



To: Urban Design Committee
From: Planning and Preservation Division
Date: April 6, 2017
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent Review of the 17th Street Farmer's Market Plaza Renovation Modifications, 50 N 17th St.; UDC 2017-06**

I. APPLICANT

Jeannie Welliver, Department of Economic and Community Development

II. LOCATION

50 N 17th Street

Property Owner:

City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character and extent review of the 17th Street Farmer's Market Plaza Renovation Modifications

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

Final approval for the 17th Street Farmer's Market Plaza Renovation was approved in February of 2016 and went to bid later that spring. It was revealed in the summer of 2016 that funding could not support the bid amounts, requiring modifications to the design of the plaza.

The modifications consist of hardscape replacement, the installation of a previously approved fountain, and a unique, signature pattern that speaks to the significance of trees in the city. The amalgamation of these elements will produce a safe and comfortable public space that generates interest, provides entertainment, and nods to the historical significance of the plaza.

Staff finds the proposed modifications reasonable and attractive, and that they further the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines for public plazas. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval.

Staff Contact:

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The project area is bound by E. Main Street on the south, N. 17th Street on the east, E. Franklin Street on the north, and N. 17th Street on the west, and includes both the rights-of-way and the parcel on which the 17th Street Farmer's Market sits. The area is primarily zoned M-1 (Light Industrial), but portions of the rights-of-way are also zoned B-5 (Central Business).

The project area is located in the Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row National Register Historic District. The National Register nomination form notes that the General Assembly act of 1780 established a public market on a site “below the hill” on the same side of the creek, and that the original structure was a wooden shed supported on locust posts. In 1794 it was replaced by a brick building, the second floor of which was used as a theater. Eighteen years later it was re-arranged to house the courtroom for the Hustings Court. The area dedicated to the market was later expanded up to Grace Street, and another structure was constructed in 1854 that stood until 1913. The current series of shelters, green metal roofs atop thick wooden beams mounted in concrete pillars, were constructed in 1989.

b. Scope of Review

The improvements associated with this project are subject to location, character, and extent review as a “park” in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

c. UDC Review History

Previously, in February 2017, the UDC continued their decision until the applicant could come back with a more detailed, illustrative plan-set showing the modifications to the previously approved final plans.

In February 2016, the UDC recommended, and the Planning Commission approved, a final design for the 17th Street Farmer’s Market with following conditions by the Urban Design Committee:

- That the applicant consider the addition of two trees to add visual interest towards the Main Street and Franklin Street ends of the site.
- That the applicant consider providing umbrellas on site for shade before the tree canopy comes to maturity.
- That the applicant provide a conduit to the Main Street location designated for public art.

In 2014, the UDC and Planning Commission reviewed a conceptual plan for the 17th St Farmers Market redesign and approved it with a series of conditions:

- That, prior to final review, the applicant provides evidence that the plans meet all applicable zoning regulations.
- That the applicant considers going through the ordinance process to close North and South 17th Streets prior to submitting for final UDC review.
- That information is provided in the applicant’s report detailing how many on street parking spaces will be removed through this proposal, and what measures can be taken to mitigate the loss.
- That information is provided in the applicant’s report detailing how services such as delivery and trash pickup will be handled for the businesses affected by the proposed closing of North and South 17th Streets.
- That the applicant considers having the City provide vendor tents and outdoor dining furniture and enclosures, or that a set of design standards is established for such amenities specific to this space.
- That the final plans detail how stormwater drainage will be accommodated for the site.

- That the final plans include a photometric lighting diagram.
- That the applicant provides details on the proposed kiosk, including dimensions and exterior materials.
- That the final plans include a landscaping schedule, to include plant species, quantity, and size at the time of installation.
- That the understory landscaping be kept low as to not obscure sight lines.
- That the applicant provides details on all proposed hardscaping, to include material samples.
- That the applicant provides details on the proposed masonry benches, including dimensions and materials, and that the applicant considers designing the benches to discourage overnight sleeping.
- That the applicant provides details on the proposed bollards and bike racks.
- That the applicant considers providing two additional trash receptacles, one at each end of the plaza.
- That the applicant considers using angled granite curb for the curb cut on E. Main Street, in place of the proposed mountable concrete curb.

d. Project Description

This project involves modifications to the final plans approved by the UDC and Planning Commission (in February 2016) in response to constructability and budget concerns. A series of changes are largely proposed to the paving scheme for the plaza.

In regards to the plaza field, the poured granite paver will be replaced with a light gray concrete (broom-finished) field. The concrete field will contain light imprints of leaves from the three species of trees to be planted throughout the plaza. These imprints will vary in position and placement to give the effect of fallen leaves. Their placement will span between 8' to 20' from the trunk.

