



**City of Richmond, Virginia**  
**Department of Planning and Development Review**  
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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: December 5, 2018  
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of Main Street Station site work improvement modifications, 1500 E. Main Street; UDC 2018-51**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Jeannie Welliver, Department of Economic and Community Development

**II. LOCATION**

Main Street Station, 1500 E. Main Street

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond Department of Public Works

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for revisions to the previously-approved final location, character, and extent review of a proposed site plan for the parcels adjacent to and containing Main Street Station, in response to the need for cost savings and future higher speed rail plans.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This proposal involves a set of changes to a previously approved design for improvements to the parcels adjacent to Main Street Station associated with the rehabilitation of Main Street Station's train shed to serve as the State and City's premier Welcome and Travel Center as well as the region's multimodal transportation center. These changes are a result of budget constraints and the anticipation of higher speed rail.

Staff finds the project to be well-considered overall, and that the changes proposed to materials do not negatively impact the overall design but should be re-considered once funding is available.

Therefore Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval of the design with the following conditions:

- That the applicant pave the main parking lot near the I-95 overpass to the heavy-duty brick, as formerly proposed, once the time comes to mill/re-pave the area, if the budget allows.
- That the applicant meet all previous conditions as recommended prior to this review that these modifications do not address.

**Staff Contact:**

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## **V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The subject properties are located west of North 15<sup>th</sup> Street and North of E. Main Street adjacent to Main Street Station and are all located in the M-1 (Light Industrial) zoning district. Much of the subject area is shadowed by the elevated Interstate 95. Main Street Station is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of Richmond's most recognizable community landmarks. Designed by Wilson, Harris, and Richards in 1900 and completed in 1901, it is one of the great examples in the country of a head house-shed train station and the French Chateau style of public architecture.

### **b. Scope of Review**

The proposed site plan is subject to location, character, and extent review as a "square, park, or other public way, ground, or open space" under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

### **c. Project Description**

Originally designed and approved in 2011-2012, the site work package for Main Street Station was bid as an additive bid item with the train shed rehabilitation. Due to limited funding at the time, the site work was deferred. Grant funding is now available for the site work improvements to commence. Cost escalations from 2012 impact the project as well as the future DC2RVA plans. Design revisions were presented in 2016; however, grant funding was delayed and the project was placed on hold again.

Grant funding is now available to allow the project to commence. Therefore, the site work design required a few changes as shown on the attached set of plans and listed below:

(For overall plan revisions, please see items shown clouded on C3.0.)

1. The following areas have been modified to accommodate budget restraints:

- C3.0 Simplify the brick entrances on the west and east side of the Franklin Street Breezeway
- C3.0 Asphalt drive in lieu of heavy duty brick pavers (as mentioned as an alternate in the UDC 2016-37 submission)

2. The following site amenities/furnishings will be accommodated if/when funding is identified:

- L1.0, L1.1, L1.2, L1.3 Overall Landscape Plans
- L2.0 Landscape Details with deletions shown with (X)
- L4.0 Site Furnishings with deletions shown with (X)
  - Bike repair station
  - Tree grates
  - Up lighting for trees
  - Pet waste stations
  - City standard bike racks
- L4.1 Site Furnishings with deletions shown with (X)
  - Bistro collection chairs/tables
  - Big Belly Compactors (these will be contracted at the end of each phase of the project)

- L4.2 Site Furnishings with deletions shown with (X)
  - Benches
  - Ash urns

3. The following areas will remain as they are:

- C3.0; L1.0-L1.3 Any area below the easternmost and westernmost train trestles will remain small river stone due to soil quality and impact of freight train cargo and outboard rail passenger loading platforms as proposed for future buildout of the DC2RVA.

#### **d. UDC Review History**

In September 2016 the Main Street Station site plan received location, character, and extent review for modifications due to new design elements and the need for cost savings. The UDC recommended and the Planning Commission approved the site plans with the following conditions:

- That the proposed bike lane on East Franklin Street taper into the right-of-way that travels underneath the train shed to provide a seamless transition;
- That the bike share station have a clear ingress and egress to and from 15th Street, including relocating the existing signage in place, as well as a direct hardscaped and ramped connection to the western path of the parking area for direct access to Franklin Street;
- That the number of retractable bollards be reduced to one or three, to provide an odd number and ease in path selection through the site and contain a reflective element for low-light conditions; and
- That the applicant work with the Transportation Engineer and Pedestrian, Bicycle & Trails Coordinator to ensure ramps are aligned to ensure appropriate sidewalk width and pedestrian desire lines are maintained.

