

Exchange & Market Plazas
Stakeholder Meeting, November 6, 2013
Urban Design Center

Attendees:

Surface 678 (Surface)– Project landscape architects for the design of the plazas
Alliance Architects (AA) – Project team members, designers of 227 Fayetteville St.
City of Raleigh Urban Forester
City of Raleigh Parks & Recreation Facilities & Maintenance
City of Raleigh Construction Management
City of Raleigh Urban Design Center
Downtown Raleigh Alliance (DRA)
Downtown Living Advocates (DLA)
227, LLC – 227 Fayetteville St
Empire Properties – local property owner and 227 Fayetteville tenant management
Bolt Restaurant – adjacent business owner
First Citizen’s Bank

Inventory, Analysis, and Precedent Study Presentation – by Surface 678, Charles Bradley

Other project team members include Crenshaw Engineers (MEP), Falcon Engineering (Civil), LHC (structural), Light Defines Form (lighting design consultant), Alliance Architecture (Architect), and TW (surveyor).

The plazas are centrally located in downtown Raleigh. Within a comfortable walking distance one has easy access to most of downtown’s amenities. These include, but are not limited to, the Capitol, Moore and Nash Squares, City Plaza, the Convention Center, and the Red Hat Amphitheater.

In considering access transportation, there are many nearby parking decks and lots. The plazas are within a 10-minute walk to Raleigh Union Station. The plazas currently have immediate access to Raleigh’s major bus hub. While the Moore Square Transit Station is currently the main terminal, current plans call for the relocation of the terminal to be near the train station. It is planned that while Moore Square station will not go away entirely, it will be downsized.

An inventory was created to locate nearby entertainment and cultural resources such as bars, restaurants, and galleries. Many choices exist within a one-block radius.

Events were also mapped to reveal the site’s proximity to parades, races, festivals, and event venues.

Using DRA’s pedestrian count study, Surface created an intensity map to illustrate the intensity of pedestrian use in the surrounding area. Fayetteville has the most intense use and the plaza’s block has the highest number of pedestrians.

Surface created a model to illustrate the amount of sun/shade the plazas get in relationship to the surrounding buildings. Both plazas get quiet a bit of sun in the summer though Exchange gets less because of the height of the surrounding buildings. This exercise informed the designers where there is the most sun and most shade, which affect where people will want to be at different times of the year, where shade in summer is necessary, and where different plants can grow.

In terms of site analysis, Surface was able to determine building access points, drainage direction, service areas, cross slope, pedestrian movement patterns and potential conflict, location of heavy sun or shade, and other site constraints and opportunities. Outdoor dining and sensitive structural issues were identified such as the basement of 227 Fayetteville extending out into the plazas and the presence of an electrical panel that is too expensive to move in this design process.

Views into and through the site were also an important subject so Surface conducted a view analysis that revealed that with both plazas the passerby loses site of the ground plane in the middle, which acts as a deterrent for people to utilize the site because it creates the possibility for an unsafe environment. Another key feature of the project is that there are open views through the 227 building because of the clear glazing that wraps the building on the first floor. This creates an opportunity for the designs of the plazas to communicate with each other as a site visitor can look through and see the other plaza by standing in one and looking through 227.

The project boundaries for the site start at the edge of the Fayetteville Street, through both Market and Exchange Plazas and around the Wilmington Street side of 227 Fayetteville. Note that the sidewalk on Fayetteville will be updated to current City standards. There are many known utilities going through the site as well as some slope issues that will need to be worked out in the design.

Surface researched precedents for similar plazas in the United States and came across several that addressed the space well.

- Theater Commons in Seattle, WA, took an open plaza with simple, open ground plane and gave it a feeling of human scale enclosure through a series of screens that hung across the plaza to create a sense of a ceiling. The screens could then be lit with colored lights at night to provide lighting and activate the space.
- Lenfest Plaza in Philadelphia is a similar space where there is open, flexible space but it's activated by a dynamic long, curving bench that provides seating along with steps that could be used like amphitheater type seating.
- 49th Street Pedestrian Street in New York has a canopy that's created by tall trees. It's an open space with movable, flexible seating and is made dynamic with a fountain wall that draws people into the site.
- Mint Plaza in San Francisco has features such as rain gardens, fixed and movable seating, space for pop up markets, and a canopy of vegetation.
- University of Washington School of Medicine has a plaza that has a sense of a ceiling through intricate, delicate cabling system with globe lights, broad open space with fixed seating and vegetation along one edge.

Surface also looked at precedent images of paving and lighting patterns, unique benches, rain gardens, vegetation support structures, and ways to activate the space with programming that may inspire design in these plazas that need integrated lighting, seating, and stormwater systems and careful attention to details.

