



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia

Planning Commission



UDC 2022-21	<p align="center">Conceptual Location, Character, and Extent Review</p> <p align="right">Meeting Date: 10/17/2022</p>
Applicant/Petitioner	Ryan Rinn – Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities
Project Description	Conceptual location, character, and extent review of the renovation of the Calhoun Recreation Center Park.
Project Location	
Address: 436 Calhoun Street	
Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND PUBLIC WORKS	
High-Level Details: The Applicant proposes to renovate the existing park located at the Calhoun Recreation Center. The proposal will replace the existing baseball field with open space and amenities. The existing playground, basketball courts, community farm, and several common spaces will be improved. The revitalization for this park is done in parallel to the larger Jackson Ward Community Plan and the planning of redevelopment for Gilpin Court through the Federal Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant from HUD. The proposed splash pad and comfort station is included in an early action grant as part of the HUD program.	
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with conditions
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	Significant public outreach has been completed in conjunction with the Jackson Ward Community Plan, including direct outreach to residents of Gilpin Court. Residents had the opportunity to vote on what project was included as the early action grant leading the splash park to be included.
Recommended Conditions	<p>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</p> <p>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</p>

	<p>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</p> <p>Staff recommends that a maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase to include landscaping, sustainability features, and public spaces.</p> <p>Staff recommends that a specific maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase regarding the splash pad that details future maintenance funding and anticipated life cycle of the mechanical equipment.</p> <p>Applicant to reassess the entrance and street crossing arrangement to align with pedestrian network on both sides of Calhoun Street, for the final submission.</p> <p>Maintain existing trees and provide further trees between the existing parking area and play area as well as along the road frontage nearest the parking area, where possible, for the final submission.</p>
--	--

Findings of Fact

Site Description	<p>The site is located in the Gilpin neighborhood at the intersection of Calhoun Street and St. Peter Street. The site is zoned R-53 - Residential (Multi-Family) district, and consists of roughly 3.6 acres. The property currently consists of a playground, public spaces, community farm, basketball, and baseball fields. The project is bound to the south by Gilpin Court residential neighborhood, to the north by CSX train track ROW, and to the west by Calhoun Recreation Center. In the greater neighborhood, Interstate 95 is located roughly three blocks to the south.</p>
Scope of Review	<p>The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter</p>
Project Description	<p>The purpose of the project is to “enhance existing features in the park and revitalize access to recreational resources within the Gilpin Court community.”</p> <p>The site currently consists of playground, public spaces, community farm, basketball, and baseball fields. The basketball courts were recently improved and will be maintained. The playground and community farm will be improved. A paved public space will be renovated into a teen zone and the existing service building will be replaced with a new comfort station. The baseball field will be renovated into an open area landscaped public space. A splash pad, exercise circuit, skate friendly plaza, and outdoor kitchen is proposed. Art is included at the northeast corner and street murals are proposed along Calhoun Street.</p> <p>The narrative states “through public meetings, surveys, and events on site the community has had the opportunity to engage in the planning and design process. Strengthening amenities, such as the community farm, play areas and facilitating a space for pop up markets have all emerged as priority items for the neighbors of the Calhoun Center. Residents had the opportunity to vote on what project was included as the early action grant leading the splash park to be included.” In response to community discussion about lack of maintenance in the past, Staff has asked the applicant to provide an enhanced maintenance plan for the splash pad, in particular, for the final application. The splash pad includes mechanical equipment that will require higher maintenance than the rest of the park and the funding for the splash pad is an early action grant relating to the HUD Choice Neighborhoods program. The grant is intended to promote good will and trust in the community. If the splash pad fails several years after installation, it will contribute to the underserved status of the community.</p> <p>The splash pad will be designed with child safety in mind, controlling for access and parental ability to watch over children.</p> <p>No GRTC bus lines are located in the vicinity.</p> <p>The narrative states “Safety, visibility, shade, and senior appropriate navigation/accessibility are major concerns for residents in the Gilpin Court community. Partners of this project acknowledge that despite the hours of operation, from sunrise to sunset, residents will likely still use the park facilities after the sun sets. Pedestrian scale lighting is planned for safety, wayfinding, and navigation at night. While proposed lighting is not meant to encourage the use of the park outside of official hours, it will increase the perception of safety and discourage vandalism. Additional concerns voiced by the</p>

community and stakeholder groups aim to address the lack of storage on site (particularly for garden activities and pop-up events), disorganized placement of fencing, and proper screening of the dumpsters near the playground.”

The narrative states “The design includes linear walking paths that are easy for seniors and mothers with strollers to navigate. Shade sails and shade structures are proposed to provide comfortable access to the existing playground and proposed plazas. Shade trees will be preserved and planted within the site and along Calhoun Street. The existing extensive fencing will be removed and strategically replaced along the existing basketball courts, the existing playground and the proposed splash play area. Street murals and crosswalks will be employed to provide safe pedestrian travel routes into the site via Calhoun Street and St. Peter Street. The master plan also includes a proposed sidewalk along St. Peter Street where sidewalk does not exist currently. The four main entrances into the site will have unique character and provide visibility into the site. These entrances will include focal elements with native landscape treatments, one with a skate friendly plaza with a stair/ramp feature, and another with the proposed public art gateway project. Additional amenities envisioned as part of the master plan include expanded play opportunities for children, teen areas with shade and social spaces, adult conversation areas, and walking paths and fitness equipment for all. The master plan focuses on creating flexible spaces that are multi-generational and high in impact to the community.”

