



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
2nd Floor of City Hall
Richmond, VA 23219
www.richmondgov.com

Meeting Minutes - Draft Urban Design Committee

Thursday, November 8, 2018

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

Call to Order

Roll Call

Present -- 7 - * Chris Arias, * Jill Nolt, * David Johannas, * Andrew P. Gould, * James W. Klaus, * Emily Smith and * Chair Andrea Almond

Excused -- 1 - * Andrea Quilici

Vacant -- 1 - * Vice Chair Giles Harnsberger

Approval of Minutes

[UDC MIN
2018-10](#)

Minutes of the regular meeting on October 4, 2018

Attachments: [DRAFT UDC MIN 2018-10](#)

A motion was made by Committee Member Nolt that these Minutes be approved. Committee Member Klaus seconded, the motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 4 - Jill Nolt, Andrew P. Gould, James W. Klaus and Chair Andrea Almond

Excused -- 1 - Andrea Quilici

Abstain -- 3 - Chris Arias, David Johannas and Emily Smith

Secretary's Report

Mr. Son announced that staff reviewed and approved signage encroachments for the new West Elm Store in Carytown at 3117 W. Cary St., some signage was existing but not functioning (neon sign); staff further reviewed and approved telecommunications equipment to be placed on City of Richmond – owned water tower tanks at 2430 Broad Rock Road; 3301 Maplewood Ave.; and 8800 W. Huguenot Rd.

Mr. Son stated that staff Reviewed and approved banners for Charlie Wilson, around the Altria Theater, on display from 10/22/18 to 1/3/19; and banners for Hip Hop Nutcracker (Tchaikovsky's score. Hip Hop Dance. NYC Style), around the Altria Theater, on display from 10/22/18 to 1/3/19

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

CONSENT AGENDA

[UDC 2018-40](#) Final Section 17.05 and location, character, and extent review of

replacement bridge, 111 and 115 Hull Street

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

A motion was made by Mr. Gould, seconded by Mr. Johannas, that the consent agenda item be recommended for approval by the Planning Commission. The motion carried unanimously.

[UDC 2018-41](#) Final review of streetscape improvements at the intersection of S. Linden Street and W. Main Street

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

A motion was made by Mr. Gould, seconded by Mr. Johannas, that the consent agenda item be recommended for approval by the Director of Public Works. The motion carried unanimously.

[UDC 2018-42](#) Final review of streetscape improvements at the intersection of Shafer Street and W. Franklin Street

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

A motion was made by Mr. Gould, seconded by Mr. Johannas, that the consent agenda item be recommended for approval by the Director of Public Works. The motion carried unanimously.

[UDC 2018-45](#) Final location, character, and extent review of new marquee and signage for Obama Elementary School, 3101 Fendall Avenue

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

[Supplemental Documents](#)

A motion was made by Mr. Gould, seconded by Mr. Johannas, that the consent agenda item be recommended for approval by the Planning Commission. The motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA

[UDC 2018-43](#) Final location, character, and extent review of landscape improvements (Low Line Green), 1701 Dock Street

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

Joshua Son: Capital Trees, a 501(c)3 organization based in Richmond, Virginia, has worked in recent years with City of Richmond officials and staff members to reclaim and enhance 5.5 acres of land along Dock Street and the Virginia Capital Trail. The site, now commonly known as The Low Line, was originally conceived in 2014 and conceptually approved as part of a general master plan by the Urban Design Committee.

Having completed the first phase of work between Great Shiplock Park and 23rd Street, with a total investment of \$1.2 million, Capital Trees has turned its attention to the western end of the site which includes roughly one acre of land bound by the Richmond Floodwall and Kanawha Canal (immediately east of the Canal Walk).

Presently, the Virginia Capital Trail crosses through the site at grade while Interstate 95 and the CSX Viaduct cross overhead. The area is periodically mown by DPW and DPU but otherwise sits idle and undermanaged, with invasive species inhabiting areas beneath the rail viaduct and along the Kanawha canal. A small brick plaza, Capital Trail Signage/monument, pedestrian pole lights and three sculpture installations are sporadically distributed through the site. Stormwater runoff from roadways above is discharged across the compacted site before making its way to the canal and, ultimately, the James River.

Working with representatives from Department of Planning and Development Review and Public Works, as well as stakeholders such as Venture Richmond, CSX, and Virginia Capital Trail Foundation, Capital Trees has developed plans to enhance the project site using public and private funding sources.

The Virginia Capital Trail will remain in place through the site. The existing brick plaza will be removed and rebuilt within the historic alignment of 17th Street. The relocation of the plaza area will simplify pedestrian movement through the Floodwall, thus creating safer transition. The newly configured plaza will also serve as a point of departure for tour groups exploring the site's historical, cultural and environmental significance. Invasive species will be removed from beneath the CSX viaduct and replaced with native grasses. Lawn areas will provide much-needed open space for area residents and employees of nearby businesses while predominantly native horticultural installations improve aesthetics and reduce scale of the looming floodwall. Stormwater runoff from the new plaza and roadways above will be routed to a planted biofilter at the site's low point adjacent to the canal. Pole lights will largely remain in place – at this point in time, we anticipate removal of two poles and possible addition of landscape lighting at/near site furnishings.

The site will be irrigated and maintained by Capital Trees under separate agreement with the City Attorney's office.

Preliminary budgets for the proposed improvements are set at \$1.2 million including maintenance reserves. To date, Capital Trees has raised roughly 40% of the project budget and expects that construction could begin as early as Spring 2019.

Within the project area, there is one owner of record, The City of Richmond; however, CSX Corporation and Virginia Capital Trail Foundation maintain certain property rights within/adjacent to the site.

Capital Trees will play an active role in the ongoing maintenance of this landscape. The group has worked in such capacity at Great Shiplock Park and Low Line Gardens since 2016. A third-party, private contractor will be commissioned and managed by Capital Trees to ensure that plantings are selectively pruned, weeded and adequately watered until establishment.

This project involves the extensive landscaping of land between Dock Street and the James River and Kanawha Canal. This area also serves as the Virginia Capital Trail head and is located south of the flood wall. Working in collaboration with various City agencies, CSX, the Virginia Capital Trail and other community stakeholders, the project is being brought forth by the Capital Trees group, which is responsible for several beautification efforts in the City. The goal of this project, dubbed the "Low Line Green", is to enhance the area to better foster the exploration of the site's cultural, environmental, and historical significance.

The proposal consists of replacing invasive vegetation with native grasses, programming more open space for passive recreation, horticultural installations to beautify the area around the floodwall, treatment of stormwater runoff, and additionally pedestrian amenities such as lighting and seating.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following conditions: That prior to approval, the applicant consult with the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities to ensure a maintenance agreement is fully developed prior to construction.

Keith Whipple: I'm with Water Street Studio and Capital Trees. We're here to answer any questions.

Emily Smith: In the rendering it looks like there is a sign that is proposed on the plaza. Is there some sort of storytelling or signage that is planned?

Mr. Whipple: We actually think there are a lot of opportunities for signage down there. What's included in the package is just a relocation of the existing capital trails which you can see in the plaza photographs. But there are certainly opportunities for other educational signage.

James Klaus: The planted area where it reaches the canal— as you go down the site it's very compacted. It seems like people are going to want to go down to the canal when they go there to look and see. Is there going to be an ability to have an overlook there?

Mr. Whipple: At this point we are not proposing any access to the canal. In prior phases we've run into a lot of issues with CSX and providing access underneath the viaduct. There's not a lot of foot traffic in that area, it's actually just compacted due to stormwater runoff from above.

