



NORTH BARTON HEIGHTS  
CIVIC ASSOCIATION

December 7, 2020

Lewis Nelson, President  
North Barton Heights Civic Association  
3120 North Ave  
Richmond, VA 23222  
president@northbartonheights.org

City of Richmond Urban Design Committee  
ATTN: Alex Dandridge  
900 E. Broad St. Room 510  
Richmond, VA 23219  
alex.dandridge@richmondgov.com

SUBJ: Civic Association Feedback on UDC20-2020 (North Avenue Branch Public Library Site Improvements)

Dear Alex and City of Richmond Urban Design Committee,

The North Barton Heights Civic Association— which surrounds the North Avenue Branch Public Library on all sides—would like to officially provide the following feedback on UDC20-2020. We are strongly opposed to the inclusion of any outdoor seating in the UDC20-2020 developmental plans for the library. Additionally, we have specific feedback regarding the planned removal of trees and choices of trees included in the plan.

Our community has witnessed frequent illegal and undesirable behavior surrounding the North Avenue Branch Public Library, not limited to vagrancy, prostitution, lewd acts, open drug and alcohol use or sales, fighting, and other disorderly conduct. Some of this activity is conducted by citizens using the public library grounds to loiter and conduct illegal activities at all time of the day, which can be validated through Richmond Police Department call logs.

In the UDC20-2020 project description, page 1, paragraph 1 states “It is important to discourage loitering on this site by not providing outdoor seating.” Our civic association supports this statement. However, on page 1, paragraph 3, the same document describes “an arrival court and nearby seating area for multi-functional community use and outdoor gatherings.” We believe any seating would only encourage and enable more undesirable behavior.

Our community and Association request removal of any public seating areas in the planned site improvements to the North Avenue Branch Public Library at this time.

Our Association also requests the UDC reconsider removing any of the Redbuds recently planted in the turf strip. The tree which was cited as damaged in the proposal has been looked at by three independent tree specialists and the only thing noted was a little dead wood/branches, which is considered normal for this species and remedies through periodic pruning.



NORTH BARTON HEIGHTS  
CIVIC ASSOCIATION

We would like for the UDC to embrace all the Redbuds and incorporate a design to use them versus destroy. The trees proposed will in a very short time overshadow and kill and Redbuds that are currently living on the small turf island. The trees were planted by the community in November 2018 and have been lovingly maintained by the community, to include 25 gallons a week of personal watering during the summer dry months. The City Arborist confirmed the tree would not likely survive a relocation.

We are concerned the proposed Scarlett Oak Tree (5) canopy will in a very short time completely cover the security pole lights (3) eventually overshadow and eradicate the existing (3) Redbud Trees. The scarlet oak grows to a height of 60–80' and a spread of 40–50' at maturity.

We are also concerned the Scarlett Oak tree acorns that are ½–1" in length and enclosed by a bowl-like, scaly cup will lead to property damage. An especially large crop is produced every 3–5 years. There is a strong potential that vehicle damage will occur to visiting library patrons as well as those of the employees as tree limbs laden with acorns will be towering over the North side of the parking lot and thereby acorns will be dropping and striking atop vehicles.

Our community and association reject the proposal to remove any Redbud trees from the property and ask the commission to reconsider any tree additions for security and potential natural damage to property.

Sincerely,

Lewis Nelson, President  
North Barton Heights Civic Association

cc: Hon. Chris Hilbert, Lisa Townes, City Council Liaison and NBHCA Officers: Arthur Freeman, VP; Karen Link, Secretary, Melisa Harl, Treasurer

**From:** [Karen Link](#)  
**To:** [Dandridge, Alex - PDR](#)  
**Cc:** [Karen Link](#); [willie.hilliard](#); [Wilmore, Dianne - Library](#); [Louise Seals](#); [Lilly, Samuel J. - DPW](#); [Hilbert, Chris A. - City Council](#); [Melissa Harl](#); [Townes, Lisa F. - City Council Office](#)  
**Subject:** Additional Feedback ICO UDC 2020-20 Parking Lot Blocks  
**Date:** Thursday, December 3, 2020 11:34:45 AM

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Good Morning Alex,

In the event that the project and its components are approved to move forward I would like to respectfully submit the following photos/comments for consideration.

