



# City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street  
2nd Floor of City Hall  
Richmond, VA 23219  
[www.richmondgov.com](http://www.richmondgov.com)

## Meeting Minutes Urban Design Committee

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Thursday, July 9, 2020

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

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**This meeting will be held through electronic communication means.**

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.

Committee members and other staff will participate by teleconference/videoconference via Microsoft Teams.

Special Guidelines for Public Access and Citizen Participation:

Audio of the meeting will be streamed live online at the following web address:  
<https://richmondva.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.

To listen to the meeting's live stream at the web address provided, find and click the link that reads, "In Progress" in the farthest right hand column entitled, "Video".

Interested citizens who wish to speak will be given an opportunity to do so by following the instructions below.

[PDRPRES 2020.034](#) Public Access and Participation Instructions - Urban Design Committee

**Attachments:** [Public Access and Participation Instructions - Urban Design Committee](#)

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Alex Dandridge, Secretary to the Urban Design Committee, at 10:05.c

Mr. Dandridge stated that Chair Andrea Almond and Co-Chair Jill Nolt would be absent from the meeting and that the members present would therefore have to elect a temporary Chair to serve for the duration of this meeting only. Mr. Dandridge stated that a quorum is not required in order for this Committee to vote.

Mr. Dandridge read the statement regarding virtual meetings:

Mr. Alex Dandridge: This meeting of the Urban Design Committee will be held as an electronic meeting pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance 2020-093. The public has been notified of this meeting and how to participate by a notice sent out through email, and an instruction sheet posted with the agenda on the Legistar website. The public may participate in the meeting by calling \*67-804-316-9457 and entering 937-770-10#. Public comment will be heard for each item on the agenda after the

applicant has responded to staff recommendations. Members of the public will be limited to 3 minutes for their comments. Committee members are electronically present, none are physically present in City Hall. We will be conducting a roll call vote with each member stating their name prior to voting. I would like to remind attendees of this meeting to remember to mute their microphones to prevent any potential background noise. Attendees of this meeting should not utilize the Microsoft Teams chat function, as any conversation within

A motion was made by Committee Member Quilici, seconded by Committee Member Gould, to make Committee Member Klaus the temporary Chair for this meeting. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye – 3 – Emily Smith, Andrea Quilici, Drew Gould

Abstaining – 1 - James Klaus

Excused – 4 –Jill Nolt, John Reyna, Max Hepp-Buchanan, Andrea Almond

## Roll Call

**Present --** 4 - \* Andrea Quilici, \* Andrew P. Gould, \* James W. Klaus and \* Emily Smith

**Absent --** 4 - \* Jill Nolt, \* Chair Andrea Almond, \* John Reyna and \* Max Hepp-Buchanan

## Approval of Minutes

**UDC MIN** Minutes of the regular meeting on June 4, 2020  
**2020-06**

**Attachments:** June Meeting Minutes DRAFT

**A motion was made by Committee Member Gould, seconded by Committee Member Quilici to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of June 4, 2020. The motion passed by the following vote:**

**Aye --** 3 - Andrea Quilici, Andrew P. Gould and James W. Klaus

**Abstain --** 1 - Emily Smith

## Secretary's Report

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

There are no items on the Consent Agenda

## **REGULAR AGENDA**

There are no items on the Regular Agenda

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

UDC Guidelines Update Discussion

Mr. Dandridge stated that Committee members had given their comments on the

guidelines to previous Committee Secretary Joshua Son, who compiled them and then incorporated them into a revised draft guidelines document. Mr. Dandridge stated that the guidelines version which Committee members recently received via email is the current draft, with various insertions, rewordings, and deletions, and a few new sections which provide greater detail. Mr. Dandridge stated that his plan for this meeting was to go through and show the Committee members their comments in the context of the revised guidelines, to double-check that they are okay with the revisions and the placement of the new material.

Mr. Quilici and Mr. Gould asked if the City Attorney and other City employees, such as Mark Olinger, had been consulted with, as mentioned in the notes. Mr. Dandridge stated that this had not been done yet, but that he would begin doing so if and when the Committee members are okay with the content reviewed at this meeting.