Mr. Klaus: Okay.

Andrea Almond:

I know in some of the site photos that there is a small memorial there to Carl Armstrong I think. I don't see that showing up in the site plans. Is that remaining in place?

Mr. Whipple: It's something that we've just recently flagged and we're trying to meet with Capital Trail Foundation to discuss its relocation. We'd love to see it remain on site but just not clear where exactly on the trail. Similarly the sculpture that you saw, the three sculptures there – we'd like to see those relocated in the area but we would like to see them moved to a more appropriate location.

Mark Olinger: Are those part of the public art?

Mr. Whipple: They are part of the public art.

*[side discussion about public art and incoming Public Arts Coordinator]

Mr. Olinger: As an aside, as being a phenomenal applicant for this, that this will proceed very similar to the way we did the first phase down by Great Shiplock. We will need to go to Council for some additional legislation, there is some access agreement that will need to occur with CSX. I'm assuming there's no Norfolk Southern here, is there?

Mr. Whipple: We have proposed agreements with CSX for this part of the project that are making their way through the City Attorney's office basically negotiating between Capital Trees, the City of Richmond, and CSX Corporation all rights necessary to install the vegetation and improvements and maintain them going forward.

Mr. Olinger: The other thing about the comment that Emily made about signage is that there are a lot of other things happening in the Greater Bottom now as it relates to memorializing either through the Devil's Half Acre side, the burial ground. There's a lot of education and interpretation that's going to be showing up over the next few years. We just need to figure out what that looks like and how it's all incorporated into the greater Shockoe Area. We just have to be aware of that so we don't end up with five different signs looking five different ways.

Mr. Whipple: I think Capital Trees has taken the approach that the first step is to reclaim and beautify the site and have it as a working functional open space down there. We'd like to see other groups step forward to actually work with us and interpret the signage there. As Mark mentioned, there are a lot of stakeholders in the area, a lot of stories to tell, whether from an environmental, educational or infrastructure standpoint, etc. But initially we'd just like to improve the area to increase the foot traffic.

Andrew Gould: The renderings provided look very dense and lush. What year growth does that represent? I assume that's not an initial planting.

Mr. Whipple: That's not an initial planting. That's probably at a five-year maturity. We've been speaking with Parks and Rec and JRPS about holding vegetation further off the trail. They'd like for us to maintain a no-strip of 2 to 3 feet. As you see, on the right side of that trail you'd actually have a turf grass shoulder to prevent vegetation from encroaching onto the trail.

Ms. Almond: Is there irrigation?

Mr. Whipple: We're proposing irrigation. As in Phase One, we'll be pulling water out of the Canal, and that pumping controller will be located down at the other end of the site from here, across the canal from Venture Richmond's Docks.

Mr. Gould: Is there any concern about security with such dense foliage in that area? I like the idea of having a grass shoulder. Looking at the other sections of the Low Line, I'm not a landscape architect but it looks like they've got much lower growing planting, which seems appropriate. I was surprised to see something so dense. I need to defer to the landscape architects here.

Mr. Whipple: Most of the palette is similar to Phase One and Two from the low-lying gardens. We have some larger shrub material proposed up against the flood wall, just to bring the scale of that down. We have also been asked to provide a 5-foot maintenance strip along the base of the flood wall, so that should help. We're open to comments if some of that plant material needs to scale back. It's a pretty massive and imposing structure there, so we'd like to scale it down if possible.

Meg Turner: When we met the other day with Nathan Burrell and Michael Burden – Michael's in charge of trails, so he's involved from the JRPS standpoint. You talked about access to the canal. Their concern was, this is where you do tend to get some folks spending the night and all that down along there. The way we have the bio-retention and all the planting under the CSX viaduct – that will actually prevent folks from doing that. Long-term, there are lots of discussions on access to the canal in many different ways.

At this point, from a safety standpoint, I think that's going to be helpful. It's pretty much open areas. Like Keith said, I think that those are computer-generated eye candy and our plants are pretty much the palate of the low-lying: about three-foot tall shrubs.

Mr. Klaus: I like how you're referring to 17th Street, which was historically there. I understand keeping people from getting in the canal, but the place on the canal at 17th Street is where there was a pontoon bridge and where Lincoln came up.

Mr. Whipple: Yes.

Mr. Klaus: In terms of not blocking, for people who want to understand that there was a road, I see that you're doing a great job of showing it in the plaza part. It kind of fritters out, and that's such an important place historically and people are going down there and retracing the steps of Lincoln and that's becoming more and more important every year. I'd like to keep that so it doesn't just fritter away into a bio-retention pool.

Mr. Whipple: We'll certainly take that into account. Our goal with the plaza was to trace the historic 17th-century roadbed, and bring that south through that bio-filtration. The bio-filter was actually relocated in response to a DPU comment early on, to that low point in the site. We had once proposed connections down to the canal; due to push-back from DPU and CSX we pulled back there. I think there are great opportunities, maybe keeping the planting lower in that bio-area.

Mr. Klaus: You could even maybe through the planting, the linear aspect of it could be extended that way. Without going down to the canal, it's a pretty steep drop when you get there. Maybe have some sort of viewing area there before the drop. In the final end story, I think it's such an important place and that needs to be communicated to CSX: I understand your point, but don't forget what happened here. There needs to be more compromise.

Mr. Whipple: We can certainly look at that. There are two hardscape elements that extend from the plaza down to this point, and maybe we can work with those to provide a little more access in the future.

Mr. Arias: There's an opportunity there to the southwest where it's not directly underneath the viaduct, where it could maybe extend. It looks like CSX does not cross over there.

Mr. Whipple: We could certainly look at that.

Emily Smith: I have a question about accessibility. I don't know if it's within the scope of work for this project, if it's something that has to be considered, but it seems like it should be. I saw in one of the images there's someone in a wheelchair. I'm thinking about where the scope ends, the connection where it passes the brick walkway through the floodwall. Are we required to look at where someone could access the path that leads to that point, for scope of work, and to ensure that there are connectors? So that someone could get from a nearby parking lot for example, and access this point?

Mr. Whipple: I don't know the answer as far as permitting goes, but just through the floodwall we connect to the canal walk, which is accessible. I'm not sure what the recent improvements at 17th and Dock are, but I believe there's a new handicapped ramp there; and further to the east of here, the trail is obviously accessible. So I think in three locations we would have access to this site. There are some grading challenges there at the floodwall gate. Right now there's a steel plate, and at some point we'd like to replace

that with something more important. It's a tricky spot for our grading plan. Right now we've got stormwater coming off the downspouts from 95, bringing I-95 and RMA ramp runoff down to the site and daylighting. It's just a sheet flow across the site. We've got to bring certain areas up and improve sheet flow and then direct that water to the bio-filter so we're not having to cross a wall like this.

Ms. Almond: Any special considerations of finishes or furnishings based on flood risk?

Mr. Whipple: We've not given a whole lot of thought to that, other than using the city standard high-haul brick pavers there in the plaza. We'd love to use the canal stone that's stored across the canal there for our seat walls, and again the plant material has been tested through Phases 1 and 2, mostly made of plant palate. We've learned a lot from the sewers and drainage down there in Phase One, and made those changes.

Ms. Almond: Is there anyone from the public who would like to comment on this project?

There was no public comment.

Ms. Almond: Further discussion from the committee? Was anyone thinking of adding additional comments to this? It seems like maybe adding access to the upper canal was the only thing I heard.

