



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2024-32	Review and Recommendation Meeting Date: 7/16/2024	
Applicant/Petitioner	NA	
Project Description	UDC 2024-32 Review and Recommendation of the Diamond District Public Realm Design Standards.	
Project Location		
Address: 1301 Whitehead Road		
Property Owner: City of Richmond School Board		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The City and development partners desire to create vibrant, attractive, and safe streets and public spaces that will effectively connect people to the surrounding land uses and be frequented by residents and visitors to the Diamond District year round.</p> <p>It became apparent that it was necessary to develop Diamond District Public Realm Design Standards to meet this goal and ensure that a cohesive design language is used throughout the Diamond District; one that identifies the Diamond District as its own unique destination while adding value to the surrounding neighborhoods and city.</p>		
Staff Recommendation	NA	
Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov	
Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews	Survey along with In-Person and Online Meetings.	
Staff Recommendations	NA	

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The site is located in the Diamond neighborhood, The site is zoned TOD-1 Transit Orientated Nodal.
Scope of Review	<p>Review and Recommendation:</p> <p>The Diamond Project is governed by a Development Agreement approved by City Council in May of 2024.</p> <p>The Agreement requires the City to provide the private development partners with the subject document to govern how public spaces are constructed. Public spaces in this instance include existing surrounding roads, proposed new roads, proposed new mews, sidewalks, parks, plazas.</p> <p>It does not include private development or the new stadium.</p> <p>The UDC will review and make recommendations to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will review and make recommendations to the Director of PDR for final approval.</p> <p>The Diamond District Public Realm Design Standards will be implemented as part of the City of Richmond's subdivision review process.</p>
Project Description	<p>The Diamond District Public Realm Design Standards provide design guidance for spaces within the public realm, meaning those spaces that fall within the right-of-way and any publicly owned open spaces. They are may also be used to inform the design decisions made by private developers. Design Standards were created for the 66.7 acre Diamond District as well as the adjacent ROW for Authur Ashe Boulevard, Hermitage Road, and Robin Hood Road.</p> <p>The Design Standards present a vision for the public realm along with design options that allow for some flexibility. Designers should adhere as closely as possible to the recommendations made in the Design Standards. There may be instances when site constraints may require flexibility in applying the Design Standard. In those instances, every attempt should be made to meet the intent of the Design Standards. Additionally, the Diamond District Public Realm Design Standards are not a substitute for complying with codes and ordinances associated with the development review process.</p> <div data-bbox="332 1024 852 1858" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>The document is very thorough and hits a number of topics in detail. It provides both requirements and recommendations.</p> <p>Topics include street network and streetscape, transit and bicycle infrastructure, public realm elements, sustainability, paving and surfacing, landscaping, site furnishings, branding and wayfinding, and art.</p> <p>Staff has worked closely and diligently with the project team to provide the proposed end product. Staff supports the document and notes a number of excellent items that included.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the surrounding existing roads provide full pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure that meets all City Standards. Vehicle safety and speed is well thought out, and landscaping and improvements are to the quality intended for the premier destination that is the Diamond District.</p> <p>The proposed Festival Street, located adjacent to the future Stadium, will provide great placemaking opportunities and facilitate a variety of game day and off-game day activities.</p> <p>Pedestrian and Bicycle safety and quality public realm design create a district that is highly walkable and pleasant to inhabit and explore. Significant pedestrian access is anticipated to and from the Stadium, as well.</p> <p>Smart City items are included to keep the District looking forward to new technology. The district will act as a testbed for new and recently approved City initiatives.</p>

	<p>Environmental Sustainability is at the forefront of design and will facilitate top range stormwater management, responsibly sourced material choices, and climate change sensitivity.</p> <p>A number of site furnishing decisions have been made and are represented in the document. Most of the furnishings are standard items from the City’s inventory to stream line maintenance. But the selection of specific items help to create a cohesive identity to the District.</p> <p>Banners, wayfinding, and gateway improvements are provided.</p> <p>A basis for public art consideration is provided.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff Recommendation</p> <p>Staff is looking forward to hearing feedback from the Committee and Commission.</p> <hr/> <p>UDC Recommendation</p> <p>The Urban Design Committee voted to forward a positive recommendation to the Planning Commission with the following notes.</p> <p>UDC recommends that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cycling safety and infrastructure continue to be emphasized in the Design Standards; 2) Traffic calming measures be added to the Standards; 3) Additional consideration be given to the street tree species list; 4) Trash/Recycling/Composting bins design consider resistance to pests and any needed communication on what is appropriate to put in recycling and composting bins; 5) Additional consideration be given to bollard lighting being used for security purposes; and 6) Additional consideration be given to pavement in high heat settings, especially for users with pets.
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Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines were used as a basis to create the document.

A number of items and themes are adapted from them.

Richmond300 Master Plan:

Priority Growth Node Greater Scott’s Addition (P. 36)

The Diamond is demolished and a new multi-purpose stadium is constructed along Hermitage. Uses along Hermitage, a public plaza, and the crescent park complement the new stadium development. Visitors to Greater Scott’s Addition have the option to safely arrive by foot, bike, transit, or car. Parking is centralized in a few parking garages to encourage users to park once and visit multiple destinations. The signature public park, a crescent park, between Ashe and Hermitage serves as a central convening space and is connected with greenways to multiple smaller public parks.

- Green Infrastructure: As part of the redevelopment of the Diamond site, develop a district-wide green infrastructure system to reduce flow of stormwater into the Combined Sewage System, reduce the heat-island effect, and increase the tree canopy, among other benefits (Goal 17).
- Park Creation: As part of the redevelopment of the Diamond site, develop a series of parks, including the signature crescent park, and investigate a funding source for park creation and maintenance, such as a bond or a special park district assessment to fund more parks in the area (Goal 17).

Future Connections (P. 98)

Aurthur Ashe Boulevard and Hermitage Road are designated as Great Streets.

Great Streets are significant entrances to the city and serve as major connectors between city destinations. Great Streets are roadways that require robust attention to make them prominent promenades to the city.

Ashe Boulevard as it runs through the Museum District is a beautiful promenade with wide sidewalks, street trees, buried power lines, and buildings that address the street with windows, doors, and porches that engage the street. However, as it travels north toward I-95/I-64, its splendor is diminished. As the areas around Ashe Boulevard near the Diamond Site are redeveloped, it is envisioned that the street would be beautified and become a truly Great Street.

Aurthur Ashe Boulevard, Robin Hood Road, and Hermitage Road are designated as Major Mixed-Use Streets.

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, through commercial and mixed-use areas
- Prioritize use and density-scaled sidewalks and crosswalks
- Require form elements, such as buildings to the street with parking in the rear, as well as building windows and entrances on the street – Incorporate streetscape features, such as trees, benches, and trash receptacles
- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops
- Prioritize the curbside for walking, bicycling, transit, and short-term parking access and loading for local shops and restaurants