

**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES**

Date: March 1, 2018

Meeting #253

Project: 250 W. Pratt Street – Plaza Improvements

Phase: Discussion

Location: 250 W. Pratt Street

PRESENTATION:

Steve Marker, Development Manager from COPT, began the presentation with an overview of the project and its goals. The new owner of the building, COPT is donating improvements to the city-owned plaza in front of the building on Pratt Street, which will include eliminating the existing berms and landscape, and a complete upgrade to the plaza space. Their goal is to contribute to the ongoing improvement to the Pratt Street streetscape, and to create an active and attractive public space, improving its security and aesthetic quality. The building's ground floor retail spaces will be maintained and their relationship with the plaza strengthened by direct entries from the plaza and potentially using the space for outdoor seating.

Alice Jones followed with a presentation of the plaza design. They began with a review of the context along Pratt Street, a spatial analysis of the existing plaza and the proposed uses for the plaza, and then walked through the design proposal for the plaza improvements. Many of the same design elements remain in the proposal from the previous discussion and Alice walked through some of the updates and modifications. The Pratt Street frontage eliminated the previous wave and now more closely reflects the guidelines as seen in other blocks for consistency. Additional plantings, trees, and large seating and meeting zones were further refined on the site. Hess light columns have been incorporated to both add pedestrian scale and lighting to the project but also reference other sites along Pratt Street which use the same lights.

Comments from the Panel:

COPT's commitment to upgrading the public plaza and contribute to the ongoing improvements of the W. Pratt Street streetscape was appreciated and the thoughtful presentation was recognized and very helpful.

The panel made the following suggestions for continued development of the design:

- Continue investigating the east of movement from Howard Street. To the main entrance. The diagrams depicted a more smooth movement through the space; allow that to help inform the continued design development in the site plan. Evaluate bringing in more gentle access and relaxing the severe axial relationship. Consider shifting the lawn panel or modifying the arc in order to retain the asymmetry but address the movement.
- Continue refining the planter on Howard Street. Investigate raising the planter higher to a 24" or 30" height to protect the pedestrian at a seated height but allow for visual connection over.

- Add layers/finesse the main entrance arc. Currently the arc seems too dark and created a very abrupt transition from the overall plaza which seems to be a barrier rather than inviting space. Find ways to soften the arc; investigate a tonal projection from the walk axis layered in the space. Keep the palette simple but mitigate the variety of moves on the plaza. Consider the ground zone at the building is expressed as its own element to help scale the arch; envision the retail base and 3 story entrance expression folding down onto the plaza with a walking zone along the building and then similarly scaled mat/arc at the entrance as a way to join the plaza with the formality of the building.
- Consider the final plant palette to assure that as they grow in, there is a softness to the plaza and is not hard scape dominant.
- Continue to work on the retail signage piece to develop a consistent framework that allows the retail base elevation to read as a wall to the outside space. Find ways to fold the ground plane into the retail read of the building.

Panel Action:

Discussion only.

Attending:

Evan Weisman, Steve Marker – COPT

Alice Jones, Matt Ellingson, Joe Ignatious – Floura Teeter

Ms. Ilieva - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Tom Stosur, Christina Hartsfield- Planning