



City of Richmond, Virginia
Department of Planning and Development Review
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To: Department of Public Works
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: October 12th, 2020
RE: **Review of a pedestrian bridge encroachment for VCU Health System Children's Hospital, 1001 East Marshall Street; UDC 2020-16**

I. APPLICANT

Ashby Ayers, JLL representing VCU Health System (VCU HS)

II. LOCATION

The public right-of-way over N. 11th Street and East Marshall Street

Property Owner:

City of Richmond right-of-way (ROW)

III. PURPOSE

The application is for the review of a pedestrian bridge encroachment

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The UDC finds that the Project Team has worked closely with the City of Richmond, and has been able to come to a consensus to develop a complete plan. The plan proposes a pedestrian bridge that is necessary for the health, safety, and privacy of pediatric patients, and responds to the site constraints of the project location.

The Urban Design Committee recommends that the Director of Public Works grant approval of the encroachment request with the following conditions:

- The applicant consider the opportunity for public art on the solid, white, concrete support piers as a way to add interest and vibrancy to an otherwise blank, yet substantial, new element in the right-of-way.
- The applicant consider increasing the height of the horizontal bands of windows on the proposed pedestrian bridge to further increase the bridge's transparency.
- Applicant submit a photometric analysis of the project area, with and without the proposed lights on the underside of the pedestrian bridge, so that staff can make an informed decision regarding lighting levels.
- Applicant consider modifying the exterior color of the proposed pedestrian bridge by lightening the color to match the exterior of adjacent buildings.

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject ROW spans the width of the diagonal of the intersection of N. 11th and E. Marshall Streets, from the northeast to the southwest corners. It is located within an area zoned B-4, Central Business District. The proposed pedestrian bridge will connect level P2 of the new Children's Hospital, currently under

construction, to level 3 of the Gateway Building. South of E. Marshall Street, N. 11th Street is a one-way, four-lane road consisting of two lanes of thru-traffic flanked by a parking lane on either side. North of E. Marshall Street, N. 11th Street is a one-way, two-lane road with through traffic and curb bump-outs to accommodate street parking on either side. The posted speed limit is 25 MPH. E. Marshall Street is a two-way, four-lane road with two lanes of thru-traffic each way.

b. Scope of Review

The City owns the ROW, but VCU HS will perform all of the work, which puts the improvements in the category of encroachments. In the last few years, the UDC has reviewed a number of streetscape encroachments for similar projects, including the pedestrian bridge for the neighboring VCU Health System Adult Outpatient Facility at 1001 E. Leigh Street and farther south at the Dominion Workplace Tower I.

The encroachment approval process is administered through the Department of Public Works, which has requested that the UDC provide design advice on certain types of encroachments. The UDC does not have the authority to approve encroachments, but rather provides advice to the Director of the Department of Public Works.

c. UDC Review History

While the UDC typically recommends against pedestrian bridges, the Committee has approved the following:

In February 2020, the UDC conceptually reviewed this encroachment. Staff recommended approval of the encroachment with the following conditions:

- The applicant demonstrate that consideration was given to addressing the expanses of blank, undifferentiated wall
- The applicant demonstrate that consideration was given to unifying the design of the support columns with those columns already part of the existing children's hospital building

Subsequently, the UDC recommended that the Director of Public Works defer the application, and that it be resubmitted with the following conditions

- that the design of the bridge be more consistent with the UDC guidelines for pedestrian bridges, specifically, that the facade of the proposed pedestrian bridge be a cleaner, simpler design that incorporates greater transparency and glass if possible
- that the vertical support columns be designed to be as small as possible and less visually and physically intrusive in the right of way
- that the applicant further study, and address, streetscape lighting improvements including lighting under the proposed pedestrian bridge
- that the branding of the children's hospital, as it pertains to the design of the bridge, be secondary and less visually obtrusive
- that the applicant and the City of Richmond's Transportation Engineering Division address the impact the design may have on transportation concerns, providing a design that is a result of consensus

- there's demonstrated clarity on the coordination and execution of the bridge design as it pertains to the pedestrian improvement plans from the VCU master plan and the hospital's design plans

