

We asked Billy and some of his friends why they wanted a sidewalk to Maymont. This is what they told us:

"There is no sidewalk to Maymont. It's just too dangerous to ride in the street with cars and trucks zooming by us. The sidewalk is not just for the residents at the Virginia Home, but it's for everybody to use and to be safe from speeding cars and trucks. It's very much needed very bad. I need your help with this project very much. It's a very worthwhile undertaking. Please help me out in any way that you can. I will appreciate anything you can do to help the sidewalk come true."

--Billy Austin
Resident

"Because it's freedom. I can't go down there much but [my girlfriend] Valerie has an electric chair and she can go, but I'm so afraid [that without the sidewalk] she'll tip over and fall. As she has done before."

--Campbell Hodgson
Resident

"Because I don't do anything much, but [at Maymont] I can watch a lot of things and the animals fascinate me so much."

--William "Buddy" Knicely
Resident

"Since I was hit by a car when I was walking as a result I have a brain stem injury. I feel the sidewalk will prevent me or anyone else from getting hit. It will give me peace and reassurance that I and many others are safe. So if you will, please put the sidewalk in; not only for those who are walking but also for the physically challenged. Thank you very much."

--Jewel Sexton
Resident

"I would want to sit out there [at Maymont] on a hot summer afternoon with friends. . . I would like to look at the flowers and the fish . . . It's a different atmosphere, a more restful atmosphere . . . I would like to be able to volunteer more at the park with this kind of project because I felt real dignified [working on the sidewalk project]. This was my first volunteer job that I have really honestly wanted to work on . . ."

--Carl Wildner
Resident

"If we had a new sidewalk without too many bumps, we wouldn't have the accidents that happened a couple years ago. You don't want people to get hit by cars. We had one resident do that and she got taken to the hospital. And we had one resident actually fall in the lake across the street. . . I've been here for 12 years and I heard about a lot of accidents happening and that wouldn't happen again."

--Bill Hayes
Resident

"I like it because you get to go places and do things, and I don't usually get to go places...I'd like to see the ducks, and all the people in Maymont Park having fun . . . I want to be on my own, be independent."

--Bev Morgan
Resident

"It'll be easy access and a better route to Maymont because that is what we need--especially people like us in wheelchairs."

--Sue Denton
Resident

"I would like to go over to see Maymont Park. They've got different types of animals...We humans are classified as animals ourselves . . . It would be a better way for us as residents to get around the park and go anywhere."

--John Holmes
Resident

"I think it will give a lot of people more freedom, that they wouldn't otherwise have, to go to Maymont. It is safer than going on the street . . . I enjoy the goats, I enjoy going to the Japanese gardens and seeing the bears, and I enjoy the gift shop [at Maymont]."

--Jackie Crews
Resident

"Because I've worked at the Home for 15 years, and I've gotten attached to the residents . . . I don't want nothing to happen to them."

