



# City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street  
2nd Floor of City Hall  
Richmond, VA 23219  
www.richmondgov.com

## Meeting Minutes Urban Design Committee

Thursday, February 6, 2020

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

### Call to Order

- Present --** 7 - \* Jill Nolt, \* David Johannas, \* Andrea Quilici, \* James W. Klaus, \* Chair Andrea Almond, \* John Reyna and \* Sahied Mansaray
- Absent --** 2 - \* Andrew P. Gould and \* Emily Smith

### Roll Call

- Present --** 5 - \* Jill Nolt, \* Andrea Quilici, \* James W. Klaus, \* Chair Andrea Almond and \* John Reyna
- Absent --** 2 - \* Andrew P. Gould and \* Emily Smith

### Approval of Minutes

1. [UDC MIN 2019-11](#) Minutes of the regular meeting on November 7, 2019

**Attachments:** [DRAFT UDC MIN 2019-11](#)

The Committee Members present agreed to delay approval of the November and January meeting minutes until the March meeting, at which time a larger cohort of those who previously attended are expected to be in attendance.

**The approval of the regular meeting minutes of November 7, 2019 were deferred until the March 5, 2020 meeting.**

2. [UDC MIN 2019-12](#) Minutes of the regular meeting on December 5, 2019

**Attachments:** [DRAFT UDC MIN 2019-12](#)

**A motion was made by Quilici, seconded by Reyna, that the regular meeting minutes of December 5, 2019 be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 4 - Andrea Quilici, James W. Klaus, Chair Andrea Almond and John Reyna

**Abstain --** 1 - Jill Nolt

3. [UDC MIN 2020-01](#) Minutes of the regular meeting on January 9, 2020

**Attachments:** [DRAFT UDC MIN 2020-01](#)

The Committee Members present agreed to delay approval of the November and January meeting minutes until the March meeting, at which time a larger cohort of those who

previously attended are expected to be in attendance.

**The approval of the regular meeting minutes of January 9, 2020 were deferred until the March 5, 2020 meeting.**

## Secretary's Report

UDC Secretary Joshua Son gave an update on Planning Commission approvals. UDC 2020-01 Final location, character, and extent review of window replacements for Binford Middle School, 1701 Floyd Avenue were approved by Planning Commission on their consent agenda.

The bollards for Temple Beth Ahabah are under construction.

Mr. Son further stated that Max Hepp-Buchanan has been recommended for appointment as the Planning Commission Representative on UDC to replace Dave Johannas; he will officially be able to begin once City Council votes on 2/10/2020.

## Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

### CONSENT AGENDA

4. [UDC 2020-04](#) Conceptual location, character, and extent review of right-of-way improvements, Hey Road between Hull Street Road and Walmsley Boulevard

**Attachments:** [Staff Report to UDC](#)  
[UDC Report to CPC](#)  
[Location & Plans](#)

Ms. Almond asked if tree removals and replacements were included in the planning for improvements. Mr. Son confirmed that these were a component.

Mr. Quilici asked if share rows, shared sidewalks, or bike lanes would be a part of the improvements.

Mr. Son stated that a potential greenway had been discussed a few years ago as part of the Bike Master Plan. This was not developed at that time, but there is still talk of finding ways to make route connections for bicyclists. With the Hey Road improvements project, widening of the sidewalk was considered but this was deemed prohibitively expensive given the difficulty of the terrain.

Mr. Winston Phillips, of the City of Richmond Department of Public Works, stated that there were no bike facilities within the scope of this project. Mr. Quilici asked if road sharing, with signage to facilitate it, might be an option. Mr. Phillips stated that it is an 11-foot land and usable by bicyclists, and asked if signage was being requested. Mr. Quilici confirmed that signage would be beneficial, to increase motorist awareness of bicycles. Mr. Phillips stated that the applicants would look into pavement markings or signs or something of that nature.

Chair Andrea Almond asked if there was any public comment on the consent agenda. There was none.

Ms. Nolt pointed out that staff recommendations included enhancements for bicyclists, which hopefully would cover Mr. Quilici's concerns, and also that this being only a conceptual review, the project would come back with further details.

**A motion was made by Nolt, seconded by Klaus, that the Consent Agenda be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 4 - Jill Nolt, Andrea Quilici, James W. Klaus and Chair Andrea Almond

**Abstain --** 1 - John Reyna

## **REGULAR AGENDA**

5. [UDC 2020-03](#) Final location, character, and extent review of a new roundabout and associated street improvements, 2115 West Laburnum Avenue

**Attachments:** [UDC Report to CPC](#)

[Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location & Plans](#)

Mr. Son: Construction of a roundabout on West Laburnum Avenue at the intersection on the I-195 southbound (SB) off-ramp and intersection improvements at the I-195 northbound (NB) off-ramp. The \$2.4 million dollar project will be funded with Smart Scale funds and be maintained by the City of Richmond.