Turf Strip - 8'4" allotted for trees.

Current (3) three Redbuds have landscaping netting and 5' U-shaped poles to protect the base of the trees from vehicles until they gain more girth.

Pictures clearly show how patrons/guests/employees park with the vehicles encroaching on the trees.

SUGGESTION: Install Parking blocks on both sides of the turf strip to protect old/new trees/bushes/landscaping.

Warm regards,

Karen Link-Aaron

NextDoor, Community Networking Lead  
Commander/Block Captain, North Barton Heights Neighborhood Watch  
Certified Tree Steward, Richmond VA  
North Avenue Library Advisory Board  
Historic Brooklandpark Collective BOD  
Brooklandpark Community Garden/Orchard Coordinator  
Garden to Table Project Manager  
Recipient of Jane Jacob's Recognition Award  
C.E.R.T. /FEMA Citizen Emergency Response Team Richmond, VA  
Election Officer for the City of Richmond, VA (2021)  
Clean the City Project "Adopt A Spot"  
RVA Clean City Participant

"Encouraging Neighbors to look out for each other; which strengthens the neighborhood and builds strong productive communities"

~.~

**"If we are not our brother's keeper, at least let us not be his executioner" MB**





MANCHU

PO' BOYS • WINGS • SEAFOOD

PAVING AVAILABLE



**From:** [Karen Link](#)  
**To:** [Dandridge, Alex - PDR](#)  
**Cc:** [Karen Link](#); [Wilmore, Dianne - Library](#); [willie hilliard](#)  
**Subject:** Project UDC-20 2020 Discrepancies.  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 18, 2020 9:13:25 PM

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Good evening Alex,

I would like to submit the following query to the UDC team.

## **Project Description Discrepancies ICO UDC20 2020**

### **Project Description Page 1, para 1:**

“It is important to discourage loitering on this site by not providing outdoor seating”.

### **Project Description Page 1, para 3:**

“An arrival court and nearby seating area for multi-functional community use and **outdoor** gatherings will be composed of....”.

*Please explain these two opposing statements.*

I would also like to respectfully submit the following statement in regards to the negative effects of potential outdoor seating at the library.

My statement:

As a resident with property that butts up to the North Avenue Public Library I have a keen awareness of the nonstop battle placed on the library personnel, it's patrons and we as homeowners as we battle the



relentless onslaught of lewd and obscene behaviors of a small local group of individuals who have used the North Avenue Public library's premise, for over a decade, as a clubhouse when the building is closed.

Public urination/defecation in open view or within the entrance doorways, sexual/lewd acts on the sides of the building, fighting etc.

From 6 A.M. to 10-11 P.M. sunny or below 30 degrees they're out there.

The only time there is peace is when Ms. Wilmore is at work as the Library/Community Service Manager or a local police car will stage in the parking lot awaiting a service call. As soon as they see her vehicle pull out ~ all bets are off, and they start drifting over to the library grounds.

While your design is heavenly, it seems as though not much research or consideration was taken into account in regards to our problematic alcoholics/drug addicts and prostitutes that use the library's grounds for after hour shenanigans.

That said.

We implore you to NOT add any outdoor seating nor add any other features that will provide more bushes, trees, walls and/or other hiding places for their illicit, immoral activities.

Warm regards,

Karen L. Link-Aaron

--

Karen L. Link-Aaron

NBH Civic Association Secretary.

Member of the North Avenue Public Library Advisory Board.  
BOD Historical Brookland Park Collective.  
Certified RVA Tree Steward.  
Brookland Park Community Garden and Orchard Coordinator.  
Garden to Table Project Manager 2020.