The narrative states “The design objectives aim to remove as little existing vegetation as possible. Selective clearing of potentially hazardous trees and invasive species is necessary along the northern edge of the site, but no individual specimen trees are planned for removal at this stage in the design process.”

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
<p>Master Plan</p>		
<p>Big Moves: Realign City Facilities</p>	<p><i>Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty</i></p> <p><i>Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.</i></p> <p><i>Beauty – Oftentimes, City facilities serve as beautiful landmarks that anchor a neighborhood and create a distinctive place through architecture and site design.</i></p> <p><i>Thriving Environment: City-owned buildings and land are opportunities for energy retrofits and green infrastructure to further Goals 15 and 16, as well as locations for new parks, urban agriculture, and resiliency hubs to further Goal 17.</i></p>	<p>Big Moves: Realign City Facilities</p> <p>The project includes the stated goal of enhancing community space located in an underserved neighborhood. The park already serves as a community focal point and will greatly benefit from the high quality design and amenities proposed.</p> <p>Sustainability features are not included at this stage and will be provide at final approval.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>
	<p>Objective 4.2 – Integrate public art into the built environment.</p> <p><i>c. Link public art with major public facility initiatives (e.g., plazas, buildings, parks, bridges) and expand the definition of public art to include architectural embellishments of buildings, or landscape features.</i></p> <p>Objective 15.4 - Reduce the amount of waste going to landfills.</p> <p><i>f. Demonstrate sustainable consumption, sustainable building practices, and zero-waste behaviors in the design and expansion of City operations.</i></p> <p>Objective 16.3 - Reduce water consumption by 10% per capita.</p> <p><i>b. Encourage on-site graywater uses in public and private facilities.</i></p> <p>Objective 16.4 - Increase green stormwater infrastructure</p> <p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way</i></p> <p>Objective 17.3 Reduce urban heat</p> <p><i>a. Encourage lighter-colored surfaces for roads and roofs to reflect sunlight.</i></p> <p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green roofs on public facilities</i></p> <p>Objective 17.7 Increase and enhance biodiversity</p>	<p>Master Plan Objectives</p> <p>Opportunities for public art are provided onsite and in surrounding ROW.</p> <p>Richmond 300 includes a number of sustainability objectives specifically relating to public facilities and City owned properties. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable stormwater management, and sustainable construction should be considered.</p> <p>Landscaping will be greatly increased from the current site design, reducing urban heat island effect.</p> <p>Lighting details will be established at a later stage, but should include sustainability considerations.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>

	<p><i>b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities</i></p> <p><i>c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.</i></p> <p>Objective 17.8 Reduce light pollution.</p> <p><i>b. Install hooded light fixtures on public rights-of-way and buildings to reduce light pollution and reduce effect on nocturnal species.</i></p>	
Urban Design Guidelines		
PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3	<p><i>The design guidelines suggest compatibility, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, cost, and sustainability be considered when designing pavement areas. Impervious areas should be limited and pervious pavement materials should be introduced, especially in minimally used parking areas.</i></p>	<p>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS</p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that a maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase to include landscaping, sustainability features, and public spaces.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that a specific maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase regarding the splash pad that details future maintenance funding and anticipated life cycle of the mechanical equipment.</u></p>
STREET DESIGN – P.6	<p><i>Intersections should be designed to serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in a safe manner.</i></p>	<p>Street Design</p> <p>Adjacent intersections include pedestrian improvements and street murals.</p>
LANDSCAPING – Page 10	<p><i>Plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes. Site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture. Plant materials should create spaces by providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas. In addition, landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest. Species diversity, plant selection, and long term maintenance should be considered.</i></p>	<p>LANDSCAPING</p> <p>A significant portion of the site will be green space. Landscaping is used to create interest and natural connections for pedestrians throughout the site.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that a maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase to include landscaping, sustainability features, and public spaces.</u></p>

		<u>Staff recommends that a specific maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase regarding the splash pad that details future maintenance funding and anticipated life cycle of the mechanical equipment.</u>
STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT – Page 11	<i>Design guidelines encourage use of Low Impact Development design elements that that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, minimize, and detain stormwater runoff are applied to not only open space, but also rooftops, streetscapes, parking lots, and sidewalks.</i>	STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT Stormwater specifics will be finalized at a later stage, but should include low-impact design combined with landscaping to compliment an attractive and accessible outdoor space and public realm. The applicant should consider opportunities for permeable paving in the proposed parking areas and pedestrian paths for the final plan design. <u>Staff recommends inclusion of sustainable considerations such as stormwater retention and permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u>
SITE FEATURES – Page 14	<i>The site should respond to its users through its design and by providing an appropriate array of amenities to serve those users and should incorporate sustainable design aspects. Plazas are encouraged and should provide pleasant transition from street to building while being designed in inviting and accommodating ways for a diversity of users. Operational features and parking should be screened from view.</i>	A large number of uses are included in the proposal, including sports fields, play areas, public space, exercise space, natural areas, skate friendly plaza, and community farm.