



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2020-135: To amend Ord. No. 2019-043, adopted May 13, 2019, which (i) accepted a program of proposed Capital Improvement Projects for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 and the four fiscal years thereafter, (ii) adopted a Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2019-2020, and (iii) determined a means of financing the same, to modify the purpose of the Stormwater Facilities Improvements project in the Utilities category to provide that such project includes a grant to Capital Trees pursuant to Va. Code § 15.2-953(B) to plant native plants and trees in the Low Line Park.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: June 15, 2020

PETITIONER

Grace A. LeRose, Program Manager, Department of Public Utilities

LOCATION

Low Line Park, in the vicinity of 17th Street adjacent to the floodwall

PURPOSE

To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to offer a donation of \$25,000 to provide funds for planting of trees and native plants at Low Line Park, in the vicinity of 16th St. and 18th St. adjacent to the floodwall.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

In 2018, DPU was awarded the first integrated permit in Virginia. As part of that permit, a stakeholder group was formed to address improving water quality in the James River and its tributaries. One strategy for achieving this was to plant native trees and plants in the city. This project is a continuation of the "Low Line Park" begun in 2014, prepared by Water Street Studio, dated August 1, 2018 and is part of the 2018 Dock Street improvements previously approved the Planning Commission on November 19, 2018.

These funds will be used to increase the City's tree canopy and improve habitat in an historic and developed watershed. These trees and plants will absorb stormwater and reduce the volume of combined stormwater and wastewater that is discharged from nearby combined sewers, which will reduce the amount of pollution discharged and improve water quality in the James River. This project is also support of the strategic goals outlined in RVAH2O Clean Water Plan

Department of Public Utilities Staff recommends approval of this ordinance.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The site consists of the portion of Low Line Park between the canal and floodwall, and beneath the elevated portion of I-95, in the vicinity of the intersection 17th Street and Dock Street.

Proposed Use of the Property

Landscaping improvements for public open space

Master Plan & Zoning

The City's Downtown Plan designates this portion of Low Line Park as Downtown Natural Area which is characterized by a wilderness landscape that is untouched by development, and whose ecological features are preserved. The uninhabitable islands in the James River are an example of a wilderness condition in Downtown Richmond. These islands remain unsettled due to periodic flooding of the river, and are preserved in their natural condition.

The area is also within the City's Master Plan category of Public & Open Space. Primary uses with this use include publicly owned and operated parks, recreation areas, open spaces, schools, libraries, cemeteries and other government and public service facilities. Also included are environmentally sensitive areas and scenic areas where urban development should not occur. Typically, this category depicts larger scale uses or open spaces, while small-scale facilities are incorporated within the predominant surrounding land use designations. This land use category may be accommodated by any zoning classification.

A portion of the property is zoned M-2 Heavy Industrial and a portion is zoned DCC Downtown Civic & Culture.

Surrounding Area

The surrounding area is comprised of a mix of multi-family residential, commercial, and public open space uses.

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