




Staff Report  
City of Richmond, Virginia  
**Urban Design Committee**



UDC 2022-13	<b>Conceptual Location, Character, and Extent Review</b> <div>Meeting Date: 8/4/2022</div>
<b>Applicant/Petitioner</b>	Nissa Dean, Deputy Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
<b>Project Description</b>	Conceptual location, character, and extent review of the construction of a new community center and related landscape and site improvements
<b>Project Location</b>	
<b>Address: 1925 U Street and 1501 North 20th Street</b>	
<b>Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND RECREATION &amp; PARKS</b>	
<b>High-Level Details:</b>  The applicant proposes a concept to construct a 30,000 square foot, 3 story community center and splash pad; and improve an existing outdoor pool facility, outdoor playgrounds, and outdoor sports fields.  The proposed building will feature an indoor multipurpose sports court, roof terraces, a rooftop multipurpose sports field, a youth / teen center, support spaces, offices, and a mixed media library.  Improvements to the site include public space improvements, a new parking lot, and enhanced landscaping and hardscaping. A raised traffic table to improve pedestrian access at a nearby intersection is included.	
<b>Staff Recommendation</b>	Approval, with Conditions
<b>Staff Contact</b>	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov
<b>Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews</b>	Significant public outreach has been completed to inform the proposed goals and features of the design, including surveys and neighborhood meetings.
<b>Staff Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</li> <li>• Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</li> <li>• Staff recommends that a maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase to include landscaping, sustainability features, and public spaces.</li> <li>• Staff recommends the applicant incorporate public art, where feasible.</li> <li>• Staff recommends that the applicant provide further visual interest on the building façade facing Rogers Street.</li> </ul>
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## Findings of Fact

Site Description	<p>The site is located in the Brauers neighborhood on the East End at the intersection of T street and North 20<sup>th</sup> Street. The site is zoned R-6 – single-family attached residential district, and consists of two properties – the property that the Community Center will be located upon is 4.5 acres and the existing pool property is 1.825 acres. The future community center property currently consists of a playground and basketball, tennis, and baseball fields. The pool property currently consists of the pool facility and underused lawn area. The project is surrounded largely by residential uses. In the greater neighborhood, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School is located to the southwest and Mosby Court is located to the northwest.</p>
Scope of Review	<p>The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter</p>
Project Description	<p>The purpose of the project is to develop a conceptual plan for the construction of a new community center, renovation of an existing outdoor pool facility, and associated site and landscape improvements. The concept narrative declares that the goal of the project is to create “engage, educate, and elevate the lives of the East End community residents.”</p> <p>The project consists of two parcels, one where the community center is proposed and one where the existing pool facility will be renovated. The future community center parcel currently consists of sports fields and a playground. The existing baseball field will be maintained and improved, other existing fields and the playground will be moved or removed to facilitate the new community center building and parking lot. A new promenade trail, picnic shelter, and splashpad will be added. Several large existing trees will be maintained.</p> <p>The existing pool facility will be expanded with new decking and the site will be improved with a community garden and parking lot.</p> <p>A raised traffic table will be added to the intersection of U Street and North 20<sup>th</sup> Street to facilitate pedestrian access between the community center, pool, and larger neighborhood. There are currently no bus stops adjacent to this site, although GRTC routes 5 and 12 are within a block of the subject site.</p> <p>The proposed parking lot on the north of the community center parcel will facilitate a connection between North 19<sup>th</sup> Street and North 20<sup>th</sup> Street that currently does not exist. A pedestrian way is oriented between U Street and T Street to extend a connection along North 19<sup>th</sup> Street that currently does not exist. Both of these connections facilitates that re-establishment of the street grid in this area – a goal of the Richmond 300 Master Plan Land Use Designation (Neighborhood Mixed Use).</p> <p>The narrative states that the architecture of the community center is “engaging.” Expanses of glass are used to create interest at pedestrian level with views of the activities and offerings inside the building that help to draw pedestrians into the space. Natural light is utilized throughout the building to encourage active use and pleasant atmosphere. A “stepdown” of massing of the building helps to re-enforce neighborhood scale and the façade is broken up into different sections by using different materials, textures, and architectural features. A number of outdoor verandas will facilitate further outdoor use and provide excellent views of the city skyline. A rooftop basketball court is proposed.</p>