A motion was made by Committee Member Klaus that this item be approved with the Staff conditions and an additional condition.

Staff conditions were:

-That prior to approval, the applicant consult with the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities to ensure a maintenance agreement is fully developed prior to construction

The additional condition is:

-That consideration be given to the historic 17th Street connection to the Canal

Committee Member Arias seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 6 - Chris Arias, David Johannas, Andrew P. Gould, James W. Klaus, Emily Smith and Chair Andrea Almond

Excused -- 1 - Andrea Quilici

Abstain -- 1 - Jill Nolt

[UDC 2018-44](#) Conceptual review of streetscape improvements on the north and south sides of W. Broad Street from N. Hamilton Street to N. Laurel Street

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location & Plans](#)

Mr. Son: The project is intended to leverage committed funding to implement limited streetscape improvements within the project area to enhance the overall character, complement the recently completed Pulse BRT project, and establish a more unified design vocabulary for one of the City's primary gateway corridors.

There are variations in the streetscape. This has been divided into several different types:

Westbound 1 and 2, Eastbound 3 and 4, and Eastbound 1 along with special consideration for a triangular park treatment near Boulevard and Broad, EB1.

The project limits of work, as defined in the Smart Scale funding documents, is from Hamilton St. to Laurel St, north and south sides of West Broad Street. Furthermore, the limits of work are restricted to the area within the public right-of-way, from the back of curb to the right-of-way. In many cases, this includes sidewalk from back of curb to the face of existing buildings. In other cases, the right-of-way abuts open space or parking areas on private property. In addition, there are some unique conditions where the right-of-way limits do not extend to a building face, resulting in areas that are visually and physically extensions of the work area, but outside of the project limits. The project site is impacted by many adjacent development projects in planning or construction. Where possible, this project will reference plans for proposed projects when those plans are available. Key adjacent property owners have been included in planning efforts, including representatives from VCU. Conceptual plans for integrating the residual City-owned green space near Wayne Street and Belmont Avenue are being considered relative to impacts on sidewalk improvements, but design or implementation of green space improvements are not part of the funded scope of work.

This project is being funded by Virginia's SMART SCALE (§33.2-214.1) program, the method of scoring planned projects included in VTrans that are funded by House Bill 1887. Funds for this project were awarded through SMART SCALE, Round 1 including Construction funds in the amount of \$5,410,000, VDOT Fiscal Year 2020.

Layout: There are generally four to five typical conditions within the project area, based upon the overall width from back of curb to building face or ROW. Concept development plans are organized around these typical sections. Each typical section is divided into three functional zones: Amenity Zone (curbside); Pedestrian Zone' and Building Zone. The overall goal is to provide a minimum clear pedestrian zone of six feet in width and a five foot minimum building zone for entry ingress/egress and furnishings. Café seating: where possible, the goal is to preserve five to six feet of depth for café areas, while maintaining the minimum six foot pedestrian clear zone. Clear zones of five feet are desired, where possible, around site furnishings, trees, railings and above ground utility features. A typical six foot scored concrete grid pattern is planned for the hardscape.

Paving: Sidewalk Pavement Finish: Discussion was had about final finishes and patterns, including use of burlap finish and picture frame troweled edges. Client direction was for simple design detailing, no troweled edges. VCU brick/concrete pattern: existing pavement will remain in place. Recommendations to enlarge tree pits to be consistent with the proposed spacing and size within the project limits will be included in the plans, pending additional input from VCU with regard to impact on pedestrian circulation patterns. The final size and location of tree planting areas will be determined in concert with University input.

Street Trees: Tree Pit Dimensions: Typical 6'x12' tree planting area, with exception that in areas with limited sidewalk width the pits are reduced to five feet (5') to provide a minimum of six feet (6') of pedestrian zone. Low groundcover and shrub plantings in tree pits will be low-maintenance and water-efficient selections. Tree selection will be informed by adjacent parking conditions (i.e. on-street vs no on-street parking conditions). Small trees or columnar varieties are preferred where travel lanes are adjacent to the curb and vehicles tend to compete with and impact growth habits of larger trees. Kimley-Horn will coordinate with City arborist for proper tree section. Tree Selection: Small trees are proposed at 30 foot spacing under overhead utility lines. Large shade trees are proposed elsewhere at roughly 40 foot spacing. Kimley-Horn has met with and will continue

dialogue with City arborist regarding proper tree section. Root Path: A typical detail is provided on the plans for root path structures to promote tree growth and stability.

Curb Extensions: Proposed curb chokers and parking-delineation islands have been shown in locations that meet the following criteria: create no change in existing drainage pattern; would provide safer pedestrian crossing; don't cause major impacts to curb ramps recently constructed with BRT project; and allow for truck movements appropriate to intersection.

Street Furnishings: Bike Share: plans maintain existing locations; no new locations are proposed at this time; Bike Racks: Bike racks, including Bike Share facilities, may be set on angle to curb to reduce overall depth impact on pedestrian zone. Trash Receptacles: M. Olinger suggested coordinating plan locations of trash receptacles within each block for ease of maintenance and alignment with anticipated use patterns. Bench Orientation: M. Olinger noted that benches could face the street, away from the street or be perpendicular to the street. S. Musarra noted that orientation could be impacted by whether or not there was on-street parking to provide a buffer to the travel lanes. Kimley-Horn to recommend orientation as part of the plans.

Driveway Closures: Proposed locations for closure of existing driveways are shown based upon traffic safety, site layout, and adequate site access from other driveway locations. All closures would be tentative pending City review and potential property owner input.

Lighting Program:

Addition of new acorn light fixtures on existing poles within project limits where there is currently no fixture today. Addition of new acorn light fixtures on the pedestrian side of the pole in the VCU area where there is currently no pedestrian fixture today. Painting of existing steel poles between Laurel and Boulevard. Replacement of existing wood poles with steel poles between Sheppard and Hamilton (for City-owned light poles only. Many poles are owned by Dominion or other utility providers). Festoon Lights: City is interested in providing for overhead string lighting in selected areas but the project program does not include design details for this element.

[slides for existing conditions, including triangles]

[slides for proposed plantings, curb extensions, etc.]

Considering the variety of constraints, Staff finds that the project accomplishes the goal of improving the two mile stretch of West Broad Street. The plan calls for delineating spaces for Amenity, Pedestrian, and Building zones, allotting a six foot minimum clearance for the Pedestrian Zone, which is one foot more than current practice. In terms of paving, the project calls for new, simplified sidewalk finishes (in areas that are unimproved by VCU) which will help unify the aesthetic along the corridor. Lighting will be enhanced through additional acorn light fixtures where none currently exist and the provision of festoon lighting in selected areas. Street trees are planned along the route and will vary depending on the width of the sidewalk and overhead utilities. The addition of including root path structures to promote tree longevity is commendable. Curb extensions, street furnishings, and driveway closures further speak to enhancements that align with the systems-based approach for the city's Vision Zero effort, an initiative to eliminate traffic fatalities for all travel modes.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission grant approval with the following conditions: that a professional arborist review existing street trees to advise on those that are viable to remain; that the new pedestrian scale light fixtures are LED with a color temperature of 3000k or less

Jill Nolt: I had a question about the approach of reducing the tree well when you are constrained by existing conditions.

Sal Musarra, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. (Applicant's Team): I think the intent was to keep the 12 foot length. We'd like to have it 6 foot wherever we can but we're putting a priority on the pedestrian zone. I think the conversation was that we'd be comfortable going to 5 feet if we had to, but keep the 12 foot (length).

