

MINUTES APPROVED AT THE DRB MEETING ON DECEMBER 11, 2024

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Multi-Purpose Room, Community Services Building, Basement Level
440 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond CA 94804
August 28, 2024
6:00 P.M.

BOARD MEMBERS

Bahar Biazar	Kimberly Butt
Ben Kellman	Karlynn Neel
Vita Rey	Brian Carter, Chair

Chair Brian Carter called the regular meeting to order at 6:03 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Brian Carter, and Boardmembers Bahar Biazar, Ben Kellman, Karlyn Neel and Vita Rey

Absent: Boardmember Kimberly Butt

INTRODUCTIONS

Staff Present: Planners Hector Lopez, Pete Srivarom and Emily Sanchez (Contract Planner), and Christopher Dykzeul from the City Attorney's Office

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 24, 2024

ACTION: It was M/S/C (Neel/Carter) to approve the minutes of the July 24, 2024 meeting, as shown; approved by a Roll Call vote: 5-0 (Ayes: Biazar, Kellman, Neel, Rey and Carter; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: Butt.)
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APPROVAL OF AGENDA: None

MEETING PROCEDURES: None

PUBLIC FORUM

An email comment from CORDELL HINDLER, Richmond, was submitted as follows: *Hello Chair Carter, Boardmembers and staff, I am sending the following comments into the record: 1) I will remind the Board that anytime when projects that are pending approval that the applicant must communicate with the neighborhood council to receive input; and 2) For E.G., when the Aspire folks came to present on the Making Waves expansion, Fairmede Hilltop was not aware of the project. Sincerely, Cordell.*

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT: None

CONSENT CALENDAR: None

APPEAL DATE

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The appeal date for actions taken by the Board at this meeting will be no later than 5:00 P.M. on Monday, September 9, 2024.

Chair Carter advised that Item 2 would be considered prior to Item 1 to accommodate one of the applicants who had another public hearing to attend.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

2. PLN24-089	UNITY PARK IMPROVEMENTS
Description	REQUEST FOR A DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT TO CONSTRUCT NEW IMPROVEMENTS TO UNITY PARK INCLUDING A UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY GARDEN AND A ONE-STORY STRUCTURE FOR STORAGE, REPAIR AND LENDING OF ELECTRIC BICYCLES.
Location	1605 OHIO AVENUE
APN	540-360-022 AND 540-370-XXX
Zoning	PR, PARKS AND RECREATION DISTRICT
Owner	CITY OF RICHMOND
Applicant	MARCIA VALLIER, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, ON BEHALF OF RICH CITY RIDES AND URBAN TILTH
Staff Contact	PETE SRIVAROM Recommendation: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Pete Srivarom presented the staff report dated August 28, 2024, and reported that the project was part of the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) Implementation grant through the State of California to implement community-led development and infrastructure projects. The TCC was part of the Richmond Rising Initiative funded by the grant.

The proposal had previously been presented to the DRB at a study session in March 2024, at which time the DRB had commented on the simplicity of the design in keeping with industrial buildings in the neighborhood, suggested the Concrete Masonry Unit (CMU) should be smooth above the mural zone, recommended that a steel member be installed horizontally around the building at the top of the mural to provide a visual separation between the mural and the exposed CMU above, recommended that signage be added to the building, raised concerns about the security of the facility, and asked about the type of lighting that would be provided in the exterior of the structure.

Mr. Srivarom noted the architect had explained that due to budget constraints the design would be kept simple and a steel member would not be installed horizontally around the building at the top of the mural. As to security, no changes had been made to the security proposed, and the applicant was seeking direction about the type of lighting to provide on the exterior of the structure whether to implement “always on” or motion-detected lighting. Most of the directions offered by the DRB at the study session had been incorporated into the plans and exterior lighting had been recommended to be always on with no lights greater than 3,000k LED.