The project scope includes pedestrian enhancements, lighting, and lane modifications along West Laburnum Avenue from I-195 to Westwood Avenue. The project is scheduled for construction completion in the summer of 2020.

The purpose and need of this project is to improve traffic flow through the I-195/West Laburnum Avenue intersection during peak hours and to eliminate prolonged periods of delay and improve safety within the current deficiencies in capacity, geometry and safety. The improvement should reduce traffic delays in this area.

The roundabout location shifts slightly to the southwest to avoid impacting existing drainage and utility features. Existing drainage features are being maintained to avoid major utility impacts. A raised island at the I-195 northbound off-ramp will improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety. Minor drainage improvements and utility adjustments will be required. There are no easements or right-of-way required.

The March 2013 I-95/I-64 Overlap Study conducted by the Virginia Department of Transportation identified the I-195 Interchange Improvements at Laburnum Avenue as a Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) candidate project.

In 2015 the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization RRTPO submitted the I-195 Interchange Improvement project at Laburnum Avenue for the House Bill 2 Program. The program name was later changed to be called the "Smart Scale" program. Funding for the project was made available in FY2018 and PE was authorized on July 7, 2017.

On December 7, 2017 the Virginia Department of Transportation held a Design Public Hearing in the City of Richmond at Linwood Holton Elementary School. The Public Hearing Schedule included a construction begin date of December 2, 2020. The project improvements will not require additional right-of-way, and the project is ahead of schedule.

Laburnum Roundabout is 100% funded through Federal and Virginia "Smart Scale" funding totaling \$2,435,580. The city of Richmond will be responsible for maintenance. The final plan seeks to improve traffic flow through the I-195/West Laburnum Avenue intersection during peak hours and to eliminate prolonged periods of delay and improve

safety within the current deficiencies in capacity, geometry, and safety.

The area does not currently sustain a heavy pedestrian presence, nor does it appear it will in the future. The improvements associated with this project, however, will simultaneously provide more improvements for both pedestrians and vehicles. The project is fully funded.

Staff is supportive of the proposed final designs. Therefore, Staff recommends that the Urban Design Committee recommend the Planning Commission approve the final design as submitted.

Ms. Nolt asked if there was a particular reason VDOT targeted this intersection as a project site. Mr. Son stated that this accident-prone area was one of several targeted for improvement. Mr. Klaus stated that this area is prone to backing up.

Mr. Phillips of DPW confirmed that VDOT's study had shown the intersection had had some traffic accidents; however, the main reason for this project is the tendency for traffic to back up.

Mr. Reyna asked about sidewalk completion plans on West Laburnum. Mr. Son clarified that the sidewalk will be made continuous on the south side, but not on the north side.

Mr. Quilici asked if any landscaping was planned for the center of the roundabout. Mr. Son indicated areas that had been earmarked for landscaping. One area not specified was under the overpass, due to the lack of light.

Ms. Almond stated that many plants can grow in a shady area, and if native species are used they generally don't need maintenance after their first year of growth. Ms. Almond added that, given this item was for final review, she was curious as to whether there was a planting plan. Mr. Son stated that this had not hitherto been added, but could easily be added.

Mr. Quilici pointed out that planting on the roundabout would also be nice. Ms. Almond asked if the roundabout was planned to be just pavement. Mr. Son confirmed that it would be pavement, with an apron to provide a buffer for semi trucks to turn.

Mr. Son stated that VDOT had been on the verge of beginning the project when they realized that it needed to undergo UDC review first. This was the reason for the review being a final one – but revisions could still be requested.

Ms. Nolt asked for details regarding the turning radius.

Matthew Timm, a transportation engineer with AECOM, introduced himself and stated that the roundabout is a small one, to be covered in concrete, and that it is designed in such a way that semi trucks can turn while driving over it. This is due to the nature of the turn, and precludes landscaping as the whole roundabout will be driven over at times.

Ms. Almond requested a turning radius diagram, stating that typically roundabouts have an apron. Mr. Timm stated that this roundabout will have a precast concrete apron, with the idea that this will be sturdy enough to withstand the projected use; and that he had a turning diagram but had not brought it to the review. Mr. Timm conceded that trucks and other traffic would not use the entire surface of the circle, but that most of it would be swept through during certain routine traffic maneuvers. Mr. Reyna asked if the center would be affected; Mr. Timm confirmed that it would be.

Ms. Nolt asked how vehicular traffic would be alerted to the roundabout's presence and instructed to use it. Mr. Timm stated that there would be a 3-inch "lip" buffer of a modified CG3, meant to deter regular cars from impinging on the roundabout apron; and stated that there would be signs both before and during the roundabout, cautioning motorists to go around and not across.