Mr. Gould stated that, though getting other opinions is helpful, it does not seem necessary to seek the City's opinion as to how the UDC defines the items in its guidelines. Mr. Gould stated that "character, location and extent" are pretty mushy terms and that to some extent it is up to the UDC Committee Members to define them as they see fit. Mr. Quilici expressed agreement, stating that the UDC is an official committee and pointing out that there are issues, such as the use of Cobra lights, about which the UDC has strong feelings which are not likely to be swayed by differing opinions from other City entities or agencies.

Mr. Quilici stated that there does need to be some way to resolve such differences, should they arise. Mr. Gould pointed out that the UDC is an advising committee whose findings are non-binding and may sometimes be not in compliance with standards, and that some disagreement among official bodies is acceptable. Mr. Gould cited the example that some Landscape Architect members of the UDC may not agree with all City standards. Mr. Klaus stated that fuzziness of definitions can be positive, and that consulting with the City Attorney would tend to constrain what the Committee discusses, which is not desirable. Mr. Gould expressed agreement. Mr. Klaus recommended removing this recommendation to consult from the guidelines notes.

Mr. Dandridge stated that a lot of new material had been added about paving, relating to heat islands, impact, sustainability, and verifying types of pavers with various City agencies. Mr. Gould, Mr. Quilici, and Mr. Klaus stated that they were fine with all of the content in that section.

Mr. Gould asked if header locations and such details would be formatted and tidied up when the final draft is assembled. Mr. Dandridge stated that the document would be tidied up.

Mr. Quilici stated that he was very in favor of the additional content about the concept of place-making. Ms. Smith expressed agreement.

Ms. Smith asked if the City had ever attempted to go further than ADA guidelines in terms of language regarding providing accessibility in public spaces. Mr. Quilici stated that it had not, to his knowledge, but that it would be a good idea to do so and to look at ramps and other design elements that aid accessibility in an overall fashion, taking into account various mobility and other challenges that members of the public may have. Mr. Quilici cited an organization called Mixed Design, which espouses an approach which takes into account all challenges and concerns of members of the public, including mobility issues, gender orientation issues, et cetera.

Ms. Smith expressed agreement and stated that there should be some language in the guidelines about how public spaces reflect Richmond as a city, and how they reflect the various neighborhoods in which parks are located, as opposed to relying solely on very general guidelines for all parks. Parks should cater to the particular neighborhoods where they are located, although excessive burdens on design teams should be avoided. Ms. Smith cited a National Parks survey which concluded that accessibility requirements had to cater very specifically to different parks, depending on the nature of the park itself and on the various people using the parks, and that by targeting solutions strategically and making them highly visible for users, they could get the best value in terms of accessibility despite limited budgets. Ms. Smith asked if this language seemed like it was overreaching or being too burdensome for designers. Mr. Quilici stated that he did not think so, that adding such language seems reasonable and that addressing mobility and other issues should be done in such a way that it integrates with the overall design.

Mr. Klaus suggested that the ideas on accessibility from the Mixed Design website be referenced under the Additional Guidance section of the guidelines. Mr. Quilici stated that there should also be an explicit statement that the guidelines are meant to be open and responsive to everyone. Ms. Smith suggested a wording to this effect, with input from Mr. Quilici, to be inserted in the section on public parks. Mr. Dandridge made a note of the suggested wording to add to the document. Ms. Smith stated that this wording leaves sufficient leeway for design teams to have flexibility for size of park, budget, and other variables.

Mr. Klaus asked Mr. Quilici to forward the Mixed Design website to Mr. Dandridge, so he can refer to it for guidelines content.

Mr. Gould pointed out that accessibility guidelines include respectful linguistic recommendations, for example using the word “accessible” and not using the word “handicapped.” The other Committee members present agreed. Mr. Quilici suggested a word search to locate and change any words which need to be changed to be more sensitive.

Mr. Quilici asked about the reasoning behind a guidelines comment regarding public parks. Mr. Dandridge stated that it pertained to unique park designs and the parameters of what spaces could be parks, citing the example of small rooftop green spaces as an additional park paradigm to fight heat island. The note also suggested an image of a green rooftop be inserted in the text, to provide an example and make the idea clear.