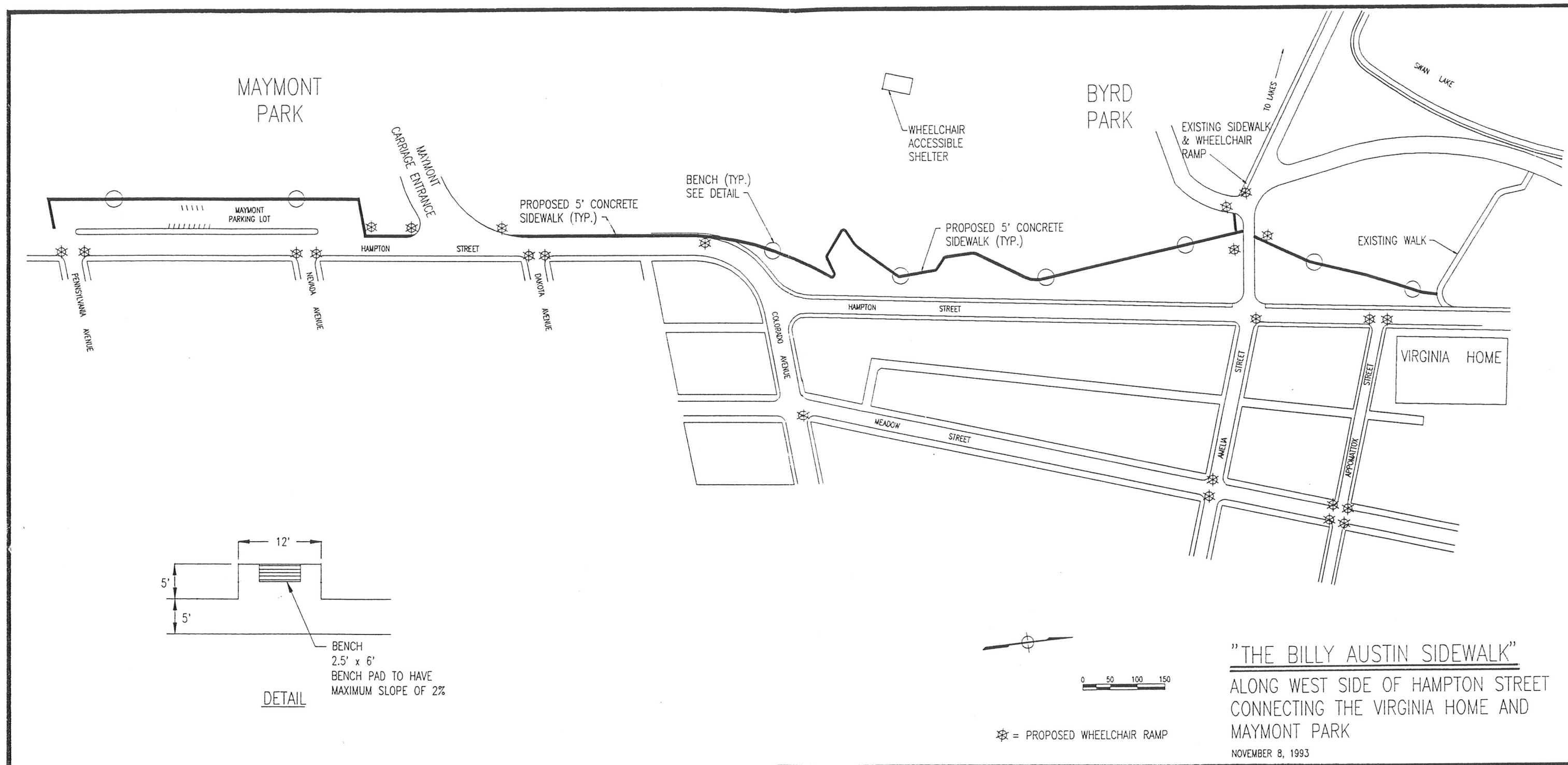
--Melvin Wilkes
Elevator Operator

"In 1988 I was going for a ride in the park when I discovered a crack on the sidewalk. My chair went over and I fell down . . . As a Richmond resident I should speak up about this problem. The park is also for the disabled."

--Sterling Lamont Marklin
Resident

"Because it will be good for all of the residents here at the Virginia Home. Because they won't be out on the road when the cars come."

--Chris Payton
Resident



TRANSPORTATION Enhancement PROGRAM

APPLICATION FORM FOR CANDIDATE PROJECT

1. APPLICANT (Group, Agency, etc.) Name and Address:

City of Richmond

900 E. Broad St.

Richmond, VA 23219

2. RESPONSIBLE PERSON/TITLE

Telephone Number (804) 780-7970

Robert C. Bobb, City Manager

3. ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY NUMBERS (See instructions. Circle all that apply):

① 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Project Title: Billy Austin Sidewalk Project

Project Size (Size of Project/Acreage):

Project Location
(Include Streets, County and Municipalities:)

Byrd Park and Maymont Park off Hampton

St. from Appomattox St. (VA Home) to

Pennsylvania Ave.

Project Description
(attach site location map):

2,750 ft. of 5' wide concrete sidewalk

(see attached).

(add additional pages as needed)

5. PRIORITY NUMBER of this project is 1

The total number of projects submitted 5

6. DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING March 14, 1994

Attach copy of public notice.

Have the local government bodies officially supported/endorsed this project? Yes ☒ No ☐
 Attach documentation including resolution. Also document support from any other civic or public interest groups or organizations.

Has the MPO officially endorsed the project? Yes ☒ No ☐ NA ☐
 Attach documentation (if applicable).

7. PROJECT CONSTRUCTION/IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE (month and year)

Begin Design

Complete

Begin Construction/Implementation

September 1994

Estimate completion date of project

October 1994

Continued

Application Item #4 - Project Location and Description:

The City of Richmond proposes to build a 1/2 mile long wheelchair/pedestrian facility that would link the Virginia Home to Maymont Park. The sidewalk would run on the western side of Hampton Street. It would begin across the street from the Virginia Home, wind through the red oaks of Byrd Park, curve around the Maymont parking lot, and finally end at the Maymont entrance.