In 2018, the UDC reviewed a pedestrian bridge encroachment associated with the VCU Health System Adult Outpatient Facility. Staff recommended approval as the proposed design met the following criteria: that a bridge should span no more than the width of the right-of-way, be level, and be made of transparent and non-reflective glass. Furthermore, the bridge was critical to provide a safe and secure passage for patients and sensitive materials in between buildings. (UDC 2018-35)

In 2016, the UDC reviewed a pedestrian bridge encroachment associated with the Dominion Workplace Tower I. Staff recommended approval as they found the proposal to comply with the treatment suggested of such a structure, with the additional benefit of offering open-air crossing space at the rooftop garden level. (UDC 2016-36)

In 2009, the UDC reviewed a pedestrian bridge encroachment associated with 1202 E. Marshall Street, now the James W. and Frances G. McGlothlin Medical Education Center, designed by Pei Cobb Freed & Partners. Staff recommended approval as they found the proposal would allow for the removal of three (3) existing pedestrian bridges that did not comply with the treatments suggested by the Guidelines. (UDC 2009-23)

In 2005, the UDC reviewed a pedestrian bridge encroachment associated with the 500 and 600 block of E. Jackson Street. The Richmond Downtown Plan, approved by City Council in November of 2004, noted that pedestrian bridges inhibit street level activity and can potentially block Downtown vistas. It further placed specific emphasis on "street level activity and the pedestrian environment" in the Biotech Park. The recommendation of conceptual approval by the UDC noted that Jackson Street is not an important Downtown vista. (UDC 2005-24)

d. Project Description

The intent of the pedestrian bridge is to connect the Children's Hospital with the rest of the VCU Health campus while ensuring that patient privacy is maintained. For the purposes of patient safety and continuity of care for pediatric patients, an elevated pedestrian walkway connecting buildings is integral to the future of the Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU. This proposed interior walkway will connect the new Children's Hospital building to the existing Gateway Building to the east. It is essential for the safe, secure transport of patients and supplies between locations.

The proposed pedestrian bridge will extend diagonally from the south west corner of East Marshall Street and 11th Street to the north east corner of East Marshall Street and 11th Street. The pedestrian bridge will then extend east along the north side of East Marshall Street where it will then cross over the existing pedestrian bridge between the Sanger and Nelson Buildings, turning 90 degrees at the Gateway Building to make a connection to the existing stair tower.

New street trees and plantings are being proposed with this project. New tree wells will be larger than the existing 4'x4' tree wells, ranging from 4'x10' to 5'x12'. There are five American Hornbeam Trees proposed along East Marshall Street, and one Willow Oak being proposed on 11th Street south of East Marshall Street. The tree wells will match the existing in design, having a granite curb with drainage cuts. Street trees will be planted in the middle of the wells surrounded by low liriopce grass.

The area within the proposed tree wells will be undercut and replaced with specified planting soil mix. Liriopce ground cover will surround the trees; helping protect the planting soil mix from erosion. The applicant has clarified that the specific plantings were selected because of their resilience and success of the other like plantings on site. The VCUHS Facilities Management will oversee landscaping maintenance.

Six foot vertical strapped back benches in a polyester powder coat black finish, 36 gallon steel trash receptacles with a green polyester powder finish and a vertical strap design with rain bonnet, and new bike racks are being proposed within the scope of this project. All proposed site furnishings will match the existing in the immediate area in design, color, and finish.

At the February 2020 meeting of the UDC, this application was recommended for deferral by the Director of the Department of Public Works. The UDC recommended that the application be resubmitted with several conditions:

1. **That the design of the bridge be more consistent with the UDC guidelines for pedestrian bridges, specifically, that the facade of the proposed pedestrian bridge be a cleaner, simpler design that incorporates greater transparency and glass if possible.** The applicant has responded to this condition by proposing continuous bands of windows on each of the visible facades of the proposed bridge, instead of the irregular widow pattern of the original design.
2. **That the vertical support columns be designed to be as small as possible and less visually and physically intrusive in the right of way.** The applicant has responded to this recommendation by removing the opaque wrap from around the steel support piers to expose the under-lying framework, creating more transparent piers. The location of the steel support piers have not been altered since the applicant's last submission.
3. **That the applicant further study, and address, streetscape lighting.** The applicant has responded to this condition with the addition of lighting underneath the proposed pedestrian bridge for the portions that encroach over top of the sidewalk. The lighting underneath the bridge will illuminate the sidewalk beneath, in addition to the existing decorative, pole mounted street lamps along Marshall Street.
4. **That the branding of the children's hospital, as it pertains to the design of the bridge, be secondary and less visually obtrusive.** The applicant has responded to this condition by proposing a cladding for the pedestrian bridge that is a neutral color that compliments the surrounding buildings, instead of the originally proposed multi-colored cladding that matched the lower level cladding of the new Children's

Hospital. The applicant has added horizontal band elements that continue off the main building and across the length of the bridge, adding a subtle visual connection of the two structures.

5. **That the applicant and the City of Richmond's Transportation Engineering Division address the impact the design may have on transportation concerns, providing a design that is a result of consensus.** The applicant has confirmed that they have been working with the City of Richmond's Transportation Engineer to be in compliance with the City of Richmond's Better Streets Manual.

The applicant has worked with the City of Richmond to address and/or clarify the following:

- Striping plans for E. Marshall Street, 10th Street, and 12th Street.
- The location and orientation of new ADA accessible ramps
- Removal of 8 arrows on departure legs that are not permitted
- Submittal of a traffic analysis to the City of Richmond
- Sight triangles and intersection configurations
- Additional renderings showing future construction and location of pedestrian bridge piers
- Compliance with applicable building codes for pedestrian bridges.

6. **That the applicant demonstrate clarity on the coordination and execution of the bridge design as it pertains to the pedestrian improvement plans from the VCU master plan and the hospital's design plans.** The applicant has stated that VCU and VCUHS are separate entities and that they have no influence or direct information about the VCU master plan.

e. Master Plan

The subject property is located in the City Center Focus Area, as defined by the 2008 Downtown Master Plan, and is placed in the Urban Core character area. The Plan contains very specific language about integrating the VCUHS Campus into Downtown's urban fabric. The plan further states "Streetscape programs should continue to better connect the campus. New and existing parking garages should be lined with habitable space (p.4.22)."

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines "*do not support the use of pedestrian bridges. If they are used, the bridge should span no more than the width of the right-of-way. Pedestrian bridges should be level, with little to no incline. The materials used for the construction of pedestrian bridges should not be opaque or made of reflective material, so as to minimize the obstruction across the public right of-way (p. 28).*"

The Urban Design Guidelines recommend that, "*the selection of appropriate paving materials be based on compatibility with adjacent paving materials*" (pg. 3). The concrete and clay brick pavers are being proposed within the scope of this project match the existing paving found in the area in material and design.

The Guidelines state that, “*curb cuts for handicap accessibility should be located at intersections. Mid-block curb cuts are strongly discouraged. Curb cuts should include tactile warning surfaces as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act*” (pg. 8). A new ADA ramp is planned for the southeast corner of 10th and Marshall Streets, and the other at the northeast corner of 11th and Marshall Streets. No other new ADA ramps are proposed. The applicant has confirmed that all proposed accessible ramps will be in compliance with the American’s With Disabilities Act.

In regards to landscaping, the Urban Design Guidelines state that: “*plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes*” (pg. 10). The landscaping being proposed will mimic the surround street scape plantings, utilizing larger than city standard tree well, ground cover, and American Hornbeam, and Willow Oak Street trees.

In addition, the Guidelines recommend that, “*hardy ground covers, such as lirioppe, should be planted under street trees, where appropriate*” (pg. 21). Lirioppe will be planted within the proposed tree well, mimicking that of existing streetscape plantings.

The Guidelines recommend that, “*site furnishings, such as benches and trash receptacles, should be appropriately styled and scaled to complement building architecture and to reinforce the character of the streetscape*” (pg. 24). The Design, color and finish of proposed benches and trash receptacles will match that of the existing in the area.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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