

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

Date: December 14, 2017

Meeting #250

Project: 250 W. Pratt Street – Plaza Improvements

Phase: Discussion

Location: 250 W. Pratt Street

PRESENTATION:

Evan Walsh, Senior 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. They are in discussions with the adjacent restaurant owner about their use of the eastern side of the plaza as well. Upgrades will include relocating the existing bikeshare station to a more prominent location.

Joan Floura and Alice Jones followed with a presentation of the plaza design. They began with a review of the Pratt Street design guidelines, identifying how they were incorporated in the plaza design. An analysis of the view sheds into the site as well as some early conceptual studies were presented. Details of the proposed design were presented including the articulation of the building entry space with a curved feature in the paving, new plantings including a semi-circular lawn panel with a surrounding wall/bench, and new street trees and planting strip with an undulating edge along Pratt Street.

Comments from the Panel:

The panel applauded COPT's commitment to upgrading the public plaza and contribute to the ongoing improvements of the W. Pratt Street streetscape.

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

- The existing building meets the ground in a very stark and uncompromising way. The panel encouraged the introduction of elements along the building edge, such as trellises, trees, or new signage, to soften that relationship and create a more human-scale environment.
- The panel noted conflicts in the plaza design between the path of pedestrian movement to the building entry and retail spaces, and the seating areas. The panel encouraged developing a diagram that clearly identified the lines of pedestrian movement and creating a design that clearly defines them, differentiating them from seating areas.
- The panel emphasized the importance of the continuity of movement along Pratt Street, and supported the elimination of the existing berms and landscape to provide better continuity between the sidewalk

and the plaza itself. Some questioned whether the undulating curve was needed in the green strip along Pratt.

- The panel noted that lighting may be another important place-making element in the plaza design, which could be a powerful element to re-brand the building and the plaza.
- In general the panel felt the design contained too many individual elements and was somewhat fragmented, and would be stronger if simplified. Some panel members questioned the effectiveness of the design's circular motif.
- The panel noted the absence of trees on the west side of the plaza and encouraged introducing trees to provide shade, particularly over seating areas, and a needed vertical element. They also discussed the possibility of raising the planter along Howard Street to incorporate additional trees.
- The panel questioned if lease provisions for the two retail spaces might require stricter definition of the seating areas in the plaza.

Panel Action:

Discussion only.

Attending:

Don Kelly – 206 W. Pratt St
Evan Walsh, Dean Lopez – COPT
Joan Floura, Alice Jones, Matt Ellingson – Floura Teeter
Joe Kittner – JMT
Darron Cooper, Kyree West – BDC
Aaron Moore - GBC

Messrs. Bowden, Burns, Ms. O'Neill* and Ms. Ilieva - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Tom Stosur- Planning