(804)467-3799 (c)

(804)592-0107 (VM)

**From:** [Karen Link](#)  
**To:** [Dandridge, Alex - PDR](#)  
**Cc:** [Hilbert, Chris A. - City Council](#); [Karen Link](#); [Lester, Janine - DPW](#); [Lewis Nelson](#); [Lilly, Samuel J. - DPW](#); [Louise Seals](#); [Melissa Harl](#); [SUZETTE LYON](#); [Townes, Lisa F. - City Council Office](#); [Wilmore, Dianne - Library](#); [willie hilliard](#)  
**Subject:** Proposed Tree Planting ICO UDC20-2020  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 18, 2020 9:54:59 PM

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**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Alex,

I am respectfully requesting to submit the following email to the UDC for consideration in regards to the North Avenue Branch Site Improvements; 2901 North Avenue, UDC20-2020. Growth pattern and tree selection, ie mature size is of concern.

Proposed Trees:

**Scarlett Oak (5)[QC]**

Proposed Site: (North) 8'4" turf strip located between library and Family Dollar.

**Mature Size**

The scarlet oak grows to a height of 60–80' and a spread of 40–50' at maturity.

**Growth Rate**

This tree grows at a medium rate, with height increases of 13–24" per year.

**CONS.**

Tree canopy will engulf Security Pole Lights (3).

- Five [QC]trees will eradicate the existing (3) Redbud Trees.
- Yields acorns that are ½–1" in length and enclosed by a bowl-like, scaly cup. An especially large crop is produced every 3–5 years. There is a strong potential that vehicle damage will occur to visiting library patrons as well as those of the employees as tree limbs laden with acorns will be towering over the North side of the parking lot and thereby acorns will be dropping and striking atop vehicles.
- 8'4' growing space is not sufficient to grow trees of this size.
- Potential for damaging surrounding concrete work and roadways.

### **Golden Redbud 'Heart of Gold' (2)[CC]**

Proposed Site (East) adjacent to alleyway.

#### **Mature Size**

Reaches 10 ft. tall and wide in 5 years, maturing to 20 to 25 ft. tall, 18 ft. wide.

#### **CONS**

- Mature tree will potentially block the view of alleyway vehicular

traffic.

### **Sweet Magnolia (10)[MV]**

Proposed Site (West)[6] adjacent to North Avenue; (South)[4] adjacent to East Essex Street.

#### **Mature Size**

Average size is 10'-20' high with equal spread. However may grow to 50 feet (15 m.) tall or more in warm, southern climates, with an equal spread.

#### **Growth Rate**

This tree grows at a medium to fast rate, with height increases of anywhere from 13" to more than 24" per year.

#### **CONS**

- These trees are often classified as wetland plants, and even with irrigation it's improbable they will grow in the proposed sites. They require medium to wet soil. Proposed sites run adjacent to sidewalks and heavily used roadways. There is no green space. Trees will not survive in dry soil.
- Obstruction to library patrons entering/leaving parking lot via the main entrance on North Avenue.
- Obstruction to vehicular traffic making right hand turns from East

Essex onto North Avenue.

- Obstruction to vehicular traffic from East Essex, crossing over North Avenue to continue on West Essex.

<https://richmondva.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8923910&GUID=32255651-3F8B-497C-A06E-1AB882E91A0D>

Respectfully,

Karen L. Link-Aaron

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Karen L. Link-Aaron

NBH Civic Association Secretary.  
Member of the North Avenue Public Library Advisory Board.  
BOD Historical Brookland Park Collective.  
Certified RVA Tree Steward.  
Brookland Park Community Garden and Orchard Coordinator.  
Garden to Table Project Manager 2020.

(804)467-3799 (c)  
(804)592-0107 (VM)

**From:** [willie hilliard](#)  
**To:** [Dandridge, Alex - PDR](#)  
**Cc:** [Karen Link](#); [Wilmore, Dianne - Library](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Project UDC-20 2020 Discrepancies.  
**Date:** Thursday, November 19, 2020 11:33:52 AM

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**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Good day Alex.

The Historic Brookland Park Collective is the civic association that partly encompasses the North Ave Branch Library. We emphatically oppose the inclusion of any outdoor seating in the development plans for the library.

