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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: February 7, 2019  
RE: **Final location, character and extent review of Powhatan Community Center ADA improvements, 5051 Northampton Street; UDC 2019-07**

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**I. APPLICANTS**

Heywood Harrison, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

**II. LOCATION**

Powhatan Hill Community Center, 5051 Northampton Street

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of proposed ADA improvements at Powhatan Hill Community Center.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This project will reconfigure and update the existing street parking and sidewalks at Powhatan Community Center to meet ADA Accessibility Guidelines. As currently designed, the layout provides sidewalk access along the west side of Northampton Street as well as accessible ramping to Powhatan Hill Park. In addition the existing sidewalk to the community center entrance will be reconfigured to include a new curb ramp, sidewalk, and ramping to the front door. The proposed improvements increase the accessibility of park facilities for a wider range of park and community center visitors.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

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**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

Powhatan Community Center is bounded by Goddin Street to the north, Union Street to the east, Williamsburg Road to the south, and Northampton Street to the west. The community center is adjacent to a 10 acre park zoned R-5 (Single-family residential) and contains open spaces, tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field and gathering spaces. The Powhatan pool is located north of the community center.

The surrounding areas to the east and south are developed primarily with single-family detached dwellings in the R-5 and R-6 (Single-family attached residential) districts. A mixed-use development consisting of two six-story buildings with

approximately 204 residential units is under construction to the north. The area to the west of Williamsburg Avenue is located in Henrico County and is developed with manufacturing/warehouse uses.

**b. Scope of Review**

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as a “public way”.

**c. UDC Review History**

At the regular September 2015 meeting of the Urban Design Committee, the placement of a Data Node atop the Powhatan Community Center was reviewed for Final Location, Character and Extent (UDC 2015-25).

The Urban Design Committee reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the plans for the construction of the community center in 1989.

**d. Project Description**

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (DPRCF) plans to reconfigure and update the existing street parking and sidewalks at Powhatan Community Center to provide accessible parking and an accessible route to the entrance of the community center and Powhatan Park. Existing conditions do not meet ADA Accessibility Guidelines. Access to Powhatan Hill Park is limited to a small staircase on Northampton Street. Access to the community center entrance is steep and does not meet curb ramp, slope, or handrail requirements.

As currently designed, the layout provides sidewalk access along the west side of Northampton Street as well as accessible ramping to Powhatan Hill Park. Mill and overlay of existing street parking is proposed to meet accessibility requirements for slope. After restriping, the area will provide 2 parallel accessible parking spaces. In addition, the existing sidewalk to the community center entrance will be reconfigured to include a new curb ramp, sidewalk, and ramping to the front door.

DPRCF engaged Timmons Group for technical services to design accessibility improvements at Powhatan Community Center. These services began with a design survey of the site and followed with a schematic design discussion with DPRCF staff. The final design included construction documents consisting of existing conditions and demolition, a layout plan, grading and drainage plan, erosion control plan, construction notes and details, and a stormwater summary.

The project is being funded through the City of Richmond Neighborhood Park CIP.

This is a relatively small-scale and simple construction project and it is estimated that construction will take approximately 40 days to complete. The estimated construction start date is May 2019 and completion is expected mid-June 2019.

The landscaping consists of reseeding all disturbed areas. Landscape maintenance will belong to the City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, & Community Facilities.

**e. Master Plan**

The Powhatan Community Center is located in the East Planning District, as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan places the subject area in the Public and Open Space use category, with primary uses including publicly owned and operated parks, recreation areas, open spaces, schools, libraries and other government facilities. There is no language in the Plan specific to the subject area.

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Public Park section of the Urban Design Guidelines notes that “A preference should be given towards materials and construction techniques which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality. (page 9). The Guidelines are also very supportive of low-impact development and green building practices (page 10, 11).

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).

Lastly, the Guidelines state that “lighting and landscaping should allow for surveillance and policing activities, but should be designed primarily to accommodate the intended use of the park” (page 9).

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

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