



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: February 16, 2016
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent Review of the redesign of the 17th Street Farmer's Market; UDC No. 2016-04**

I. APPLICANT

Jeannie Welliver, Department of Economic and Community Development

II. LOCATION

17th Street Farmer's Market and City rights-of-way bound by E. Main Street, S. 17th Street, E. Franklin Street and N. 17th Street

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

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

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project involves the extensive redesign of the 17th Street Farmer's Market, including the removal of the existing sheds, the modification of vehicular access on North and South 17th Streets, and the provision of an open-air plaza with flexible programming space in their place. The applicant's report notes that the redesign is intended to encourage both casual and highly programmed uses by providing a central open area, smaller outdoor rooms within bands of plantings and mature trees, pedestrian walkways, amenities including a fountain, and dedicated dining/retail zones for businesses fronting the square.

The Urban Design Committee found that the layout of the space, with expanded outdoor dining opportunities, outdoor rooms created with benches and landscaping, and an open air plaza with a "ceiling" of lights, creates an attractive sense of place.

The Committee appreciated how the design addressed recommendations from the conceptual review to retain and reuse historic materials, including cobblestones, to memorialize the historic street bed and form the access routes. They found that the different paving materials and brick banding help convey different areas of the plaza, and found the design sophisticated. There was a full discussion of the City standards for the various furnishings proposed in the plan, including café barriers, movable furniture, bike racks, and ornamental pedestrian lighting; the Commission supports the design elements as proposed, while also recognizing that there are constraints against undergrounding the utilities and using LED lighting in City standards that necessitated design modifications and compromises.

The Urban Design Committee consulted with the applicant and with the City's Pedestrian, Bicycle, & Trails Coordinator to discuss whether or not the design was

meant to contain a bicycle route as represented on the connectivity diagram, and if so, if the accommodations for cyclists already present within the design achieved sufficient bicycle access. There was also discussion of 6 public comment letters received, including one each from Bike Walk RVA and the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation, advocating for a dedicated path for cyclists through the plaza and the removal of cobblestones from such a route. Ultimately, the Urban Design Committee found the existing design to be sufficient for cyclists and attractive overall and so recommended no changes to the proposed design with respect to cyclist circulation.

Finally, there was much discussion of what the character of the plaza would be on the Franklin and Main St frontages, particularly regarding proposed locations for public art and the desire to extend the tree canopy of the plaza closer to the sidewalks on those streets. There were also some concerns that shading would be inadequate while the canopy of oaks is growing; the Commission suggested the addition of umbrellas to the design while necessary.

The Urban Design Committee found the proposal to be thoughtfully considered and is supportive of the plans to redesign the Farmer's Market. The Committee also found that the proposal is generally consistent with the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan. Staff also finds the proposal to be consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines. Therefore, it is the Urban Design Committee's recommendation that the Planning Commission grant final approval, with the following conditions:

- That the applicant consider the addition of two trees to add visual interest towards the Main St and Franklin St 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 St location designated for public art.

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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, S. 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 surrounding area is also zoned B-5 and M-1 and is developed with a mix of office, commercial and residential uses. Portions of the area to the east and south are densely developed, while land to the north remains vacant and unimproved. Main Street Station is located one block to the west of the market site. Conversions of former industrial buildings in Tobacco Row to the east and the Cold Storage area to the north, as well as infill development, have added scores of residents to the area in recent years.

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 rearranged 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.

Traffic on E. Main Street is two-way, with two travel lanes in each direction and some on-street parking, though there is none in the project area. Traffic on N. 17th Street is one-way northbound, with one travel lane and on-street parking on the eastern side. On E. Franklin Street, traffic is two-way with one travel lane in each direction and on-street parking, though there is none in the project area. Traffic on S. 17th Street is one-way southbound, with one travel lane and on-street parking on the western side. E. Main and E. Franklin Streets are composed of asphalt, while North and South 17th Streets are composed of granite cobblestones arranged in a fishtail pattern, with occasional asphalt patches.

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

In July 2014 the UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the conceptual plans for the redesign of the Farmer’s Market, with the following conditions:

- (1) That, prior to final review, the applicant provides evidence that the plans meet all applicable zoning regulations.
- (2) That the applicant considers going through the ordinance process to close North and South 17th Streets prior to submitting for final UDC review.
- (3) That the final plans more physically represent the history of the streets and the market within the paving patterns of the new streetscape.
- (4) 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.
- (5) 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.
- (6) 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.
- (7) That the final plans detail how stormwater drainage will be accommodated for the site.
- (8) That the final plans include a photometric lighting diagram.
- (9) That the applicant provides details on the proposed kiosk, including dimensions and exterior materials.
- (10) That the final plans include a landscaping schedule, to include plant species, quantity, and size at the time of installation.

- (11) That the understory landscaping be kept low as to not obscure sight lines.
- (12) That the applicant provides details on all proposed hardscaping, to include material samples.
- (13) 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.
- (14) That the applicant provides details on the proposed bollards and bike racks.
- (15) That the applicant considers providing two additional trash receptacles, one at each end of the plaza.
- (16) That the applicant considers using angled granite curb for the curb cut on E. Main Street, in place of the proposed mountable concrete curb.
- (17) That the applicant provide a connectivity plan, a growth/shade plan, a trash/delivery plan, and a management/programmatic plan.

