



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: October 19, 2015
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of an athletic field and associated improvements at Hickory Hill Community Center, 3000 Belt Boulevard**

I. APPLICANT

Heywood Harrison, Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

II. LOCATION

Hickory Hill Community Center, 3000 Belt Boulevard

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character and extent review of an athletic field and associated improvements at Hickory Hill Community Center.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project would establish a new multi-purpose playing field on land adjacent to the Hickory Hill Community Center. The two properties on which the field will be located are to the south of the community center and currently bisected by Platinum Road, which was closed to public travel by Ordinance No. 2014-140-135, adopted on July 14, 2014.

The Urban Design Committee finds that the proposed improvements will make active use of land that is currently underutilized. The Committee further finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Master Plan and the Urban Design Guidelines, and with the recommendations made during conceptual review. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

Staff Contact:

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject properties are located on the west side of Belt Boulevard south of its intersection with Terminal Avenue and lie within the R-4 (Single-Family residential) zoning district. The two properties on which the field will be located total 5.43 acres, not including the Platinum Road right-of-way, which was closed to public travel by Ordinance No. 2014-140-135, adopted on July 14, 2014. The portion of the property on which the community center, softball field, tot lot, parking areas and walking track are located contains another 6.98 acres. The western edge of all three properties abuts a CSX rail line, and there is a vegetated buffer that runs the distance of this edge. With the exception of a property located north of the community center that is zoned B-3 (General

Business), all of the surrounding properties are zoned R-4 and are improved with detached residential dwellings.

The subject properties are the site of a former landfill that has not been used for more than 25 years. The City has several other parks facilities that have been constructed on former landfills, including the golf driving range, the Norrell playing fields, and Canoe Run Park.

b. Scope of Review

The improvements associated with this project are subject to location, character, and extent review as a “park” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

In October 2014 the Urban Design Committee reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the conceptual plans, with the following conditions:

- That the final plans show any trees that are to be removed as part of the project, indicating the species type and caliper size for any tree larger than 4” in caliper that is proposed to be removed.
- That the final plans include a landscape plan, including plant species, quantity, and size at the time of installation; and that the plans include new trees across the vacated Platinum Road adjacent to the CSX rail line, to continue the existing vegetative buffer.
- That the final plans provide details on the lighting, proposed scoreboard, any proposed benches/bleachers and trash receptacles.
- That the applicant receives Board of Zoning Appeals or other necessary approval for the field lighting prior to submission for final review.
- That the final plans indicate how the playing fields will be connected to the parking areas.
- That the applicant considers burying the overhead power lines that are to be relocated as part of the construction.

In 1997 the UDC and Planning Commission recommended approval of plans that authorized the renovation of the early 1900s structure and the 1950s additions to allow them to be used as a community center. The plans also included new landscaping, a parking lot expansion and the addition of a tot-lot and a walking trail.

d. Project Description

This project would establish a new multi-purpose playing field on land adjacent to the Hickory Hill Community Center. The two properties on which the field will be located are to the south of the community center and currently bisected by Platinum Road, which was closed to public travel by Ordinance No. 2014-140-135, adopted on July 14, 2014. The property north of Platinum Road is already used as an informal playing field.

The applicant’s report notes that there are two major use types on the existing playing fields at this site: general and casual “walk up” recreation activities on the grounds as well as structured recreation programs and activities associated with the Community Center. The City’s Department of Parks, Recreation and

Community Facilities is interested in developing a new athletic field for the property that will incorporate both use types.

The proposed improvements would include demolition of Platinum Road, which is no longer in service, the underground relocation of overhead power lines, and grading of the field. The standard sized multi-use football and/or soccer field will be reseeded, and field goals and a wireless scoreboard for multiple sport score keeping will be installed. The field will be surrounded by a 4' tall chain-link fence coated in black vinyl. Field lighting, which was proposed during conceptual review, has been removed from consideration. Parking for the new field will be provided by the existing parking lots, which contain 82 parking spaces.

An 8' wide concrete walkway will be provided along the north side of the field, connecting to the parking area. The path will widen in two locations to accommodate bleachers. The bleachers, approximately 15' wide and 10' tall, are composed of metal. While no specs have been submitted on the bleachers, they are to match those used at Hotchkiss Community Center, and a photo of those was included in the plans. One City-standard ribbon-style metal trash can will be located on the concrete pad adjacent to each bleacher. The scoreboard, which is approximately 6' tall and 16' wide and sits atop two 14' tall poles, will be located to the west of the field, outside of the fenced area. No specs are provided on the scoreboard, but again, it is to match the one at Hotchkiss Community Center, and a picture of that is provided in the plans.

Site drainage will occur naturally and through the use of swales where necessary to convey runoff away from the field. Any runoff on the north of the site will be conveyed by swale to an inlet grate that was formerly a manhole in Platinum Road. Due to the removal of Platinum Road there is an overall 0.28 acre reduction in amount of impervious surface on the site.

As requested during conceptual review, the final plans include a survey of all trees greater than 4" in caliper that are proposed to be removed. The plans also indicate where there are trees less than 4" in caliper that will be removed. The trees over 4" in caliper that are proposed to be removed are primarily along the border of the property and the CSX rail line, though there are also a few trees to be removed where the field will be located and others along the fence line near the parking lot due to site grading. The applicant proposes to plant three loblolly pines along the property line shared with CSX where Platinum Road was vacated.

The City will be funding the project, which has a budget of \$500,000.

e. Master Plan

The subject properties are located in the Broad Rock planning district as defined by the citywide Master Plan, which recommends Public and Open Space uses for the site, a designation that includes publicly owned and operated parks, recreation areas and open spaces (page 135). The Plan notes that "additional public park space and community facilities are needed throughout the district" (page 146).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Public Park section of the Urban Design Guidelines has a number of recommendations pertinent to the proposal, including that “active parks should have adequate facilities (i.e. sports fields, trash receptacles, benches, running paths, etc.) to accommodate intended users”. Further, the Guidelines note that “successful public parks...share certain qualities, which include the ability to attract and entertain visitors, access and connectivity to surrounding areas, and safety and comfort” (page 9).

Lastly, the Guidelines state that “impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements” and that “lighting and landscaping should allow for surveillance and policing activities, but should be designed primarily to accommodate the intended use of the park” (page 9).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

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