City of Richmond, Virginia
Department of Planning and Development Review
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To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: June 15, 2020
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of Intersection and Traffic Flow Improvements on Jefferson Davis Highway from Brisner Street to Chesterman Street; UDC 2020-11**

I. APPLICANT
Winston Phillips, City of Richmond, Department of Public Works

II. LOCATION
Jefferson Davis Highway between Brisner Street and Chesterman Street

Majority Property Owner:
City of Richmond Department of Public Works

III. PURPOSE
The application is for the final review of intersection and traffic flow improvements on Jefferson Davis Highway.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION
This project is proposing to improve the Jefferson Davis Highway Corridor from Chesterman Street to Brisner Street for both motorists and pedestrians. An intersection reconfiguration is proposed at the crossings of Jefferson Davis, Hopkins Road and Harwood Street to allow a smoother through movement when crossing Jefferson Davis along Hopkins and Harwood, and a better turning movement when leaving Jefferson Davis.

The Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission approve the final design with the following conditions:

- The new location of the impacted GRTC bus stop at the corner of Halifax Street and Jefferson Davis Highway be confirmed before it is removed, and the new location be coordinated with GRTC.
- The new GRTC bus shelter be the city-wide design approved by Planning Commission on March 18, 2019, item number UDC 2019-12.
- Crosswalks utilize the same pavement markings at each intersection where crosswalks are being proposed, and that preference be given to the stripped design rather than the two parallel lines design, as the stripped design is more visible.
- Any trees that are removed along the median be replaced with a native tree species.
- Applicant work with DPW to consider the addition of city trash receptacles and benches in areas of the corridor that experience greater amounts of pedestrian traffic, or that may in the future.
- Applicant show that consideration was given to the undergrounding of overhead utility lines.
- Street trees be included in the planting plan
- Applicant further examine the design of the left-hand, south-bound slip lane at the intersection of Jefferson Davis Highway and Harwood Street

- The City of Richmond Department of Planning and Development Review expedite a Special Area Plan for the Route One Corridor

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject improvements are proposed along Jefferson Davis Highway between Brisner Street and Chesterman Street, a distance of approximately 0.4 miles. Land use along the east side of the corridor is mostly R-5 residential and B-6 mixed use business, and M-1industrial on the west side. There are six travel lanes separated by a center median, three northbound travel lanes and three southbound travel lanes. The posted speed limit along this section of Jefferson Davis Highway is 35mph.

The portion of Jefferson Davis Highway included in the project bounds abuts the unoccupied Model Tobacco Complex, an industrial complex which opened for business in 1940 for the processing and storage of tobacco, which was recently nominated to the National Register of Historic places in April 2019. In addition, there are several auto repair shops, gas stations, and individual businesses along the corridor.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as part of a "widening, extension, narrowing, enlargement, vacation or change in the use of streets and other public ways" under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

In January 1998, The Urban Design Committee conceptually reviewed the location, character, and extent of UDC 98-02, Jefferson Davis Roadway Improvements from Decatur Street to Chesterman Avenue. The scope of this project included widening Jefferson Davis Highway and the additional of new sidewalks, curbs, signaling, and drainage. This project was primarily funded by the State through Urban Aid Funds.

The Urban Design Committee recommended denial of the schematic design at the January 1998 meeting, and that the application be brought back before the Committee for final schematic review, and that the applicant address the following:

- Placement of streetlights along the curb rather than in the median.
- Consideration of placing the utilities underground or the provision of specific plans to do this work at some future time.
- Provision of landscape plans indicating the types of street trees and median plantings to be used.

Planning Commission subsequently approved this item without the Urban Design Committee's conditions at their regular January 1998 meeting, and specified that final landscape plans would be required for final Urban Design Committee Review.

In June 2001, The Urban Design Committee reviewed the final location, character, and extent of UDC 98-02(02), Jefferson Davis Roadway Improvements. Although the Planning Commission approved the conceptual location, character, and extent review of this project in 1998 without the Urban Design Committee's recommended considerations, the final review of this item took the UDC's comments into consideration, and the Urban Design Committee recommended that the Planning Commission grant final approval.

Due to a change in the location of utilities, the plan came back to the Urban Design Committee for the final location, character, and extent review of UDC 98-02(03). The Urban Design Committee recommended that the Planning Commission grant final approval of the plans with the condition that the applicant consider installing conduits for the future undergrounding of overhead wires.

Ultimately, Planning Commission granted final approval of this location, character, and extent review item at their regular July 2003 meeting, however the work was never completed.

d. Project Description

This project is proposing to improve the Jefferson Davis Highway Corridor from Chesterman Street to Brisner Street for both motorists and pedestrians. An intersection reconfiguration is proposed at the crossings of Jefferson Davis, Hopkins Road and Harwood Street to allow a smoother through movement when crossing Jefferson Davis along Hopkins and Harwood, and a better turning movement when leaving Jefferson Davis.

