




Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
 Urban Design Committee



UDC 2022-10	Conceptual Review	Meeting Date: 5/5/2022
Applicant/Petitioner	Giles Garrison, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities	
Project Description	Conceptual Review of Belle Isle Interpretive Signage	
Project Location		
Address: Belle Isle		
Property Owner: City of Richmond		
<p>The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities and the Friends of the James River Park are working together, proposing to install new interpretive signage in various locations on Belle Isle, which is part of the James River Park System.</p> <p>The new interpretive signage will be flat, and supported by wooden posts. The signage will serve as an educational amenity, presenting visitors with various opportunities to learn about the many historical sites on the Island.</p>		
Staff Recommendation		
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@richmondgov.com , (804) 646-6569	
Previous Reviews	None	
Staff Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The light brown text color may be hard to read and recommends that a bolder color be used in place of the light brown text color. • The images be a high resolution. • The dimensions of the sign face and support structure be submitted with the final review. 	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The location of the proposed addition is on a 17.98 acre site, the former campus of the Richmond Outreach Center, formerly known as the ROC Church. In addition to the Gymnasium and the former sanctuary building, an assortment of pre-existing, poor condition buildings of various scale and utility are situated on site, including a small skate park, a multi-use field, three baseball fields, and expansive parking areas.
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<p>Scope of Review</p> <p>Project Description</p>	<p>The improvements associated with this project are subject to location, character, and extent review as a “public building” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.</p> <p>Friends of the James River Park has collaborated with the City of Richmond’s James River Park System on this proposal for a new set of interpretive signage for Belle Isle, in the James River Park System. The purpose of this project is to replace the existing mismatched signs with a set of modern signs with updated information and a consistent design. The design process began in the fall of 2021 with a summer 2022 installation goal.</p> <p>These signs are modeled after traditional “wayside” signs that are a standard fixture in any state or national park. The design elements and colors were selected by senior Parks and Recreation staff members. The interpretive text was developed by JRPS education team members with input from Friends of the James River Park. Project funding is being provided by Friends of the James River Park through a grant from the Herndon Foundation. Fabrication of the signs can begin as soon as this application is approved. JRPS staff and volunteers will complete the installation as soon as fabrication is complete.</p> <p>Eight uniform signs have been designed to replace the existing sixteen signs that have been placed throughout Belle Isle over the years. The signage will receive an anti-vandalism/UV protective coating and will be situated on treated lumber posts.</p> <p>The existing signs do not conform to any consistent design elements and are in various states of disrepair. The new signs would be placed in accordance with the included map and will be near the locations of the signs they are replacing.</p> <p>All signs contain between 250 and 300 words of interpretive text up to two images (or one image and one map), and a relevant quote from a historical figure that helps to put the sign into a more personal context. The selected colors are in line with the Riverfront Plan signs. Sign images have been pulled from a variety of sources including the Library of Virginia, the Richmond Times-Dispatch, and the National Archives.</p> <p>Map and Locations</p> <p>Sign 1 - Welcome to Belle Isle (Image 1, Map Location 1) Sign 2- Old Dominion Iron and Steel (Image 2, Map Location 2) Sign 3- Fall Line of the James River(Image 3, Map Location 3) Sign 4- The Civil War on Belle Isle (Image 4, Map Location 4) Sign 5- Hollywood Rapids (Image 5, Map Location 5) Sign 6- Quarrying Broadrock Island (Image 6, Map Location 6) Sign 7- First Break Rapids (Image 7, Map Location 7) Sign 8- Headgate Cleaner/Power Plant(Image 8, Map Location 8)</p> 
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Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	TEXT	STAFF ANALYSIS
<p>James River Park Master Plan 2019</p>	<p><i>Install Consistently branded interpretive signage and wayfinding signage throughout the park system.</i></p>	<p>The existing interpretive signage on Belle Isle is in disrepair and are an inconsistent design. The applicant is proposing to install new, updated signage that is modern and consistent in design.</p>
<p>Urban Design Guidelines</p>		
<p>Signage, pg. 23-24</p>	<p><i>A sign's message should be easy to read and direct.</i></p> <p><i>Sign lettering should be 4" to 14" high and should be in proportion to the area in which it will be displayed. One inch should be added to the lettering height for each additional 50' between the sign and the viewer" (page 24).</i></p> <p><i>The Guidelines note that "signs should be placed so that they are sensitive to the signs of adjacent businesses" (page 23).</i></p>	<p>While the Urban Design Guidelines do not mention interpretive signage specifically, they do offer some general guidance on signage.</p> <p>The designs of signage submitted to staff are a blue and light brown color scheme. <u>Staff finds that the light brown text color may be hard to read and recommends that a bolder color be used in place of the light brown text color.</u></p> <p>There are a number of black and white images being used on the signage. <u>Staff recommends that the images be high resolution.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the dimensions of the sign face and support structure be submitted with the final review.</u></p>