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To: Planning Commission  
From: Urban Design Committee  
Date: March 16, 2015  
RE: **Conceptual Location, Character and Extent review of the construction of two new buildings and associated site improvements at 1638, 1650 and 1700 Commerce Road**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Dexter Goode, Dept. of Public Works

**II. LOCATION**

1638, 1650 and 1700 Commerce Road

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for conceptual Location, Character and Extent review of the construction of two new buildings and associated site improvements at 1638, 1650 and 1700 Commerce Road for the relocation of street maintenance, street cleaning and solid waste operations to the site.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This project involves the construction of two new buildings and associated site improvements at 1638, 1650 and 1700 Commerce Road. This is a part of the ongoing efforts to relocate City operations currently located at the Parker Field/Boulevard site to allow for the redevelopment of the area. The Street Maintenance, Street Cleaning, Solid Waste and Survey operations of the Department of Public Works will be moved to the subject properties.

The Urban Design Committee is supportive of the relocation of these operations to the site, noting that several other City functions are already operating on the expansive property. The Committee finds that the proposed buildings will complement the existing buildings on the site, and the building materials are structurally durable and low maintenance. The Committee notes that the overall property is not widely visited by the citizenry.

The Committee finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines and with the zoning and Master Plan Land Use designations for industrial uses for the site. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval, with the following conditions:

- That the final plans include a landscaping plan, showing plant species, quantity, location and size at the time of installation.
- That the applicant considers providing landscaping and/or an architectural treatment along the Commerce Road side of building 2 to break up the large blank façade.

- That the final plans include a lighting plan, showing make, model and finish for any light pole and fixture, as well as fixture light source and color temperature.
- That the outdoor employee break area adjacent to the office building be located in a landscaped area rather than next to the mechanical equipment.
- That a similar outdoor employee break area be located adjacent to the garage building.
- That the applicant considers providing skylights in the roof of the garage building to maximize access to natural light.
- That concertina or barbed wire is not used on the fences between the buildings along the Commerce Road frontage of the site.

**Staff Contact:**

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The subject properties are located on the east side of Commerce Road in the vicinity of its intersection with Carter Creek Road and are zoned M-2 (Heavy Industrial). The properties total 9.9 acres of land, and are improved with a number of industrial structures that are currently used for City functions such as fleet maintenance, Police forensics, and storage. The remainder of the site is primarily composed of gravel without any formal drive aisles or parking areas, although there is some paved parking around the building at 1700 Commerce Road. There is no intentional landscaping on the site, which contains security gates and chain link fencing around the perimeter. Directly east of the subject properties is a CSX rail line, a Dominion Power transmission line, and Interstate 95.

The surrounding properties on the east side of Commerce Road are also zoned M-2 while the properties on the west side of Commerce Road are zoned M-1 (Light Industrial). Both sides of the corridor are improved with warehouses, manufacturing and commercial facilities. The City is currently renovating the building at nearby 1801 Commerce Road to house the Department of Public Works Water and Wastewater Plant laboratory operations; the Wastewater Pretreatment Operation; and the Stormwater and Wastewater Collections operations.

**b. Scope of Review**

The proposed building and site plan are subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as a “public building” and “public ground”.

**c. UDC Review History**

Staff was unable to identify any prior UDC reviewed projects involving the subject properties.

**d. Project Description**

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The properties are improved with a number of industrial structures that are currently used for City functions such as fleet maintenance, Police forensics, and storage. Several of the smaller structures on the site will be demolished as part of the project. The entire site is fenced and has several access gates controlled by card readers.

The remainder of the site is primarily composed of gravel without any formal drive aisles or parking areas. The plan proposes to pave all disturbed surface areas in asphalt. The site drains primarily to the east towards Interstate 95. An existing outfall exists at the southeastern corner of the site and the underground stormwater management facility is planned to outfall at this location also. Underground stormwater management facilities will be designed to meet runoff volume control and quality requirements under the 2014 DEQ regulations and the City of Richmond Stormwater Management Design and Construction Standards Manual.

