



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: December 21, 2015
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent Review of an addition to Fire Station #20 at 4715 Forest Hill Avenue**

I. APPLICANT

Dexter Goode, Dept. of Public Works

II. LOCATION

4715 Forest Hill Avenue

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final Location, Character and Extent review of an addition to Fire Station #20 at 4715 Forest Hill Avenue.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project involves constructing an addition to Fire Station 20, which dates to the 1930s-1940s. The Applicant's Report notes that the City intends to renovate the interior of the station and also construct an addition to extend the usable life of the building and to meet the needs of a modern fire department.

The Urban Design Committee finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines. The proposed addition materials will match the existing building materials and will continue architectural details such as the arch over the windows. The Committee further finds the proposal to be directly supportive of the Master Plan recommendation advocating for upgrades to current fire facilities to meet the needs of a changing workforce and federal regulations. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject property is located on the north side of Forest Hill Avenue, just east of Westover Hills Boulevard. The B2-POD (Community Business with a Plan of Development Overlay) zoned property totals 0.33 acres of land and is improved with the existing Fire Station, an approximately 6,150 square foot structure which dates to the 1930s-1940s. A large portion of the site is paved and developed, however, there are two grassy areas with trees to either side of the driveway on Forest Hill Avenue.

The surrounding properties on Forest Hill Avenue are also located in the B2-POD zone and are developed with a number of community-serving commercial uses. The alley to the rear of the Fire Station is the separating line between that district and an area zoned R-5 (Single-family Residential), which is developed with single-family detached dwellings in a moderately dense pattern

b. Scope of Review

The proposed building and site plan are subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as a public building.

c. UDC Review History

Fire Station #20 was constructed prior to the UDC being established by resolution of City Council. Staff was unable to identify any UDC-reviewed projects for the subject property.

d. Project Description

This project involves constructing an addition to the existing fire station, which dates to the 1930s-1940s. The Applicant's Report notes that the City intends to renovate the interior of the station and also construct an addition to extend the usable life of the building and to meet the needs of a modern fire department.

The program for the fire station calls for individual sleeping quarters, station officer's office, a day room, kitchen, storage, decontamination facilities, laundry facilities, and exercise space. Not all of those functions could be accommodated in the existing space, so the addition (19' x 14' 3") is proposed to house the exercise room. The approximately 300 square foot building addition, located on the east side of the main building, will be constructed of masonry walls with a stucco finish to match the existing building. The location of the addition will necessitate the closing-in of a door leading into the main vehicle bay as well as a window leading into the kitchen. The roof of the addition will be composed of membrane and the roof line will come in just below the existing roofline of the kitchen area. To conceal the roof, the front elevation will contain a parapet wall. The plans also call for a 5' wide and 17' 6" long membrane-roof canopy to be erected over top of a covered patio outside the kitchen. This will provide a covered area for fire fighters to sit outside and to grill in inclement weather.

Renovation of the building exterior will include the in-kind replacement of the existing windows (themselves replacements of the originals) and the patching, repairing, and painting of the existing stucco. The plans also include the provision of a 3' tall cast aluminum "20" over the main vehicle bay doors, painted to match the color of the windows.

Interior renovations will include new partitions, finishes, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems. The station will be fully accessible at the conclusion of the project. The Applicant's Report notes that the Station is visited quite often by walkers and joggers and therefore the interior renovation plans also call for a public restroom, accessed in the portion of the building on the western side of the main vehicle bay, which will be available to the public without disturbing the fire fighters in the station.

There are no proposed alterations to the site, landscaping or lighting, with the exception of the repair of some deteriorated sections of the concrete driveway.

The project budget is approximately \$1,350,000, which will be funded through the Fire Department's Capital Improvement Projects fund. The project is expected to be completed in November of 2016.

e. Master Plan

The subject property is located within the Old South planning district as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan places the subject area in the Community Commercial use category, with primary uses including office, retail, personal service and other commercial and service uses (page 134). The Public Safety and Emergency Services portion of the Plan recommends "upgrades to current fire facilities to meet the needs of a changing workforce and federal regulations" (page 90).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

In general, the Urban Design Guidelines note that "the quality, design, and condition of all public facilities sets the image of the City, and sends a message about the values placed upon the services provided" (page 13). The Guidelines also note that building materials "should be appropriate for the size and architectural style of the building" and that "many different materials on a single building lead to visual confusion and should be avoided" (page 17). Building materials should also be "aesthetically and structurally durable, of high quality, and require little maintenance" (page 17).

The subsection on materials continues to say that "building textures and their combinations should add continuity and not conflict or detract from each other" and that "textures should be appropriate for the size, proportion and architectural style of the building and its surroundings" (page 17). Referring to building colors, that Guidelines note that they "should be coordinated and compatible with each other and with adjacent buildings" (page 17). The Guidelines also state that "windows, projecting cornices, and architectural details, such as decorative masonry bands in an accent color, may be used to break up flat building planes" (page 19).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

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