

**7. COA-077065-2020**

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

August 25, 2020

PROPERTY ADDRESS

428 North Arthur Ashe Boulevard

DISTRICT

Boulevard

APPLICANT

J. Bosket

STAFF CONTACT

Carey L. Jones

# Commission of Architectural Review

## STAFF REPORT

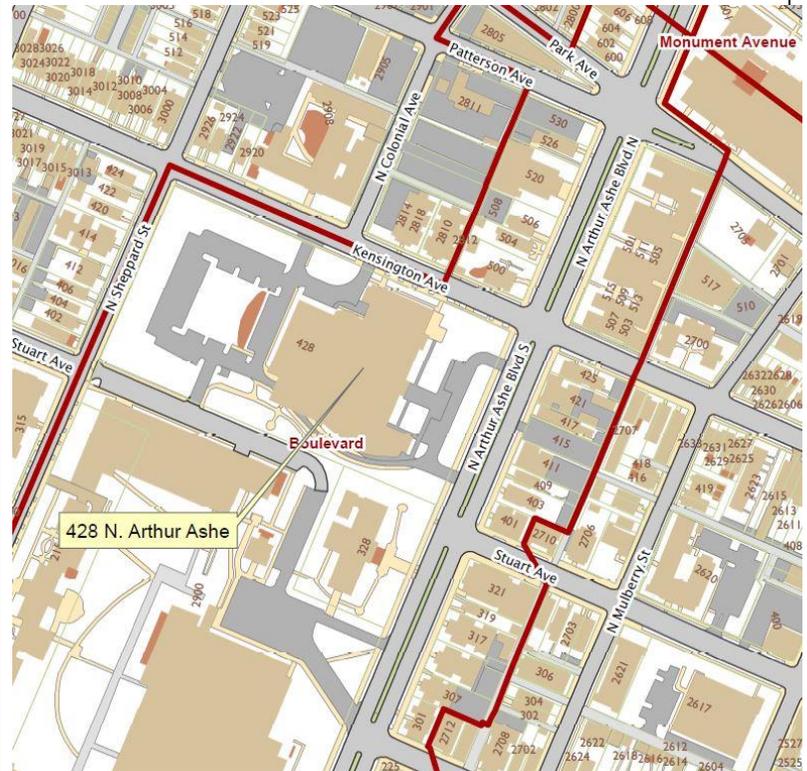


**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Modify existing parking lot, lighting, and landscaping.**

**PROJECT DETAILS**

- The applicant proposes to modify the existing parking lot, landscaping, access drives and paving, and install new lighting at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture (VMHC).
- The VMHC proposes to address the need for additional parking by redesigning the existing parking lot and relocating existing curb cuts.
- The VMHC also proposes to relocate the current green space from the center of the parking lot to be adjacent to the west façade. This will allow for more functional space for events.
- New landscaping will be installed around the relocated green space including trees and shrubs.
- The applicant also proposes to replace some of the existing magnolias from the original 1912 landscape plan, which are past their lifespan, with a new landscape buffer and perimeter tree canopy.
- The VMHC also proposes adding interpretation to the landscape with new signage.
- No additional buildings or structures are proposed.



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This application is also subject to a special use permit and is under review by Land Use Administration staff and the Director of Planning and Development Review.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS**

**PREVIOUS REVIEWS**

The Commission previously reviewed this application at the May 26 meeting. During this meeting, the Commission reviewed and approved plans to expand the existing building.

**STAFF RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS**

- Any changes to the plans be reviewed and approved by the Commission Secretary and the Director of Planning and Development Review.

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## STAFF ANALYSIS

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Standards for Site Improvements, Landscaping, pg. 76

*8. Landscape design should enhance the streetscape and contribute a strong aesthetic along street frontages. Appropriate landscaping should buffer the visual severity of surface parking lots from view. Vacant lots, large expanses of blank wall and other unattractive streetscape features (i.e. utilities, rear yard trash depots, etc.) can also be screened effectively with appropriate landscaping.*

*9. Landscape plans should select plant materials based on their: a) suitability to the site and urban surroundings, b) appropriateness to the local climate, soils and light conditions, c) ability to provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest, d) avoidance of not-native or invasive planting material.*

The VMHC proposes to remove the row of magnolias along the western edge of the site. These magnolias were installed as part of the original landscape plan for Battle Abbey in 1912 as part of a formal landscape design. The trees are past their lifespan and have become a hazard for the VMHC due to decay and damage from storms. The VMHC plans to install 43 new magnolia trees in this area. A section of the original trees will be retained on the Kensington (north) side of the site. The existing privet hedgerow along Kensington Avenue and N. Shephard Street will remain.

On the south side of the site, the area adjacent to the access drive for the VMHC and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the applicant proposes to plant a total of 23 Higan cherry trees, a bosque elm, and three lavender crape myrtles.

The applicant also proposes a drop-off island with eight white crape myrtles and new paving. Additional new landscaping will be provided throughout the parking lot with pairs of black gum trees in islands. Additionally, sugar maples and bosque elms will be planted in curb bump-outs, and oaks added to the existing tree pits on Kensington Avenue.

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Standards for Site Improvements, Parking Lots, pg. 77

*1. Parking lots should be broken up as much as possible with interior landscaped islands and should be well screened from the public right-of-way and adjacent properties. Appropriate screening may include landscaping, walls, fences or berms. If a vegetative screen is chosen, the type(s) and numbers of shrubs and trees used should ensure a high density screen between parking lot and street.*

*2. Commercial parking should be confined to the sides and rears of buildings.*

*3. Parking lot lighting should be kept to a minimum, keeping spill-over to a minimum and using the lowest wattage possible, especially in residential areas.*

*5. Mature trees contribute to the character of Old and Historic Districts, provide visual interest, reduce the negative impacts of parking areas and ease the effects of temperature and wind conditions. Every effort should be made to preserve and maintain them.*

The applicant proposes a series of upgrades to the parking lot, landscaping, and lighting. These upgrades will include increasing the amount of parking spaces by 60, relocating the great lawn, and creating a car turn-around area.

The great lawn will be relocated to be adjacent to the west elevation of the building. The great lawn will be landscaped with hydrangeas, boxwoods, crape myrtle, windflowers, yarrow, Russian sage, Black-eyed Susans, and phlox.

Staff finds the landscape and planting plan meets the Guidelines for site improvements and recommends approval with the condition that any changes to the plans be reviewed and approved by the Commission Secretary and the Director of Planning and Development Review.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (c) of the City Code, as well as with the Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.

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## FIGURES



Figure 1. Existing great lawn.



Figure 2. Existing parking areas.



Figure 3. View of parking lot and great lawn from VMFA



Figure 4. Great lawn and parking areas.



Figure 5. Plantings between VMHC parking lot and VMFA parking garage.



Figure 6. Magnolia trees on Kensington Avenue.