



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2025-30	Final Review	Meeting Date: 9/16/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Yongping Wang / Department of Public Works	
Project Description	UDC 2025-30 FINAL: Location, Character, and Extent review for the replacement of the Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge over CSX Transportation, located between Norfolk Street and Boulevard West.	
Project Location		
Address: 2000 N. Arthur Ashe Boulevard		
Property Owner: City of Richmond – Department of Public Works		
High-Level Details: Final design proposal for the replacement of the existing Arthur Ashe Boulevard multimodal bridge. The project scope includes roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, and streetscape improvements as well as associated landscaping, lighting, and placemaking features.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval	
Staff Contact	Kevin Costanzo - kevin.costanzo@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	Please see Applicant Narrative. Prior Reviews: Conceptual review approved by UDC July 2025 with conditions	
Conditions for Approval	NA	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The project site is located on Arthur Ashe Boulevard, between Norfolk Street and Boulevard West. The site is located just south of the Diamond and extends over CSX tracks. Scotts Addition is located to the South. An adjacent project was approved by the UDC for CONCEPT in June of 2024 to provide a path from Broad Street, through the Science Museum and Movieland Property, adjacent to the Arthur Ashe Bridge.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to Location, Character, and Extent review under Section 17.07 and design recommendations under Section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter.
Prior Approvals	Conceptual review approved by UDC July 2025 with the following conditions: • Final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant. • Inclusion of permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines. • The re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible. • A maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase to include landscaping, sustainability features, public spaces. • The Applicant incorporate public art, where feasible.
Project Description	The Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge replacement project proposes to replace an existing multi-modal bridge structure that provides a critical connection over the CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) railroad at the City's crossroads with the eastern seaboard interstate highway corridor. The existing bridge is structurally deficient, requiring the recent installation of emergency temporary supports, and provides sub-standard vertical clearances over CSXT. The proposed bridge will meet all CSXT current requirements. • Replacement of structurally deficient bridge originally built in 1889 and last rehabilitated in 1985. • New two-span bridge will raise roadway by 7 feet to meet CSX clearance requirements. • Four vehicular travel lanes (two in each direction). • Shared use paths (10' minimum) on both sides of the bridge, separated from traffic by planters, barriers, and guardrails. • Pedestrian overlooks with integrated benches, shade canopies, and planters oriented to views of Scott's Addition and the Diamond District. • Placemaking features include industrial-inspired shade structures, LED-integrated lighting, and a central overhead "gateway." • Landscaping includes 43 large canopy trees, 12 medium canopy trees, and over 1,000 SF of raised planters. • Final planting palette emphasizes native and hardy low-maintenance species. • Lighting design incorporates street lighting, planter-integrated lighting, railing underlighting, and accent lighting at benches and structures <u>Staff Review</u> During CONCEPT review, the UDC discussed bike infrastructure, pedestrian access to the bridge, location of shade structures, bridge and lane cross sections, pedestrian lighting rhythm. Concern was expressed for using wood materials for and efficacy of the provision of benches, the approach for vehicle users and the visual impact of the design elements, the deconstructed nature of the elements on the side of the bridge, and the design of the gateway element. The UDC also recommended formation of a subcommittee to assist the Applicant in addressing any remaining design questions in preparations for FINAL submission. Committee Member Gemmer and Van Inwegen were selected. They met with Staff and the bridge design team to work through many of the design features provided in this FINAL Application. With the current FINAL submission, the design has been revised to address UDC concerns such as using composite materials for seating. The design has also simplified the number of vertical

	elements that were present in the CONCEPT design, which in turn helps reduce visual impact as well as the “deconstructed” design appearance. The gateway element was also simplified and has several options for implementation, all of which Staff is supportive of. These options include not being provided at all (Staff believes the bridge design stands well on its own without the gateway element); providing only one bar across the travel lanes and containing an internally lit sign, possibly containing the name of the bridge; or the provision of some sort of artwork which could take the form of art setting on the shown gateway element or something completely different and up to the artist. If the artwork route is taken, the review of the artwork would be handled by the Public Art Commission and PAC Secretary. With the proposed changes from the CONCEPT design, Staff fully supports approval of the FINAL Application for the Bridge over CSX on Arthur Ashe Boulevard (future name to be determined). Staff suggests the proposed simplification and refinement of the design met all previous concerns and that the proposal meets the expectations of the Master Plan and character of the larger neighborhood. <u>UDC recommendation to the Planning Commission</u> The UDC reviewed the application and discussed plantings and maintenance difficulty on a bridge, materials and finish of shade structures, use of perforated panels, color temperature of lighting, width of lanes and sidewalk, pattern of shade structures being more timeless. The UDC recommends approval with no conditions.
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Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
	The project includes significant pedestrian and bicycle improvements to a stretch of road that was previously industrial in character and lacking in amenities that reflect the area’s growth, both south in Scotts Addition and north with the Diamond and adjacent redevelopment. Master Plan The Master Plan shows Arthur Ashe as a Great Street with enhanced transit. Great Streets call for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle amenities along with an elevated aesthetic design. The Master Plan future connections map shows a connection, south to north, across the CSX tracks, for pedestrians and bicycles. The map also shows this connection integrating with the path project approved for CONCEPT by the UDC in June of 2025 that connects Broad Street to the Diamond District via the Science Museum and Movieland Property. The proposed bridge is intended to be that connection, with a future phase making the further connection between the proposed path and the bridge. The significant grade difference between the bridge and Movieland path make it difficult to make the connection, necessitating a separate project. Greater Scotts Addition Master Plan Node The Master Plan Greater Scotts Addition Node calls for “<i>series of open spaces and a transportation network that support families and aging-in-place...</i>” and “<i>Visitors to Greater Scott’s Addition have the option to safely arrive by foot, bike, transit, or car...</i>” Next steps are listed as “<i>Great Streets: Transform N. Ashe Boulevard and Hermitage Road into Great Streets, featuring buildings addressing the street, underground utilities, street trees, lighting, enhanced transit, and other amenities.</i>”	

The plan also calls for a *“landmark bridge over the CSX tracks connecting the crescent park and development on the north side to the Pulse Corridor.”*

The Master Plan intended this “Landmark Bridge” to be separate from the Arthur Ashe Blvd bridge, but it was decided as part of the Diamond District project that the separate bridge would not be pursued. The Arthur Ashe Blvd Bridge becomes the only near-term opportunity to make that connection and create a landmark bridge.

Urban Design Guidelines	
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	The Guidelines state <i>“It is the priority of the UDC to support all modes of transportation, giving deference to pedestrians and vulnerable transportation users...”</i> and <i>“Streetscape elements, such as street trees, street lighting, and seating should be used to encourage pedestrian activity.”</i>
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