Chris Arias: Any comments on my question regarding the curb, on the granite versus the concrete? Is there a plan for it?

Mr. Musarra: It is not within the scope of the project. It's really back of curb to face of building. In the way the Smart Scale application of funding works, they are fairly strict on the limits of the work. It's defined as back of curb to face of building or right of way.

Mr. Arias: So during construction the curb does not get disturbed at all, it just stays where it is?

Mr. Musarra: Hopefully, yes. And some of that curb work was dealt with as part of the BRT project. The intent would be not to disturb it.

Mr. Arias: Could there be consideration that, if it does get disturbed, if there's concrete there, if they have to pull out some concrete curb, maybe we go back in with something that is consistent, which would be the granite. Granite would be nice, and I'm sure there's a stockpile somewhere because they've been pulling it out for a long time.

Mr. Musarra: So, I would think within the contract documents we would need to have language which addresses what happens if we have to remove or disturb it. And there would be a little bit of curb work done with – John Oliver's here, we've got some curb extensions – they're proposed in select areas and driveway closures, so there would be some disturbance, especially in those areas, and replacement, where we're closing a driveway. So yes, we will have to deal with that where we are disturbing it.

Mr. Arias: Is there a way to put the language in there so the default would be to go back with granite as opposed to concrete?

Mr. Musarra: We can certainly discuss where it's appropriate.

Mr. Arias: I've got another question, this refers to the lighting – the acorn. I didn't see any sort of cut sheet, but is this the acorn that has the cap, or no cap?

Mr. Musarra: It's intended to match what's out there today, and there's two light fixtures we're discussing. One is putting the lights on the poles where they are currently missing, and then there's putting the lower pedestrian heads, with the focus on the VCU district. The lower pedestrian acorn lights would go on the backside of the pole, to match what's out there today.

Mr. Arias: So some of those city acorn lights have a metal cap, and to consider dark sky (impacts)?

Mr. Musarra: We'll check that and make sure.

Mr. Olinger: The intent was to carry the Broad Street guidelines that were in place down

from roughly 14th all the way to Hamilton, so that stretch of road would be very consistent.

Mr. Musarra: And generally we're trying to bring a consistent aesthetic, and a pattern and a rhythm to an area that sort of has none right now. So, what you see in the Conceptual are these kind of prototypical layouts based on width. We'll essentially have to walk every layer through it and adjust for special conditions. For example, there are some significant trees out there that may alter our rhythm. Every now and then we have a right of way that stops before a building face, so there will be two or three feet between a right of way and a building, that's technically outside the scope of the project, but obviously visually it's certainly integrated with it. Some of those areas are concrete, some of those areas are other materials. Granite; there are step encroachments; and ramps that business owners have put in. So, in those cases, along the driveways we're going to have to have communication with individual property owners to determine how to deal with the situation. Otherwise we're faced with stopping our work at a right-of-way line and then having unusual conditions when building there. Technically, the Smart Scale application is only to deal with what's in the right of way, so we have to figure out what to do with those gaps.

Ms. Nolt: There was conversation back and forth about orientation of benches. I'm seeing in the prototypical plan a singular bench in each plan. Will it be possible to study congregating benches together for group gathering, and studying where that best location is? Whether the benches are facing each other, or are at 90 degrees, I think an opportunity for multiple people sitting together would be a nice feature.

Mr. Musarra: We'll definitely do that. We'll have a budget for site furnishings. The question will be how to get the best bang for where that should go. Also we'll establish a typical rhythm but with VCU for example we're talking about pedestrian micro-movements – it may be that we alter the rhythm of street furniture or tree plantings so that we don't interfere with normal pedestrian movements that are happening today. Those kinds of adjustments will have to occur block to block. What we thought we'd do at the conceptual level is say, here's our typical for each of these different conditions and we're going to have to dive into the details and figure out what we have to alter. Overall we'd like there to be an experience of a normal rhythm in terms of materials: site furnishing, lighting, trees. Even though in reality there may be trees spaced at 38 feet or 40 feet, we generally shouldn't notice those things, but we'll just have to be very minimal in terms of the conditions. And of course every time we stick a shovel in the ground out there, who knows what we'll come up with.

Ms. Nolt: Is there potential to add to your kit of parts a planting bed that would not have a tree but might help create a bit more – not continuous, let's say, because we know the conditions are such that you would need to traverse across it – but maybe to add another layer of greenscape?

Mr. Musarra: I think that's a great point. Tree selection, particularly where there is overhead power, you have to go with a small tree, and small trees tend to compete with the pedestrian zone. So maybe it's better not to have trees in those locations where the small trees just don't look good or they get too broad and we don't have enough width. So, when we have 16 or 18 feet it's okay, but when we have a 12-foot area the small tree's probably not going to be the best choice.

Ms. Nolt: Is there an option that between your 40-foot spacing and your trees when you've accomplished your other goals and you still have space that you could do some additional planting.

Mr. Musarra: Yes. And I think that makes sense in terms of what's behind it, the architecture, and the overall rhythm.

Ms. Nolt: Thank you. No further questions.

Mr. Olinger: As someone who's been to a few of these meetings – one of the things we're trying to do is, we are trying to get a uniform sidewalk depth, which is very difficult west of Boulevard. But on those projects that have some opportunity to give up a little space, we've been talking to some of them, including the former hotel. So that we get closer to the 18 feet of depth along that section so we can get 6-6-6. It's not possible in every location but it will be in some. And there are a number of projects that have come forward in various stages of discussion west of the boulevard where I think we might be able to pick up more of that. So our goal is to get to 18 feet, understanding that we can't get that in every location, but we're going to try to get it where we can.

Ms. Nolt: When you cannot get to 18 feet, is the strategy to unify the block? Or to let those widths ebb and flow as you're meeting those constraints and then flow back out? Is there a strategy in mind for that?

Mr. Musarra: Yes, and I think based on existing conditions it's not going to be too difficult to do that in a unified-block approach because they tend to be pretty consistent, and it changes at the intersection. Unless something else drives us to do something interesting and say, okay, we're going to break the pattern, which I think we can be open to. Otherwise I think the blocks will generally be consistent.

Ms. Almond: I saw there was a note about root path structures. Can you explain a little more about what you guys are thinking for street trees?

Mr. Musarra: We've included the detail and we understand the benefits and the desire to do that. It is currently not in the budget but, again, we're only at a conceptual level. In the urban environment it can often be difficult to create that growing environment given what's beneath us. But the goal is of course to create the best growing environment for the tree, which means largest amount of soil volume. Obviously a 12 by 6 pit allows us to do that. There are certainly going to be utilities and things we have to dance around. It tends to be an expensive item. In streetscape work we've done around the country, this is the one that takes the budget axe first, but we understand the intent and the desire to do it, so we put the detail in there. We'll probably include it as an alternate item, and that way we can at least get it priced, and then we can make some decisions about it as we get nearer to where it happens. It's important to get the best growing environment we can.

Ms. Nolt: Do you feel that this approach is the most economical, most viable solution for offering root zone, versus a soil cell or a structural soil, or a structured slab, or...

Mr. Musarra: We are not using this type of structure much at all. If you look at Select Trees of Athens Georgia, they've done a lot of studies on street trees and following them for a number of years to see how they're doing, and for the most part this is not a recommended approach. So no, I think giving more soil volume, paying attention to the soil, maybe some structure type of proprietary products... But it's just given the best environment we can, I think this is a cost that may not bear out over time to be the best use of money.

Ms. Almond: Shouldn't we have what is the best version is in our plans?