This community has a serious dilemma with homelessness, vagrancy, prostitution and open drug use. The perpetrators of these, use the Library and its surroundings as their own personal lounge/dump/drug lab and any seating would only encourage more outrageous behavior.

We ask that you please listen to the will of the community and remove the proposed seating from this development. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Best regards,

Willie Hilliard, Executive Director  
Historic Brookland Park Collective  
804-852-7463

On Thu, Nov 19, 2020, 9:23 AM Dandridge, Alex - PDR  
<[Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com](mailto:Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com)> wrote:

Good morning. Karen –

Thank you for your input.

I will be sure to forward to the UDC.

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**From:** Karen Link [mailto:[nbhdaretocare@gmail.com](mailto:nbhdaretocare@gmail.com)]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 18, 2020 9:13 PM  
**To:** Dandridge, Alex - PDR <[Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com](mailto:Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com)>  
**Cc:** Karen Link <[nbhdaretocare@gmail.com](mailto:nbhdaretocare@gmail.com)>; Wilmore, Dianne - Library <[Dianne.Wilmore@richmondgov.com](mailto:Dianne.Wilmore@richmondgov.com)>; willie hilliard <[whprez@gmail.com](mailto:whprez@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Project UDC-20 2020 Discrepancies.

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Good evening Alex,

I would like to submit the following query to the UDC team.

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group of individuals who have used the North Avenue Public library's premise, for over a decade, as a clubhouse when the building is closed.

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That said.

We implore you to NOT add any outdoor seating nor add any other features that will provide more bushes, trees, walls and/or other hiding places for their illicit, immoral activities.

Warm regards,

Karen L. Link-Aaron

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Member of the North Avenue Public Library Advisory Board.  
BOD Historical Brookland Park Collective.  
Certified RVA Tree Steward.  
Brookland Park Community Garden and Orchard Coordinator.  
Garden to Table Project Manager 2020.

(804)467-3799 (c)

(804)592-0107 (VM)

**From:** [Karen Link](#)  
**To:** [Dandridge, Alex - PDR](#)  
**Cc:** [Karen Link](#); [Lewis Nelson](#); [Melissa Harl](#); [willie hilliard](#)  
**Subject:** Re: UDC December Public Notice ~ Removal of Trees  
**Date:** Monday, November 16, 2020 4:54:40 PM

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We will also be furnishing a letter from the North Barton Heights Civic Association to voice our concerns.

Living adjacent to the North Avenue Public Library I have had the ease of caring for and protecting our community/city trees.

I am just returning from the tree site where I examined all angles of the tree. No where are there signs of distress, disease or damage. It's a beautiful specimen.

We as a community group planned, planted and have cared for the tree for exactly two years.

I am enclosing today's visit.

Please note that 4' landscaping poles and plastic fencing surrounds each tree. The design was to protect the tree trunks from vehicles that park their vehicle over the curb onto the center isle turf. Once the tree trunk grew to a substantial girth the fencing is to be removed.

It appears that the redbud in question is merely 'in the way' of their design.

Stating the tree is damaged is an untruth.

Embrace our neighborhood/Tree Steward efforts or make plans to safely move, not remove, the tree to a new home. I have offered my alleyway access plot as a potential planting site as it runs parallel with the library parking lot and they would still benefit from its shade.







W/r,

Karen Link-Aaron

On Mon, Nov 16, 2020 at 4:22 PM Dandridge, Alex - PDR  
<[Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com](mailto:Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com)> wrote:

Good afternoon, Karen –

Thank you for your feedback.

As part of the UDC review process, I will be making a site visit to better understand the existing conditions of the site, including the condition of the existing trees and landscaping.

I will include your comments as part of the public comment I forward to the Committee before the Committee Meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

Let me know if you have any other comments.

