



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
File ID: UDC-092867-2021
Date: June 21, 2021
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of the removal of various monuments and pedestals; 15 N. Laurel Street; UDC 2021-31**

I. APPLICANT

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

II. LOCATION

15 N. Laurel Street

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of the removal of various monument pedestals and replacement landscaping at 15 N. Laurel Street, within Monroe Park.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant seeks authorization to remove three monument pedestals from Monroe Park located at 15 N. Laurel Street, The Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, Joseph Bryan, and Williams Carter Wickham statues. The statuary portion of the monuments were previously removed by order of the mayor.

The new location of the monuments and pedestals 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 monuments and pedestals, but City Council will make the final decision regarding the final disposition of the monuments and pedestals. Once the monument pedestals have been removed, the applicant proposes a temporary treatment of the space, reseeding the disturbed areas with grass to match its surrounding.

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 this application with the following conditions:

- The landscape plan be updated to include three large, native shade trees such as oaks; and the location of those trees to be determined by the City of Richmond's Department of Public Works City Arborist.

Staff Contact:

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The monuments proposed for removal are within Monroe Park which is located at 15 N. Laurel Street. The project site is surrounded by institutional and residential buildings for Virginia Commonwealth University, as well as the Oregon Hill Neighborhood to the south and the Fan Neighborhood to the west. Belvidere street borders the site to the east, W. Franklin Street the north, N. Laurel Street to the west, and W. Main Street to the south. The monuments are located in grassy areas within the park amongst large trees, landscaping, and open lawn.

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 three monuments and pedestals from Monroe Park located at 15 N. Laurel Street, The Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, Joseph Bryan, and Williams Carter Wickham statues, which are assets 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 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 Williams Carter Wickham statue was erected in 1891. The statue of Joseph Bryan was erected in 1911. The Gen. Fitzhugh Lee Cross monument was erected in 1955. The site plans provided by the applicant show the removal of the monument and reseeded of disturbed areas with grass to match the surrounding area.

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

"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 reseeded of disturbed areas is in-keeping with the City of Richmond's Urban Design Guidelines.

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**