Mr. Quilici asked if other materials could be used for the hardscape, for example cobblestones. Mr. Timm stated that the applicants had worked hard with VDOT construction and arrived at the option of using the precast concrete roundabout, which is a fairly new item, with reducing the amount of construction time a priority. Mr. Timm stated that from a maintenance standpoint cobbles would be problematic for an area exposed to significant traffic wear.

Ms. Nolt asked if the applicants had brought samples of the precast material. Mr. Timm stated that they had not, but that the precast concrete specialists brought in for the project would provide detailed drawings for the applicants to review. Mr. Quilici asked if examples could be found online. Mr. Phillips stated that this precast model is unique, and that VDOT had only just begun using it in the past year, thus there are not extant examples.

Mr. Klaus asked motorists would know how to use the roundabout, since the need for trucks to drive over it would preclude placing signs on it. Mr. Timm stated that the approaches would each have two warning signs about the roundabout, as well as a "yield" sign.

Ms. Nolt asked about other planting opportunities, for example at the median and shoulders. Mr. Timm stated that the landscape architects employed for the project had recommended not planting under the overpass, but the median areas to the right of the roundabout will have grass planted, and these will be suitable for plantings as they will not block roundabout visibility for motorists. Ms. Nolt asked about planting potential where the curbs and gutters are being realigned, and at the shoulders. Mr. Timm stated that there are sidewalks on both sides in the indicated area, but that there are areas between the sidewalks and the road which might have potential for low-profile plantings. Ms. Nolt asked if the current plan specifies grass for those areas; Mr. Timm confirmed this.

Mr. Quilici asked if there were plans to use the precast concrete system in other areas of the city. Mr. Timm stated that VDOT is planning to use this approach across the state, and that this project will be an opportunity to showcase the reduced construction time that it entails.

Mr. Quilici asked if there will be any variety of finishes to add to the concrete, to add visual interest. Mr. Timm stated that at this point the precast concrete manufacturers do not recommend the application of color or of textured finishes to the product.

Ms. Nolt asked what sort of finish the product would have, noting that precast concrete tends to be smooth from the molding process, and thus slippery. Mr. Timm initially stated that it would have a sidewalk finish, then stated that he was not certain, although he was certain it would not be slippery. Ms. Nolt asked that the applicants come back with details about this. Mr. Reyna stated that details of the actual shape of the precast design, or the curb at least, would be helpful.

Ms. Nolt stated that, since the roundabout will have to be maintained by the city, it would be important to have as much as detail as possible about the design.

Mr. Quilici stated that, if the precast roundabouts are going to be ubiquitous, it would be good to devise a way to increase their visual interest. Mr. Reyna stated that ease of manufacture could make these precast roundabouts ubiquitous regardless of whether they are suitable.

Ms. Nolt asked about the score pattern on the concrete, and whether it would be in a grid or some other pattern. Mr. Timm stated that VDOT had decided to not place limits on the contractors in terms of their design innovations for these pieces, but then to vet what they come up with. Ms. Nolt asked if a process could be set up such that UDC then reviews items after VDOT does so. Mr. Philips stated that it would be difficult to review the items while they are being manufactured. Ms. Nolt recommended that if there are shop drawings, these be provided to the UDC prior to manufacture, adding that UDC can review items quickly when necessary. Mr. Quilici stated that it would be better if the review could occur at an earlier stage of product development.

Tony Haverly, Project Manager with VDOT, introduced himself and stated that the pie-shaped precast model was the one the applicants had started out with, but that they did not want to limit the contractors to just that shape. Mr. Haverly stated that dimensions were limited by what would fit on the truck. Ms. Nolt asked if the precast unit specifications would be included in the applicants' bid package. Mr. Haverly stated that they would not be.

Mr. Philips stated that adding another check to the construction and installation process would increase the time to completion of the project. Ms. Almond asked if the project was actually ahead of schedule. Mr. Philips stated that they were, but that with the requests for review being made, the construction would be delayed. Mr. Quilici expressed understanding but stated that, given the desired schedule, review information should have been brought before UDC at an earlier phase, stating that at this point it appeared that UDC was being asked simply to rubber-stamp it.

Mr. Klaus expressed concern about the new and thus experimental nature of the precast roundabout model, positing that, if it proves to be less durable than predicted, the City is then in a compromised position; and suggested that it should be warrantied. Mr. Philips stated that there would be a warranty, although he was not certain of its duration. Mr. Haverly stated that the applicants could provide the warranty duration information.

