



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: February 18, 2020
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of a new roundabout and associated street improvements, 2115 West Laburnum Avenue; UDC 2020-03**

I. APPLICANT

Winston Phillips, City of Richmond, Department of Public Works

II. LOCATION

West Laburnum Avenue at the intersection of the I-195 southbound off-ramp and the I-195 southbound on-ramp and along West Laburnum Avenue between Saunders Avenue and Westwood Avenue.

Majority Property Owner:

City of Richmond Department of Public Works

III. PURPOSE

The application is for the final review of the construction of a roundabout on West Laburnum Avenue at the intersection of the I-195 southbound off-ramp and the I-195 southbound on-ramp. The project scope includes pedestrian enhancements, lighting, and lane modifications along West Laburnum from Saunders Avenue to Westwood Avenue.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The final plan seeks to improve traffic flow through the I-195/West Laburnum Avenue intersection during peak hours and to eliminate prolonged periods of delay and improve safety within the current deficiencies in capacity, geometry, and safety.

The area does not currently sustain a heavy pedestrian presence, nor does it appear it will in the future. The improvements associated with this project, however, will simultaneously provide more improvements for both pedestrians and vehicles.

The project is fully funded through Federal and Virginia "Smart Scale" funding totaling \$2,435,580.

Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission approve the final design with the following conditions:

- that the final precast concrete traffic circle plan and warranty conditions be provided to staff and UDC sub-committee for review and subsequent discussion during the "other business" portion of a future UDC meeting
- that the applicant identify potential areas available for planting of native plants

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

Improvements are proposed along West Laburnum Avenue between Saunders Avenue and Westwood Avenue. The roundabout is proposed at the intersection of the on-ramp and off-ramp for southbound I-195 vehicular traffic. The site is located east of the CSX-owned Acca Yard and associated access drives. Access to northbound I-64 is located farther east of the site. Additionally, the off-ramp for northbound I-195 vehicular traffic feeds into the site from the south side. A suburban-style office park is located on the north side of West Laburnum Avenue, while a mix of office and industrial uses is located on the south side. There is a continuous sidewalk on the southern side of West Laburnum Avenue throughout the site; however, a continuous sidewalk does not exist on the northern side.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as part of a “widening, extension, narrowing, enlargement, vacation or change in the use of streets and other public ways” under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

Staff was unable to find any existing records related to projects involving this site.

d. Project Description

Construction of a roundabout on West Laburnum Avenue at the intersection on the I-195 southbound (SB) off-ramp and intersection improvements at the I-195 northbound (NB) off-ramp. The \$2.4 million dollar project will be funded with Smart Scale funds and be maintained by the City of Richmond.

The project scope includes pedestrian enhancements, lighting, and lane modifications along West Laburnum Avenue from I-195 to Westwood Avenue. The project is scheduled for construction completion in the summer of 2020.

The purpose and need of this project is to improve traffic flow through the I-195/West Laburnum Avenue intersection during peak hours and to eliminate prolonged periods of delay and improve safety within the current deficiencies in capacity, geometry and safety. The improvement should reduce traffic delays in the vicinity of West Laburnum along I-195.

To improve the function of this interchange, a dedicated left turn lane will be included on the northbound off-ramp while the southbound on- and off-ramps will be realigned to facilitate a connection to the proposed roundabout.

The roundabout location shifts slightly to the southwest to avoid impacting existing drainage and utility features. Existing drainage features are being maintained to avoid major utility impacts. A raised island at the I-195 northbound off-ramp will improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety. Minor drainage improvements and utility adjustments are required. There are no easements or right-of-way required.

The March 2013 I-95/I-64 Overlap Study conducted by the Virginia Department of Transportation identified the I-195 Interchange Improvements at Laburnum Avenue as a Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) candidate project.

In 2015 the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization RRTPO submitted the I-195 Interchange Improvement project at Laburnum Avenue for the House Bill 2 Program. The program name was later changed to be called the “Smart Scale” program. Funding for the project was made available in FY2018 and PE was authorized on July 7, 2017.

On December 7, 2017 the Virginia Department of Transportation held a Design Public Hearing in the City of Richmond at Linwood Holton Elementary School. The Public Hearing Schedule included a construction begin date of December 2, 2020. The project improvements will not require additional right-of-way, easements or utility adjustments. The project construction is ahead of schedule and construction is scheduled to begin in April 2020.

The project is funded through Federal and State Smart Scale funds. The Virginia Department of Transportation is responsible for the project development and construction. No funding is required from the City for these phases. The City of Richmond will be responsible for maintenance once construction is complete.

Laburnum Roundabout is 100% funded through Federal and Virginia “Smart Scale” funding totaling \$2,435,580. The city of Richmond will be responsible for maintenance.

The total estimated cost is:

Engineering Design: \$ 350,000
Utility Relocation: \$ 0
Construction: \$2,085,580
Total: \$2,435,580

Project Schedule:

Begin Project Design: July 7, 2017
Public Involvement: December 7, 2017
VDOT Design Approval: March 9, 2018
Begin Utility Adjustments N/A
Begin Construction: April 7, 2020
End Construction: August 3, 2020

e. Master Plan

The site straddles both the North and the Near West Planning Districts of the 2001 Master Plan.

The North Planning District section notes that “widening of Laburnum Avenue is not an appropriate means by which to address deficiencies in the carrying capacity of that corridor.” Furthermore, the plan cites a 1999 I-95/I-64/I-195 Feasibility Study that was endorsed by the Bryan Park Interchange Advisory Committee, a multi-jurisdictional citizen group and a consultant. It states “Improvements should include the following: provide a two-lane on-ramp to I-95 northbound from I-64/ I-195, replace the Hermitage Road off-ramp from I-95 northbound and the Hermitage Road on-ramp to I-94 southbound with an off-ramp to Dumbarton Road from I-95 northbound and an on-ramp from Dumbarton Road to I-95 southbound. These improvements are needed to accommodate changes in traffic patterns and volumes which have changed significantly since

the interchange was originally designed and constructed. Any improvements to the Interchange should not take land from Bryan Park (P.263).”

The Feasibility Study has since been updated in the form of the March 2013 I-95/I-64 Overlap Study, mentioned previously.

A 2017 update to the Land Use Plan for the North Planning District reflects that the area north of Laburnum Avenue becomes Transitional Office.

The Near West Planning District does not reference any transportation improvements for the site but maintains that the land use on the south side of Laburnum Avenue remains Industrial.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines are supportive of traffic management techniques that slow traffic (page 7) and that add “an aesthetic contribution to the urban character of the neighborhoods in which they are placed” (page 8). The Guidelines note that “intersections should be designed to serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in a safe manner” and that circles “should be considered in certain situations as an alternative to the traditional intersection” (page 7).

The Guidelines are supportive of on street parking, noting that it “creates pedestrian activity and provides a buffer between those pedestrians and moving traffic” (page 6). In regard to landscaping, the Guidelines note that “landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest” and that “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10). The Guidelines also note that “existing granite curbing and stormwater inlets should be retained” and that “any new granite curbing should match existing curbs” (page 4).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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