



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: March 16, 2015
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of a freestanding sign for the Henry L. Marsh, III and Harold M. Marsh, Sr. Manchester Courthouse at 28 E. 10th Street**

I. APPLICANT

Don Summers, Dept. of Public Works

II. LOCATION

Manchester Courthouse, 28 E. 10th Street

Property Owner(s):

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character and extent review of a freestanding sign reflecting the new name of the Manchester Courthouse as the Henry L. Marsh, III and Harold M. Marsh, Sr. Manchester Courthouse.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project involves the installation of a freestanding sign on the E. 9th Street side of the Manchester Courthouse that would reflect the new designation of the building as the Henry L. Marsh, III and Harold M. Marsh, Sr. Manchester Courthouse, as set forth in Ordinance No. 2015-2-15, adopted unanimously by City Council on January 26, 2015. The Urban Design Committee finds the proposed sign to be complementary to the courthouse in architecture, materials and scale. The Committee further finds the proposal to be consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines and Downtown Master Plan. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends 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 Manchester Courthouse is located in the block bound by Hull Street on the north, E. 9th Street on the east, Decatur Street on the south, and E. 10th Street on the west. The original structure was built in 1871 in the Greek revival style (with modest Italianate overtones), as the new courthouse for Chesterfield County. When Manchester became an independent city in 1874, Chesterfield County moved its courthouse operations. Manchester Courthouse originally occupied the southwest half of the block. By 1886, it shared the rest of the block with the jail, fire station, city market, and a Methodist Church. The block was cleared of the additional structures by 1919. The courthouse was added to three times in the 20th Century, bringing the total area of the building to 27,000 square feet. The most recent expansion, in 2010, more than doubled the size of the courthouse,

which now contains 58,590 square feet. The building and grounds were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character and extent review as a sign identifying a “public building” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

In 2007 the UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the final plans for the expansion of the Manchester Courthouse. The expanded facility opened in 2010.

d. Project Description

This project involves the installation of a freestanding sign in front of the Manchester Courthouse that would reflect the new designation of the building as the Henry L. Marsh, III and Harold M. Marsh, Sr. Manchester Courthouse, as set forth in Ordinance No. 2015-2-15, adopted unanimously by City Council on January 26, 2015.

The sign is proposed to be installed on E. 9th Street, in front of the 2010 expansion to the courthouse and the new main public entrance. The sign has been designed by the same firm that designed the courthouse expansion and will be constructed of the same materials as those used on the expansion, brick with a pre-cast concrete cap. The base of the sign will replace a small section of the low concrete retaining wall that runs at the edge of the property where it meets the sidewalk. The sign has an arched cap in the same radius as the arched louvers at the base of the building to the rear of the sign. The overall dimensions of the sign are 5’ 9/16” and 10’ wide, and the lettering will be 5” tall and composed of black metal to match railings and other metals on the site.

There is approximately 6’ between the sidewalk and the building, and this space does contain some landscaping. Installation of the sign will require the removal of two shrubs that have overgrown the space and spilled out into the sidewalk area. The sign will not be lighted.

The project cost estimate is \$5,000, with funds provided by the Department of Public Works, Facilities Management and Operations division. Installation is estimated to be complete by April 10 of this year.

e. Master Plan

The Downtown Master Plan designates the property as being in the Downtown Civic Area, which refers to both buildings and open spaces, with buildings being dedicated to “culture, government, and public gatherings” and open spaces defined as “outdoor areas dedicated for public use” (page 3.28).

The Downtown Plan contains extensive language towards the goal of developing the Manchester Courthouse as a gateway to the Hull Street shopping district (page 4.34). Much of this discussion is centered on development of the adjacent blocks or the use of portions of the courthouse site as civic space and is beyond the scale of this project.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines contain several recommendations for signs, including that “a sign’s message should be easy to read and direct” (page 24). Generally, the Guidelines impart, “sign lettering should be 4” to 14” high and should be in proportion to the area in which it will be displayed. Lastly, the Guidelines note that “freestanding signs should be landscaped with appropriate evergreen shrubs, ground cover planting, annuals and/or perennials” (page 24).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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