Mr. Klaus expressed concern about safety and suggested making the roundabout a color in order to increase visibility. Mr. Haverly stated that he was fairly certain a red color had been selected for the project.

Mr. Klaus stated that the UDC would like to have the information discussed, such as warranty and color selection, but that they did not want to slow down the process, and that the site for the project was a good one, being not highly visible.

Mr. Quilici stated that, as the roundabout is situated at an approach to the City, it serves in some ways as an introduction to the city, and it would be good if its aesthetic could somehow reflect this.

Ms. Almond asked if the color was taken from a palette of options from the vendor. Mr. Haverly stated that it was a VDOT red brick color, and that he would provide further details.

Mr. Reyna asked whether there was any information available about the geometry of the joints of the roundabout. Mr. Timm stated that the applicants had worked with VDOT

construction staff and that the design would be a pentagon shape, flat, with visible joints. Mr. Reyna stated that it was difficult to approve the roundabout without a visual representation. Mr. Timm stated that the shop drawings would be provided so that UDC could review them. Ms. Almond suggested that the shop drawing review could be done by a subcommittee of two members of the UDC. Mr. Son suggested that this be stated as a condition, since the proposal will also go before the Planning Commission.

Ms. Almond asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

Mr. Quilici asked if it would be possible, the next time one of the precast roundabouts is reviewed, to have options of finishes, materials, colors, etc., presented to UDC. Ms. Nolt suggested that the subcommittee that reviews the details of UDC-2020-03 should then share the information gathered with the whole UDC.

**A motion was made by Committee Member Klaus, seconded by Committee Member Nolt, that this location, character, and extent item be recommended for approval by the City of Richmond Department of Public Works with the following conditions:**

**-that the final precast concrete traffic circle plan and warranty conditions be provided to staff and UDC sub-committee for review and subsequent discussion during the "other business" portion of a future UDC meeting**  
**- that the applicant identify potential areas available for planting of native plants**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 5 - Jill Nolt, Andrea Quilici, James W. Klaus, Chair Andrea Almond and John Reyna

6. [UDC 2020-02](#) Review of a pedestrian bridge encroachment for VCU Health System Children's Hospital, 1001 East Marshall Street

**Attachments:** [Location & Plans](#)  
[Staff Report to UDC](#)  
[2.4.20 Modifications](#)

Mr. Son: The project is being built on the site of the former Children's Eye and Ear Hospital and will physically connect to the existing outpatient Children's Pavilion at 1000 E. Broad Street. Due to the tight site footprint, the applicant will be utilizing the existing patient access entrance points in order to allow for an Emergency Department entrance on the Ground Floor. The new building will include sixteen (16) stories of clinical and support space above grade with four (4) levels of below grade parking. The budget for the overall project is estimated at \$364M and is funded by VCU Health System. The Children's Hospital of Richmond is a service line of and wholly owned by VCU Health System.

The bridge design approach was to connect the Children's Hospital with the rest of the VCU Health campus while ensuring that privacy was maintained. This connection is critical to support the patient movement and access flows required by VCU Health. The proposed walkway would connect the new CH building to the existing Gateway building to the east and is essential for the safe, secure transport of patients and supplies between locations. The new Children's Hospital will be a Level 1 Trauma Center with four levels of inpatient beds and the necessary services to support the hospital. There will be scenarios in which patients will need to be transported between buildings, frequently with timing being a life or death variable. For the purposes of patient safety and continuity of care for

pediatric patients, an elevated pedestrian walkway connecting buildings is integral to the future of the Children's Hospital.

The proposed Pedestrian Bridge will extend from the north east corner of the horizontal expansion of the Children's Hospital across the intersection at 11th and East Marshall Streets, run along Marshall Street on the south side of the Nelson building. The bridge will cross over the existing pedestrian bridge between the Sanger and Nelson buildings, and will turn 90 degrees at the Gateway building to make a connection to the existing stair tower.

The applicant reviewed staff comments and we've been in discussions; they were able to provide updated renderings this week. As submitted, this was the design; they came back with modifications to open up the expanse of undifferentiated wall. They were also able to address some of DPW's concerns, although there are some concerns outstanding that the applicant is still working to modify.

Ms. Nolt asked if there would be an opportunity to learn what DPW's concerns were, and which had been addressed and which had not. Mr. Son stated that DPW staff were present and could provide this information.

Mr. Son: While the Guidelines are not supportive of pedestrian bridges, they do contain design criteria for when a pedestrian bridge is proposed: that a bridge should span no more than the width of the right-of-way, be level, and be made of transparent and non-reflective glass. Most importantly, the bridge will provide a safe and secure passage for patients and sensitive materials in between buildings.

