



MEETING MINUTES

Monroe Park Master Plan
RHI #25681

DATE & LOCATION	May 31, 2007	Landmark Theater, Lounge B 6 North Laurel Street, Richmond, Virginia		
ATTENDEES	NAME	REPRESENTING	EMAIL	Phone
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Biederman	BRV	dbiederman@brvcorp.com	212.719.3434
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Patricia R. Daniels	MPAC	prdaniels@comcast.net	804.254.2928
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jackie Decker	VCU/Richmond		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Benjamin Donsky	BRV	bdonsky@brvcorp.com	212.626.6612
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Aaron Feldman-Grosse	R&H	aaronfg@rhodeside-harwell.com	703.683.7447
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Elinor Kuhn	MPAC	elinorkuhn@msn.com	804.359.0600
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	James C. Hill	MPAC	hilljc@ci.richmond.va.us	804.646.6374
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alice McGuire Massie	MPAC	amassie@collegiate-va.org	804.355.1605
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Larry Miller	Richmond	larry.miller@richmondgov.com	804.646.0037
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Janis Hall Nuckolls	MPAC	janicehallasid@comcast.net	804.358.7646
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brian Ohlinger	MPAC	bjohling@vcu.edu	804.828.9647
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tyler Potterfield	Richmond	Thomas.potterfield@richmondgov.com	804.646.6364
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Elliot Rhodeside	R&H	ElliotR@rhodeside-harwell.com	703.683.7447
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Turk Sties	MPAC	Jamessties@msn.com	804.257.5504
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Todd Woodson	MPAC	candylandmusic@earthlink.net	804.644.3812
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Richmond Police		

A progress meeting for the Monroe Park Master Plan was held at the Landmark Theater on 31 May 2007. Representatives from the City of Richmond, Monroe Park Advisory Council (MPAC), Richmond Police, Rhodeside & Harwell (R&H) and Biederman Redevelopment Corporation (BRV) were present.

The items below document important points for consideration in executing the project. Items in bold require action:

1. Richmond Police Officer _____ provided input regarding law enforcement at Monroe Park.
 - a. There haven't been any recent crimes in the park.
 - b. Having the lights on all night is good; however, they need to be brighter.
 - c. Anything to discourage people sleeping on benches is welcome.
 - d. The park could benefit from posting park rules on signs at every entrance.

320 King Street
Suite 202
Alexandria, VA 22314

703-683-7447 ph
703-683-7449 fx
www.rhodeside-harwell.com

2. Brian Ohlinger introduced Monroe Park's newly hired park keeper, Jackie Decker.
 - a. Her uniform will display insignias of both the City of Richmond and VCU.
 - b. Her hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 6.30am to 3.00pm.
 - c. Her office is in the Checkers Building.
 - d. She has direct radio communication with VCU police.
 - e. Responsibilities include:
 - i. Parking control
 - ii. Discouraging homeless feedings
 - iii. Basic grounds maintenance (trash pickup).
 - iv. Liaison between park and VCU police (not responsible for law enforcement).
3. Money has been made available to hire lighting consultant Domingo Gonzalez. **City of Richmond to sign and return contract to R&H.**
4. R&H presented their existing conditions inventory.
 - a. Daniel Biederman suggested developing the Pedestrian Desire Lines plan to show a hierarchy of paths based on use. BRV to coordinate desire line analysis.
5. R&H presented their programming analysis, which consisted of a synthesis of the maps created during the 19 April 2007 public meeting.
6. BRV presented its programming concept. Dan Biederman discussed how careful programming, with great attention to detail will enliven Monroe Park by drawing new users and keeping them there. The complex program allows for a number of different experiences for park visitors, depending on the time and day of their visits. This keeps the park interesting and stimulating, even for those who visit it every day.
 - a. BRV explained that the program is driven by the uses of buildings surrounding the park, especially academic buildings, and the overwhelming public desire for a "Great Lawn" for performances and unorganized sports and recreation.
 - b. BRV's concept places food kiosks at crucial intersections of what are expected to be the most heavily used paths.
 - i. Initially, these will probably be cards or movable stage sets, so the park can experiment with kiosk locations once the park is opened.
 - c. Programs were sited to reinforce one another; BRV recommends grouping programs targeted to children and families, as well as "intellectual" programs.
 - d. BRV warns that not all programs will be immediately successful: many will have to be modified, and some may not work at all. The success of Monroe Park depends on careful adjustments to existing programs and continually developing new ones.
7. BRV led a discussion regarding programming opportunities.
 - a. BRV recommended bringing in a local events coordinator to gain an understanding of how a revitalized Monroe Park can fit into the Richmond events market. **Alice Massie volunteered to help locate and contact Richmond events coordinators. Echelon events was suggested.**
 - b. Daniel Biederman suggested contacting Richmond's chess club and offering to pay them to play chess in Monroe Park to attract attention.
 - c. There is a demand for private events (e.g. weddings) to be held in Monroe Park. MPAC members suggested accommodating such requests within the Master Plan by accommodating the easy setup and tear-down of tents, dance floors and tables. BRV explained that private events should be managed by an inHouse or contracted events manager.
 - d. Attracting children (especially from the Fan District) has been a challenge.
 - i. Nearby Lombardy Park (Lombardy Street and Park Avenue) is heavily used: create a connection between Lombardy Park and Monroe Park.
 - ii. Most children will be arriving to the park via Floyd Avenue: make children's use areas visible