Mr. Musarra: This was a request to include this approach and this detail for the project, so...

Ms. Almond: Request from Urban Forestry?

Mr. Musarra: Yes.

Ms. Nolt: I think I have this correct, that 17th St. Market is one of the first locations to use soil cells, so as to have an expanded root zone in trees. Granted that they haven't been installed long enough to really test that, but it might be worth studying that option just from a budget standpoint, since it has been done here in the city, it may be worth including as an alternate, as a best practice, if this one is no longer being recommended.

Mr. Musarra: That was more a personal opinion/experience based on what we've seen over that last ten to years, but we're open to finding the best solution that will work.

Ms. Almond: I think what you're saying and what we've been seeing is that having larger tree beds and using structural soil under the surrounding streetscape is currently the preferred technology. So it seems like that's what we'd prefer to have priced in our plans.

Mr. Musarra: Yes.

Ms. Nolt: And holding that 12-foot dimension will be really critical.

Mr. Musarra: Absolutely.

Ms. Nolt: Are there other questions for the applicant?

Discussion about timing of project and of funds being made available to bring project as far as Belvidere, desirability of burying utilities west of Monument. Schedule of most of project funding is two or three years.

No questions from the public.

No further comment.

A motion was made by Committee Member Nolt that this item be approved with the Staff conditions and additional conditions.

Staff conditions were:

- That a professional arborist review existing street trees to advise on those that are viable to remain**
- That the new pedestrian scale light fixtures are LED with a color temperature of 3000k or less**

The additional conditions are:

- That the applicant study best practices for root zone expansion around planting wells and street trees**
- That granite curbs are installed when curbs are disturbed**

Committee Member Gould seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 7 - Chris Arias, Jill Nolt, David Johannas, Andrew P. Gould, James W. Klaus, Emily Smith and Chair Andrea Almond

Excused -- 1 - Andrea Quilici

UDC 2018-47 Conceptual location, character, and extent review of a new middle school (formerly Elkhardt Middle School), 6300 Hull Street

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location & Plans](#)

Mr. Son: In early 2018, The City of Richmond Public Schools issued an RFP for the design of a new 1500-student middle school. The intent of the RFP was to provide a prototype design that would allow for a reduced design timeline in order to have the new school operational by September 2020. Under a previous RPS term contract, the existing school building at 6300 Hull Street was demolished, and the site was selected to be the home of the new 1500-student middle school. Four prototypes were presented to the School Board and to the community, and the plans presented here represent the selected prototype.

The selected site is approximately 19 acres, with a major grade change between the building area and the football field. Improvements will be provided to allow ADA access to all areas of the site. A secondary entrance will be provided at the northern end of the property, where one exists today, but this access will be gated and will be emergency access only. Parking for 25 buses and 150 staff/visitors has been provided based on conversations with RPS staff. Asphalt roadways and concrete curb are provided for all vehicular areas. Pedestrian areas will be concrete. Buffers consistent with the city's requirements will be provided as shown to screen the parking areas from adjacent properties and roadways. Landscaping within the parking areas will also be provided, consistent with the City's requirements. Additional foundation plantings will be provided along the building face to enhance those areas. All plantings will be based on native or adaptive species to minimize the watering requirements. It is anticipated that the new school will be designed to meet LEED Silver certification.

Access to the property from Hull Street and Elkhardt Road is limited, and it is important to separate access between buses and cars. Therefore, the access points shown on the plan represent the continued discussions and coordination with both DPW and RPS. In addition, the plan includes the improvements that are proposed with Hull Street (by others), as we understand this work is underway as well. Based on our understanding, Hull Street will be widened to accommodate a shared-use path on the north side of the road. As such, we are not proposing sidewalk along Hull Street, but we are including a sidewalk extension along Elkhardt Road.

The project involves the construction of a new middle school to accommodate 1500 students. The proposed building will replace a demolished school and accommodate a growing student population. Richmond Public Schools (RPS) selected four school design prototypes and presented them to the School board and community. The intention of the project is to reduce the design timeline in order to have the new school operational by 2020. The topography of the parcel makes siting the school difficult and will not allow for existing trees to remain, which is unfortunate. The programming of the surrounding area will allow flexibility and the space in between the "wings" of the school may allow for future outdoor facilities to enhance the educational programming which is desirable. Additionally, existing utility lines onsite will be buried.

Staff is supportive of the overall design of the school building, which is required to meet LEED Silver. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval with the following

conditions for a final review: provide a site plan for the project indicating site characteristics which include: building footprints, parking areas, pedestrian routes, recreation areas, open areas, and areas of future expansion.; provide a set of floor plans and elevations, as detailed as possible.; provide a landscaping plan that includes a complete plant schedule, the precise location of all plant materials, and a landscape maintenance analysis. The plant schedule must show number, size and type of each planting proposed. If existing trees are to be removed, their size, type and location must be noted on the landscape plan.; provide the location of all lighting units (this should be noted on a site plan), including wall-mounted, site, and parking lot lighting. Other site details, such as benches, trash containers and special paving materials, should also be located. Include specification sheets for each item.; samples of all proposed exterior building materials, including but not limited to brick, mortar, shingles, siding, glass, paint and stain colors. When an actual sample cannot be provided, a product information sheet that shows the item or a photo of an existing item may be substituted.

Additionally, in order to work with the applicant in their timeline, the application is coming for conceptual review; however, it will be necessary to move forward with the general siting of the building, give or take five feet, in order to secure building permits for the foundation in December, which would allow for the project to move forward. This would then come back in January for final review of all the above-grade things.

Mr. Arias: There's an upper field there, behind Elkhardt – so that gets absorbed into this plan?

Mr. Son: Correct. That would be I believe where the proposed tennis courts and basketball court would go.

Mr. Arias: There's another field that's behind the existing school now, to the right of the parking lot. Is that outside the scope? If there's an opportunity or available space to not have such a programmed area. Right now it looks like there's the football field, the tennis courts, the basketball court, but it doesn't look like there's much room for just open grass area, green space for something that's not programmed.

Mr. Son: It's a very restricted site. Since we're in conceptual, that could be discussed.

John Carty (Civil Engineer, VHB, representing Virginia Public Schools and the team with RRMM Architects):

To answer your question, yes, there was a field there. To put it into perspective, the building that was on site was 3 stories and approximately 800 students. This one has a footprint about 3 times larger and will serve 1500 students. We're also adding 25 buses as opposed to the original site probably had 12, and we're doubling the parking. So based on the program put out by RPS we've tried fit it in as well as possible. Some of it did eat up part of that upper field. But, the athletics that are laid out here are based on discussions with community and with RPS.

Ms. Almond: How will storm water be handled on site?

Mr. Carty: We're handling it on-site. The current plan is to do underground retention that will provide us with best water quality and in the right quantity.

Ms. Almond: Where's that going?

Mr. Carty: We have two locations: one under the front parking lot in the triangular shaped piece. The building is so large it extends to the property lines on both sides, so we're

splitting the drainage area to north and south, so we have one there and also one near the tennis courts.

Mr. Klaus: RPS announced earlier this year that they were putting solar panels on several of their existing schools. Is that going into the planning of this building?

Mr. Carty: I'm familiar with that program; that is being done through a grant. They are retrofitting existing schools with solar panels. If it is available, the building would be able to handle it, though we would have to look at where we could do it. We have some pitch grooves.

Mr. Olinger: It's a power purchase agreement. It's going in at no cost to the school department, and they're agreeing to buy for 20 years the power to pay back the cost. But some of the buildings weren't planned for that.

