



Application for Urban Design Committee Review

Department of Planning and Development Review
Planning & Preservation Division
900 E. Broad Street, Room 510
Richmond, Virginia 23219 | (804) 646-6335
www.richmondgov.com/CommitteeUrbanDesign



Application Type (select one)

Location, Character, & Extent
Section 17.05
Other:

Encroachment
Design Overlay District

Review Type (select one)

Conceptual
Final

Project Information

Submission Date: _____

Project Name: _____

Project Address: _____

Brief Project Description (this is not a replacement for the required detailed narrative):

Applicant Information (a City representative must be the applicant, with an exception for encroachments)

Name: _____ Email: _____

City Agency: _____ Phone: _____

Main Contact (if different from Applicant): _____

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Submittal Deadlines

All applications and support materials must be filed no later than 21 days prior to the scheduled meeting of the Urban Design Committee (UDC). Please see the schedule on page 3 as actual deadlines are adjusted due to City holidays. **Late or incomplete submissions will be deferred to the next meeting.**

Filing

Applications can be mailed or delivered to the attention of "Urban Design Committee" at the address listed at the top of this page. **It is important that the applicant discuss the proposal with appropriate City agencies, Zoning Administration staff, and area civic associations and residents prior to filing the application with the UDC.**

Submittal Deadlines

The UDC is a ten member committee created by City Council in 1968 whose purpose is to advise the City Planning Commission (CPC) on the design of projects on City property or right-of-way. The UDC provides advice of an aesthetic nature in connection with the performance of the duties of the Commission under Sections 17.05, 17.06, and 17.07 of the City Charter. The UDC also advises the Department of Public Works in regards to private encroachments in the public right-of-way.

Greening Richmond Public Libraries

IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF THE JAMES RIVER BY REDUCING STORMWATER POLLUTION

Belmont Branch

Project Description

The site is located in the Museum District of Richmond. The property is situated on the corner of Elwood Avenue and South Belmont Street adjacent to a city bus stop. The site features a tiny public terrace along the busy road. There are four crepe myrtles infested with bark scale and a variety of overgrown non-native shrubs scattered over the property. In the rear there is limited parking along the alley and a tangle of utilities. This is the most visited branch of the Richmond Public Libraries.

The design was informed by public questionnaires and the collaborative project management effort of Richmond Public Library staff, RVAH2O, The James River Association, and Four Winds Design. The results of the questionnaire contributed significantly to informing the direction of the design for this project. Library users and residents identified the needs for visual and physical separation from the busy street and more seating.

The purpose of the project is to develop a series of bioretention basins and areas of designed to Virginia Department of Environmental Quality standards to infiltrate storm water discharge from a portion of the roof, sidewalks, and terrace; reduce the heat island effect as possible; enhance the existing streetside plaza; add seating; and create opportunities for education about the importance of native plants and managing stormwater runoff. Some impervious area and all non-native species will be removed – while additional impervious paving will be added these surfaces will all now flow into bioretention basins for onsite infiltration such that the net result is a reduction in the stormwater discharge from the property. The project strives to become a model of sustainable site development with educational components accomplished with an interpretive sign, special library programs, and community involvement and support.

This project is funded by a 319H grant from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, RVAH2O, the National Fish and Wildlife Service/ Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction grant, the Virginia Department of Urban Forestry, Altria, and is supported by staff hours from The James River Association and RVAH2O with service donations from Four Winds Design.

Construction is scheduled to begin in the late fall of 2025. Most project elements will all be accomplished with independent contractors with JRA and FW functioning as the general contractor. Volunteers will install the plants and mulch while JRA will handle installing the interpretive signs.

Maintenance Analysis

All maintenance of RPL properties is performed by an independent contractor managed by RPL staff. The seven previously developed library branches have served as maintenance testing grounds. Site-specific manuals for each property have been created and the section for Belmont will be revised to include plant species specific care upon completion of construction. This site will be actively maintained by JRA staff for weeding and supplemental watering and monitored yearly by JRA. Beginning in 2025, Richmond Public Library BMP's have been maintained by Soar365 to great success (portion of the NFWF grant covers this) and we hope to expand this program.

Greening Richmond Public Libraries

Belmont Branch Library - Urban Design Committee Final Review

July 10, 2025



Overview

- Existing Conditions at Belmont Branch
- Summary of Community Engagement Efforts
- Updated Plans
- Maintenance
- Westover Hills Branch Library
- East End Branch Library

Existing Conditions at Belmont Branch Library



Existing Conditions - Ellwood Avenue



Existing Conditions - Ellwood Avenue



Existing Conditions - Ellwood Avenue



Existing Conditions - Ellwood Avenue



Existing Conditions - N. Belmont Avenue



Existing Conditions - N. Belmont Avenue



Existing Conditions - Parking Area



- 9 parking spaces
- 2 accessible spaces

Summary of Existing Conditions

- Total Acreage: 0.357 acres, largely impervious
- Located in Cannon's Branch/Shockoe Creek watershed
- Library is accessible by foot, bicycle, public transit, and car
- Minimal green infrastructure and few outdoor amenities
- High heat vulnerability, low tree canopy
- Existing landscaping is primarily non-native plant species
- Impervious surfaces around library generate stormwater runoff, drainage issues observed at the intersection of Ellwood Avenue & N. Belmont Avenue

Community Engagement

- **Community Questionnaire**
 - Offered online and in-person at Belmont Branch
- **Public Information Meeting**
 - Held at Belmont Branch on January 29, 2025
- **Stakeholder Meeting**
 - Held virtually on March 26, 2025

Questionnaire Summary

Total responses: 76

Usage & Support

- 76% use the library at least monthly
- 91% support replacing non-native plants with native species
- 95% support replacing impervious surfaces with green infrastructure

Key Themes

- The majority of respondents reported not currently using the library's outdoor spaces, describing them as limited and uninviting.
- While some appreciated existing features (benches, shade from existing trees, minimal green space), most expressed a desire for outdoor areas that feel more welcoming, connected, and functional.
- Respondents showed strong enthusiasm for transforming these spaces into greener, more inviting environments, with safe areas for children, comfortable seating, and native landscaping.

East End Branch Library

Similar design concept and layout of linear bioretention basins providing separation between the street and pedestrian zones



Westover Hills Branch Library

- The first library branch to participate in the GRPL initiative in 2014, this bioretention basin has remained functional and well kept for 11 years
- Maintained by New Market, SOAR365, and JRA Green Infrastructure Stewards
- Recent replanting effort in fall of 2024
 - Over 200 native plants installed with volunteer support