Although the proposed design meets some of the criteria, Staff is concerned with the aesthetics. Specifically the expanses of blank, undifferentiated wall created by masking the trusses between the columns and the numerous materials proposed for the bridge and associated structures. Staff believes the bridge, as submitted, perpetuates disharmonious design elements when considered in the larger context of the area. Due to the nature of the project and its impact on health and quality of life, Staff is supportive of the project in general but has reservations regarding the aesthetics of certain design elements.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Director of Public Works grant approval of the encroachment request with the following conditions: demonstrate that consideration was given to addressing the expanses of blank, undifferentiated wall; demonstrate that consideration was given to unifying the design of the support columns with those columns already part of the existing children's hospital building.

Mr. Brian Copple of the Richmond DPW introduced himself. Mr. Copple stated that DPW was not in support of the application as submitted. Mr. Copple stated that certain elements of the design would be in the right of way and impact safety and mobility, that certain operations are absent from the design, and that the plans are not fully developed and require further review when more developed plans are submitted.

Ms. Almond asked Mr. Copple to provide some specifics of what details are missing. Mr. Copple stated that more information is needed about the ADA ramps and landing areas; intersection details, e.g., the southeast side of 11th Street and E. Marshall Street; and structural drawings of the bridge piers. Mr. Copple stated that there were many comments about the lane configuration, though DPW had not had ample time to review it yet.

Ms. Nolt asked if a traffic study had been done on the intersection. Mr. Copple said that DPW had requested that VCU do a full traffic study for the entire campus involving all the



construction, which had not yet been done. Ms. Nolt asked if an auto-turn study of the new turning radii with the new configuration had been done. Mr. Copple stated that that would be part of a traffic study.

Mr. Jakob Helmboldt, Pedestrian Bicycle and Trails Coordinator for Public Works and Transportation and Engineering, introduced himself. Regarding the technical details alluded to by Mr. Copple, Mr. Helmboldt expressed concern about the function, flow, and safety of pedestrian movement. Mr. Copple stated that the bridge piers' size, mass, placement, and spacing are of concern; and that their lining up in the proposed manner would create an occluded sight window at a place where a car's natural blind spot is already challenging.

Mr. Helmboldt stated that, because constructible plans had not been provided, the curb ramp design, flares, and how the top landing would align the piers were not known. Mr. Helmboldt stated that the piers are located where pedestrian staging would occur, and that some of them are directly in the middle of the sidewalk, leaving 5 feet clear on either side and shunting pedestrian traffic to the exit of the existing parking deck; this violates principles of shy distance [the tendency for pedestrians to walk within a central sidewalk swath] and would provide for a poor level of pedestrian service and safety. Mr. Helmboldt stated that curb ramps have not been placed where they would be needed in order for wheelchair-users to navigate the sidewalk.

Mr. Helmboldt stated that there was no way to approve the plan without more development and more information.

Catherine Porzio, Senior Director of Facilities Management & Construction at VCU Health, introduced herself. Ms. Porzio stated that the applicants had been working with DPU for a few months to resolve some of the issues raised, and stated that they are still in a design stage, and figuring out the parameters within which they must work. Ms. Porzio stated that structural drawings with pier locations, as well as sidewalk accessibility information, would be provided.

Ms. Nolt asked if the applicants had a timeline to do a traffic study. Applicant representative Ashby Ayers, a project manager with JLL, stated that to her understanding the traffic study had been done already and submitted to the City. Mr. Copple stated that there were comments on the traffic study.

Ms. Nolt asked the diameter of the pier columns at ground level. Ms. Forzio stated that they are 2 feet, 10 inches wide.

Ms. Nolt asked about the material and appearance of the underside of the bridge. Candace Goodman with HKS Architects introduced herself. Ms. Goodman stated that the underside would be a matte surface, painted white; though renderings may show it exposed, it will have a soffit.

Ms. Nolt asked if there was lighting planned for the underside of the bridge. Ms. Goodman stated that the applicants do not currently propose lighting, but are in the process of working with a lighting consultant, who would make sure that any lighting used is helpful to pedestrians. Ms. Nolt asked if the applicants had done any photometric analysis to identify and dark areas. Ms. Goodman said none had been done as of yet, and that the plan is to retain existing streetlights, moving them only as needed to address dark spots.

Mr. Quilici asked why the bridge is needed, why it goes from corner to corner, why it is at the height proposed, and why it runs alongside another building for as long as it does, and overlaps another existing pedestrian bridge.

Ms. Forzio stated that the bridge runs diagonally to the Nelson Building, which is zoned for business and not I-2, which is the zoning for patient care; this is the reason for the bridge running alongside the building, and for the height as well. The other option would be to redesign Nelson, which would require relocating people and bringing Nelson up to safety code specifications for I-2. Nelson is old and could be replaced in future.