Jeff Harris (of RRMM Architects): I don't know if we're going to do that right off the bat, but the buildings can accommodate it, as John said. There are plenty of slope grooves.

Ms. Smith: Question about lighting: with the elevations and the perspectives it looks like on the pilasters or columns – are these wall or surface, like sconce lighting? Are there free-standing lights as well?

Mr. Carty: There will be some free-standing lights.

Ms. Smith: Are those shown in the plan?

Mr. Carty: I don't think we have anything at the conceptual level yet but we will work with the lighting consultant to make sure that we have parking lighting and pedestrian lighting at the entrances.

David Johannas: In terms of the architecture, I think the basic form is pretty decent. Use of verticals and stone is pretty nice. What I find in conflict is the entranceway itself, it's almost postmodern looking. And then the three bays in the back, I find them really contrary to the style of the building, which is cleaner looking. Any chance of cleaning it up a little bit?

Mr. Carty: We can certainly try. This was a prototype that was chosen by the community and the school system, so we're locked in to the general shape of the building. We're trying to manipulate the exterior skin to provide those details. We can certainly look at it. Are there specific elements that you're talking about?

Mr. Johannas: I just think that the Craftsman approach of the rest of the building is pretty nice-looking. I just find that the pediment and window treatments tend to be heavy for what they are, not so open, and in the back they look almost postmodern. The huge weight that you have in the columns on the back as opposed to having it be a little more open, and some heaviness at top of the entrance canopy. These small details take more effort than the massing and fenestration, which actually work pretty well.

Mr. Harris: We'll take a look at that, sure.

Mr. Carty: The intent today is to nail down the site plan, and make sure that the building location is acceptable to you. We also brought some materials to get some preliminary comments from you.

Mr. Carty: The intent of these schools is to be operational by September 2020, which gives us about 18 months from today. The reason we're coming for both conceptual and final review [in rapid succession] of the building, is that next month we'd be submitting for building permits, and planning to break ground in January.

Mr. Arias: What are some of the things that were driving the building's being oriented as it is now? It's a huge proposal for us to look at the conceptual location of it without understanding the decisions that got you to this point. What are the natural lighting opportunities and solar heat gains and things like that? And was that considered? Are we looking at natural light coming into the building as an asset or is it something that was not a consideration? LEED requires reducing energy consumption and natural lighting is a huge way to do it.

Mr. Harris: We are considering all of those things. Access to the site is the biggest driver. We were trying to work around the existing entrances, and the nearby intersection, which is signalized. Bringing people out to that signal, trying to maintain separation between bus and cars.

Mr. Carty: We have a very narrow buffer between us and the bus lane, and between the bus lane and the building, and we're very tight to the property line on the east as well. Unfortunately, rotating the building 90 degrees so it faces Hull Street, the building doesn't fit on the site. We are constrained, but also trying to be cognizant that how people get in and out of this is going to be vital to the success of the school. There's a proposed plan for Hull St. to provide enhanced streetscape and improvements along that corridor. That project includes installing a median which will limit our access to Hull St. We will have ability to turn into but not left out of the site anymore. This made it vital that all the parking lots have access to Elkhardt.

Mr. Harris: We want to drop kids off the buses in the secure courtyards by the greenhouses, so that dictated where the bus lot is currently located.

Mr. Klaus: Because of the building's position you kind of have two facades – you have the façade when you're driving west, which is the main façade where it curves. But if you're coming the other way that west façade really becomes a forward-facing part of the building for half the people. Right now that west elevation doesn't read as more than a random side of a building. The east elevation is going into the woods and not visible, and the rear elevation isn't that visible too, but that west elevation is going to be a very visible landmark on Hull Street for people driving east.

Mr Harris: Sure, we can add entry feature details to couple locations.

Mr. Carty: We're also talking about enhanced landscaping on that corner to try to screen us from the signalized intersection.

Ms. Almond: Does the service yard off of the kitchen have a façade wall around it?

Mr. Harris: Yes, parts of it does.

Ms. Almond: My question is, you're not showing any landscaping or screening in that area of the site, so...

Mr. Harris: We're going to have to screen it. I know that we've got trash enclosure screen walls but we need to take another look at that.

Ms. Almond: I know this is more dictated by budget than anything, but it does seem like this concept plan is just bare minimum. It would be nice if there were some more enhanced areas that had trees and green space that the children had access to – places that look like nature. It seems like you have a lot of empty grass areas on site.

Mr. Carty: We're looking at doing enhancements at the entryways and into the courtyards, but we can also look at other areas where we can do enhancements.

Mr. Johannas: About the west elevation – it would be nice if there was something that proclaimed that was an important side of the building.

Mr. Klaus: Maybe the entrance on the side becomes something more than just a door in a wall.

Mr. Carty: Yes, we can incorporate some more simplified entry feature there.

Mr. Klaus: It looks like traffic is driven towards the middle and then in, so it makes sense that this becomes an option for an entrance as well as the front of the building.

Ms. Almond: Are there other questions for the applicant?

Sample building materials were shown and passed around.
Mortar colors were also discussed. A light color is planned.

Ms. Almond: Is it common that we're using prototypes? Do we have a prototype [school design] that's being used for other locations?

Mr. Carty: Using prototypes saves time on the front end.

Ms. Almond: Where do the proposals for prototypes come from?

Donald Summers (Senior Capital Projects Manager, City of Richmond): When we started the school projects with RPS, their wishes were, in order to meet the August 2020 date, to use a prototype that had already been designed or constructed. The RFP that went out included this caveat. Participating firms had to submit various prototypes. Selection was based on how closely that prototype would replicate the programming needed. We can't from scratch create a design based on the wishes of everybody. RPS wanted the community involved so they would feel that, even though it's just a prototype, it's still their neighborhood school.

Normally a school of this size would be on a site twice as large, but that's the site we're dealing with.

As with the next school we'll be reviewing, communities have seen 4 elevations and 4 prototypes, and multiple color schemes, and have narrowed it down to what we're presenting today.

Ms. Almond: So those 4 prototypes will continue to be used for future schools?

Mr. Summers: Could be, and we don't know that yet, but could be, yes. The nice thing about these prototypes is they've had elevation adjustments in the past that were brought about through the community and RPS engagement.

Mr. Arias: I'm concerned about opportunities for things to happen outside that's not programming. Was there any consideration for outdoor classroom or gathering space?

Mr. Harris: Yes, those wings are secure courtyards. Students dropped off buses in the morning come into that courtyard. Once school has started those gates are locked. Those serve as outdoor classrooms – there's also an areas for small gardens.

Mr. Carty: There's also discussion of a possible learning amphitheater.

Mr. Arias: How does Phys. Ed. (Gym) class occur?

Mr. Harris: This building does have a main gymnasium as well as an auxiliary gym. There's easy access to the playing fields in the back.

Mr. Carty: Extended learning areas are a big part of this plan.

No public comment or additional discussion.

A motion was made by Committee Member Gould that this item be approved with the Staff conditions and additional conditions.