Currently, there is a sidewalk on the eastern side of Hampton Street, but it extends for only one block and is not wheelchair accessible because the curb cuts are not wide enough. This is unfortunate because the community has an unusually high number of wheelchair-bound individuals, including nearly all of the 113 residents of the Virginia Home, most of the population of Amelia Street School, and other elderly persons who live in the community. The sidewalk would also provide a safer route for families with children, particularly in strollers, many of whom enjoy visiting Maymont and Byrd Park. Indeed, the community has led a successful campaign to "take back the parks" from those car drivers who cruise Byrd Park for purposes that have little to do with observing the beauty of nature. Gates have been installed around the lakes, and are closed at certain hours, but unfortunately, because Hampton Street is a residential area, the traffic cannot be blocked on that street.

Because there is not a sidewalk, many people in the community cannot visit Maymont Park without risking their lives. There have been some accidents over the years as the physically-challenged have had to maneuver their wheelchairs through the heavy traffic of Hampton Street. As a result, many in the community do not get to enjoy the parks as often as they would like. As James Jervis, Amelia Street School principal points out in his letter (enclosed with this application), "Vehicle transportation is expensive and even when available, access to vans is not always possible." However, some wheelchair-bound continue to risk their lives to obtain that bit of "freedom" found in Maymont that Billy Austin speaks of.

Because of the special needs of the community, the City is proposing that the sidewalk be five feet wide, include several 5'x 12' concrete pads where wheelchairs can turn around, and have wheelchair access at each end of the sidewalk. Because some wheelchair occupants need someone to push them, the City is proposing that the turn-around areas also contain benches, where the wheelchair pushers can rest. The sidewalk will conform to all ADA requirements.

Application Item #10 - Benefits

"To improve; to make better." These are Webster's definitions of the word enhance. The Billy Austin Sidewalk Project overflows with benefits which will enhance the lives and the surroundings of the community in which it will be located.

The sidewalk's design insures that it will be an aesthetically pleasing addition to an already beautiful park area. Beginning in Byrd Park within sight of a tranquil lake, our sidewalk will meander among the majestic trees of the park rather than simply running parallel to Hampton Street. As the sidewalk approaches Maymont Park, there will be a vantage point from which park goers can watch deer and buffalo in their Maymont habitat. The sidewalk's final stretch will be alongside the regal double row of cedar trees leading to the park's entrance. Preserving the beauty of the natural environment has been a priority. Additionally, routing the sidewalk through the park provides for the greater safety of all individuals who use it. As Billy Austin says, "The sidewalk is ...for everybody to use and to be safe from speeding cars and trucks."

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the Billy Austin Sidewalk will be to improve the quality of life of the residents of the community and other visitors to the park. As Billy commented in the first newspaper article about his dream sidewalk, "It's not only for me. Old folks. Young people with baby strollers. It can be for anyone." Thousands of Richmonders visit Byrd and Maymont parks each year, and therefore thousands of citizens will benefit from the installation of this sidewalk. Benches placed at intervals will provide resting places as well as opportunities to sit and enjoy the peaceful beauty of the surroundings. The park area is nestled within a residential community, and this community as a whole will benefit from the safe access to Maymont which the sidewalk will provide. Children from two elementary schools nearby will certainly be among the most enthusiastic travelers along the sidewalk.

Finally, the quality of life for the physically challenged residents of the Virginia Home will undoubtedly improve with the completion of the sidewalk. It was their specific need for a safe way to travel to Maymont Park that was the impetus for Billy Austin's reaching out to the community with his idea. The sidewalk will meet ADA requirements and will thus provide the "pathway to freedom" that many wheelchair-bound residents have long wished for. Carl Wildner speaks of wanting "to sit out there on a hot summer afternoon with friends...I would want to look at the flowers and the fish...It's a whole different atmosphere, a more restful atmosphere." Bev Morgan puts it this way: "I like it because you get to go places and do things, and I don't usually get to go places. I'd like to see the ducks and all the people in Maymont having fun...I want to be on my own, to be independent." These comments typify the feelings expressed by many others whose daily lives will be enhanced by the accessibility to beauty and tranquility which the Billy Austin Sidewalk will make possible.

In conclusion, we believe that the Billy Austin Sidewalk Project fully meets all the requirements of a Transportation Enhancement grant recipient. Installation of the sidewalk will enhance the life of the community and its residents while preserving and rendering more accessible the natural beauty of the park.