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To: Planning Commission  
From: Urban Design Committee  
Date: July 18, 2016  
RE: **Conceptual Location, Character and Extent review of streetscape improvements along Patterson & Grove Ave; UDC No. 2016-26**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Yongping Wang, Department of Public Works

**II. LOCATION**

Patterson Ave. between Maple Ave. and Willow Lawn Dr. as well as Grove Ave. between Maple Ave. and Westview Ave.

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond Department of Public Works

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for the conceptual location, character, and extent review of streetscape modifications Patterson and Grove Ave. as part of a set of streetscape design guidelines.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This proposal shows a careful consideration to the existing furnishings and community character of the streetscape on Patterson and Grove Ave, and attempts to create a more unified character for the two areas as stated in the Master Plan. However, the recent 2011 Master Plan for this area is very clear that the goal for these two corridors in the future, particularly Patterson Ave, is to create a complete street with an excellent pedestrian environment and improved bicycle accommodation that supports a neighborhood-scale mixed use shopping district. The proposed design does many things called out as specific goals in the Master Plan, including providing gateway signage and pedestrian amenities, increasing tree plantings and shade, and landscaping that promotes a sense of place. However, it fails to consider widening the sidewalk, which is many areas of the project is below the 4'-5' clear minimum the City has established for clearance around sidewalk cafes or bike share stations, for example, or the design of bike lanes on Patterson and Grove Ave, as indicated in both the Master Plan for the area, as well as the City's Bicycle Master Plan.

The UDC discussed with the applicant some options for addressing some of the staff recommendations, such as using concrete pavers rather than bricks for the sidewalk banding, encouraging more native species within the groundcover options, and generally encouraging streetscape elements that better match the period and style of the area's architecture rather than using historic downtown as an aesthetic.

Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends the Planning Commission approve the conceptual design, with the following recommendations for the final design:

- That the applicant consider ways to increase pedestrian right-of-way and sidewalk width throughout the corridors

- That the applicant address bicycle accommodations within their streetscape plan
- That any on-street parking be marked as a lane, not stalls, to allow for compact and super-compact cars and consider EV charging stations within the corridor
- That the applicant work with the Transportation Engineering division to establish a complete streets vision for the project
- That the applicant clarify the pedestrian lighting offset, and ensure a spacing of 40-60 feet as recommended by the Urban Design Guidelines
- That the applicant consider treatments other than a brick band for the sidewalk treatment
- To consider elements more in line with the period of when the neighborhood was established, a la 1940s-1950s
- To consider the use of more native plantings in the corridor

**Staff Contact:**

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**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

Patterson Ave between Maple Ave and Glenburnie/Westview Ave is zoned B2, a commercial district that allows for more strip-like development with parking in front. West of Glenburnie/Westview Ave to Willow Lawn it is zoned R5 residential to the North side of the street, despite containing commercial uses, and RO2 to the South. One parcel is in the R2 residential district at the intersection with Willow Lawn.

Grove Ave between Maple Ave and Granite Ave is part of an Urban Business district, with a parking overlay that reduces some off-street parking requirements. A requirement of the Urban Business District land use and zoning is to locate parking in the rear of buildings, have limited setbacks from the street, and reduce curb cuts. The block between Granite and Westview Ave is currently zoned R4 as part of a residential district, but contains many commercial uses within converted houses that are setback much further from the street.

**b. Scope of Review**

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

**c. UDC Review History**

In the last few years, the UDC has reviewed a number of signage and marker encroachments in the project area. In 1994, the UDC reviewed streetscape improvements and street lighting improvements to the Libbie & Grove area.

**d. Project Description**

This project provides design guidelines for the streetscape along Patterson Avenue and Grove Avenue within the Westhampton Commercial District. While an initial Phase 1 is being developed for implementation, these guidelines would guide future streetscape investments in the area.

Sidewalks in the area are currently “overwhelmingly concrete with the exception of one stretch on Patterson”, as the plans say. There are a few stamped asphalt

crosswalks in the Grove Ave area. There are no brick sidewalks in the area surveyed.

Tree wells will be expanded and planted with groundcovers. New trees are proposed as red maple, red bud, and Chinese pistache. Grove Ave would be planted on both sides of the street with red maple; Patterson is proposed to have Redbud on the north side of the street under the utility lines, and the Chinese pistache on the south side of Patterson. A variety of groundcover plant options are proposed in the plans. Tree well offset varies through the plan.

City standard benches, trashcans, and bike racks are proposed throughout the project. On Patterson Ave, more benches and street furniture are proposed on where there are fewer driveways, so predominantly on the Northside of the street, with the exception of bus stops. A bench, trash can, and bike rack are clustered in the plan. The dimensioned plans show the benches with a parallel orientation on Patterson.

