



Meeting Summary October 16, 2019

Attendance

Panel Members: Fred Marino, Chair
Bob Gorman, Vice Chair - excused
Ethan Marchant
Sujit Mishra
Larry Quarrick
Juan Rodriguez - unexcused
Vivian Stone

DPZ Staff: Val Lazdins, Nick Haines and Kaitlyn Clifford

1. **Call to Order** – DAP Chair Fred Marino opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Review of Plan No. 19-15: The Mall in Columbia Refresh
Columbia, MD

Owner/Developer: Brookfield Properties
Architect/Engineer: JP2 and studio H26/Century Engineering

Background

The 62.33-acre site is comprised of Parcel 460 zoned NT. The existing Columbia Mall has access to Broken Land Parkway and Little Patuxent Parkway in the center section of Downtown Columbia. The NT (New Town) zoning accommodates pedestrian oriented, urban activity centers, with a mix of uses. The project is centered around the center outdoor courtyard and accessway on the western end of the mall.

Applicant Presentation

The Mall in Columbia project proposes renovations to the outdoor elements on the western edge of the mall. Improvements include removing the outdoor fountain and replacing the outdoor paved area with large lawn area and wide walkways. Adjacent the lawn a permanent stage area for performances or on which an inflatable projection screen can be set up for weekend movie events is proposed. Two large outdoor pavilions and a smaller seating area are also proposed for outdoor seating and relaxation areas. The eastern end of the concourse will contain a large shade trellis structure and additional seating areas. The updates include new decorative building materials, new lighting, and outdoor furniture. Enhancements to the building facades along the concourse are also proposed.

Exterior materials include glass, cast concrete, stained wood, decorative tile and pavers, and metal paneling. The design aesthetic for the concourse and plaza will create a “high-street” feel to the overall project in keeping with the design philosophy of the district.

Wayfinding signage updates are also proposed to be included with the design proposal to the mall plaza and concourse. The signage concepts will be placed around the mall property to provide both

vehicular and pedestrian direction to specific mall features and businesses. Proposed signage materials include frosted glass, wood slats, and colored aluminum.

Staff Presentation

The project is within the Mall of Columbia and subject to the requirements of the Mall in Columbia Design Guidelines. Staff requested that DAP evaluate site design and architecture - focusing on the, pedestrian pathways and pedestrian circulation, landscaping, furnishings, fixtures, plaza and outdoor entertainment area orientation and placement. Written comments from the public were received in advance of the meeting and provided to the panel and the applicant.

DAP Questions and Comments

Site Design

DAP commented on the proposed wall being added to the front of the site adjacent the promenade. DAP thought the wall would be a good idea for safety issues with preventing children from running out into the vehicular circulation, but it could cause poor pedestrian circulation to the mall itself. The wall and sign would limit entry points to the promenade to only two locations. Outdoor movie events on an inflatable screen or performances on the proposed stage located adjacent to one of the entry points would cause disruptions from pedestrians walking in front of the entertainment to enter into the plaza. DAP suggested moving the location of the stage to reduce the conflict with pedestrian traffic if the wall and signage were necessary. DAP recommended moving the stage to section labeled ccc on the site plan or the adjacent planting location containing honey locust trees. The applicant explained that having the two entrance points as proposed would align pedestrian traffic with the existing crosswalks promoting safe crossing, and that moving the stage to the suggested locations would create grading issues. DAP recommended looking at limiting the vehicular use of the road in front of the sign and potentially limit is only for emergency vehicles. Limiting vehicular traffic to the public could potentially help with pedestrian traffic during events.

DAP commented that the reason there is lots of congregation by the Starbucks entrance to the mall is there is coffee, food, people and movement. It was suggested that as people move through the promenade there are not as many vendors and consequently no reason for people to spend time there. Adding trellis and seating elements may not make people dwell in these locations. DAP commended the applicants on adding lighting to the trellis area and adding glazing to the roof covering to reduce heat. DAP suggested adding tint to the roofing for further protection. DAP also commended the applicants for utilizing weather proof furniture in the trellis areas to have areas for people to congregate. DAP liked the updated wayfinding signage the applicants were proposing but suggested making the font a bigger so its easily viewable for vehicular circulation.

Architecture

DAP suggested changes to the entries 5 & 6 pedestrian bridges leading to the mall entrance. DAP recommended adding planters and vines, arches, colorful banners, trellises, pergolas an off centered pitched roof with some kind of glazing. This would make the bridges to be more consistent with the architecture of the rest of the proposed updates. DAP suggested looking at the green and blue pedestrian bridge that crosses Route 29 as an example.

DAP recommended updating the graphic cover of the service door by entry 3 for truck delivery so it better blended in with the rest of the building.

Landscape

DAP asked if the applicants knew why the honey locust tree cluster nearest to the proposed entrance by Maggiano's died. The applicants said they have not been able to determine what happened as they have not removed the trees and done an in-depth study. The applicants explained that honey locust trees are the most durable trees planted in an urban environment and there are several other honey

locusts on the property that have survived. The applicants said they would make sure to enrich the soil in that area.

DAP asked the applicants if the reasoning behind the proposed artificial turf by the proposed sign was due to durability and maintainability. The applicants said the entertainment centers in urban areas are moving towards synthetic turf as the newer synthetic turf looks just like regular turf. The synthetic turf is more durable and with the proposed stage and inflatable screen utilized in that area for festivals and activities the applicants want to ensure they have a long-lasting product. The synthetic turf is going to be installed near the cluster of dead trees, and if there is already an issue with soil they do not want to install natural turf that could also die or erode. DAP cautioned that the synthetic turf will be evergreen and any natural lawn near it would pale in comparison, but stated that synthetic grass has been successfully installed in cities of Arlington, Virginia and Silver Spring, Maryland.

DAP Motions for Recommendations

DAP Chair Fred Marino made the following motion:

That the applicant study the relationship of the front entry drop off area and the plaza. The proposed wall, screen, stage, pedestrian safety and circulation, vehicular circulation, and pinch points should be evaluated. The applicant should go back and take another look at whole front area with any ideas or thoughts for the aforementioned comments provided. DAP member Larry Quarrick seconded.

Vote: 5-0

DAP member Larry Quarrick made the following motion:

That the applicant looks more at entries 5 & 6, the pedestrian bridge entrances at the side of the mall, to include enhancements the entries to make more inviting and less sterile. DAP member Sujit Mishra seconded.

Vote: 5-0

DAP Chair Fred Marino made the following motion:

The applicant continues the design treatments proposed along the service door adjacent to the food court entry to make the wall and entrance design consistent.

DAP Member Vivian Stone seconded.

Vote: 5-0

2. Other Business

The next DAP meeting will be on October 30, 2019.

3. Call to Adjourn

Chair Fred Marino adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.