Paving the site will allow for a more defined circulation within the site, which will now contain 159 standard size vehicle spaces for employees/visitor parking and 103 oversized spaces for fleet vehicle parking. Of the regular vehicles spaces, 24 are existing spaces located around the Fleet Operations building at the southern side of the site.

There is an existing 40' right-of-way, "Page Street", which bisects the complex. This right-of-way will remain with the proposed development and will become the main entrance/exit point for the fleet vehicles accessing this site. The southernmost passenger vehicle site entrance will be removed in order to deter employees/visitors from performing an illegal crossing of Commerce Road. Both entrances on Commerce Road will be designed to meet City of Richmond commercial entrance standards and no turn lanes or tapers on Commerce Road will be provided. Adequate stacking space is provided at entrance #2 to provide room for vehicles to stack while the gate opens. The existing chain link fence along Commerce Road, which is topped with concertina wire, will be relocated and placed between the new buildings and the existing buildings, making way for the public parking area along the Commerce Road frontage.

This project and the N. Hopkins Road Complex project (also under consideration by the UDC in March 2015) are considered one project in the City budget. The total construction budget for both projects is estimated to be \$8 million. Construction is slated to commence in June 2015, with relocation of operations and occupancy of the new facilities scheduled to occur in December 2015. Below are details for each proposed building:

**Street Maintenance & Street Cleaning Office (building #1 on plans)**

The new office building for the Street Maintenance and Street Cleaning operations is an approximately 11,500 square foot, one-story pre-engineered building that will be aligned parallel to Commerce Road in the center of the site. The building will incorporate elements from building materials already on the site and will feature a combination of brick columns interspersed with grey metal panels atop a brick base, with a one-way sloping standing-seam metal roof. The

building will be using sustainable design principles to minimize energy usage and maximize daylight harvesting and will be constructed to meet LEED Silver Certification. The front façade of the building faces west towards Commerce Road.

The expansion will provide space for offices, a break room, a conference room, restrooms, a locker room and storage. Windows are provided along each of the sides of the new building. Where offices are not on an exterior wall, there is a window into the corridor outside the office and the office wall has windows so that every office has access to natural light. The main entrance to the building features double-doors flanked by full height windows, all protected by a metal canopy.

#### **Street Maintenance & Street Cleaning Garage (building #2 on plans)**

The new garage building for the Street Maintenance and Street Cleaning operations is an approximately 12,100 square foot, one-story pre-engineered building that will be aligned perpendicular to Commerce Road and adjacent to the access aisle towards the north of the site. Similar to building #1 and other buildings on the site, this one will feature grey metal panels atop a split face CMU base, with a two-way sloping standing-seam metal roof. The long facades of the building are predominated by overhead bay doors for vehicle ingress/egress. The bay doors will have window inserts to allow some natural light into the building.

#### **e. Master Plan**

The subject properties are located within the Old South planning district as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Master Plan recommends Industrial uses for this property, and defines the primary uses in this land use category as a wide variety of manufacturing, processing, research and development, warehousing, distribution, office-warehouse and service uses (page 135). There is no language in the plan specific to the subject properties or the proposed improvements.

#### **f. Urban Design Guidelines**

In general, the Urban Design Guidelines note that “the quality, design, and condition of all public facilities sets the image of the City, and sends a message about the values placed upon the services provided” (page 13). More specifically, the Guidelines state that “a building’s entrance should be easily recognizable (page 13). The Guidelines also note that building materials “should be appropriate for the size and architectural style of the building” and that “many different materials on a single building lead to visual confusion and should be avoided” (page 17). Building materials should also be “aesthetically and structurally durable, of high quality, and require little maintenance” (page 17).

The subsection on materials continues to say that “building textures and their combinations should add continuity and not conflict or detract from each other” and that “textures should be appropriate for the size, proportion and architectural style of the building and its surroundings” (page 17). Referring to building colors, that Guidelines note that they “should be coordinated and compatible with each other and with adjacent buildings” (page 17). The Guidelines also state that “windows, projecting cornices, and architectural details, such as decorative masonry bands in an accent color, may be used to break up flat building planes” (page 19).

The Guidelines note that landscape plans should “include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings” and that “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10).

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

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