Ms. Nolt asked about using Sanger Hall. Ms. Forzio stated that Sanger Hall belongs to the university, not to VCU Health.

Ms. Nolt stated that she knows the VCU Master Plan identifies the intersection of the project site as a critical one for enhancing pedestrian safety and patient experience, and asked how the pedestrian bridge project takes this priority into account.

Ms. Forzio stated that when VCU builds its adult outpatient facility, the vehicular and pedestrian traffic at the intersection in question will be significantly reduced. Ms. Forzio stated that there is a future plan, separate from the children's hospital project, to improve the streetscape – which includes pedestrian control measures to reduce jaywalking.

Referring to the lane closure included in the project plan, and the resulting traffic constriction, Ms. Nolt asked if there were any planned changes to valet service for the Gateway building. Ms. Ayers stated that valet traffic has been parking in the drive lane, so the applicants plan to change its designation so it is no longer a drive lane. Vehicles will be able to enter and exit as they do now, but will be channeled to the right; the applicants will attempt to prevent them crossing over 11th Street. Ms. Ayers stated that the traffic consultant hired by the applicants recommended having the one lane heading west that can either go straight or turn right; and that the consultant, while not seeing an improvement from the current "C" rating for traffic in the area, did not foresee any worsening due to the planned changes.

Ms. Ayers stated that the project plan includes some widening of sidewalks, and that the applicants could provide the information from the traffic study.

Ms. Forzio stated that new construction at the children's hospital includes additional parking, which should decrease vehicular traffic in the area.

Mr. Reyna asked about the continuation of the building's appearance onto the bridge, and the window pattern on the bridge, stating that it is distracting. Ms. Forzio stated that the goal was to have light but also privacy on the bridge.

Ms. Kate Renner of HKS Architects stated that the intention had been to continue onto the bridge the appearance, colors, and materials of the pavilion parking area components of the building. Ms. Renner stated that the bridge design is modular for easier construction. Ms. Renner stated that the bridge window pattern corresponds to patterning on the building façade.

Ms. Almond asked if the applicants could continue their brand while creating a neater appearance.

Ms. Renner stated that the applicants could study that.

Mr. Reyna pointed out that the fins on the bridge are in many different positions, thus distracting, and questioned whether a pedestrian bridge is an appropriate place for continuing a brand.

Mr. Klaus asked about the office windows that appeared to be getting blocked off by the bridge. Ms. Forzio said that the bridge is offset by 9 feet, which allows for sunlight to come in.

Ms. Renner stated that the bridge is positioned as high as it is so that it can connect to a non-public area, for patient privacy.

Ms. Almond asked about rainwater drainage off the bridge. Ms. Goodman stated that the bridge would slope to drains located on the bridge roof, with a single-ply or TPO roof system, with scuppers for overflow.

Mr. Quilici brought up the lack of transparency of the bridge, pointing out that this would affect 4 roads, being at an intersection, and suggested that surrounding buildings could have frosted or otherwise covered areas to address any privacy concerns.

Mr. Quilici asked if the applicants had considered other options than the current design, including the option of drawing underground, and stated that the indirect meandering route of the bridge makes it harder to accept. Mr. Quilici pointed out that, though exceptions are made, the guidelines are in general opposed to pedestrian bridges. Ms. Forzio stated that for child patients being transferred from emergency care to the children's hospital must be transported inside to maintain custody; they cannot be driven from one location to another in an ambulance.

Mr. Quilici expressed uncertainty about the bridge as designed being the best available option, in terms of its height and extent. Ms. Ayers stated that 14 different designs had been considered by the applicants, including some that used the Nelson building. Ms. Forzio stated that the Nelson building was problematic due to having narrower corridors that don't meet I-2 specifications. Ms. Almond stated that since Nelson is also old, it seems inadvisable to invest in it.

Mr. Reyna stated that there seems to be an existing visual language of the other pedestrian bridges in the area, which does include some transparency. Ms. Nolt and Mr. Reyna stated that these bridges have a receding effect, because they are not visually loud and irregular. Mr. Reyna stated that the VCU Hospital may have a brand but there is also a language of Richmond pedestrian bridges, and asked that the applicants look into doing a more regular, gridded design. Ms. Renner stated that because it is a modular design, the applicants could look into using the same modules consistently instead of in a varied manner.

Ms. Nolt stated that the bridge design as submitted is trying too hard to extend the language of VCU Children's Hospital, when it should be referring more generally to the VCU Health brand.

Ms. Forzio stated that the applicants would take the recommendations into consideration, and look at normalizing the bridge modules.

Ms. Almond asked Mr. Son about the possibility of reviewing the project again, given the amount of information not yet available. Mr. Son stated that the Department of Works can request an additional review by UDC.