On Grove Ave, these clusters of street furniture are located at bus stops and then twice in the blocks with most street-facing businesses. On the dimensional plans, they are shown parallel to Grove Ave, but the renderings show them in perpendicular orientation.

Throughout the project, the street section varies block to block. The plan proposes adding a band of brick pavers to the outside of the sidewalk area, in order to provide a visual separation between the sidewalk and street. The plans say that the concrete paving will then identify the path of travel for pedestrians and vehicular entrances.

The design envisions the brick band area, which is interspersed with the expanded tree wells, as equivalent width the concrete pedestrian way. On Grove Ave, for example, there are places where it is 5' clear pedestrian way, 7.6' clear, 6'2 clear, 6.5' clear, and then down to only 4' clear on the block between Granite Ave to Westview Ave, which is the existing condition. The block of Grove Ave between Granite Ave and Westview is proposed to retain their existing narrow 4' sidewalk, grass hedges, and trees. One new tree and well is proposed, and as well as decorative pedestrian lighting and banners to match the rest of the district.

On Patterson Ave, there are places with only 3.4' clear sidewalk and 4.5' brick banding, and the sidewalk width as indicated by the concrete area is consistently below 4' wide.

Throughout the project, more pronounced crosswalk markings as well as marking the parking lane and parking spaces will help identify available parking spaces, reduce interference with driveways and intersections, and emphasize the pedestrian presence.

Entrance signs are proposed at either end of both corridors; the plans show three options. Banners would be mounted on utility poles, and so would be in the middle of the street on Grove Ave and on both sides of the street on Patterson Ave.

The project proposes the Charleston light fixture as a continuation of the decorative pedestrian lighting already found in the area. There is not a clear indication of the offset, but the plans show about 6 fixtures per block.

Funding has been secured to execute a limited amount of the design as a first phase. The City of Richmond and the designers are working with the Westhampton Merchants Association to define the scope of Phase 1 construction.

**e. Master Plan**

The 2011 Master Plan Amendment focused on Libbie/Patterson/Grove focused on the need for streetscape improvements, particularly envisioning how public infrastructure improvements and redevelopment along Patterson would help create a more consistent mixed use district. The amendment says “Patterson need a thorough re-thinking as “complete streets” that serve pedestrians, school children, the elderly, and cyclists, and that reinforce neighborhood connections...[as part of] a dynamic and coherent system of public spaces and walkable streets”

“A redesign of these streets, as shown on the following graphic, should at least explore all of the following:

- Wider sidewalks
- Landscaped medians
- Landscaping that promotes the sense of place
- Bike lanes, preferably buffered
- Generous crosswalks at major intersections, with curb extensions (bump-outs)
- Trees and other shading devices
- Higher level of amenities for pedestrians, including better sidewalks, lighting, seating, and way-finding
- Redesign of the Patterson and Libbie intersection, which is one of the big obstacles to Patterson becoming better connected to the rest of the district
- Gateway treatments at key places should mark entrances to the Grove-Libbie-Patterson shopping district

“The attractive tree-lined streetscape of the neighborhood streets and sidewalks needs to be continuous all the way to the arterials to help break up the monotonous concrete environment of Patterson. Bringing the typical streetscape, with trees and good sidewalks, all the way to Patterson will be part of the strategy to signal to drivers that they are driving through a neighborhood place, making the corridor more attractive, and helping reduce traffic speeds. It will also encourage walkability and connectivity.”

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Community Character section of the Urban Design Guidelines contains several suggestions on landscaping, noting that “generally, new street trees should be located a minimum of 35’ from each other and three feet from the curb” and that “generally, a street tree should be no closer than 12 feet from a streetlight” (page 21). “Entrances and pedestrian walkways should enhance the

streetscape and delineate an edge between pedestrian walkways and the street. Appropriate landscaping should be used to clearly define entrances and pedestrian walkways” (page 20).

“Site furnishings should be conveniently located for the pedestrian, but should not obstruct pedestrian circulation. Furnishings should be located where people congregate, such as at bus stops, in front of major attractions, and in parks and plazas. The placement of furnishings should not create visual clutter on the streetscape. Furnishings may be grouped together, where appropriate. However, trash receptacles should be placed in the vicinity of bench groupings, but not directly adjacent, because of wasps and other insects in summer months.” (page 25).

The Guidelines also encourage alternatives to metal tree grates, unless a precedent has been established in the area (page 21). Finally, the Guidelines state that lighting and street fixtures should be consistent with the existing fixtures in the surrounding area and that pedestrian light poles should be placed 40 to 60 feet apart (page 22, 25).

## **VI. ATTACHMENTS**

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