MARCIA VALLIER, CSW/ST2, stated the project was part of the \$35 million TCC grant for the two projects through the Richmond Rising Initiative. She described an extensive process of outreach for both of the projects, which had been introduced to the community and special interest groups in June and July 2023. The recipients of the grant were Rich City Rides for an e-Bike lending library, and Urban Tilth for a universally accessible garden.

Ms. Vallier added that the outreach process involved senior citizens, the National Institute of Art & Disabilities (NIAD), and the biking community among others, and there had been a community workshop in the park where ideas about what people wanted had been discussed, with follow

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up with all applicable groups and final presentations in December 2023. The proposal had been considered by the Recreation and Parks Commission on numerous occasions and by the DRB in March. The DRB was being asked to review the final proposal.

Ms. Vallier described the setting for the two projects and identified the area of the park where the funding applied. For the garden, she described the fully accessible pathways, raised garden beds of different sizes, covered seating, picnic tables, compost area and public art, and highlighted the individual components of the plan for the garden that had been vetted with the disabled community and with seniors. The design would fit in with the improvements, such as fences, that had already been made at Unity Park.

Ms. Vallier also pointed out shade canopies over the tables, a vegetable washing station with a drinking fountain that included a dog bowl, an accessible roll-up drinking fountain, a bottle filler and a hand washing station. The restroom for the e-Bike lending library would be available for those using the garden who could not access the existing restroom a block away. She identified a mural, and noted that senior and disabled artists would be asked, through NIAD, to create a paint by number mural during one of the City's major events. She described the access through the gardens by a decomposed granite path in and among the garden beds, and again pointed out the different components including a trash enclosure and a container where all the tools would be stored. She stated that everyone would be welcome in the garden.

CHRIS DUNCAN, Project Architect, described the e-Bike lending library in a basic shed with two big bays and a garage to hold 40 bikes with lending, construction and maintenance for residents and anything else bike related. He pointed out a small office space behind two other openings with roll-down shutters for security at night and a small entry for access to the shared restroom with the garden. He stated the office would have two to three staff during the day with the doors up as much as possible during the time of use and interaction with anything bike related. He explained the design took on some of the industrial aspects of the surrounding historic neighborhood and described some of the details of the structure and the materials to be used.

To go with the murals on the garden phase, Mr. Duncan proposed that the lower portion of the building be fully covered with painted artist murals, with the upper portion a concrete block (split faced and smooth), with the intention that if tagged it could be painted out. It would be capped with exposed metal decking, supported by exposed painted beams, with lights tucked up in the overhanging roof area to be unobtrusive and not glare. He described the other details of the design and reiterated that the main structure would be lit with LED light fixtures underneath the canopy to light the face of the building with two supplementary pole lights in the greenway and on the far side of the paving. The poles would match the existing lighting in Unity Park.

Mr. Duncan responded to the DRB's suggestion for a steel band to be carried further around the building as a separation point between the mural and the rest of the building and stated there was no structural reason to do that. He again pointed out the lighting plan with the lights to be always on. Since e-Bikes used batteries that sometimes-caught fire, there would be special storage containers for the batteries inside and the building would be fully sprinklered.

Ms. Vallier stated the building would be kept in its intended capacity for 25 years after which it would be turned over to the City of Richmond as a maintenance structure. For security purposes, the access doors on the side and back would have no doorknobs and just be exit doors or key access and all of the windows above for light would not be operable, although everything below would be operable. The roll down doors would completely close the building to ensure a secure good-looking building that would last.

Chair Carter opened the public hearing.

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No written comments were submitted, or oral comments made, by any member of the public.

Ms. Vallier responded to questions about the concern expressed by a local resident, Lizabeth Lubin related to safe soils in the planting area of the garden, and explained that during the master planning for Unity Park soil management plans had been developed to address any type of soil remediation, which would continue to run with the property. She also responded to questions related to the potential use of the garden, suggested there would be no problem in that the garden had been programmed and funded, and would likely be well used. She urged Boardmembers to reach out to Arleide Santos at Urban Tilth to respond to concerns and stated that two people from Urban Tilth had been dedicated to the garden. She added that she had replied to Ms. Lubin's comment prior to the DRB study session in March 2024..