Surface is currently working through the schematic design phase and hopes to have a design by the end of 2013 or early 2014. Following this stakeholder meeting there will be an initial conceptual design process, a public meeting to share ideas, more schematic design work, review by the City and stakeholders, a final public meeting to present the preferred design, and, finally production of a final design and cost estimate by late December or in January. Summer of 2014 is the estimated time of ground breaking and there will be some form of a phased approach to ensure businesses have adequate access to their buildings throughout construction. Construction should take 6-9 months.

Stakeholder Comments, Concerns, & Ideas

Maintenance issues in current design to be avoided in future if possible:

1. 01 Pavers are in poor condition, many broken, sunken and are of obsolete styles so replacements are out of the question, pavers overall are difficult to clean and maintain
1. 02 227 spoke of water issues in their basement
1. 03 There is skateboard damage to planters, benches and seat walls, new design should either keep them off or be built to withstand the use
1. 04 There is poor drainage grades and the storm drain pipes are in poor condition
1. 05 There is dog waste, cigarette butts, and other trash in planters
1. 06 The areas behind the restaurant are greasy, dirty, and have deterring odors with the exhaust fan blowing into Market Plaza, Surface 678 noted that screening and ventilation will be necessary to separate the service area from the Market Plaza experience
1. 07 The restaurants currently dump mop water and food waste into Market Plazas storm drains
1. 08 Restaurants currently store trash bins in Market Plaza (David Diaz, with the DRA noted that trash bin storage is an issue throughout downtown because there is a lack of alleys)
1. 09 There is some irrigation in Exchange Plaza and none in Market Plaza
1. 10 The lighting in Market Plaza is from Duke Progress and there are issues getting repairs done, the City would like to transfer ownership from Duke to the City; Exchange plaza lighting is controlled by the City of Raleigh
1. 11 Bolt has a lease area that is not public and is currently set up in a manner that is not inviting
1. 12 Fayetteville Street events set up in Market Plaza
1. 13 Issues of vagrancy in Market Plaza include sleeping on benches and storing belongings in the planters
1. 14 The electrical panels in Market Plaza need to stay due to cost of relocation so they should either be screened or incorporated into the design. Access and code setbacks must be maintained. These panels control this portion of Fayetteville Street
1. 15 The marble on One Exchange Plaza is difficult to replace because it is an obsolete style, there are no plans to change the buildings façade. The glass is very expensive and difficult to replace so the design should avoid possibilities of damage
1. 16 The Japanese maples are in good shape, consideration should be made for the fact that it will be impossible to start a new tree in that space that will provide that amount of canopy
1. 17 The holly sheds a lot of its leaves which is a concern for the Quiznos
1. 18 There is great difficulty to maintain a lower story planting in the tree planters because of the soil conditions and competition for water
1. 19 The current public art in Exchange plaza will be moved for this project by the Arts Council
1. 20 Areas of lawn are discouraged because area overuse will not allow grass to grow

Specific business concerns:

- 2. 01 It is acknowledged that it is difficult for the plaza design that 227 is not set on all of its door access areas which remain flexible to accommodate future tenant needs and wishes
- 2. 02 Ideally the property manager for 227 is looking to have retail, active first floor uses
- 2. 03 227's basement must be protected from vehicles driving on top (other than small maintenance vehicles)
- 2. 04 Bolt has pedestrian traffic issues because its dining in the plaza is set up in the center as an island and both guests and wait staff have to cross an active pedestrian way, ideally the owner of Bolt would like to have their dining up next to the restaurant
- 2. 05 Bolt would like if there is fixed seating to be incorporated into the design that they can use for their business that it be constructed in such a way that it can be made comfortable for longer periods by accommodating cushions the restaurant would provide and maintain
- 2. 06 Bolt has some issues with the trees in the space, would like it to be more open, they would also like to see an open, flexible space that can use by permit for special events
- 2. 07 Bolt also mentioned that the number of local events with street closures make it difficult for his client basis because it changes peoples routes and makes it more difficult for potential clients to access his business – it's the same for others
- 2. 08 There are many people entering and exiting the main doors of One Exchange Plaza during business hours, the access to all the businesses along the plazas must have access during construction
- 2. 09 First Citizen's Bank's upper floors are currently empty and they are looking for tenants so they want to keep potential leasees in the loop, same goes for 227 tenants

Overall, surrounding businesses and residents are excited about the fact that the plaza will be redesigned. The DRA noted that the current space is not flexible enough to accommodate events or event planning, events would help activate the plazas. The plazas definitely need to be designed to keep in mind that there are 6,000 residents living downtown so the space needs to be an amenity to them as well as visitors and downtown employees.

David Diaz with the DRA noted that this is a prime opportunity for these plazas to take on a brand and be a landmark that people immediately recognize.