Staff conditions were:

- Provide a site plan for the project indicating site characteristics which include: building footprints, parking areas, pedestrian routes, recreation areas, open areas, and areas of future expansion.**
- Provide a set of floor plans and elevations, as detailed as possible.**
- Provide a landscaping plan that includes a complete plant schedule, the precise location of all plant materials, and a landscape maintenance analysis. The plant schedule must show number, size and type of each planting proposed. If existing trees are to be removed, their size, type and location must be noted on the landscape plan.**
- Provide the location of all lighting units (this should be noted on a site plan), including wall-mounted, site, and parking lot lighting. Other site details, such as benches, trash containers and special paving materials, should also be located. Include specification sheets for each item.**
- Samples of all proposed exterior building materials, including but not limited to brick, mortar, shingles, siding, glass, paint and stain colors. When an actual sample cannot be provided, a product information sheet that shows the item or a photo of an existing item may be substituted.**

The additional conditions are:

- Consideration of enhanced architecture especially on the back bays of the building (north elevation) and the second entrance (west elevation).**
- Consideration of outdoor learning and engagement opportunities in the courtyards between the back bays of the proposed structure.**
- That landscaped spaces are enhanced**

Committee Member Smith seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 6 - Chris Arias, David Johannas, Andrew P. Gould, James W. Klaus, Emily Smith and Chair Andrea Almond

Excused -- 1 - Andrea Quilici

Abstain -- 1 - Jill Nolt

[UDC 2018-48](#) Conceptual location, character, and extent review of new construction of an

elementary school, 1745 Catalina Drive

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

Mr. Son: The Building One Richmond Program currently includes a five-year, \$150 million plus program focused on the new construction of public elementary, middle and high schools in the city. The school Board of the City of Richmond has updated its 2002 Facilities Master Plan, and the update identifies ESH Greene Elementary School as a prioritized "Phase 1" project. The Owner has identified \$150 million in funding for those projects identified in the updated 2002 Facilities Master Plan as "Phase 1" projects. The design and construction of these projects is a collaborative effort between the City of Richmond, which is the owner of the schools, and the School Board, which will operate the schools once they open.

E.S.H. Greene Elementary School was named for Edwin Stonewall Hunter Greene, a former superintendent of schools for Chesterfield County and the City of Colonial Heights. The school was built in 1954. In 1970, the city of Richmond annexed the area including E.S.H. Greene School from Chesterfield County and the school then became a part of the Richmond Public School System. E.S.H. Greene School is located at 1745 Catalina Drive on the constantly growing and culturally changing south side of Richmond, Virginia. It has a main building which houses grades K-2 and 2 modular buildings with an additional cafeteria to house grades 3-5.

During the construction of the new ESH Greene Elementary School, the existing elementary school and modular buildings must remain operational. This constraint gives us only one area of the property to build the new school, behind the existing building. The new ESH Greene Elementary School will be an approximately 115,000-square-foot facility with a capacity for approximately 1,000 students. The building will be construction type IIB and fully sprinklered. It will have CMY bearing walls with brick veneer and a standing seam metal roof. Sustainability is a key component to this project. The project will achieve a minimum LEED Silver Certification.

The site plan will allow for complete separation of car and bus traffic. It will provide parking for staff and visitors as well as a drop-off lane for parents that choose to drive their children to school. There will be playground areas behind the school that will be fenced for safety purposes. There will also be playground and athletic field areas at the front of the site that will be used by the school during the day and by the community after school hours. Construction is scheduled to begin in the early Spring of 2019. Occupation of the new ESH Greene Elementary School is planned for the Fall of 2020 with the demolition of the existing school planned for Fall of 2020 and potentially into the Spring of 2021.

The project involves the construction of a new elementary school to accommodate 1,000 students. The proposed building will replace an existing school that has been expanded with two modular units that house additional classrooms and an additional cafeteria. Richmond Public Schools (RPS) selected four school design prototypes and presented them to the School board and community. The intention of the project is to reduce the design timeline in order to have the new school operational by 2020. Due to existing physical constraints, the existing school will remain open as the new school is under construction directly behind.

Staff is supportive of the overall design of the school building, which is required to meet LEED Silver. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval with the following conditions for a final review: provide a site plan for the project indicating site

characteristics which include: building footprints, parking areas, pedestrian routes, recreation areas, open areas, and areas of future expansion.; provide a set of floor plans and elevations, as detailed as possible.; provide a landscaping plan that includes a complete plant schedule, the precise location of all plant materials, and a landscape maintenance analysis. The plant schedule must show number, size and type of each planting proposed. If existing trees are to be removed, their size, type and location must be noted on the landscape plan.; provide the location of all lighting units (this should be noted on a site plan), including wall-mounted, site and parking lot lighting. Other site details, such as benches, trash containers and special paving materials, should also be located. Include specification sheets for each item.; samples of all proposed exterior building materials, including but not limited to brick, mortar, shingles, siding, glass, paint and stain colors. When an actual sample cannot be provided, a product information sheet that shows the item or a photo of an existing item may be substituted.

Mr. Klaus: The new school would be at the lowest part of the grade, it looks like: down the hill about ten feet. Is that correct?

Steve Rowe, Simmons Group (Applicant's Team): You are correct. The drainage on this site is essentially from Catalina Drive towards the bottom corner of the site. We're going to have to bring in fill material to raise that building pad to make sure we can get gravity storm and sewer to drain off the site. So we do have to raise the building up somewhat.

To answer an earlier question about how the building fits on the site: the overhead utility line that bisects the plan horizontally is essentially our dividing line: everything below is our buildable area, in order to keep the existing building and modular areas functioning. That also allows us to keep the parking lot functioning.

Once the new building is operational, we'll begin demolition on the old, and complete work on the athletic fields and the parking lot. The modular buildings can come down a lot quicker than the existing building. The bus loop will be coming off Crawford Avenue. Hopefully we'll have that and the parking lot ready, we just won't yet have use of the athletic fields when we first open the doors.

Mr. Arias: Looking at the connection between the building and the play area, it seems like an afterthought. I'm sure the bus turning radius is fixed and that can't be changed. Thinking about the students and their day, everyone at some point in the day uses those athletic and playing fields, is that correct?

Mr. Rowe: We do have an outdoor playground equipment area, as well as a blacktop area tucked behind the building. And that [the back] will be fenced in and contained for use by the school itself. Then in the front of the building we have direct path from the front door and one classroom wing directly out to the blacktop playground area as well as the ball fields. We have it laid out so they don't have to cross vehicular traffic to access those fields. They'll also have space indoors for P.E., for rainy days.

The front playgrounds on afternoons, evenings and weekends will be open to the community, whereas the playgrounds to the rear are confined and provide a safe play area during the day.

Mr. Arias: I would like to see more connection between the school and the play area. There's a bottleneck where students will have to go between the bus area and the front. The front entrance doesn't seem viable for kids to be going in and out of.

Mr. Rowe: We wanted to make a clear separate entrance for the staff, from Catalina Drive. Parents driving kids to school will drop them at the front door. We also wanted to

make sure the buses have easy access to the building. They have access to three doors to get kids into the classroom and out of the weather.

The shape of the site and the prototype building, and working around the existing building, led us to this solution. We've also tried to provide direct and safe pedestrian movement from building to all playground areas. In some cases it's a longer walk than we would like, because of the constraints we've had to work around. But we feel it accomplishes what we wanted to accomplish.

Ms. Almond: Even some adjustments in the pathway out and the way the sidewalks at that corner connect the playground and athletic fields would start to make that look like an intentional design instead of just where things lined up. This area is just some intersecting pathways when it could be a place.

Mr. Rowe: Yes, I understand what you're saying. It's amazing how big these bus loops can get. One other point is that the bus loop will be used 30 minutes twice a day. The rest of the day it can be used as a play area. It is an integral part of the site, but we can certainly look at ways to improve the link between building and playing fields.

Mr. Klaus: Thank you.