The granite curbs are to be replaced with flush granite pavers, transforming the curbs to bands and making the plaza flush with the surrounding sidewalks. The granite pavers will delineate the historic road bed and the stormwater drainage will flow into central trench between the lines of granite pavers.

The previously approved fountain will be installed and will entirely replace the area of sod. The east and west side of the fountain will see the installation of granite pavers.

The removal of granite banding for cart paths will allow for unimpeded fish-scale patterning along the plaza. Additionally, the granite used for the bike lane has been replaced with brick.

e. Master Plan

The subject property is located in the Shockoe Focus Area, as defined by the 2008 Downtown Master Plan, and is placed in the Urban Center character area. One of the recommendations for this area is to “remove the clutter of overhead utility lines and equipment from the visible public right-of-way to enhance the streetscape” (page 4.58). The Plan also contains extensive language on the Farmer’s Market itself:

"The 17th Street Farmers' Market is one of the oldest markets in the United States, and has served as an essential center of trade since Richmond's founding. The market was a center for trade in produce, livestock, and flour. The existing Farmers' Market on Main Street is a modern, unremarkable structure that is located one block south of the original Farmers' Market. While it remains a popular destination for locals and visitors, the Market is underutilized and inadequately laid-out for Market shopping, with limited sight lines for goods on display and barriers to multiple uses of the space.

While changes in management could improve the Market's performance, the design and location of the building should be reconsidered to better accommodate vendors and shoppers. The Farmers' Market could be built on a site one block north of the existing building. The historic market was a long open-air pavilion supported by a colonnade and protected with a gable roof. The re-creation of this building would not only enhance the cultural experience of Shockoe Bottom, but would also provide a flexible, more efficient space for selling market goods. The site of the existing Farmers' Market could be reused as an open plaza that complements the restored Farmers' Market. This plaza could be used for overflow market uses, or for outdoor dining and community gatherings. The placement of a linear plaza in front of the Farmers' Market will increase its visibility from Main Street and will improve accessibility for shoppers" (page 4.61).

The City's Department of Economic and Community Development undertook an economic revitalization strategy for Shockoe in 2011 which contained the following statements regarding the Farmer's market:

"The current farmers market is widely considered to be more of a detriment than an asset to the neighborhood, but the potential to re-position it into a more diverse, year-round public market has been studied and could follow the success of other urban public markets in becoming a popular destination" (page 20).

"A new public market... would be a combination of spaces that includes a permanent structure housing a year round public market of food, crafts and other items; outdoor or open areas serving as expansion area for seasonal markets (farmers market, holiday market), programmed activities and events; and space for any administrative or small business development activities associated with the market. If executed effectively, it can: 1) be a flexible, dynamic gathering space, implemented for relatively low cost; 2) help anchor a "food destination" identity for the area which can be supported by restaurants and bars; 3) recognize and serve as a legacy to the long history of market operations in the area; 4) incorporate a small or micro business development component; and 5) act as an amenity for local residents as well as a regional draw" (page 27).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines note that successful public parks "share certain qualities, which include the ability to attract and entertain visitors, access and connectivity to surrounding areas, and safety and comfort" and that "the quality, design, and condition of all public facilities sets the image of the City, and sends a message about the values placed upon the services provided" (page 13). "Public plazas", the Guidelines continue, "should use landscaping, public art, and historic preservation to create inviting spaces". The Guidelines also advocate for

adequate seating, lighting and trash receptacles in the design of plazas (page 14).

Regarding hardscaping, the Guidelines state that “materials that have an uneven surface should be avoided in pedestrian areas” (page 3). Nonetheless, the Guidelines also state that “historic features, such as existing cobblestone streets and alleys and stone crosswalks, shall be preserved” (page 20). They state that “the selection of paving materials should be based upon the following: desired visual image, compatibility with adjacent paving materials, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, and cost” (page 3). Further, the guidelines state that “simpler paving designs are more compatible with diverse building styles and better unify the various design elements found on City streets. The color of brick and concrete pavers should coordinate with building architecture and adjacent streetscape pavements” (page 3).

The Guidelines state that “lighting fixtures should be consistent with existing fixtures in the surrounding area” (page 23) and that that “exterior lighting should avoid light pollution by directing light downward (page 22). The Guidelines also note that “streetscape furnishings and streetlights should coordinate with each other in style, color and finish” (page 24).

The Guidelines state that “furnishings should be located where people congregate...such as in front of major attractions and in parks and plazas” (page 25).

As to landscaping, the Guidelines state that “site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture” and that “plant materials should create spaces by providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas”. In addition, the Guidelines note that “landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest”. Landscape plans should “include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings” and “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10). The Guidelines express support for low-impact development, the goal of which is to “mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source” (page 11).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**