



City of Richmond, Virginia
Department of Planning and Development Review
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To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
File ID: UDC-092856-2021
Date: June 21, 2021
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of the removal of a monument and pedestal; 3099 Monument Avenue; UDC 2021-29**

I. APPLICANT

Christopher Frelke, Director, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

II. LOCATION

3099 Monument Avenue

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of the removal of a monument pedestal and temporary replacement landscaping located at 3099 Monument Avenue.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant proposes to remove the Matthew Fountaine Maury monument pedestal located in a traffic circle in the intersection of Belmont and Monument Avenues, or 3099 Monument Avenue. The statue portion of the monument was previously removed by order of the mayor.

The new location of the monument and pedestal has not been determined and is not considered as part of this application. This Location, Character and Extent approval will provide authorization for the removal of the monument and pedestal, but City Council will make the final decision regarding the final disposition of the monument and pedestal. Once the monument has been removed, the applicant proposes a temporary treatment of the space, grading the disturbed area and landscaping the existing traffic circle with native plant species. Existing spot lights will be turned off and removed or replaced with pedestrian scale lighting.

The historic preservation aspects of this application have been reviewed and approved by the City of Richmond's Commission of Architectural Review at their May 25th, 2021 meeting. The associated staff report for that review can be found here: <https://richmondva.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4951077&GUID=EB5F1E41-2A3F-47ED-B444-96B2F9A0637D&Options=&Search=>

Since the City of Richmond Urban Design Guidelines do not specifically address removal and relocation of objects, Committee staff utilized the City Code of Ordinance, specifically the zoning ordinance, available here:

https://library.municode.com/va/richmond/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH30ZO_ARTIINGE.

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

- The landscape plan be updated to be a simplified design of seeded lawn, perimeter plantings, or low maintenance plantings in order to appear more temporary and to allow for public access into the space.

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The monument proposed for removal is located in a traffic circle at the intersection of N. Belmont Avenue and Monument Avenue within the Monument Avenue City Old and Historic District. The project site is surrounded by single-family and multi-family residences of varying architectural styles. The project area is surrounded by a decorative metal fence and is terraced with a concrete retaining wall with landscaping.

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter for the removal, relocation, or alteration of structures/works of art.

c. UDC Review History

The Urban Design Committee has not previously reviewed any projects for this location.

d. Project Description

On behalf of the City of Richmond and in accordance with Ord. 2020-154, the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities requests a final location, character and extent review to authorize the ability to remove a monument and pedestal from Stuart Circle in the Monument Avenue City Old and Historic District. The Matthew Fountaine Maury Monument is an asset of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities.

Justification for this application for review is further rooted in the City Charter and the City Code. Code §30-100 outlines the purposes of the zoning ordinance. The ability to remove the monument and pedestal will (3) Promote health, sanitation and general welfare, as well as (7) Facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community. Code §30-930.2 (4) outlines the purposes of City Old and Historic Districts. Ability to remove the monument and pedestal will provide for (4) The enhancement of the quality of life for residents. Charter § 2.04 of the Charter provides the City power to make regulations for the preservation of the morals of the city and its inhabitants. The applicant asserts that the representation of white supremacy and the legacy of slavery in prominent public places through this monument is of questionable morality.

Charter § 2.04 of the Charter provides the City power to prevent riots, disturbances, and disorderly assemblages. Based on the events of the last year, and similar events in other cities, the ability to remove monuments and pedestals could be considered such a prevention effort.

The Matthew Fontaine Maury Monument was erected at the intersection of N. Belmont Ave and Monument Avenue in 1929. It is located in the Museum District Neighborhood and the 1st City Council District. The monument site is adjacent to private residences in the median of Monument Avenue

The applicant has provided site plans, showing the removal of the monument and the landscaping of the space with native species. Lighting at the site that currently spotlights the monument will be turned off and removed, or replaced by pedestrian scale lighting as appropriate to the location.

e. Master Plan

City-wide vision: In 2037, Richmond is a welcoming, inclusive, diverse, innovative, sustainable, and equitable city of thriving neighborhoods, ensuring a high quality of life for all. Information and analysis provided by the applicant states that the existing monuments are not in-keeping with the ideals in the city-wide vision stated in the City of Richmond’s Master Plan, which emphasizes the importance of creating neighborhoods that are equitable, diverse, and welcoming to all visitors, current residents, and potential residents.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

In the Environment Section of the Urban Design Guidelines under Public Parks, it is stated that “*Historic elements should be surveyed and preservation should be considered for both facilities and landscapes*” (pg.9). The scope of this project was reviewed and approved by the Commission of Architectural Review at their May 25th, Meeting. Staff defers any matters of historic review to the City of Richmond’s Commission of Architectural Review.

“Intersections should be designed to serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in a safe manner” (pg. 7). Staff finds that the changes to this intersection will not negatively impact the circulation of pedestrians, bicyclist, and motorists at this location.

“Traffic calming elements, when necessary, should be well designed so that they provide for an aesthetic contribution to the urban character of the neighborhoods in which they are placed” (pg. 8) . Staff finds that the retention of this space as a traffic circle serves as a traffic calming mechanism for this area and enhances the character of the neighborhood, and speaks to the original layout of Monument Avenue as a boulevard with wide medians and periodic traffic circles and traffic calming mechanisms.

“Landscape plans should include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings. Plant materials should be adaptable to existing soils, climatic and lighting conditions, and be disease resistant. Native plant species are encouraged, but not required” (pg. 10). Staff finds that the proposed

plantings are native species that provide four season interest and are adapted to the climate of the region.

Code of Ordinances, Sec. 30-100, Purpose. The purpose of this chapter is to adopt a comprehensive zoning plan designed to:

(2) Secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other danger;

(3) Promote health, sanitation and general welfare;

(7) Facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community;

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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