Mr. Quilici commented, regarding street tree diversity, that he understood the need for diversity to combating diseases, but that sometimes a consistent tree selection in an area, i.e., the maples along Monument Avenue, can be good. Mr. Quilici asked if there are alternate means to prevent tree diseases. Mr. Klaus expressed agreement, stating that he had discussed this with a city arborist in regard to replacing some unhealthy maple trees in the Fan. Mr. Klaus expressed dismay that there is no specific guidance and that the selection of replacement and new trees is a free-for-all without deliberate planning. Placing, for example, an alternate tree species in between a row of maples could be a solution – but deliberate selection of what species would be important.

Mr. Quilici suggested that perhaps a specific selection of tree species which would work well together could be recommended, including taller ones for situations in which those are needed.

Mr. Klaus stated that the Grove Avenue bike lane was an example of a deliberate planting palate with varying trees, and that in general there needs to be more thought about tree

planting but that these plans do not always come before the UDC.

Mr. Dandridge stated that greater uniformity in plans could be arrived at via response to plans, when those plans lack focus in terms of tree selection. Mr. Klaus stated that arborists have very different ideas about tree selection, which have a significant impact, and suggested that new arborists come before the UDC to discuss their thoughts, and whether they have ideas about operating differently than their predecessors.

Mr. Quilici stated that Green Site Design should have its own heading in the guidelines, as it does in the current draft, in addition to various green site-related guidance in the various other sections. Ms. Smith and Mr. Klaus expressed agreement.

Mr. Gould suggested that the limitation on impervious surfaces to 30% should be removed, as it is not always workable, some areas such as parking lots having significantly more impervious surface than this. Mr. Quilici asked if some other goal specification could be provided, to push people toward decreasing impervious surface. Mr. Gould stated that the basic statement in the guidelines in regard to reducing impervious surface is good, but that putting a number to it is confusing. Mr. Quilici asked how to address the varying conditions, in urban and suburban areas. Mr. Gould stated that the guidelines language needs to be more general, leaving it up to UDC and designers to determine specifics depending on conditions. Mr.

Klaus suggested that the wording state that minimizing is always a priority. Mr. Quilici suggested that the UDC ask that percentage of impervious surface be provided for each project, so that the Committee has some basis to either accept this or ask that the amount be decreased.

Mr. Klaus suggested that the language about low-impact design, in a section about plazas, could be clearer, as the meaning may not be readily understandable. Mr. Gould suggested that the term "sustainable" might be more up-to-date and understandable. Mr. Dandridge stated that he would research options for current terminology.

Mr. Quilici suggested that the language in regard to integrating telecommunications devices into the existing infrastructure should be stronger, insisting that they do so and that they not be disruptive. Mr. Gould suggested the wording "strongly encourage" which Mr. Quilici stated seemed like a good option and better than the current "whenever possible" wording. Mr.

Gould suggested adding that the UDC strongly discourage the addition of new utility poles and other non-integrated telecommunication equipment.

Mr. Quilici stated that he found it problematic when designers mimic local architectural details, but use materials which are not durable, and suggested that the guidelines address this issue of durability. Mr. Klaus expressed agreement, and stated that the Commission of Architectural Review sees this issue a lot, and is able to rule that these are not allowed in historic districts. Mr. Klaus asked Ms. Carey Jones what language is used. Ms. Jones stated that both she and Mr. Dandridge are familiar with this language from the CAR guidelines, and that they would work to incorporate it into the UDC guidelines. Ms. Smith stated that she had seen language about this before, stating something akin to "prioritize authenticity over replication," and suggested that some wording similar to that be used.

Mr. Quilici suggested a phrasing change in regard to windows, stating that the design of windows may be influenced by surrounding architectural details such as sills, sashes, and lintels, rather than stating categorically that it is influenced by those details.

Ms. Smith suggested that there be a statement affirming the importance of universal design principles that affirm the dignity of all users, and that the Mixed Design principles be cited in addition to the ADA. Ms. Smith stated that the non-specificity of the language, including all groups without naming any specific groups, is more effective. Ms. Smith suggested the use of the phrase “apparent and non-apparent disabilities.”

Mr. Quilici suggested that wording about granite curbing encourage not only its preservation, but also its restoration.