As well as the additional considerations:

- That the applicant consider designating some bicycle parking as long-term, with lockers or other protected storage, and remove excess bicycle parking with poor sight lines from the project; and
- That drought-resistant, non-invasive groundcover be used in the landscape plan.

In 1997 the Main Street Station site plan received location, character, and extent approval for use as a multi-modal transportation center. In November 2012, the UDC and Planning Commission approved a final design for the Main Street Station site work, with the following conditions recommended by the Urban Design Committee:

- That all new street lights match those already installed on N. 15<sup>th</sup> Street.
- That the applicant presents to the UDC details of the proposed site furniture, including but not limited to lighting interior to the parking lot, trash cans, benches, bollards and bike racks, if the racks are different than the City standard bike rack that has already been approved by the UDC.
- That the applicant presents to the UDC details on the proposed canopies at each side of the Franklin Street entrances through the train shed.

#### **e. Master Plan**

The 2017 Pulse Corridor Plan recommends this area, as part of the Main Street Station Area Vision, to consist of Nodal Mixed-Uses near Main Street Station to

allow for intense development with active ground-floor uses near the multi-modal heart of the Richmond Region; Corridor Mixed-Uses along E. Broad and E. Main Streets to encourage the redevelopment of surface parking lots and underutilized buildings into higher-density buildings that focus on creating walkable environments with active ground floors, appropriate streetscape, and minimal driveway entrances and; Neighborhood Mixed-Uses in the surrounding area to help maintain the existing residential and mixed-uses found in the area, mainly in the form of repurposed warehouses, and to allow for appropriate infill development (page 104).

In the Future Connections section of the Main Street Station Area Vision, the plan calls for an area that is enhanced with a shared-use path through the Main Street Station trainshed, as well as better bicycle and pedestrian connections to access the Virginia Capital Trail and the Low Line. The conversion of one-way streets to two-way is explored and carried out where feasible in order to create a more neighborhood-focused transportation network; specifically it calls for two-way conversions of the few one-way streets in Shockoe Bottom in consultation with the City's Strategic Multimodal Transportation Plan, evaluating during implementation the balance of two-way conversion, on-street parking, and bicycle infrastructure (page 104).

As part of the 2008 Downtown Master Plan, the subject properties are located in the Shockoe Focus Area with the majority of the parcels designated as being in the Urban Center Area, while Main Street Station is designated as being in the Civic Area. The Urban Center Area is characterized by "higher density, mixed-use development, typically arranged on a fine-grained street network, with wide sidewalks, regular tree planting, and minimal setbacks" (page 3.25). The Civic Area refers to "public sites dedicated for publicly used buildings dedicated to culture, government, and public gatherings" (page 3.28).

The Transportation chapter of the Plan recommends that Main Street Station be restored as an inter-modal center. One of the specific recommendations is that "any development plan for the property should include a new street through the two-block long train shed, in order to increase connectivity in the area and enhance pedestrian access" (page 5.24). The Plan further states that "an important component of the future of Main Street Station is to consider it for a multi-modal transportation hub for Downtown. A multi-modal hub could include increased passenger rail service, commuter rail service, light rail or streetcar buses, bus rapid transit, shuttles, taxis, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities" (page 5.24).

#### **f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Public Facilities section of the Urban Design Guidelines contains a number of generalized recommendations regarding public facilities, including that "the City of Richmond's Master Plan states that it is important that these facilities are convenient, attractive, and accessible. The quality, design, and condition of all public facilities sets the image of the City, and sends a message about the values placed upon the services provided" (page 13).

The Site Features subsection states that "circulation within the site should be geared toward pedestrian movements, not vehicular" and that "connectivity from

the site to adjacent areas should be considered during the design phase" (page 14). In regards to site layout, the Guidelines note that "the provision of plazas adjacent to buildings serving the public is encouraged. Public plazas should use landscaping, public art, and historic preservation to create inviting spaces. Adequate seating, lighting and trash receptacles should also be provided in the design of plazas" (page 14).

## **VII. ATTACHMENTS**

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