Boardmember Kellman recommended conditions of approval to require the import of top soil for the raised planting beds, and for the contractor to follow the soil management plan during the construction of the shed.

Ms. Vallier clarified the benches that had been approved for the park in response to Boardmember Biazar who was concerned with the different types of benches and stated that the bench with the curved arm that was currently used in the park could be considered.

A public speaker whose name was not audible on tape expressed concern for garbage dumped in the area, cars abandoned on 16th Street, and people sleeping in their cars parked on the street, and she requested cameras to address those concerns.

Ms. Vallier explained that the City had installed a trash enclosure three years ago and Urban Tilth and Rich City Rides collects the trash and put it in an enclosure to later be collected by City staff. She stated that staff was working to keep up with the trash.

Boardmember Rey liked the project but expressed concern about the split-faced CMU as far as cleanability of graffiti, and Mr. Duncan clarified that the exterior would be treated like a park building with the intention for a painted surface to ensure the City's ability to clean-up after tagging.

Chair Carter referred to the DRB's suggestion that a steel member be installed horizontally around the building at the top of the mural to provide a visual separation between the mural and the exposed CMU above and commented that the band of murals would break up the exterior and the additional detail at the soffit, especially where it met the wall and allow the roof to sit better on the form.

Boardmember Kellman liked the project and the design of the garden and was pleased to see that the design incorporated the existing poles to now be used for shade structures. His concerns related to security and he suggested that the handful of small skylights could be a target of vandalism and he recommended some sort of security measure. He was also concerned about the upper windows on the west elevation and supported some sort of break resistant or laminated glass. He supported more security but otherwise commended the terrific design and the creative use of a small space for a lot of programming and wanted to see it move forward.

Mr. Duncan explained that the small skylights had specifically been chosen to avoid security issues. He added that bollards had been added to the front of the building to discourage

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ramming, for instance, as a way to access the building and its contents.

Ms. Vallier added that the building had to comply with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver of the Green Building Code and had to be zero energy so daylight energy would be important.

Ms. Vallier also noted that the proposal would be considered by the Richmond Arts and Culture Commission (RACC) to provide public art.

Boardmember Neel clarified with Ms. Vallier that the signature color would be RAL, one of the shipping rail colors consistent with the historic rail line, which color had previously been approved by the DRB. She liked that the red/orange would maintain the historical integrity of the site but did not want the color to fight with the art. She also verified that the circle of washed aggregate proposed for the garden would be wheelchair friendly, and acknowledged that the e-Bikes would be a target and the more security provided over night the better.

Mr. Duncan verified that a camera system would be involved, yet to be identified.

Chair Carter closed the public hearing.

ACTION: It was M/S/C (Kellman/Rey) to approve PLN24-089, Unity Park Improvements, subject to the four Findings and Statements of Fact with the staff recommended 10 Conditions of Approval and the DRB recommended condition as follows: 11) Use imported topsoil for edible plants and require the builder to follow the soil management plan for the construction; approved by a Roll Call vote: 5-0 (Ayes: Biazar, Kellman, Neel, Rey and Carter; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: Butt.)

1. PLN22-423	ESQUINA SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING
Description	REQUEST FOR A DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A 2,200-SQUARE-FOOT SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING ON A PORTION OF A VACANT 12,500-SQUARE-FOOT PARCEL. THE PROJECT ALSO INCLUDES A TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP TO SUBDIVIDE THE PARCEL INTO THREE LOTS AND A FENCE PERMIT REQUIRING A FENCE HEIGHT EXCEPTION.
Location	686 S 30 TH STREET
APN	549-203-030
Zoning	RL2, SINGLE-FAMILY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
Owner	MONTE ESQUINA
Applicant	SY MCCULLER
Staff Contact	EMILY SANCHEZ Recommendation: CONTINUED FROM AUGUST 14, 2024

Emily Sanchez presented the staff report dated August 28, 2024, for the review of a Tentative Parcel Map, Design Review Permit and Fence Height Exception to subdivide the project into three parcels; construct a new single-family dwelling on the easternmost parcel; and install a front yard fence that would exceed the maximum height limit for residential zones of the 12,500-square foot vacant parcel on the corner of S. 30th Street and Hoffman Boulevard within the Coronado Neighborhood. The site was currently secured by a six-foot chain link fence with three-strand barbed wire with a driveway and partial sidewalk along the property frontage.