from Floyd Avenue

- e. Local residents prefer to orient amplified performances such that sound projects east, toward Belvidere Street.
 - i. Placing the stage east of the fountain plaza, facing east is appropriate for sound and to make use of the "Great Lawn" concept.
 - f. Turk Sties gave a brief history of the Riverside Valentine, which was a Civil War themed amusement park in Downtown Richmond that failed shortly after opening for several reasons:
 - i. Access was difficult.
 - ii. There was little to no green space (especially a problem in the summer)
 - iii. The park was not located near any other amenities.
 - g. BRV explained that a restaurant owner who currently has two to five locations is the ideal kiosk operator for Monroe Park: someone who has experience operating more than one restaurant at a time, but is still small enough that he/she will pay sufficient attention to a kiosk in the park. The ideal operator has a kitchen nearby, so food can be prepared elsewhere to minimize the footprint of the kiosk. MPAC members gave several suggestions of local restaurateurs.
 - i. Johnny Giavos
 - ii. Crossroads Coffee House
 - iii. Rick Lo Presti
 - iv. Chris Zecchini
 - v. Brian Ohlinger stated that VCU would be willing to open the first food kiosk in Monroe Park.
 - h. BRV suggested that a local bookstore would be a good target to approach for sponsorship of a book stall or reading room. MPAC members provided suggestions of local active bookstores:
 - i. Chop Suey (Ward Tefft)
 - ii. Black Swan (Nick Cook)
 - iii. Logos (Christian Book Store)
 - i. The Big Map and Weather Station should be coordinated with the Science Museum of Virginia so as not to be competing with the museum.
 - j. The question of parking during events within Monroe Park was raised. Currently, visitors park in VCU parking structures, or they park on-street and walk to the park. Shuttle service may also be an option.
8. R&H presented various landscape treatment alternatives and led a discussion regarding different physical upgrade issues to Monroe Park. R&H's conclusion is that it is important to preserve the historic integrity of Monroe Park while absorbing programming elements into park landscaping.
- a. Brian Ohlinger expressed concerns about grass growing in deep shade.
 - i. For healthier turf in the park, the existing topsoil needs to be tilled and aerated. A shade tolerant grass seed also needs to be applied.
 - ii. In places where grass still won't grow, the alternatives of groundcovers, mulch, gravel or brick were presented.
 - b. Currently, stormwater flows off the site at a very rapid rate, allowing little chance for infiltration. Various opportunities exist to increase drainage and stormwater infiltration:
 - i. Reduced pathway widths.
 - ii. Shallow swales instead of paved gutters.
 - iii. Reinforced turf.
 - iv. French drains along sides of paths.
 - v. More catch basins.
 - vi. Minor grading adjustments to create shallow bowls.
 - c. Pathway alignments were discussed. **R&H to develop pathway alignment alternatives.**
 - i. Tyler Potterfield noted that the pathway configuration in Monroe Park has not changed since the 1870's.

- ii. MPAC has expressed the desire to remove the “X” (two intersecting paths in the eastern sector of the park) in order to create more green space in the “great lawn” area.
- iii. R&H suggested creating a hierarchy of paths in the park with primary walkways being those that radiate from the central fountain and secondary walkways connecting the entrances.
- d. While discussing treatment of the “X,” various concerns regarding pathway cross-sections were addressed. R&H presented various cross-sections showing paving alternatives. **R&H to further develop pathway configuration alternatives in conjunction with alignment alternatives, exhausting all possibilities to keep historic fabric before removing entire paths.**
 - i. Existing Condition: Raised concrete curb and gutter with asphalt paving.
 - (1) This condition divides the grass panels, and makes for a tripping hazard when used for sports.
 - ii. Retain historic curbs in the “X,” but replace asphalt with grass at the same level as the curbs.
 - (1) This condition is entirely reversible, retaining historic fabric in place for later restoration, should the need arise.
 - (2) Concerns were raised over the grass sinking, turning the curbs into a tripping hazard.
 - iii. Stone dust pathway, with flush curbs.
 - (1) Concerns were raised that stone dust would be a maintenance problem.
 - iv. Historic Condition: Gravel pathway without curbs.
 - (1) Curbs were installed because this condition caused a significant amount of erosion.
 - (2) The precedent of the Mall in Washington DC was discussed: paths kick up a lot of dust, and edge treatment is messy.
 - v. Asphalt or concrete paving, no curbs.
 - (1) This configuration could be used along secondary walkways.
- e. Various alternatives for perimeter treatment were discussed: low hedge, brick wall, iron fence.
 - i. General consensus was in favor of a low seat wall, possibly of brick or granite.
 - ii. Iron fencing could also be feasible, considering it is a local product.
- 9. The question of contacting the State Historic Preservation Office was raised.
 - a. Although not required for this project, contacting the SHPO would be good to do as a courtesy.
 - b. **Tyler Potterfield to contact SHPO.**
- 10. Short term improvements were discussed:
 - i. Lighting upgrades. These have already begun, however path configuration and alignment should be settled prior to construction.
- 11. Next Steps:
 - a. **R&H to develop a recommended treatment plan to be presented at next meeting.**
 - b. **R&H to provide PDF’s of all images to Pat Daniels; Pat Daniels to post images on Monroe Park website.**
 - c. The next public meeting will be scheduled for this fall, once VCU classes resume.