The reconfiguration includes a dedicated northbound left-hand turn lane onto Hopkins Road from Jefferson Davis Highway; a channelized southbound left-hand turn lane onto Harwood Street from Jefferson Davis Highway; right-hand yielding turn lanes onto both Hopkins Road and Harwood Street from Jefferson Davis Highway; and the termination of Ingram Street to allow Harwood Street to shift northward.

There are two historic markers within the project bounds that will be relocated. The historic marker at the existing intersection of Harwood Street, Ingram Street, and Jefferson Davis Highway will be relocated 12 feet to the south. The historic marker located in front of the Model Tobacco Complex will be moved seven feet back from its current location. The project manager has noted that the new locations of the historic markers have been approved by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Additionally, sidewalk improvements and crosswalks will improve the pedestrian accommodation within this corridor. The larger density of commercial properties within the project limits warrants the need to provide these improvements. The project will also improve drainage, restore the pavement, and provide new pavement markings, as well as upgrade the current signals. Crossovers along Jefferson Davis at Fairfax and Halifax Avenue will be eliminated, requiring a right-in/right-out-only turning movement.

One GRTC bus stop and shelter will be removed on the east side of the corridor at the intersection of Halifax Street and Jefferson Davis Highway. A new location

350 feet south has been proposed for the bus stop; the ultimate location will be coordinated with GRTC.

The project is funded through federal, state and local funds. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is responsible for the project design, right of way acquisition, utility relocation and construction. The City of Richmond will be responsible for betterment costs and maintenance once construction is complete.

The VDOT Richmond District Environmental Section reviewed the social, economic and environmental impacts of the project on the local community and surrounding area. The project was coordinated with the appropriate federal, state and local officials. As a result, it has been determined that construction of the project will not result in any significant environmental impacts.

The project is planned to begin construction in September 2022 and complete construction in June 2023.

The project is financially supported with federal, state and city (match and betterment) funds totaling $11,602,886. The total *estimated* cost is:

- Engineering Design: $3,182,619
- Right of Way & Utility Relocations: $2,636,866
- Construction: $5,783.401
- Total: $11,602,886

The City of Richmond will be responsible for maintenance.

e. Master Plan

The project site is located in the Old South Planning District of the City of Richmond's Master Plan. The deterioration of Jefferson Davis Highway is noted in the Master Plan, and redevelopment opportunities are broadly mentioned, which could include corridor improvements. The Old South Planning District's Transportation and Roadway Improvements Map indicates the need for additional travel lanes, including designated bike lanes, along the segment of Jefferson Davis Highway that is included in this project.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines state that, "All transportation projects should have adequate provisions to address the needs of the pedestrian in a safe and efficient manner. Streetscape elements such as trees and lighting should be used to encourage pedestrian activity. Striped crosswalks, pedestrian crosswalk signals, and other improvements that enhance safety should be installed as a standard amenity at all signalized intersections" (pg.6), and that, "Pedestrian crossings should be clearly marked and refuge islands should be provided where the crossing distance is 60 feet or greater" (pg.7). The scope of the project will include the replacement of any street trees that will be removed during the construction, and painted and signaled crosswalks at major intersections. Additional lighting and plantings are not being proposed. Pedestrian refuge islands are included in the project scope.

The Guidelines also state that, "The elimination of transit stops without replacement should be discouraged" (pg. 6). Currently, one GRTC bus stop at

the intersection of Jefferson Davis Highway and Halifax Street will be removed during construction. The applicant has specified that a new location for the bus stop and shelter has been proposed 350 feet to the south, closer to the reconfigured intersection of Jefferson Davis Highway and Harwood Street.

Regarding intersection and street design, the Guidelines specify that, “Channelized turn lanes should only be used where absolutely necessary” (pg.7). The applicant has clarified that the channelized left-turn lane from southbound Jefferson Davis Highway to Harwood is "absolutely necessary" to avoid significant impacts to the Dominion power line that runs down the median of Jefferson Davis Highway, and that major impacts to power lines will exceed available funding and could eliminate the project from further development or consideration.

The Urban Design Guidelines are supportive of traffic management techniques that slow traffic (page 7) and that add “an aesthetic contribution to the urban character of the neighborhoods in which they are placed” (page 8). The Guidelines note that “intersections should be designed to serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in a safe manner” (pg.7).

In regard to landscaping, the Guidelines note that “landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest” and that “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (pg.10).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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