street” (page 21). The Guidelines also expresses support for low-impact development, which aims to “mimic a site’s predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source” (page 11).

**VI. ATTACHMENTS**

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