Ms. Sanchez identified the surrounding uses that included residential, light industrial, and the I-580 Freeway. She advised that the subdivision of the property would create three parcels ranging in size from 3,944 to 4,293 square feet. Parcel C would be the site to be developed with a 2,200 square foot two-story single-family dwelling with an attached 323-square foot

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garage, the only unit to be developed under the subject permit. Parcels A, B and C would all comply with lot and density standards under the zoning district. She described the design of the proposed unit, reported that the primary building would be gray with powder coated metal siding throughout with a simple pitched roof, asphalt roof shingles, and the attached garage would have a lighter grey stucco siding, a flat roof and be a maximum 30 feet in height. One parking space had been proposed and the garage would comply with design standards for garages.

Ms. Sanchez identified the other elements of the design and stated that the proposed six-foot wooden and metal fence with a functional gate in the front yard would require a height exception. The fence would be built along the rear and east property lines of Parcel C and staff recommended a condition that the fence be extended to enclose the west property line of the parcel. She clarified that while the maximum allowed height of a front yard fence was four feet, the DRB could grant an exception to allow a six-foot fence pursuant to certain conditions.

Ms. Sanchez also recommended that a doorbell device be installed to ensure appropriate access to the property. As part of landscaping requirements, the project proposed a 5-foot-wide planting strip buffer along the west property line and the concrete driveway, and 1,759 square feet of new landscaping within the required setbacks with four on-site trees and low to moderate water use plants. The side yard would provide a decomposed granite and gravel walk and an existing planter buffer at the right-of-way where staff recommended a condition to require that irrigation be provided at the ROW. The project proposed nine light fixtures at the front and rear elevations of the building, small shielded downlights attached to the front and rear of the residence with fixtures to comply with City allowed lumen output.

Ms. Sanchez stated the Coronado Neighborhood Council had expressed its approval for the project, the applicant had gathered 11 letters of support from residents of the local neighborhood, and no other comments had been received prior to the meeting.

Ms. Sanchez recommended conditional approval of the project with the staff recommended 26 conditions of approval, some of which she highlighted at this time including the condition that Parcels A and B be maintained by the owner and be kept free of debris and weeds. She identified the required findings to approve the Tentative Map, the Design Review Permit and the Fence Height Exception.

In response to questions, Ms. Sanchez verified that the partial tentative map did not require Planning Commission approval.

MARK HOGAN, OpenScopeStudio, the project architect, noted that the neighborhood abruptly transitioned from industrial to residential and the design incorporated the modern style and some of the materials from the residential neighborhood, incorporating natural wood elements into the fencing. He described the relationship of the proposed residential unit to the adjacent industrial building and explained that the two buildings were roughly in the same scale and generally in the same height range.

SY MCCULLER, the applicant, responded to Boardmember Neel's question as to the reason for the six-foot fence in the front of the property. She characterized the corner as rather rough, with a lot of late-night foot traffic and other things going on, which was why the taller fence had been proposed in the front.

Chair Carter opened the public hearing.

KERRY MOSES, 646 South 30th Street, Richmond, noted the transitions in the neighborhood and suggested that the subject space be used for a park given that there were no parks in the

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area. Parking was also an issue and he suggested a new unit would just add to the parking concerns.

KARMEN STARKS, 2911 Chavez Lane, Richmond, commented that the rendering was stunning, she highly supported the landscape proposed and suggested the design was congruent with the adjacent light industrial building.

Ms. Starks agreed the area was busy. She referred to the encampments, the dumped cars and other dumping, and noted she had witnessed illicit activities in the area. She agreed that more eyes in the area would be great, and supported home ownership as opposed to another rental.

