



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Urban Design Committee Report to Planning Commission

UDC 2021-35	Conceptual Review Meeting Date: 8/2/2021
Applicant/Petitioner	Dironna Clarke, City of Richmond Department of Public Works
Project Description	Conceptual location, character, and extent review of a Temporary GRTC Transfer Station
Project Location	
Address: 808 E. Clay Street	
Property Owner: City of Richmond	
High-Level Details: In coordination with the City of Richmond, GRTC plans to relocate the Temporary Transfer Plaza to the surface parking lot at 8th Street and Clay Street from its current location next to the Public Safety Building along 9 th Street. The proposed improvements are planned to be temporary, as GRTC and the City will continue to work together to identify and construct a permanent transfer facility in the vicinity of Downtown Richmond	
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@richmondgov.com , (804) 646-6569
Previous Reviews	The Planning Commission originally reviewed this proposal at the July 19 th , 2021 meeting. The Commission continued this item until the August 2 nd , 2021 meeting.
Conditions for Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applicant consider alternate fencing material; if chain-link fencing is utilized it be coated in a black vinyl finish. - Applicant consider additional pedestrian access points from all sides of the lot. - Applicant consider additional bus shelters and shade structures with in the space. - Applicant include specifications on site features such as bus shelters, benches, and bike racks with the final submission - Applicant investigate connectivity from the transfer center portion of the lot to the parking area of the lot

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applicant consider a more permanent restroom facility design that is accessible, and open to bus drivers and bus patrons - Applicant consider the inclusion of a drinking fountains on site - Applicant consider the inclusion of large scale planters for the site, partnering with an entity that can actively maintain them.
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Findings of Fact

<p>Site Description</p>	<p>The current parking lot is located in downtown Richmond bound by E. Leigh Street to the north, 9th Street to the East, E. Clay Street to the south, and 8th Street to the west. The parking lot provides approximately 64 public parking spaces, including 3 ADA spaces, and approximately 199 spaces for use by government employees. The parking lot sits several feet below street level, and has a stair case and a ramp at the E. Clay Street entrance which allow pedestrians and vehicles access into the space.</p>
<p>Scope of Review</p>	<p>The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter</p>
<p>Project Description</p>	<p>GRTC currently occupies the right of way adjacent to the City of Richmond Public Safety Building on 9th Street between Marshall Street and Leigh Street as their Temporary Transfer Plaza. The Public Safety Building property was recently sold by the City and is anticipated to be demolished and redeveloped, with demolition beginning as soon as December 2021. In coordination with the City of Richmond, GRTC plans to relocate the Temporary Transfer Plaza to the surface parking lot at 8th Street and Clay Street to make room for the construction along 9th Street.</p> <p>The proposed improvements are planned to be temporary, as GRTC and the City will continue to work together to identify and construct a permanent transfer facility in the vicinity of Downtown Richmond.</p> <p>Currently, the City’s draft City Center small area plan includes considerations for a permanent transit facility. The current expected life of the new temporary center in the 8th and Clay parking lot is 5-10 years. Therefore, proposed improvements are intended to be only what is necessary to meet GRTC’s needs for safe and efficient transfers without added cost for temporary enhancements.</p> <p>The current parking lot provides approximately 64 public parking spaces, including 3 ADA spaces, and approximately 199 spaces for use by government employees (City employees and John Marshall Courts Building personnel). The proposed lot will provide 34 spaces for government employee use and no public</p>

