Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia

Planning Commission

UDC 2022-19	Final Location, Character, and Extent Review	Meeting Date: 10/17/2022
Applicant/Petitioner	Scott Firestine, Director, Richmond Public Libraries	
Project Description	Final location, character, and extent review of the Greening Richmond Public Libraries: East End Branch project.	
Project Location **Address: 1200 North 25th Street** **Property Owner: CITY OF RICHMOND PUBLIC WORKS** **High-Level Details:** The applicant proposes sustainable stormwater and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to the exterior of the existing library and surrounding right-of-way. Improvements to the site include public space improvements, a new parking lot, enhanced landscaping and hardscaping, green stormwater facilities, passenger drop off area, and a new bike share station.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	The design was informed by public charrettes and the collaborative project management effort of Richmond Public Library staff, RVAH2O, The James River Association, and Four Winds Design. The application was heard at the October 6, 2022 UDC meeting. At the meeting, the Committee voted to recommend approval with no conditions.	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site is located in the Fairmount neighborhood at the intersection of North 25th Street and "R" Street. The site is zoned B-2 - Business (Community Business) district, and consists of roughly 0.35 acres. The property currently consists of the East End Branch Library and associated landscaping and parking lot. In the greater neighborhood, the Nine Mile Road/ North 25th Street traffic circle is located one block to the north and acts as a central point to the neighborhood.
Scope of	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 of the Richmond

Review	City Charter
Project Description	The purpose of the project is to develop a final plan for the construction of sustainable stormwater and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to the exterior of the existing library and surrounding right-of-way. The narrative states that the goal of the project is to filter runoff while detaining stormwater so that excess volume can infiltrate to the ground and be recycled by landscaping plants. The project site currently consists of the East End Branch Library building, street sidewalk, parking lot, and associated landscaping. The site will provide new stormwater bioretention infrastructure along North 25th Street and "R" Street, parking lot improvements to consist of greater landscaping and permeable pavers, passenger drop off location, and a new bike share station. Impervious area and most non-native species will be removed with native plants added for shade, wildlife habitat, and other ecosystems services. GRTC Bus Line 7 is located on the primary street frontage along North 25th Street, but the nearest bus stop is a block to the south. The narrative states that the "project strives to be become a model of sustainable site development with educational components accomplished through the use of an interpretive sign, special library programs, and community involvement and support." The applicant is working with the Richmond Public Art Commission to provide several trellis structures along "R" Street that will be used to grow shade plants that will shade the windows of the library as well as the sidewalk. The inclusion of this feature is likely dependent on that collaboration and the approval of Public Arts funding.

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
Big Moves: Realign City Facilities	*Vision: Equity, Sustainability, and Beauty* *Sustainability - City facilities can help showcase green building features.* *Beauty – Oftentimes, City facilities serve as beautiful landmarks that anchor a neighborhood and create a distinctive place through architecture and site design.*	**Big Moves: Realign City Facilities** The project includes a number of sustainability green features that will be showcased for the community. The library will also facilitate learning opportunities to enhance knowledge of sustainability in the community. The addition of greater landscaping and site features will contribute to the beauty of the site and the ability of the library to anchor the neighborhood through distinctive place making.
	Objective 4.2 *– Integrate pubic art into the built environment.* *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.* ***Objective 10.4*** *- Increase the number of low-emission vehicles.* ***Objective 16.4*** *- Increase green stormwater infrastructure* *b. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure on public lands and rights-of-way* ***Objective 17.3*** *Reduce urban heat* ***Objective 17.7*** *Increase and enhance biodiversity* *b. Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities at public facilities* *c. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023.* *g. Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and safe shelters for wildlife.*	**Master Plan Objectives** Richmond 300 includes a number of sustainability objectives specifically relating to public facilities and City owned properties. Sustainable stormwater management is a primary concern and will be enhanced by this project. ROW stormwater will also be treated by this project, furthering RVA 300 Goals. The addition of a bike share station onsite will enhance the availability of low emission transportation via greater bike infrastructure. Further landscaping in parking areas and the street sidewalk will reduce heat island effects. Native, adaptive, and pollinator plantings will be utilized.
Urban Design Guidelines		
PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS – Page 3	*The design guidelines suggest compatibility, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, cost, and sustainability be considered when*	***PAVING AND SURFACE MATERIALS*** The project will install pervious pavers in the parking area. The project will also install bio-

	designing pavement areas. Impervious areas should be limited and pervious pavement materials should be introduced, especially in minimally used parking areas.	retention facilities that will treat stormwater from both onsite and the ROW.
STREET DESIGN – P.6	*Intersections should be designed to serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in a safe manner.*	**Street Design** The project includes pedestrian enhancements and the proposed bio-retention facilities will help buffer pedestrian crossing areas across "R" Street and North 25th Street – reducing the distance that pedestrians will be in the path of vehicles while crossing.
LANDSCAPING – Page 10	*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.*	**LANDSCAPING** Landscaping is used to create interest and enhance the beauty of the existing site. Diverse species and long term maintenance is considered.
STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT – Page 11	*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.*	**STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT** Low impact stormwater practices are included with bio-retention facilities and permeable pavers.
SITE FEATURES – Page 14	*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. Operational features and parking should be screened from view.*	The proposed bike share station, opportunity for community engagement on sustainability themes and greater shade for users all increase the offerings of the site and the comfort of users. Landscaping is used to help screen parking areas.