Mr. Quilici asked about urban tree placement guidelines, and where the 25-foot distance idea came from, stating that the type of tree is more of an issue in terms of traffic visibility than simply the spacing. Mr. Dandridge stated that he would make a note about this, and check if there is or is not a more significant reason for that spacing recommendation.

Mr. Quilici suggested that, rather than gratings, suspended pavement systems such as Silva cells be recommended, for tree plantings in dense urban areas, in situations where tree root growth will otherwise not be possible. Mr. Dandridge suggested that a few alternate solutions could be listed, to which Mr. Quilici agreed.

Mr. Quilici suggested a change to the wording about light fixture installation, and that attachment to utility poles should depend on the type of light fixture. Mr. Gould suggested that a differentiation be made between transportation scale lighting, which is placed higher and where pole consolidation is more desirable, and pedestrian scale lighting, which is placed lower.

Mr. Klaus suggested that the guidelines about signs should not include the message on the signs. Ms. Jones stated that Zoning staff had informed the Commission of Architectural Review that they are not allowed to regulate the wording on signs. Ms. Smith, Mr. Quilici, and Mr. Gould expressed agreement with Mr. Klaus that this falls outside the Committee’s purview.

Mr. Klaus stated that the CAR had reviewed and disallowed flashing signs, and language to this effect could also be put in the UDC guidelines. Ms. Jones stated that illuminated and neon signs are not allowed in the CAR guidelines, unless they are of an historic nature. Mr. Gould stated that a term for some kinds of illuminated flashing signs is “variable messaging” signs.

Mr. Quilici expressed opposition to allowing any use of chain link fence, and suggested removing the softening language “in most instances” from the guidelines. Mr. Gould stated that he is currently working on the Warwick Maintenance Facility, a project for which chain link will be included and for which he deems it appropriate. Mr. Quilici suggested that landscaping screening be used in such cases. Mr. Gould stated that the fence installation in question would be heavily screened, and that due to instances such as this, words like “never” become problematic to use in the guidelines.

Ms. Smith stated that there is porous metal wire that is an alternative to chain link, but that suggesting or requiring this would be a very directive, specific guideline. Mr. Quilici suggested that the guidelines encourage other types of fencing. Mr. Dandridge stated that he had deleted the phrase “in most instances” and had added wording to the effect that the UDC “strongly encourage” the use of types of fencing other than chain link.

In the section on Encroachments, Mr. Quilici stated that he would like to see language about parklets, and that he would like to encourage the use of parking spaces for dining, especially given the current public health situation created by covid-19. Mr. Quilici

suggested that there be guidelines for both temporary parklets, set up and dismantled daily, and for more permanent parklets.

Ms. Smith expressed concern that this repeats language from the Parklet Design Guidelines, and suggested a link to those guidelines be included in the UDC guidelines. Ms. Smith stated that the parklet guidelines are somewhat open. Mr. Quilici stated that the parklets are something that are built up, and asked if the parklet structures are more permanent or more casual.

Mr. Quilici stated that parklet design needs vary depending on the traffic in their location.

Ms. Smith stated that she would need to study the parklet guidelines further to discern to what extent those guidelines recommend that parklets be built or non-built. Mr. Quilici suggested that there be wording mentioning parklets as an opportunity to provide additional dining space, and then refer readers to the parklet guidelines document.

Having arrived at the end of the document, Mr. Dandridge stated that he would clean up the current document and use color-coding to show the new material based on today's comments, and then either email the resulting draft to Committee members or present it at the next meeting.

Mr. Klaus brought up the guidelines about cables, suggesting that new overhead wires are not desirable, but also that existing overhead wires should where possible be moved underground. Mr. Dandridge and Mr. Gould pointed out that there is language in the current guidelines draft to that effect.

Mr. Quilici asked if there is a set timeline for completion of the revised guidelines. Mr. Dandridge stated that there is not, but that Ms. Almond had wanted to discuss that at this meeting.

Mr. Quilici asked if a timeline should be made, for example making the end of the year the deadline for completion and adoption. Mr. Dandridge stated that he would need to check on City procedures for adoption of new guidelines to find out how long that would take.

## **Adjournment**

Committee Member Klaus adjourned the meeting at 11:37 AM.