Ms. Nolt asked Mr. Son if a project proposal had been reviewed by UDC in regard to Phase 2 of streetscape modifications for the Children's Hospital. Mr. Son stated that he had just received information regarding planned overall streetscape improvements for the VCU Health campus. Ms. Nolt stated that there seemed to be not yet reviewed streetscape improvements included in some of the plan drawings for the pedestrian

bridge. Mr. Son stated that he believed this would be part of a forthcoming application. Ms. Nolt requested clarification regarding planters in the pictures, and whether those are part of the bridge plan or the forthcoming streetscape plan. Ms. Goodman stated that the planters would be part of the forthcoming Children's Hospital project.

Ms. Ayers stated that, to her understanding, the Children's Hospital streetscape plan would not require review by UDC. Ms. Nolt asked Mr. Son if this was the case. Mr. Son stated that whenever there is a narrowing or widening of right-of-way, this would go before UDC; whereas a streetscape encroachment would be DPW's purview.

Ms. Almond mentioned that UDC had reviewed streetscape modifications on Broad Street in front of the Children's Hospital.

Ms. Nolt asked for clarification regarding UDC's review role, given that VCU Health is planning sidewalk widening, closing a lane of traffic, and other changes. Mr. Son stated that the initial project brought before UDC was the pedestrian bridge, but as other aspects have come to light the project has become bigger, and classifying the additional items as a "location, character and extent" item, to be reviewed by UDC and then passed on to Planning Commission, could be appropriate.

Ms. Forzio stated that a different team is involved in the streetscape project, that it seems to have some overlap with the pedestrian bridge project, and that she could seek out information regarding the timeframe of the streetscape project. Ms. Forzio stated that the Children's Hospital would open on Dec. 31, 2022, which is not contingent on the streetscape timeline.

Ms. Nolt stated that if there is no other option but to accept the pedestrian bridge in basically the form submitted, then the UDC's attention would shift to the streetscape, which should be well done in terms of aesthetics and safety; and therefore, and because they are physically integrated, the two projects need to be designed together; reviewing them separately is difficult.

Chairman Klaus stated that information on the streetscape as a whole may not be needed, but changes such as lane closures which do affect the pedestrian bridge project site should be included in the review. Ms. Nolt stated that the UDC needs enough information to be comfortable with what the pedestrian experience will be like. Ms. Forzio stated that the streetscape design involves planters and other elements, and that the applicants would check on the progress of that project but that it may be years before the streetscape plan is finalized and/or put into effect. Ms. Forzio stated that the main goal [of the applicants] was to clearly show the impacts of the bridge installation on pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Mr. Klaus expressed concern that lighting that was being removed without information on new lighting being provided, and stated that providing such information would be an "easy win" for applicants.

Ms. Nolt asked for further details about the steel supports of the bridge. Ms. Goodman stated that they would be wrapped in a GFRC material, a plaster-like material with a smooth painted finish. Ms. Nolt and Mr. Quilici asked why it was necessary to wrap them. Ms. Goodman stated that originally the entire bridge was going to be wrapped, but Committee staff raised the issue of this making a blank wall, thus now only the legs are wrapped. The reason Ms. Goodman provided is that the smooth round wrapped column creates a better appearance than the wide flange which the leg would present if unwrapped.

Mr. Klaus pointed out that supports for the nearest pedestrian bridge appear to be simply metal.

Mr. Helmboldt of Public Works stated that DPW's bridge engineer had been curious whether the wrap added any structural rigidity or if it was merely aesthetic.

Ms. Goodman stated that she did not have specific numbers, and that the structural engineer for the project was not present, but stated that the supporting members are larger due to the height of the building; because the applicants are trying to use a longer truss span, the points where the trusses meet and make contact with the ground are larger in order to support the weight and prevent shaking.

Ms. Nolt asked if the support members are tube-shaped or w-sections. Ms. Goodman stated that they are w-sections. Mr. Quilici asked if it could be made tube-shaped. Ms. Goodman said that the applicants could check and that if a tube is available, they would have to determine what size it would be. Mr. Klaus stated that, if it eliminates the need for wrapping, it could ultimately be smaller.

Ms. Nolt stated that the brand look carrying over from the entry portico to the bridge itself is not working, that more focus is needed on the functionality of the bridge, and that in addition to perspectival drawings, technical information such as cones of vision, traffic flows, and auto turns.

Chair Almond asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

Mr. Quilici restated opposition to the bridge length, and stated that a street with tubes crossing it is not an urban design response. Mr. Quilici stated that he would like to see the 14 designs considered and rejected by the applicants.