	<p>The proposed community center will include net zero design goals and utilize solar panels, closed system geothermal heating, and rainwater harvesting. The building will be designed to facilitate disaster response and emergency shelter during inclement weather.</p> <p>Site improvements to landscaping will use primarily local species and will maintain several well established trees, protected through construction. A community garden is proposed on the pool property and rooftop gardens on the community building are dedicated as a teach site for urban horticulture.</p> <p>Site improvements to hardscape will provide permeable pavement on basketball courts, enhanced pedestrian paths (a request from the community), and enhanced surfaces for playground areas. Seating, picnic tables, trash receptacles, and bike parking will be provided throughout the site. A splash pad is proposed at the southern part of the site along T Street which will act as a primary point of entry and interest along that axis. Two basketball courts will be created and the existing baseball field will be renovated, a major goal mentioned by the community. Outdoor exercise equipment and all ages swings will also be included.</p>
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## Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
<b>Master Plan</b>		
<b>Big Moves: Realign City Facilities</b>	<p><i>Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty</i></p> <p><i>Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.</i></p> <p><i>Beauty – Oftentimes, City facilities serve as beautiful landmarks that anchor a neighborhood and create a distinctive place through architecture and site design.</i></p> <p><i>Thriving Environment: City-owned buildings and land are opportunities for energy retrofits and green infrastructure to further Goals 15 and 16, as well as locations for new parks, urban agriculture, and resiliency hubs to further Goal 17.</i></p>	<p><b>Big Moves: Realign City Facilities</b></p> <p>The project includes the stated goal of designing a new public facility with equity and beauty in mind. The programming of the new community facility will include educationally minded assets such as a multimedia library, community garden and food forest, indoor play area, and youth/teen center.</p> <p>A number of sustainability and environmentally friendly features are included. The building will be design with a net zero goal, sustainable energy will be introduced, and environmental resiliency is a goal of the plans for landscaping.</p>
	<p><b>Objective 2.1</b> - Align new facilities and improve existing City owned facilities.</p> <p><i>f. Implement programs to improve the energy efficiency of City-owned buildings</i></p> <p><b>Objective 4.2</b> – Integrate public art into the built environment.</p> <p><i>c. Link public art with major public facility initiatives (e.g., plazas, buildings, parks, bridges) and expand the definition of public art to include architectural embellishments of buildings, or landscape features.</i></p> <p><b>Objective 10.4</b> - Increase the number of low-emission vehicles.</p> <p><i>b. Seek opportunities to install electric charging stations on publicly</i></p>	<p><b>Master Plan Objectives</b></p> <p>Richmond 300 includes a number of sustainability objectives specifically relating to public facilities and City owned properties. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable stormwater management, and sustainable construction should be considered. Sustainability features that are planned to be included: NetZero energy (combine energy efficiency and renewable energy generation to consume only as much energy as can be produced onsite), photovoltaic roof panels, rooftop gardens and green site improvements. Zero emission charging stations could be considered for this site.</p> <p>Richmond 300 establishes that City facilities should be considered in larger resiliency efforts. Community Centers are traditionally considered in municipal resiliency plans as they operate as</p>

