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## Fredericksburg's Riverfront Park plan is taking shape

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BY PAMELA GOULD / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

The design for Riverfront Park in Fredericksburg includes a tall mast that leans toward the Rappahannock River, providing a nod to the sailing ships that spurred development in the region.

For commuters, the feature may bring to mind the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Prince William County, with its dramatic rooftop representing the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jima.

But George Solley, chairman of the Riverfront Task Force and a retired Marine, said he never connected the two and sees the park as unique and suited to the area's history.

In fact, it is similar to a mast structure at Falls Park in Greenville, S.C., a place several residents told the design firm they found attractive.

Alexandria-based Rhodeside & Harwell was hired in December to produce the concept design for the park on 3.6 acres between the river and Sophia Street and is adjacent to Shiloh (Old Site) Baptist Church.

Rhodeside & Harwell staff members held a series of focus group meetings in February, March and May to gather community input and feedback on two design options.

The Riverfront Task Force formulated its preference and asked for modifications, including incorporating some features from the option not chosen.

The revised alternative was presented to the task force on July 10 and received an endorsement.

The next step is for the designers to meet with the city's Architectural Review Board at a work session on Aug. 4, Senior Planner Erik Nelson said.

That meeting will provide ARB members a chance to review the plan before deciding whether to approve the demolition of a brick building on the property known as the Masonic lodge.

Nelson recommends demolishing the building and said it doesn't meet any of the city's criteria for preservation.

The designers were given approval to design the park without incorporating it. If the building is not removed, the design would have to change.

The two-story building at 609 Sophia St. is a wood-frame building constructed in 1921 and then bricked over in the 1950s, Nelson said.

It was built as Prince Hall Lodge #61 and served an African-American fraternal organization for about 60 years before being sold to the city, Nelson said in a June 2013 memo.

The ARB will hold a public hearing on the issue on Aug. 11.

The City Council is scheduled to take its first official look at the park design during a work session on either Aug. 26 or Sept. 12, said Bob Antozzi, the city's director of parks, recreation and public facilities.

## DESIGN DETAILS

The design incorporates 22 features including the mast, which would be made of steel and have cable supports that fan out.

It also has several walkways and trails, most of which are designed to draw people to the river.

Two are considered boardwalks and lead directly to the river. One includes a dramatic overlook in the area of the mast. Two others make arcs through the park and intersect, connecting with the boardwalks.

Along Sophia Street are two entry points as well as a tree-lined promenade, a history wall and a history walk.

A children's play area has been moved back from the street and includes an interactive sculpture, boulders for climbing, shade trees and areas for seating.

Children will also enjoy an aquatic play area with water that bubbles up from the ground.

The designers provided the city with examples of most of the features, which are being used at other parks.

Cumberland Park in Nashville features a similar water play area as does City Garden in St. Louis, Mo.

Closer to home, people familiar with Pierce's Park in the Inner Harbor area of Baltimore will get an idea of a child-friendly sculpture.

Lurie Garden in Chicago has a boardwalk similar to what Rhodeside & Harwell are proposing.

The Riverfront Park will include seating throughout, including stone masonry seat walls that will provide access to the water feature.

Paths will have lighting, and there will be spaces that are shaded. There are also open spaces for events, a spot for public art and an area where a temporary stage or screen could be placed.

In addition, the boat dock already in place will be improved.

The design also calls for stabilizing the riverbank and adding trees, shrubs and ground cover.

A projected cost was not available on Wednesday.

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## DESIGN ELEMENTS

The final concept design for the Riverfront Park in Fredericksburg includes 22 features.

1. A park entry signs at each side of the park along a scored concrete pathway that begins at Sophia Street.
2. A history walk with brick paving and ornamental street lighting.
3. A history wall of stone with engraving ?with a tapered height from 48 to 18 inches.

4. Promenade and street edge gardens that include ornamental shrubs, shade trees and seating.
5. A boardwalk with river access and overlook that includes a wood railing.
6. A mast structure made of steel with cable supports.
7. A shade structure made of steel with wood louvers and wood seating.
8. A water play feature with ground bubblers.
9. A seat wall that steps down to the water feature.
10. A seat wall extending from the boardwalk.
11. A play area with shade trees, a lawn berm, climbable boulders, an interactive sculpture and seating.
12. A lawn terrace in an open area that includes stone seat walls and a sloping lawn area.
13. Open space for events.
14. Park paths paved in concrete with seating.
15. A river walk trail with porous, flexible paving.
16. Stabilization and re-vegetation of the riverbank using native trees, shrubs, grasses and ground cover.
17. A wetland area with native plants.
18. Path lighting with column fixtures.
19. A path that can connect to future paths along the riverfront.
20. An area for a temporary screen or stage.
21. A spot for public art.

22. The boat dock.

—Pamela Gould

## WHAT'S NEXT

The next steps toward creation of a Riverfront Park between Sophia Street and the Rappahannock River include a presentation of the design to the Architectural Review Board at a work session at 7 p.m. Aug. 4. The meeting will be held in a second-floor conference room of City Hall, 715 Princess Anne St.

The meeting is open but there is no public comment period. Comments can be made at the ARB's hearing at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 11 in Council Chambers of City Hall.

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