Ms. Smith: Landscaping really seems to be a way to customize a prototype, to connect it and ground it to a place. Any way that we can within the budgets that we have to explore those opportunities. We find these little pockets that are created by an edge and then a building and a program, and really try to capitalize on them, beyond the manicured plantings that we see. Thinking about a mix of different planting types.

Ms. Smith: I see some notes about plantings to be determined by the budget, but there's definitely a preference for shade trees versus foundation plantings. Having hardscape play areas have some shade trees versus having a row of shrubs against the building would be more of a preference if we can't have both.

Proposed site materials shown and distributed to the Committee members.

Mr. Klaus: To go back to the grading. It's a site that, you had the original school which they chose to put somewhere else because it's higher. I'm worried that in our haste we don't make a bigger problem.

Mr. Rowe: We do this all the time, which is building on occupied campuses. We worked on one in Lynchburg where it was the third time – school was at front of property, then moved to the rear, then moved back to the front. Our goal is to make it look like it's all intentional and we'll do our best to make sure this comes off that way in the end.

A motion was made by Committee Member Almond that this item be approved with the Staff conditions and additional conditions.

Staff conditions were:

- Provide a site plan for the project indicating site characteristics which include: building footprints, parking areas, pedestrian routes, recreation areas, open areas, and areas of future expansion.**
- Provide a set of floor plans and elevations, as detailed as possible.**
- Provide a landscaping plan that includes a complete plant schedule, the precise location of all plant materials, and a landscape maintenance analysis. The plant schedule must show number, size and type of each planting proposed. If existing trees are to be removed, their size, type and location must be noted on the landscape plan.**

- Provide the location of all lighting units (this should be noted on a site plan), including wall-mounted, site, and parking lot lighting. Other site details, such as benches, trash containers and special paving materials, should also be located. Include specification sheets for each item.
- Samples of all proposed exterior building materials, including but not limited to brick, mortar, shingles, siding, glass, paint and stain colors. When an actual sample cannot be provided, a product information sheet that shows the item or a photo of an existing item may be substituted.

The additional conditions are:

- Enhanced architecture especially on the back bays of the building (north elevation) and the second entrance (west elevation) is considered.
- Outdoor learning and engagement opportunities in the courtyards between the back bays of the proposed structure is considered.
- That landscaped spaces are enhanced.
- Shade trees shall be given priority over other plantings.
- Cut sheets for fixtures and exterior lighting be provided
- The use of Solar Panels is considered.
- A direct connection between the school and the play/athletic areas is better defined.

Committee Member Klaus seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

- Aye --** 5 - Chris Arias, David Johannas, James W. Klaus, Emily Smith and Chair Andrea Almond
- Excused --** 1 - Andrea Quilici
- Abstain --** 2 - Jill Nolt and Andrew P. Gould

UDC 2018-46 Final location, character, and extent review of informational signage, 719 W. Franklin Street

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location & Plans](#)
[Public Comment - Opposition](#)

Mr. Son: 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.

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, Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend the Planning Commission approve the final design as submitted.

Ms. Nolt: I know we're matching the previously approved sign design, but it looks like the interior is a different color: it's blue instead of green.

Mr. Son: Yes, I believe that speaks to that this is the sustainability signage. It would match the blue of the recycling bin.

Ms. Nolt: And is the white face of the sign the same as the others that have been installed?

Mr. Son: I believe so. I believe everything else remains the same.

Ms. Nolt: It's just that blue band that's talking about infrastructure?

Mr. Son: Yes.

Ms. Nolt: And the sign is being initiated by DPU, is that right?

Mr. Son: Yes.

There were no questions from the committee.

Ms. Nolt: Are there any questions from the public?

Mr. Son: There was public comment as part of the packet. It was also on Legistar.

Ms. Nolt: Thank you. No one in person here. But there has been public comment via email.

Commission Discussion:

Mr. Klaus: On the map of the park it says "You Are Here." Is there going to be indications of where additional recycling and trash is going to be on that map? What is the map doing?

Mr. Son: This just speaks to where the sign is going to be. "You Are Here" indicates where the sign is. It's not going to show where other trash and recycling receptacles are. This just speaks to the bio-filtration, coarse pavement, stormwater drainage and other larger infrastructure improvements, but not the receptacle locations.

Mr. Klaus: Why not? I mean, you have a map there, why not use it? I know we're not supposed to comment on the content of the design, but I have a lot of comments on what is actually the content.

Ms. Nolt: Josh, can we make comments?

Mr. Son: Since this is a city sign, we can, because it's not an infringement on freedom of speech.

Mr. Klaus: You've got the legend which tells where bio-retention is and where the permeable pavers are, and you say "new trees" – you could indicate where the new trees were planted.

Grace LeRose, Richmond Department of Public Utilities Program Manager (Applicant's Team): We did do a version with where the new trees are, so that's an option.

Mr. Klaus: That's good. And the same with the new lighting and things like that. My only other content comment is you just said these improvements will help improvement water quality by reducing stormwater pollution into the James River by 4 pounds – is that per year, per day?

Ms. LeRose: A year.

Mr. Klaus: You might want to add that.

Ms. LeRose: Okay.

Discussion about the 122 new years and the desirability of mentioning this in the signage.

Ms. LeRose: We're going to pass around a version [of the sign] that we did showing where the new trees are.

Ms. Nolt: I think showing them graphically would be nice as well.

Mr. Klaus: My initial thought was, the map isn't doing that much for us, so why include it?

Ms. Nolt: I think that the trees are a big improvement.

Ms. LeRose: Okay.

Mr. Klaus: And to show where the other recycling bins are would be a nice thing as well. If you have a map, and it's about environmental amenities.

Ms. LeRose: Yes, we can do that.

Ms. Smith: I understand this is a tool for educating people as to the environmental efforts that are being made. Are there any wayfinding maps or tools?

Ms. LeRose: There will be. We talked to the Conservancy about what this sign was meant to do. It's not to be in the middle of a bio-retention or the middle of where the porous pavers are, but it's to say "here's what's in the park, go and find it." What bio-retention looks like, where the native plants are, here's where they are.

We felt it was important to talk about it in this historic park for a lot of reasons.

Redevelopment is not always held to the same standard that new development is, and also because it's in the combined-sewer part of the city, and that's just as important, to manage stormwater in that part of the city as it is in what we call the non-combined area.

Ms. Smith: More important.

Ms. LeRose: Exactly.

Ms. Smith: If you're standing in front of the map, is map oriented to your sense of orientation within the park?

Ms. LeRose: Yes, it will be.
Further discussion about orientation of the sign.

Ms. Nolt: It might be helpful to include a North arrow for orientation.

Ms. LeRose: Yes. That's a great idea.

Ms. Smith: If these are two options, for the graphic representations, the cross-hatch of the pavers is a little more intuitive.

Ms. LeRose: Yes, and that's what we landed with as well.

Ms. Smith: Where the renovated fountain is, it might be nice within the legend to add an element that would point them to the fact that that's the fountain.

Ms. LeRose: Okay.

Ms. Smith: I think, without getting busy, it's helpful to be graphically representing what you're listing in the righthand side.

Ms. Smith recounted difficulty many people have with navigating a park.

No further discussion.

No public comment.

A motion was made by Committee Member Klaus that this item be approved with conditions.

Conditions are:

- 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.**

Committee Member Arias seconded the motion and it carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 6 - Chris Arias, Jill Nolt, David Johannas, Andrew P. Gould, James W. Klaus and Emily Smith

Excused -- 1 - Andrea Quilici

Abstain -- 1 - Chair Andrea Almond

OTHER BUSINESS

Adjournment