

Site Plan Review Committee Meeting Summary

Virginia Hospital Center (SP# 177)

SPRC Meeting – Post Approval

March 18, 2019

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Nancy Iacomini (Chair), Elizabeth Gearin, James Schroll, James Lantelme

MEETING AGENDA

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Applicant Presentation
- 3) SPRC Discussion
 - a. Orientation and use of space
 - b. Landscaping and other elements
- 4) Community Input

PRESENTATION

Trini Rodriguez, of Parker Rodriguez, Inc., presented the proposed conceptual design for the corner open space (corner park).

SPRC DISCUSSION

- What is the percentage of hardscape to greenscape in the park area?
Applicant response: It is approximately 60/40 of green to hardscape. We tried to create an open space instead of a more corridor-like space.
- The square footage for the public easement is measured from the back of the sidewalk curb and VHC will be responsible for long-term maintenance of the space.
- Is any paving inside the park permeable?
Applicant response: At this time no, but there is the potential to do parts of it with permeable materials.
- Except for the proposed cherry trees, most of the plantings proposed are native species.
- Is there milkweed proposed that can attract butterflies?
Applicant response: Milkweed would be challenged to receive sun but depending on the location it could grow.
- Most of the plantings are deciduous with evergreens towards the back of the area/along the garage wall for screening.
- The idea of incorporating public art was widely accepted and encouraged. One member asked if there could be some continuity between what happens here and the welcoming art proposed at Lee Highway. The art proposed here is not a part of the applicant's public art contribution, as required by the site plan conditions, but a unifying theme could be considered.

- A committee member suggested that in addition to the bioorientation signage, there should be signage about any works of art.
- A committee member from the John M. Langston Civic Association suggested that someone from the hospital team attend an upcoming meeting to provide an update on this item and specifically to talk about plantings.
- A committee member who lives directly across from the corner commented that the proposed lights should be fine as long as they are low. The applicant noted that they will be low lighting and are essentially footlights.
- The committee suggested that more than one trash can be included in the design, and one should be located closer to the sidewalk. The cans themselves can be visually interesting if designed well. The can could also include a dog bag receptacle as many in the neighborhood walk their dogs in this area.
- Is the hospital responsible for maintenance and snow removal?
Applicant response: Yes.
- What happened to the existing oak tree in the corner?
Applicant response: It needed to be removed and replaced.
- Many SPRC members commented that future renderings should include views at all four seasons, so the community could see how the plantings would appear at different times of the year.
- The applicant should think about the entrances to the space, where they are placed, and if those spaces feel inviting to come in.
- Several committee members expressed a desire for public art to be something that kids and other folks can interact with and play on. The piece itself could also reference the history of the area, which was originally a dairy farm.
- A committee member asked if there was a possibility for a small memorial at this space.
- The plants proposed along the street next to the parking lane – will they be successful? Many areas directly adjacent to parking don't grow and get trod on frequently. Maybe something a little heartier will work better in this area.
Applicant response: We initially thought of just grass in this area, but the plantings help bring the park feel up to the street. We added some breaks to accommodate people getting out of cars but can add more.
- The pathway design that cuts through from 19th to Edison will be well used, since people naturally like to cut corners.
- Consider the visual interest of the space – such as varied heights of trees – to distract the eye from the tall structure behind it. Perhaps planting different sizes of the same types of plants to start would help.
- Seasonality should be strongly considered and future views of the seasonal landscape will be important to ensure the space can be inviting during all times of the year.
- The tree canopy proposed is good – how many years do you anticipate for the trees to reach this size? Are these the maximum sizes?
Applicant: The sizes pictures are not the maximum in most cases. We used varying sizes to create more realistic views. For most of the trees to achieve the size pictures it would be 12-15 years after planting.

- Is the sidewalk a smoke free zone? Does the hospital have the obligation to enforce that on their property?
Applicant response: Yes, the entire hospital property is a smoke free zone and responsibility to enforce it.
- What side are the street lights on?
Applicant response: They will be on the hospital's side.
- Would the County consider replacing the street lights on the other side of the street with the new LED lighting?
Staff response: At this time, we are unsure of the future plans and ultimate timing for streetlight replacement. However, this comment will be passed on to the appropriate DES project manager.
- Concerns were expressed about protection trees from dogs while they are growing. It was also suggested that a pergola with native vines could be added to create some interim greenery while trees grow.
- The idea of incorporating whimsy into the space is appealing, especially to engage the community. Wayfinding signage that included directions and mileage, as well as signage that explained medicinal plants was suggested.
- For future meetings with the neighborhood, can you show the palette of the paving materials? Are they varied in any way? We don't want the space to be entirely grey.
Applicant response: Our initial thought was to use bluestone, which has a nice color. Perhaps you can edge it in red brick, or mix in cobblestone so the end result is not industrial or monochromatic.
- Since this space doesn't physically connect with the other open space areas on the site, wayfinding signs should be considered.
- The committee discussed the possibility of a water feature. The majority of the community does not want a water feature at this location; the public art is preferred as it is more welcoming to all ages. There is a water feature located in the sunken garden.

CLOSING COMMENTS

- The committee hopes this area will become a destination for the neighborhood as well as for folks who walk the perimeter of the hospital site. A shade structure – perhaps to add height or greenery and visual interest in the winter – should be considered. Ultimately, the committee hopes this will be a successful example that other SPRC applicants can look at.
- There is still a fair amount of hardscape, so any ways that could reduce impervious areas while still maintaining a park feel should be considered.
- This area should be a place for all ages in the community and amenities should not focus solely on one age group.
- Committee members expressed appreciation of the desire line created by the current design with views from 19th to the Edison Street crosswalk. Whatever redesigns the team looks at, this should try to be maintained as it will draw people into the space.
- How maintenance intensive will this park be and will the hospital have a point of contact for maintenance?

Applicant response: Our intention is not to use all of the plants listed, however we wanted to provide the neighborhood with options to see what types people are interested in. The hospital will have a point of contact for maintenance issues.

- Public art that also provides something for children to interact with is a good idea.
- Seasonality should be strongly considered as well as creative ways to activate the space in the winter season.
- Additional whimsical ideas like twinkle lights, shapes embedded into the sidewalk, and scavenger hunt signage was suggested.

COMMUNITY INPUT

While there were additional community members present, none had any comments to add at this time.

NEXT STEPS

- The applicant plans to use tonight's discussion to inform a modified design that will be presented to the community at future quarterly meetings between the community and the hospital.
- The applicant expects that the final landscape plan will be submitted in August 2019.