	<p><i>owned land, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.</i></p> <p><b>Objective 15.4</b> - Reduce the amount of waste going to landfills.</p> <p><i>f. Demonstrate sustainable consumption, sustainable building practices, and zero-waste behaviors in the design and expansion of City operations.</i></p> <p><b>Objective 16.3</b> - Reduce water consumption by 10% per capita.</p> <p><i>b. Encourage on-site graywater uses in public and private facilities.</i></p> <p><b>Objective 16.4</b> - Increase green stormwater infrastructure</p> <p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way</i></p> <p><b>Objective 17.3</b> Reduce urban heat</p> <p><i>a. Encourage lighter-colored surfaces for roads and roofs to reflect sunlight.</i></p> <p><i>b. Identify opportunities for green roofs on public facilities</i></p> <p><b>Objective 17.6</b> Increase the resiliency of infrastructure and community assets.</p> <p><i>h. Increase local renewable energy generation (see Goal 16).</i></p> <p><i>h. Identify community facilities to serve as resilience hubs and update systems to be more resilient.</i></p> <p><b>Objective 17.7</b> Increase and enhance biodiversity</p> <p><i>b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities</i></p> <p><i>c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.</i></p> <p><b>Objective 17.8</b> Reduce light pollution.</p> <p><i>b. Install hooded light fixtures on public rights-of-way and buildings to reduce light pollution and reduce effect on nocturnal species.</i></p>	<p>community centers and conveniently placed municipally owned spaces.</p> <p>Landscaping and lighting details will be established at a later stage, but should include sustainability considerations.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that final details on outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the applicant consider permeable surfaces in the proposed parking areas and pedestrian paths.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends the applicant incorporate public art, where feasible.</u></p>
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<b>Urban Design Guidelines</b>		
<b>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3</b>	<i>The design guidelines suggest compatibility, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, cost, and sustainability be considered when designing pavement areas. Impervious areas should be limited and pervious pavement materials should be introduced, especially in minimally used parking areas.</i>	<p><b>PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS</b></p> <p>Hardscape materials will be finalized at a later stage; sustainability and compatibility considerations should be included. Significant improvements to the site landscape include stormwater and sustainability considerations.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends inclusion of permeable hardscape materials where appropriate and as suggested by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that a maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase to include landscaping, sustainability features, and public spaces.</u></p>
<b>STREET DESIGN – P.6</b>	<i>Intersections should be designed to serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in a safe manner.</i>	<p><b>Street Design</b></p> <p>The proposed provision of bump outs along North 20<sup>th</sup> Street and the proposed raised traffic table at the intersection of U Street and North 20<sup>th</sup> Street will facilitate a safer environment for pedestrian users.</p>
<b>LANDSCAPING – Page 10</b>	<i>Plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes. Site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture. Plant materials should create spaces by providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas. In addition, landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest. Species diversity, plant selection, and long term maintenance should be considered.</i>	<p><b>LANDSCAPING</b></p> <p>A significant portion of the site will be green space. Several well established trees will be maintained and protected throughout construction. Landscaping is used to create interest and natural connections for pedestrians throughout the site.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that a maintenance plan be submitted during the Final UDC review phase to include landscaping, sustainability features, and public spaces.</u></p>
<b>STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT – Page 11</b>	<i>Design guidelines encourage use of Low Impact Development design elements that that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, minimize, and detain stormwater runoff are applied to not only open space, but also rooftops, streetscapes, parking lots, and sidewalks.</i>	<p><b>STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>Information on stormwater strategies is not provided within the application. Stormwater specifics will be finalized at a later stage, but should include low-impact design combined with landscaping to compliment an attractive and accessible outdoor space and public realm. Rainwater recycling is proposed with the project which will help to reduce runoff from stormwater. The applicant should consider opportunities for permeable paving in the proposed parking areas and pedestrian paths for the final plan design.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that sustainable stormwater features be included, as detailed by the Urban Design Guidelines.</u></p>

