



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: March 16, 2015
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent Review of streetscape improvements along E. Canal Street between S. 12th and Virginia streets, and along Virginia Street between E. Cary and E. Canal streets**

I. APPLICANT

Kevin Newcomb, Department of Public Works

II. LOCATION

E. Canal Street between S. 12th and Virginia streets, and Virginia Street between E. Cary and E. Canal streets

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of streetscape improvements along E. Canal Street between S. 12th and Virginia streets, and along Virginia Street between E. Cary and E. Canal streets.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project involves streetscape improvements along E. Canal Street between S. 12th and Virginia streets, and along Virginia Street between E. Cary and E. Canal streets. The project includes restoring the cobblestone street surface on Canal Street, widening the sidewalk on Virginia Street, and providing brick sidewalks, decorative street lighting and street trees throughout the project area.

The Urban Design Committee finds the proposed improvements to be consistent with the streetscape in adjacent blocks of Canal and Virginia streets. The Committee finds that the restoration of the cobblestone streets will act as a natural traffic calming measure. The Committee further finds the proposal to be consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines. Lastly, the Committee finds the proposal to be directly supportive of the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan, particularly as it pertains to restoring the cobblestone streets, widening sidewalks, replacing concrete sidewalks with brick and providing street trees and ornamental lights. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval, with the following conditions:

- That the crosswalk at the intersection of S. 12th Street and E. Canal Street be composed of bricks as is the case with the crosswalks at the intersection of Virginia Street and E. Canal Street, instead of the proposed stamped asphalt.
- That all new ornamental lights are placed at the same setback from the curb as the existing ornamental lights in the project area to maintain consistency.
- That the applicant endeavors to reuse the existing granite curb on Virginia Street where possible.

- That the applicant works with the Department of Public Utilities to remove as many wooden poles, overhead utilities and cobrahead light fixtures as possible.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject rights-of-way are along E. Canal Street between S. 12th and Virginia streets and along Virginia Street between E. Cary and E. Canal streets. The project area is located in the B-5 (Central Business) zoning district and within the bounds of the Shockoe Slip City Old and Historic District. The surrounding area is improved with office, commercial and residential uses as well as structured parking to support those uses. The Downtown Expressway abuts the project area on the south from S. 13th Street to S. 12th Street, separated by a landscaped berm.

The subject length of Canal Street carries one lane of vehicular traffic in each direction and has on-street parking on the north side of the street. The portion of Virginia Street in the project area carries one lane of vehicular traffic in each direction and has on-street parking on the west side. Both streets are composed of cobblestones, though portions of Canal Street have been paved with asphalt, which has deteriorated to expose the cobblestones beneath. There is sidewalk throughout the project area, though it varies in depth and composition. Likewise, there are some street trees and decorative lights in the study area, but not consistently. Both streets have a posted speed limit of 25mph.

b. Scope of Review

The proposed improvements are subject to location, character, and extent review as a "street" under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

Staff was unable to identify any prior UDC reviewed projects involving the subject rights-of-way.

d. Project Description

This project involves streetscape improvements along E. Canal Street between S. 12th and Virginia streets, and along Virginia Street between E. Cary and E. Canal streets. The project includes restoring the cobblestone street surface on Canal Street, widening the sidewalk on Virginia Street, and providing brick sidewalks, decorative street lighting and street trees throughout the project area.

Along E. Canal Street, the plans propose full depth restoration of the cobblestone street surface from S. 12th Street to Virginia Street. This will complement the section of cobblestone roadway from Virginia Street to S. 14th Street, which has previously been restored. The plans also propose replacement of concrete sidewalks with brick paver sidewalks in a running bond pattern, replacement of damaged brick sidewalk, provision of street trees and ornamental pedestrian streetlights, and accessible curb ramps at intersections. At all accessible ramps along the project corridor, the truncated domes will be colonial red in color, and any existing yellow truncated domes in the project area will be replaced with

colonial red for consistency.

The Canal Street project limits end at the east side of 12th Street, and the street surface to the west transitions to asphalt. The crosswalk from the southeast corner of Canal Street at 12th Street to the triangular splitter island will be a ladder-style crosswalk, which is the existing condition. The crosswalk from this same island to the northeast corner is proposed as a stamped concrete crosswalk in a herringbone brick pattern to match the adjacent brick paver sidewalks. The applicant notes that this crosswalk type was selected due to the cobblestone-to-asphalt transition.

