



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: November 19, 2018
RE: **Final Location, Character, and Extent review of Monroe Park – informational signage, 719 W. Franklin St.; UDC 2018-46**

I. APPLICANT

Jennifer Hatchett, Department of Public Utilities

II. LOCATION

719 W. Franklin St.

Property Owner:

City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

III. PURPOSE

The application is for the final location, character, and extent review of informational signage within Monroe Park.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This final plan for informational signage in Monroe Park is part of a larger restoration effort called for in the Master Plan for Monroe Park. The proposed signage will inform the public of the extensive green infrastructure and stormwater control measures that have been implemented to make Monroe Park more sustainable. The angular pathways influence the form of the primary and secondary signs which will speak to significant points of interest within the park. The proposed design of the signage signifies the park's entry into a new, contemporary chapter of its life as a unique public space.

This proposal for final review reflects the applicant's ability to incorporate previous conditions of approval from the UDC and the Planning Commission. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends the Planning Commission approve the final design as submitted with the following conditions:

- That the informational signage include the location of new tree plantings, recycling bins, trash receptacles, and the restored historic fountain.
- That the informational signage include a north arrow to aide with orientation.

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The proposed components of the project are located within Monroe Park which is bordered by Belvidere Street to the east, Main Street on the south, Laurel Street to the west, and Franklin Street on the north. The public urban park property is surrounded by a number of high-density zoning districts, including multi-family residential, institutional, and religious buildings.

In addition to the fountain, the park is embellished with two major statues and two smaller monuments, as well as the Checkers House, an octagonal pavilion which once held public toilets. Only one statue and the fountain are related to the plan of the park.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as part of a “public structure” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

At the regular June 2018 meeting of the UDC, the final location, character, and extent of Monroe Park wayfinding signage (UDC 2018-25) was reviewed. The Committee recommended approval with the following conditions:

- That the Planning Commission review the signage before final approval
- That the applicant submit exact locations of stationary signage for administrative review

At the regular April 2018 meeting of the UDC, Monroe Park Signage (UDC 2018-15) came up for conceptual review. The UDC recommended that this item be approved as conceptual with the following conditions for final review:

- That the applicant investigate alternative location and form for the donor sign that was proposed for the masonry on the Checkers house, that would not be affixed to the Checkers House
- That the primary, secondary, and tertiary sign typefaces support the logo and be provided in a signage package to better understand the proposed typefaces
- That the applicant consider a ‘less is more’ approach to signage, overall, and that the location and quantity of signs be provided and minimized to the extent possible and appropriate
- Minimize the impact of signage on the Checkers House

At the subsequent regular April 2018 meeting of the Planning Commission, UDC 2018-15 was approved with the conditions put forth by the UDC.

In 2018, revisions to the renovation of the Checkers House were approved by the Planning Commission.

In 2017, various revisions and updates to the overall renovation of Monroe Park were submitted including:

- UDC 2017-08 Final review of Monroe Park Revisions
 - Permeable Pavers
 - Bio-filtration Planters
 - Planting Plan
 - Park Lighting-Interior
 - Park Lighting-Perimeter Streetscape

- Checkers House Plaza – Wall Materials and Layout
 - Drinking Fountain
 - Bike Racks
 - Stage and Flagpoles
 - Games Court Design
 - Tree Removal Plan
- UDC 2017-12 Conceptual Review of Laurel Street Event Venue – Monroe Park Pavilion
 - UDC 2017-17 Final Review of Laurel Street Event Venue – Monroe Park Pavilion
 - UDC 2017-18 Final Review of Monroe Park Furnishings
 - UDC 2017-19 Conceptual Review of Monroe Park Portland Loo
 - UDC 2017-33 Final Review of Monroe Park Portland Loo
 - UDC 2017-35 Final Review of modification to Checkers House Plaza (Monroe Park Revisions)

This project is part of the larger Monroe Park Master Plan. The Urban Design Committee and Planning Commission reviewed the Monroe Park Master Plan conceptually in October 2007, and then recommended approval and then approved, respectively, a final version of the plan in February 2008. In 2009, the Urban Design Committee and the Planning Commission recommended approval and then approved, respectively, final construction plans for the renovation of Monroe Park without conditions.

d. Project Description

The City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities and The Monroe Park Conservancy seek final review on informational signs to be installed in Monroe Park. The informational sign explaining the green infrastructure measures that have been carried out in the park will be placed next to waste and recycling bins near the Checkers house. It is believed that this is an ideal location for the signage, as it will serve as a reminder to the public to help keep the park clean and sustainable. Other smaller informational signage regarding park rules and bike lanes will be placed in other locations in the park. The City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities will pay for the cost of all sign fabrication and installation. The applicant proposes the following measures to address the preliminary review recommendations of the UDC and Planning Commission:

The proposed green infrastructure informational signage will have a body constructed of aluminum with an aluminum sheet on its face. The sign will be 2.5” thick and 3.5’ wide, standing 3.5’ tall. The proposed Park Rules and Bike Path signage will be constructed of the same materials as the green infrastructure signage, but will differ in size. These signs will be 0.77’ wide and 2.5’ tall.

e. Master Plan

Following the adoption of the 2008 Monroe Park Master Plan and the 2009 design of the park, the 2009 Downtown Plan contained recommendations for the surrounding neighborhoods and areas, as well as specific language about Monroe Park that “promote Monroe Park as the center of a campus and a community. With the growth of the Monroe Park Campus that surrounds the park

on four sides, Monroe Park is becoming more important to the University as its primary green space, and as such has been endorsed as a central feature within the campus by the VCU 2020 Master Plan. The City and the Monroe Park Advisory Council have developed the 2008 Monroe Park Master Plan that will guide future enhanced use of the park as a cultural and passive recreational center for the campus and the neighborhood. This park plan has been reflected in the illustrations in the Downtown Plan. Respect for the park's historic integrity and increased maintenance and security are key to the park's success."

Regarding existing parks in Downtown and ways to enhance their accessibility and usage, the 2009 Downtown Plan suggests "... wayfinding elements such as lighting and signage should be provided" (page 3.10).

Furthermore, the plan states that the park should receive "...a facelift with rehabilitated public facilities, new shade trees, improved lighting, and wireless Internet access" (page 3.11).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines contain several recommendations for signs, including that "a sign's message should be easy to read and direct" (page 24).

Generally, the Guidelines impart, "sign lettering should be 4" to 14" high and should be in proportion to the area in which it will be displayed. One inch should be added to the lettering height for each additional 50' between the sign and the viewer" (page 24). The Guidelines note that "signs should be placed so that they are sensitive to the signs of adjacent businesses" (page 23).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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