	<p>parking to make room for the transfer center and be controlled by gate access at the Clay Street entrance.</p> <p>Additionally, the 11-12 existing parking spaces on 8th Street between Clay Street and Leigh Street will be impacted by the proposed entrance modification and 7 on-street spots are proposed.</p> <p>Due to the existing site being lower than the surrounding street grade, entrance to the transfer center is limited to the western boundary along 8th Street where the lot is at grade with the Street. The transfer center will provide 12 bus bays in a saw-tooth design that allows arrival and departure at each bay independent of whether the adjacent bays are occupied by buses. The 12 bus bay layout can accommodate 10 standard buses and 2 articulated buses that GRTC has secured funding to add to their fleet in the near future. Additionally, 2 parking spots are proposed within the transfer center for GRTC maintenance vehicles.</p> <p>Access for bus patrons will be provided in two locations from the public right-of-way: along 8th Street near the bus entrance, and by a proposed ramp in the northeast corner of the site near the corner of Leigh Street and 9th Street. Existing site walls and slopes up to 7' high prevent providing pedestrian access from other locations in a practical and cost-effective way. Crosswalks and ADA-accessible curb ramps will be provided to route pedestrians safely from the exterior of the site to the interior islands where boarding and alighting will occur.</p> <p>Amenities for bus patrons on site include several bus shelters, benches, and trash cans. All will utilize the specific models previously approved by UDC. Additionally, a restroom facility is proposed for use by GRTC bus operators. Options for the restroom are still be explored but include a temporary “trailer style” restroom with self-contained utilities or a permanent prefabricated facility with underground utility connections for water, sanitary, and power. The exhibit included in this application demonstrated a few options for operator restrooms that are currently being explored.</p> <p>Existing site lighting will be improved for the transfer center portion of the site to provide visibility for patrons and buses alike during night hours. The two existing lights in the parking portion on the southern end of the lot are proposed to remain. Fencing is proposed along the curb between the parking portion of the lot and the transfer center at the request of DPW Parking Services to prevent bus patron access to the parking lot. Pedestrian access to the parking lot will be provided as exists today: along 8th Street, down the driveway slopes from Clay Street, and a stairway in the southeast corner near Clay Street and 9th Street.</p>
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Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	TEXT	STAFF ANALYSIS
Richmond 300 Master Plan	<i>Objective 8.4.j - Increase Transit Service. Work with GRTC, evaluate the need for transfer centers at critical</i>	While the proposed design has striped crosswalks outside and inside of the site, access into the lot is limited. <u>Staff finds</u>

	<i>points where of the bus system and if a transfer center is needed, design the center so it supports walkable urban design. (pg. 118)</i>	<u>that in order to increase walkability and access into the site, pedestrian access points should be considered on all sides of the lot.</u>
Chain Link Fencing	<i>In most instances, chain link fencing is not an appropriate fencing material. It is the policy of the City Zoning Administration not to accept chain link with blinds as an appropriate screening material. The blinds are not durable and often disappear. If chain link is required, however, for safety or security purposes, the entire structure (fabric, posts and railings) should be coated with a dark colored vinyl, preferably black, and supplemented with sufficient evergreen landscaping. Barbed wire and razor wire are not appropriate fencing materials in most situations.</i>	Chain-link fencing is being proposed within the site. <u>Staff recommends that the applicant consider an alternate fencing material. If chain-link fencing is the only feasible fencing material, staff recommends that it be coated in black vinyl.</u>
Community Character, Placement.	<i>Site furnishings should be conveniently located for the pedestrian, but should not obstruct pedestrian circulation. Furnishings should be located where people congregate, such as at bus stops, in front of major attractions, and in parks and plazas. The placement of furnishings should not create visual clutter on the streetscape.</i>	The plans submitted do not indicated the number or location of benches within the site. <u>Staff recommends that information on the number, location, and style of site furnishings be included in the final submission to UDC.</u>
Pedestrian Facilities.	<i>All transportation projects should have adequate provisions to address the needs of the pedestrian in a safe and efficient manner. Streetscape elements, such as street trees and street lighting, should be used to encourage pedestrian activity. Striped crosswalks, pedestrian crosswalk signals, and other improvements that enhance safety should be installed as</i>	As submitted, the plan propose striped crosswalks at pedestrian crossings.

	<i>a standard amenity at all signalized intersections.</i>	
<i>Modular Units</i>	<i>The Urban Design Committee is strongly opposed to the use of temporary modular classroom units by Richmond Public Schools to meet ongoing educational needs. The UDC supports the City Planning Commission's policy, adopted July 17, 1995, which states that all future modular unit requests, including renewals of currently approved units, will not be considered unless they are submitted with a cost analysis which compares the cost of the modular unit(s) to the cost of constructing an addition or a new school in lieu of the modular unit(s). (pg. 16)</i>	While the UDC no longer reviews the installation of modular classrooms, there is no language pertaining to other modular facilities. <u>Given the temporary nature of the site, staff recommends that the applicant consider having the temporary transfer center utilize restrooms located in nearby public buildings rather than utilizing restroom trailers on site, or modular units that may require utility connections.</u>