On Virginia Street, the plans propose to widen the west sidewalk from approximately 6' to 12' wide. The sidewalk will be entirely replaced with new brick pavers in a running bond pattern. The parking deck located adjacent to Virginia Street to the west is City owned. The existing north entrance into the parking deck will be retained, while the south entrance to the deck will be closed, as will the existing curb cut. This loading dock portion of the parking deck is not being utilized for its intended purpose, and it is the City's intention to eventually convert this space to commercial uses; closing this entrance will support that goal.

Granite curb will be set at the proposed west side curb line. The three existing streetlights will be relocated to the standard 30" offset from the face-of-curb. Accessible curb ramps will be installed on the southwest corner of the intersection of Virginia and Cary streets and at the northwest corner of the intersection of Virginia and Canal streets.

The improvements on Virginia Street will result in a loss of four on-street parking spaces along the west side of Virginia Street. After construction, the proposed street width of Virginia Street is 26' wide (one 13' wide travel lane in each direction). The proposed improvements along E. Canal Street maintain the existing roadway width, travel lanes, and number of parking and loading zones.

The proposed ornamental light is the Charleston fixture in a black finish atop a 12' tall pole, which is the same fixture and pole that are already used in the project area. The lights will be installed approximately every 30' and placed 24" from face of curb on a 24"x24" concrete pole foundation. The fixture features a 150 watt high pressure sodium bulb and clear acrylic side panels with solid upper metal panels to reduce upward light pollution.

There are currently eight ornamental lights along Canal Street, all of which are located in between Virginia Street and S. 13th Street. On this block, the plans propose to add two new lights on the north side (for a total of seven) and seven on the south side (for a total of ten). A total of 18 new lights (nine on each side) are proposed along Canal Street from S. 13th Street to S. 12th Street. One new proposed streetlight will be installed on Virginia Street roughly midblock between Canal and Cary streets.

Tree wells are proposed on Canal Street for existing and proposed street trees. There are thirteen existing trees on the subject section of Canal Street that will receive a new, larger tree well. One new tree well is proposed on the north side of Canal Street roughly midblock between S. 13th and S. 12th streets. On Virginia

Street, one proposed tree will be installed in a well roughly midblock between Canal Street and Cary Street. The proposed trees will be consistent with the existing trees in this project area.

Construction of the project will be divided into two phases, with Phase 1 being along E. Canal Street from Virginia Street to S. 13th Street and Phase 2 being along E. Canal Street from S. 13th Street to S. 12th Street and also along Virginia Street. No construction is proposed during the Richmond 2015 UCI Road World Championships to be held in September. The construction estimate for Phase 1 of the project is \$440,000, and the estimate for Phase 2 is \$600,000. Funding has been provided for Phase 1 in the 2015 CIP budget. Funding for Phase 2 has been requested but not yet provided.

e. Master Plan

The subject rights-of-way are located in the Shockoe District as defined by the Downtown Master Plan. The Plan notes that “the urban fabric of the district is ideal for pedestrians, with small blocks and intimate cobblestone streets” (page 4.56). To improve the pedestrian environment, the Plan advocates for restoring, maintaining and where possible, widening the existing brick sidewalks. The Plan also calls for replacing concrete sidewalks with brick (page 4.59).

Another recommendation of the plan is to remove “the clutter of overhead utility lines and equipment from the visible public right-of-way” to enhance the streetscape (page 4.58). In addition, the Plan states that “street trees should be planted regularly along the edge of the sidewalk at no more than 30’ apart” and that “historic, pedestrian-scaled lighting should be installed along all streets to enhance the safety and character of the district” (page 4.59).

Speaking directly to the project area, the Plan notes that a critical area for improvement is Virginia Street, between Cary and Canal Streets, which should have wider sidewalks, street trees, and wayfinding signage (page 4.59). Lastly, the Plan notes that “traffic speeds can be lowered by better defining the streets with closely-spaced street trees, and by restoring the cobblestone streets” (page 4.63).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines notes that “historic features, such as existing cobblestone streets and alleys and stone crosswalks, shall be preserved” (page 3) and also that “existing granite curbing should be retained” (page 4). The Guidelines are supportive of on-street parking, noting that it is important “for not only providing for some of the parking needs of adjacent uses, but also as a means of defining the character of a corridor or neighborhood” and advocates for on-street parking lanes that are between 7 and 8 feet in width (page 6). The Guidelines note that “streetlights should coordinate with each other in style, color and finish” (page 25) and that “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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