



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
File ID: UDC-088954-2021
Date: April 19th, 2021
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of a parklet at 114 W. Brookland Park Boulevard; UDC 2021-11**

I. APPLICANT

Yessenia Revilla, City of Richmond Department of Planning and Development Review

II. LOCATION

Right-of-way adjacent to 114 W. Brookland Park Boulevard

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of a parklet encroachment adjacent to Ms. Bee's Juice Bar located at 114 W. Brookland Park Boulevard.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposed parklet is in substantial compliance with the City of Richmond's Urban Design Guidelines, the City of Richmond's Parklet Design Guidelines, and furthers the objectives of the Richmond 300 Master Plan by constructing a creative public space that will add to the vibrancy, activity, and usability of the right-of-way on Brookland Park Boulevard.

The Urban Design Committee recommends that Planning Commission approve the final design with the following conditions:

- The parklet include furnishings accessible to all potential users, including a wheelchair accessible table
- A reflective element be added to the exterior of the parklet
- More flexible seating be provided within the parklet
- The bike rack and trash/recycling bin on either side of the parklet be reoriented 90 degrees

Staff Contact:

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject right-of-way consists of two 18-foot parking spots adjacent to Ms. Bee's Juice Bar located at 114 W. Brookland Park Boulevard in Richmond's Northside. West Brookland Park Boulevard in this location is two travel lanes, one eastbound and one westbound, with parking on both sides of the street. The

posted speed limit is 25mph. This section of West Brookland Park Boulevard is a commercial strip consisting of businesses and some residential units. The sidewalk in this location is narrow, with little space for seating or street tree plantings. The city has constructed several bump-outs in the Right-of-way which contain small ornamental street trees and ground cover plantings.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as part of a “public structure” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

The Urban Design Committee has not previously reviewed any projects for this location.

d. Project Description

HKS Architects, Venture Richmond, and the City of Richmond are partnering with Brandi Battle, owner of Ms. Bee’s Juice Bar, on designing, permitting, and installing a custom parklet adjacent to her and her neighbors’ storefronts on West Brookland Park Boulevard. Parklets are a creative way to transform public right-of-way used for parking into usable, pedestrian-friendly spaces. Parklets are common in other cities across the county and have been considered an asset during the global corona virus pandemic, creating additional outdoor spaces.

The base design of the parklet consists of 3 modular units that can be assembled and disassembled easily, as they are not anchored to the ground. Composite decking placed perpendicularly over a frame constructed of 2x4s will be utilized for the flooring of the Parklet. An accessible, slip resistant ramp from the surface of the sidewalk to the surface of the parklet’s deck will be utilized to ensure ADA compliance.

The parklet will be 28 feet long and 6 feet 5.5 inches wide, and located in two 18-foot parking spaces. On the south side of the parklet, there will be a 2 foot buffer zone between the outer wall and travel lane. On the two ends of the parklet there will be 4-foot buffer zones, with a waste/recycling receptacle on the western end and a bike rack on the eastern end serving as additional physical barriers. The parklet will have a lightweight shade canopy supported by 8-foot metal structural posts painted yellow. Walls will be between 3 and 4 feet tall. Both the walls and shade canopy will be constructed of individual hexagonal panels that vary between red cedar and opaque and transparent acrylic materials. All dimensions of the proposed parklet and buffer zones are in compliance with the City of Richmond’s Parklet Design Guidelines.

The parklet will feature two standing tables, three single stools, one bench, and eleven rectangular planters. All furniture, including planters, tables, stools, and benches, will be constructed of red cedar and maintained by Ms. Bee’s Juice Bar.

The interior planters will contain dwarf sunflowers and the exterior planters will contain echinacea and will be located within the 2 foot buffer zone between the parklet and the travel lane, serving as a physical buffer. All planters will be 24

inches above the ground, and maintenance will be performed by Ms. Bee's Juice Bar.

There are two water utility access points located on the sidewalk adjacent to the proposed parklet. The City of Richmond Parklet Design Guidelines state that parklets must be placed so that they *"maintain at least 5 feet of clearance to utilities (including manholes and valve boxes), loading zones or handicapped parking spaces."* The proposed parklet will be closer than 5 feet to two water utility access points. Staff notes that the parklet is not in keeping with this specific requirement, but still believes that this location is acceptable for the placement of a parklet for the following reasons:

- Water access points are not being covered by the parklet
- The parklet is a modular design and not anchored into the ground, and can be removed during an emergency.
- The applicant has submitted letters of support from adjacent businesses
- The parklet furthers goals of the Richmond 300 plan, creating seating and shade on a corridor that is currently underserved by those public amenities.

e. Master Plan

The City of Richmond's Master Plan, Richmond 300, in objective 17.1 speaks to increasing the number of Richmond residents within a 10-minute walk to high-quality open space to 100%, prioritizing low-income areas with a high heat vulnerability index rating. Richmond 300 identifies Brookland Park Boulevard as having a moderate to high heat vulnerability rating (figure 44 pg. 171). Objective 17.1.f suggests that the City promote the Parklet Program and encourage the development of parklets throughout the City (pg.168) On a site visit, staff noted that this portion of West Brookland Park has few street trees, confirming the area's vulnerability to heat. The proposed parklet will have a canopy that will provide shade to its users. Staff finds the installation of a parklet in this location is a creative way to add more public open space to this urban setting, increasing residents' and visitors' access to a public park.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

While the City of Richmond's Urban Design Guidelines do not mention parklets specifically, the guidelines reference public parks:

"Public parks are integral to the quality of life found in any urban landscape. Parks should respond to the environment in which they are located and should be designed in accordance with their intended use" (pg. 9). Parklets are a unique way to reclaim right-of-way for public use, and respond to the need of gathering/green space in an urban setting. The proposed parklet will be sponsored by Ms. Bee's Juice Bar, but will be open to the public for use. The parklet will respond to its setting, providing a gathering and seating space that is shaded in a location that does not currently have these amenities.

The Guidelines note that *"site furnishings, such as benches and trash receptacles, should be appropriately styled and scaled to complement building architecture" (page 24).* The Guidelines also note that *"site furnishings should be durable, both in construction and finish, and be easy to maintain and to install"*

(page 25). Staff finds that the parklet design and all related furnishings and materials are in substantial compliance with the *City of Richmond's Urban Design Guidelines and Parklet Design Guidelines*.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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