




Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Urban Design Committee

UDC 2023-06	AMENDMENT – VCU Standard Streetscape Encroachment Package	Meeting Date: 5/4/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Terry McCormick, VCU Facilities Management Division	
Project Description	AMENDMENT – VCU Standard Streetscape Encroachment Package, originally approved in 2016.	
Project Location		
Address: VCU Facilities and adjacent ROW		
Property Owner: City of Richmond ROW		
High-Level Details:		
Virginia Commonwealth University requests to revise the VCU Standard Streetscape Encroachment Package, approved by the City of Richmond Urban Design Committee in 2016. The document standardizes sidewalk improvements for VCU projects in City Owned ROW, rather than receive full UDC Hearing for every project due to relatively minor scope and potential number of such applications.		
UDC Recommendation	Approval	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	The Streetscape package was originally approved by UDC and CPC in June of 2016.	
Conditions for Approval	NA	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The streetscape guidelines will apply to City Owned ROW adjacent to VCU owned or operated facilities.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 and 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter
Prior Approvals	The Streetscape package was originally approved by UDC and CPC in June of 2016.
Project Description	The document standardizes sidewalk improvements for VCU projects in City Owned ROW, rather than receive full UDC Hearing for every project due to relatively minor scope and potential number of such applications. When projects exceed the scope of the Standards listed in the document, such projects would have to be approved through the standard UDC hearing process.

The Applicant states:

"The revisions being proposed to the 2016 standards pertain to modifying the standard tree well design to better align to the increased tree well size that the City of Richmond has implemented on West Broad Street as well as implementing a raised border curb around the tree well that has been approved on recent projects on VCU's Monroe Park Campus. The increased tree well size improves the health of street trees and deters pedestrians from crossing the street mid-block. The raised curb helps keep sidewalk salt out of the tree wells."

DPW and Planning Staff have worked with the Applicant to revise the full document to adequately configure to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) requirements as well as the several City requirements and best practice guides.

The proposed document has been simplified from the original document approved in 2016 to very clearly and simply show and state what VCU is permitted to do outside of the standard City practices regarding sidewalks, curbing, tree wells, etc. By simplifying the document, projects can respond to the many different conditions on the ground without unintended complications from the Standards Document.

Approval of projects are completed administratively by Staff for UDC review when proposals match what is shown in the Standards. The UDC would review proposals if they do not meet the requirements of the Standards.

DPW reviews ALL applications for work in public ROW to ensure that proper pedestrian clearance is provided, among other engineering and forestry considerations.

Existing Example that takes into account all proposed changes to the Standards
(Northeast Corner of Cary and Belvidere)



Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
	<p>Objective 17.2 Increase city-wide tree canopy from 42% to 60%</p> <p>Objective 17.3 Reduce urban heat, prioritizing areas with a high heat vulnerability index rating, as shown in Figure 44.</p>	<p>To reach these goals, the City and other entities must work together to maximize the opportunity for new trees, but also enhance the survivability of tree locations in difficult environments such as ROW. The proposed Standards equal or surpass current best practices.</p>
Urban Design Guidelines		
	<p><i>Tree Wells P.17</i> <i>When possible, individual tree wells should be larger than 3' by 5' feet in order to provide the adequate amount of CF of soil to support tree development.</i></p> <p><i>Tree grates are not authorized to be used on City property. Tree well surfaces should be permeable and not covered with companion plantings or material other than mulch. ...</i> <i>Pea gravel is not an appropriate material under street trees. Proposed development located within an area covered by an approved streetscape plan should be consistent with that plan.</i></p>	<p>The amended guidelines require tree wells a minimum of 5x5 feet (greater than required) and do not allow impervious cover of tree wells or the use of grates.</p>