Ms. Nolt stated that the bridge's diagonal run across the intersection seemed as if it would be distracting. Ms. Ayers stated that the first choice of the applicants was a run across 11th Street which followed the south side of the street, but this was rejected by DPU due to the piers impinging on a City duct bank. Ms. Ayers stated that the applicants have been working with the city in considering and rejecting the other locations, all of which encountered similar obstacles.

Mr. Quilici stated that the length of the bridge would be more acceptable if there were some visual connection via transparencies, so that nice views of nearby houses were less obscured. Mr. Quilici asked if the bridge as proposed, running along the sidewalk, could be treated as a temporary solution, to be redone when the Nelson building is rebuilt.

Ms. Nolt stated that she is aware VCU Health does a large amount of planning, but that the current project is difficult to accept, and goes against the guidelines, which discourage bridges and which when allowing them, has them running directly across a street, as opposed to diagonally. Mr. Quilici stated that if projects are driven by emergency, this would force UDC to accept every proposal brought to it. Ms. Almond stated that the entire UDC seems to feel similarly opposed.

Ms. Forzio stated that VCU's priority is patient safety, but that the applicants would go back and respond to the requests and suggestions from the Committee.

Ms. Nolt requested that the UDC guidelines be considered in the design of any other bridges in the VCU Master Plan.

Ms. Forzio asked if UDC was requesting information about the other 14 designs which the applicants developed and rejected. Mr. Reyna stated that this level of would not be necessary, but rather that he would like the applicants to go back and study some designs in relation to the Urban Design Guidelines as they relate to sky-bridges. Ms. Almond stated that having information in advance about the work the applicants were doing with DPU exploring design options would have been helpful in enabling UDC to understand the design finally arrived at. Mr. Quilici stated that it is important for UDC to not set a precedent of simply allowing bridges which are against the Urban Design Guidelines.

Ms. Ayers and Ms. Forzio stated that the streetscape plans for the area are generated by VCU, which is a separate entity from VCU Health, and expressed uncertainty about their ability to assemble and provide streetscape information.

Ms. Forzio stated that to her knowledge the VCU Master Plan streetscape plans had not yet been finalized and might only be enacted far in the future, and asked if the applicants could submit a version of the streetscape projected for the time of the hospital opening. Ms. Nolt stated that the probability of unknown future streetscape changes would make her reluctant to accept the bridge plan. Ms. Nolt pointed out that some of the streetscape improvements, e.g., those under the bridge, would be part of the bridge plan and not part of VCU's 10-year streetscape improvement plan, and thus could be provided for UDC review.

Ms. Ayers stated that the applicants were working with streetscape plans including such items as planters under the bridge, and that this information could be provided. Ms. Forzio stated that street-view perspective drawings could be provided.

Mr. Quilici stated that he would like it made clear that the UDC is considering the current proposal as an exception, due to the importance of health and safety of patients. Mr. Klaus pointed out that the UDC was deferring at this point, and that the disclaimer would become pertinent at such time as UDC actually approves the proposal.

**A motion was made by Committee Member Almond, seconded by Committee Member Klaus, that this encroachment be deferred and resubmitted with the following conditions:**

- that the design of the bridge be more consistent with the UDC guidelines for pedestrian bridges, specifically, that the facade of the proposed pedestrian bridge be a cleaner, simpler design that incorporates greater transparency and glass if possible**
- that the vertical support columns be designed to be as small as possible and less visually and physically intrusive in the right of way**
- that the applicant further study, and address, streetscape lighting improvements including lighting under the proposed pedestrian bridge**
- that the branding of the children's hospital, as it pertains to the design of the bridge, be secondary and less visually obtrusive**
- that the applicant and the the City of Richmond's Transportation Engineering Division address the impact the design may have on transportation concerns, providing a design that is a result of consensus**
- there's demonstrated clarity on the coordination and execution of the bridge design as it pertains to the pedestrian improvement plans from the VCU master plan and the hospital's design plans**

**Aye --** 5 - Jill Nolt, Andrea Quilici, James W. Klaus, Chair Andrea Almond and John Reyna

Excused -- 2 - David Johannas and Sahied Mansaray

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### UDC Membership Requirements

Mr. Son stated that staff are working with the City Clerk's office to update the language for UDC's zoning change, which consists of working with City Planning staff zoning specialist Anne Darby, who has put together an omnibus update, which will also include UDC positions. Final language for UDC position descriptions was emailed to Committee members.

### Proposed Visuals for Guidelines Sections

As part of updating the UDC guidelines, planner Alex Dandridge's artistic skills have been tapped to illustrate the sections, e.g., Community Character, Transportation, with an example streetscape with different subsections highlighted. Mr. Dandridge developed a preliminary design which he stated he would send to Committee members in PDF form.

## **Adjournment**

Committee member Almond adjourned the meeting at 12:06 PM.