The UDC reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the previous layout and improvements for the Farmer's Market in 1985.

d. Project Description

- e. This project involves the extensive redesign of the 17th Street Farmer's Market, including the removal of the existing sheds, the modification of vehicular access on North and South 17th Streets, and the provision of an open-air plaza with flexible programming space in their place. The applicant's report notes that the redesign is intended to encourage both casual and highly programmed uses by providing a central open area, smaller outdoor rooms within bands of plantings and mature trees, pedestrian walkways, amenities including a fountain, and dedicated dining/retail zones for businesses fronting the square.

In the project area, North and South 17th Streets are proposed to be raised to be flush with the adjacent sidewalks, creating a plaza roughly the size of a football field (approximately 130' by 350'). Within that area, the applicant proposes a 15' deep dedicated outdoor dining zone along each row of storefronts; the existing 6' brick sidewalk and granite curb will be retained and combined with a 9' area of reused fishtail cobbles to serve as the dining zone; the former roadbed is wider on the Eastern end of the plaza and so the cobble area there will total almost 19'. The original cobblestones of North and South 17th Street will be reset when the road bed is lifted flush with the square and sidewalks and the areas of cobblestone infill will be with matching material. The plans note that the outdoor dining furniture and enclosures will comply with the City's *Sidewalk Café Design Guidelines*.

Adjacent to the dining zones lies an 11' wide pedestrian walkway and access route running from E. Main Street to E. Franklin Street. The walkway design physically represents the history of North and South 17th Street and also provides controlled vehicular access for loading activities and other services through the plaza. Two bands of 3' wide x 6' long granite pavers run the length of the walkway, separated by two areas of reused fishtail cobbles.

The new "streets" do not have a raised curb line delineation; the marking of access route comes from material changes, furnishings, and limited use of bollards. Trees that were shown in the former street bed in the plans submitted

for conceptual approval have been removed from the project or shifted into the center plaza area so as to further preserve the legacy of the historic streets. The walkway boundary is now in the same location as the historic street curbs so that the historic street reads in the same location.

The applicant's idea is to restrict public vehicular traffic and access these streets from Franklin St. Times that the streets allow for deliveries will be set with the property owners and merchants along the square. Vehicles will access these routes from the Franklin St entrance and exit onto Main St. Retractable bollards will be located at the entrance/exit to each access route at each end. Both the Franklin and Main St edges of the plaza will have a wayfinding sign and map as well as a water fountain. The Western corner of the plaza near Main St will have a relocated ATM.

A parking valet program (customers will pay for the valet service) will be offered at the Main St. end of the square. There will not be a curb cut for this service, it will be offered as a curbside service.

The central plaza area, delineated by the sidewalks along Main and Franklin St and the access routes along the old roadbed of North and South 17th Streets, will be approximately 61' wide and 313' long. The plaza itself will be made of new 2' wide x 4' long granite pavers across the surface. Ten parallel bands of city-standard brick pavers extend across the plaza area to the edge of each walkway, delineating where Walnut Alley crossed the space and subdividing the plaza every 32'.

Inside the plaza area will be a series of planting beds of varying sizes and 96" long benches with armrest divisions to create various sized "outdoor rooms". Each planting bed will have one large caliper oak tree surrounded by groundcover plantings that will be a mix of evergreen shrubs combined with limited use of hardy deciduous material and short-stature ornamental grasses. There will be three different oak species in the planting palate: Willow oak, Nuttall oak and Overcup oak. A total of 20 trees, 6" in caliper at the time of planting, will be provided, along with under plantings, including shrubs of up to 24" tall. Tree and planting areas are shown with ornamental metal fencing.

The interior plaza also provides space for bicycle racks (a total of 4 rows of 4 racks each proposed) and smaller public artworks and historic artifacts. Movable chairs and tables will be present throughout the plaza area; the plan envisions 50 tables and 120 chairs. One gas connection for a seasonal firepit will be located in the plaza area, and two trash/recycling Big Belly cans will be located near the central area of the plaza.

A 30' x 24' pop jet fountain with programmable lighting will be at the center of the plaza area on the central axis of Walnut Alley. The pop jet fountain will be mounted in the larger granite pavers than the general plaza surface.

Twelve pedestrian-scale ornamental fixtures will line the cobble outdoor dining area as well as access walkway routes in the previous North and South 17th Street road beds on each side of the plaza. Eight taller 25' tapered steel poles located further inside the main plaza area will hold speakers, banners, security lighting and cameras, wifi equipment, and an overhead catenary cable system

grid containing festoon lighting suspended 25' above the paving surface. Other project lighting includes exterior LED uplighting at tree planting areas and LED integrated with the surface-mounted pop-jet fountain.

The plaza area can accommodate 75 vendor tents, assuming a 10' by 10' standard. Circulation will flow through the access routes on either side of the plaza as well as a central alley. The fountain will likely have to be turned off during such a layout to ensure circulation.

The project no longer includes plans to underground the existing overhead utility lines. Dominion has changed course on this over the past few years, and their final directive is that they will not allow undergrounding the transformers in the floodplain. The project applicant is now pursuing strategies to aesthetically improve the overhead lines, poles and overhead infrastructure. The applicant reports that Dominion is striving to reduce a couple of poles and replace the poles with fluted fiberglass poles, with the applicant recommending black poles to match the black city standard streetlights.

New stormwater drainage infrastructure ties into the existing infrastructure using trench drains in the streets; the site slopes gently upward from southeast corner to northwest corner.

The budget for this project is presently \$3 million. Once approvals are secured, construction should begin by Summer 2016 to be complete by Spring 2017.

f. 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).

g. 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**