Thank you,

**Alex Dandridge**

**Planner I - Urban Design Committee**

City of Richmond Planning and Preservation

[alex.dandridge@richmondgov.com](mailto:alex.dandridge@richmondgov.com)

(804) 617-2496

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**From:** Karen Link [mailto:[nbdaretocare@gmail.com](mailto:nbdaretocare@gmail.com)]

**Sent:** Monday, November 16, 2020 3:36 PM

**To:** Dandridge, Alex - PDR <[Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com](mailto:Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com)>

**Cc:** Dave Pohlmann <[dwpohlmann@gmail.com](mailto:dwpohlmann@gmail.com)>; Hilbert, Chris A. - City Council <[Chris.Hilbert@richmondgov.com](mailto:Chris.Hilbert@richmondgov.com)>; Joe Terry <[jt.treesteward@gmail.com](mailto:jt.treesteward@gmail.com)>; Karen Link <[nbdaretocare@gmail.com](mailto:nbdaretocare@gmail.com)>; Lester, Janine - DPW <[Janine.Lester@richmondgov.com](mailto:Janine.Lester@richmondgov.com)>; Louise Seals <[louise.seals@gmail.com](mailto:louise.seals@gmail.com)>; SUZETTE LYON <[suzette.lyon1@gmail.com](mailto:suzette.lyon1@gmail.com)>; Schwartzkopf, Sam R. - OPS <[Sam.Schwartzkopf@richmondgov.com](mailto:Sam.Schwartzkopf@richmondgov.com)>; Teresa Davis <[tcmd17@gmail.com](mailto:tcmd17@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** Re: UDC December Public Notice ~ Removal of Trees

**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Plan UDC 2020-20 North Avenue Library indicates the removal of a damaged redbud tree.

The tree is not damaged and is thriving.

I am the assigned caretaker and certified RVA Tree Steward for these trees.

I am in opposition of any of the three Redbuds being moved, removed or otherwise altered due to poor planning, oversights or misdiagnosis of city trees.

I am forwarding a copy of this email to the BOD for the Richmond Tree Steward to take for action against your proposal.

“... damaged Redbud”, which is located on the turf strip.

Plans also are to excavate the turf strip to 3” below curb and not within 5’ of Redbud tree wells. This is egregious to the well-being and health of the trees.

Karen Link-Aaron

On Mon, Nov 16, 2020 at 1:47 PM Dandridge, Alex - PDR  
<[Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com](mailto:Alex.Dandridge@richmondgov.com)> wrote:

Greetings,

One of the recommendations on the Urban Design Committee (UDC) application is for the applicant to speak with the project area citizens, civic associations, and Councilpersons prior to making an application to the UDC. At the request of City Council, the UDC sends notice of application receipt to all civic associations and councilpersons within 1000’ from the project boundaries. In an attempt to increase transparency, the UDC also sends notice of application receipt to those on the UDC



distribution list as well as members of the UDC. Attached please find the public notice letter(s) that have been sent in reference to recent applications to the UDC for projects in or near your district for the scheduled **December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020** meeting of the UDC. (Please note this meeting is subject to change and/or cancellation.)

This meeting will be held through electronic communication means pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020. This meeting will be open to participation through electronic communication means by the public and closed to in-person participation by the public.

For instruction on how to access and/ or participate in this meeting, please use the link below:

[Public Access and Participation Instructions Urban Design Committee](#)

To review the Location & Plans of the aforementioned applications, please use the links below:

[UDC 2020-19, Final location, character, and extent review of Richmond Public Library - Broad Rock Branch Site Improvements](#)

[UDC 2020-20, Final location, character, and extent review of Richmond Public Library - North Avenue Branch Site Improvements](#)

[UDC 2020-21, Final location, character, and extent review of Richmond Public Library - West End Branch Site Improvements](#)

[UDC 2020-22, Final location, character, and extent review of Richmond Public Library - Westover Hills Branch Interpretive Signage](#)

If you have questions about the proposal or about the UDC review process or would like to provide feedback on the listed projects, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

**Alex Dandridge**

**Planner I - Urban Design Committee**

City of Richmond Planning and Preservation

[alex.dandridge@richmondgov.com](mailto:alex.dandridge@richmondgov.com)

(804) 617-2496

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