<p><b>GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES – Page 13</b></p>	<p><i>Guidelines suggest that buildings should be oriented toward the primary street that borders the site and architecturally acknowledge all adjacent public right-of-ways. A building's entrance should be easily recognizable, at ground level, and appropriately design to accommodate persons of differing mobility levels. Efficiency should be considered when deciding building location and orientation such as passive solar heating design and maximization of natural light.</i></p>	<p><b>GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES</b></p> <p>The building is located on the northwest corner of the site, at the corner of U Street and Rogers Street. While T Street could be considered a primary street, the applicant stated that “Through the community engagement process (Dec 2021 – June 2022) community members expressed the importance of keeping the baseball field (which gives the park its name) intact and in its current location. This was expressed in response to initial site options proposed (along T Street).” The proposed siting allows for the existing baseball field to remain, for new basketball courts to be installed, and several well established trees to be maintained. The proposed siting also facilitates the main pedestrian axis as an extension of North 19<sup>th</sup> Street and a new connection extension of U Street, further enforcing the street grid of the area.</p> <p>The southern exposure of the building will facilitate seasonal changes in natural lighting and warming.</p>
<p><b>BUILDING SETBACK – Page 14</b></p>	<p><i>The guidelines state that new buildings should have the same or similar setback as existing buildings on the same street. There will be situations, however, where a different setback would be appropriate for the type of building and the desired environment. Examples would include larger public buildings, such as schools and recreation centers, located within urban residential areas. In certain cases, a new building should be constructed with a minimal setback to reinforce the traditional street wall.</i></p>	<p>The proposed addition will largely meet the established minimum setback trends along both U Street and Rogers Street and further enforces the creation of the “streetwall” along that corner of the site. The proposed building is also a vertical orientation of usable space which maximized the outdoor greenspace on the site by limiting the footprint of the building.</p>
<p><b>SITE FEATURES – Page 14</b></p>	<p><i>The site should respond to its users through its design and by providing an appropriate array of amenities to serve those users and should incorporate sustainable design aspects. Plazas are encouraged and should provide pleasant transition from street to building while being designed in inviting and accommodating ways for a diversity of users. Operational features and parking should be screened from view.</i></p>	<p>The primary façade and surrounding site circulation is oriented to pedestrian users in both massing and design.</p> <p>A number of outdoor spaces and plazas add interest and usable space for pedestrians. This diversity of uses will enhance pedestrian activity throughout the site. These spaces include a splash pad as an amenity for families, all age swings for users of limited mobility, and an outdoor area dedicated to teens.</p> <p>Deliveries will be facilitated on the rear of the building along U Street. Operations design elements such as HVAC and other equipment will be appropriately screened from the public right-of-way. Surface parking will also need to be appropriately screened.</p>
<p><b>BUILDING PROPORTION – Page 15</b></p>	<p><i>Building massing should be compatible with the surrounding uses; although, important public buildings may require larger sizes. Visual impact can be minimized via design techniques such</i></p>	<p>A “stepdown” of massing of the building helps to re-enforce neighborhood scale and the façade is broken up into different sections by using different materials, textures, and architectural features. A number of outdoor verandas will facilitate further</p>

	<p><i>as setbacks or varying surface and roof planes. Height and roof design should be sensitive to surrounding uses, but may be taller on corners to frame access to the block.</i></p>	<p>outdoor use and provide excellent views of the city skyline. The building will be three stories, slightly larger than surrounding uses, but greater height can be reserved for important civic uses.</p>
<p><b>FAÇADE DESIGN. – Page 18</b></p>	<p><i>Building materials should be compatible with surrounding uses and not cause visual confusion by using numerous different materials on a single façade. Material quality and design should complement those on the existing building and be sufficiently durable and sustainable.</i></p> <p><i>Building design should take cues from the surrounding area. An easily recognizable, inviting and accessible entrance should be included and ground level design should be comfortable for the pedestrian. Large expanses of blank or undifferentiated wall are not appropriate building elevations, especially at the street level. Access for users of differing mobilities should be included; handicap ramps or other handicap considerations should be incorporated into the façade design and to a high design quality.</i></p>	<p>Materials are planned to be locally sourced and recycled where possible. Final material selection will be finalized at a later stage of design.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the re-use of existing materials onsite should be incorporated with the design plans, where feasible.</u></p> <p>The proposed façade of the addition introduces a modern, bright, and inviting glass, wood, and stone materials. The façade uses a number architectural features and changes in rhythm and setback to break up the design to more adequately fit the surrounding single family detached neighborhood feel. Some further visual interest may be needed on the west façade facing Rogers Street.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the applicant provide further visual interest on the building façade facing Rogers Street.</u></p>