



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2025-22	FINAL Location, Character, and Extent Review	Meeting Date: 07/15/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Scott Firestine, Director, Richmond Public Libraries	
Project Description	UDC 2025-12 FINAL Location, Character, and Extent review of the Greening Richmond Public Libraries: Hull Street Branch project, located at 1400 Hull Street.	
Project Location		
Address: 1400 Hull Street		
Property Owner: Richmond Public Libraries		
High-Level Details: The applicant proposes sustainable stormwater and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to the exterior of the existing library and surrounding right-of-way. Improvements include removal of impervious area and non-native species; construction of bioretention basins and pervious pavers; construction of a tiny park with stone benches; installation of native plants and irrigation system; and interpretive signage.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	This project was approved for CONCEPT by the UDC in May 2025.	
Recommended Conditions	RECOMMENDED FINAL CONDITIONS 1.Applicant to match using the existing brick pavers if any sidewalk is altered or added.	
PREVIOUSLY APPROVED CONDITIONS	PREVIOUSLY APPROVED CONCEPT CONDITIONS 1. Applicant to include photo sims and materials samples for the rear courtyard with Final Review.	

	2. Applicant to match using the existing brick pavers if any sidewalk is altered or added.
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Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site is located in the Blackwell neighborhood. The property is situated on the corner of Hull Street and East 14th Street. The property currently consists of the Hull Street Branch Library and associated corner pedestrian plaza, landscaping, and parking lot.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter and review and recommendation under 17.05.
Project Description	<u>The Applicant States:</u> <i>“The purpose of the project is to develop a series of bioretention basins and areas of pervious artificial turf and pavers designed to Virginia Department of Environmental Quality standards to infiltrate storm water discharge from a portion of the roof, sidewalks, and parking lot; reduce the heat island effect as possible; enhance the existing streetside plaza; and create a small public park that features shaded reading/ seating areas, play space for young children, and opportunities for education about the importance of native plants and managing stormwater runoff. Some impervious area and all non- native species will be removed with native plants added. The project strives to be become a model of sustainable site development with educational components accomplished with an interpretive sign, special library programs, and community involvement and support.”</i> <i>“The design was informed by public questionnaires...Library users and residents identified the needs for shade, an outdoor gathering and children’s play spaces, and more seating. Per library leadership it was made clear that security and loitering are major issues at this branch and no free use outdoor seating can be added.”</i> <u>Staff Review:</u> The Applicant has agreed to bring materials and renderings to the UDC July meeting, specifically in relation to the proposed children’s area in the rear of the building, per the UDC’s request. Staff strongly supports the enhancement of the exterior of the library in terms of stormwater and landscaping, as well as the transformation of the space into a more usable location. <u>UDC Review</u> The UDC discussed the use of artificial turf in the outdoor reading space to the rear of the building voicing concern regarding use of plastic in an environmental project, microplastics, and precedent setting. The Applicant noted that the options for this space were either turf or pervious paver (as opposed to plantings) due to anticipated foot traffic, lack of sunlight, ground quality, and desire from the community for a space different from the adjacent urban hardscape. The UDC also recommended providing shade in the rear play area as much as feasible. <u>UDC Recommendation</u> The UDC recommends approval with the following conditions: 1.Applicant to match using the existing brick pavers if any sidewalk is altered or added.