ALEX DUNBAR, 654 South 30th Street, Richmond, stated the design was compatible with the look and feel of the neighborhood. He agreed with the need for the higher fence in the front and supported the application.

KEITH ALVIN DAVIS, 2951 Hoffman Boulevard, Richmond, the across-the-street neighbor to the subject site also supported the proposal. He too spoke to the concerns in the neighborhood and suggested the project would benefit the neighborhood. He commented that he did not want a park across the street.

The following submitted a statement of support for PLN22-423:

Stacy Hui, 631 South 30th Street, Richmond
Camron Grihton, 611 South 30th Street, Richmond
Roland Williams, 2931 Hoffman Boulevard, Richmond
Rosalynd and Keith Davis, 2951 Hoffman Boulevard, Richmond
Alexandra Wilson, 654 South 30th Street, Richmond
LaNetra Johnson, 2921 Hoffman Boulevard, Richmond
The resident at 2931 Chavez Lane, Richmond
Charles Crouder, 2932 Bonds Lane, Richmond
Julie Morgan, 2942 Bonds Lane, Richmond
Ellen August, 2941 Hoffman Boulevard, Richmond
Audra Williams, 644 South 29th Street, Richmond

Boardmember Biazar asked about the sharply steep roof and the ceiling height that was produced as a result, and clarified the arrangement of the existing trees on the property.

Chair Carter liked the design and the use of the warm wood that was inviting at the entry, and that the roof form along with the cladding worked well with the neighboring industrial feel but also transitioned to the residential. With respect to the use of the other two parcels, he clarified that was not part of the subject application. He recommended that Mr. Moses be directed to those in the City who planned parks.

Mr. Lopez clarified that the residential property would have to be rezoned to accommodate a park.

Chair Carter also clarified for the benefit of the speakers that the property owner would have to comply with all code requirements including off-street parking requirements.

Ms. McCuller acknowledged the parking concerns on South 30th Street and commented that Hoffman Avenue had available parking 24/7.

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Boardmember Neel supported the design of the unit, the fence, and the transitional nature of the design, and to be fair wanted to hold other residents accountable to be welcoming. She understood the challenges but did not want neighborhoods to become compounds. With respect to the comment about a park, she explained that could be possible if the neighborhood pursued that option, although the lots in question were privately owned. She added that parks actually raised property values. She asked if the fence exception was granted whether or not it would be permanent, and Chair Carter noted that each application for an exception would be separate.

Boardmember Kellman agreed that the second story of the proposed residential unit was abrupt and tall but other than that the proposal checked all the boxes with a thoughtful design consistent with the City's development standards. While he was not a fan of long narrow lots, it was not the purview of the DRB to make that determination.

Boardmember Rey characterized the proposal as a successful transitional project and she had no comments on the design. She supported the development of the residential unit and potentially two others to provide more housing.

Chair Carter closed the public hearing.

ACTION: It was M/S/C (Carter/Rey) to approve PLN22-423, Esquina Single-Family Dwelling, subject to the 13 Findings and Statements of Fact with the staff recommended 26 Conditions of Approval: approved by a Roll Call vote: 5-0 (Ayes: Biazar, Kellman, Neel, Rey and Carter; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: Butt.)
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Board Business

A. Staff reports, requests, or announcements:

Christopher Dykzeul from the City Attorney's Office responded to a question that had been raised at an earlier meeting and reported that only the majority of the DRB's seven members had to be residents of the City of Richmond. In addition, the Chair of the DRB could only serve two consecutive terms.

Boardmember Kellman asked about an applicant's requirement to repair sidewalks, and Mr. Lopez stated with respect to PLN22-423, the applicant would be required to install a sidewalk.

B. Boardmember reports, requests, or announcements:

Chair Carter advised that DRB elections would be placed on the meeting agenda for September 25, 2024.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 P.M. to the regular Design Review Board meeting on Wednesday, September 11, 2024.