

# UDPRP Review Summary

Urban Design Peer Review Panel

DATE: 9.27.24

TIME: 8:30am

**PROJECT: Forest Theater**

LOCATION: City Hall 5ES

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## Overview

Below is a summary of the Urban Design Peer Review Panel's advice for the Forest Theater project as derived from the September 27<sup>th</sup> Peer Review session.

## Advice Summary

- [1] The Panel advises exploring a more seamless integration between the Harwood festival street and the adjacent public gathering plaza space. Design for an enhanced plaza experience with an emphasis on shared connections and transitions between the festival street and plaza.
- [2] The Panel recommends the community room at the corner have a more prominent entrance visible from the street and as guest arrive to the site, distinct from the loading dock area.
- [3] The Panel suggests embracing the highway as integral to the development by revising it for art practice spaces, lighting, public art installations, special events, and enhanced safety underneath I-45. Landscaping along the edge of the highway should be purposeful and coordinated with TXDOT.
- [4] The Panel recommends emphasis on shade throughout the site including at the south facade addition, roof terrace, and along the edges of the triangle green space property and the proposed lawn. Reforestation efforts create opportunities to improve air quality and public health around the interstate. Reconsider a double allee of trees along the plaza.
- [5] The Panel advises continued study at the neighborhood scale. Increase efforts to include properties on the west side of I-45 by incorporating St. Philip's School and Cornerstone Church into future connections and planning efforts. Plan for restoring street grid to many of the surrounding dead end streets.
- [6] The Panel recommends enhancing the street crossing from the off-site parking to the theater property and plan for additional lighting and crosswalk paint to maximize safety for pedestrians.
- [7] The Panel suggests using the bulb out near the corner of MLK and the Harwood festival street as a green infrastructure testing site that could be designed as a rain garden or bioswale.
- [8] The Panel advises activating the SM Wright Freeway facade with the ability to include visual art projections.
- [9] The Panel recommends prioritizing two entries to the theater instead of four. Design these entries in prominent ways with monument signage.
- [10] The Panel advises the applicant to make design moves that help catalyze future phasing and coordination with TXDOT.

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**[11]**The Panel suggests reconsidering angle parking and look at opportunities for higher value, strategic parallel parking spaces along the property. Consider a dedicated pick up/drop off space.

**[12]**The Panel believes that there is plenty of opportunity along the new south entry addition to contribute to the vibrancy and urban design of the neighborhood. Shading windows architecturally, canopy additions, or other architectural features can be enhanced to responds to the sensitive context within this southern sector of town. The applicant should consider homage to the existing historic building and take some of that interest and energy all the way around the building façade architecturally in a way that adapts early 20<sup>th</sup> century design into the future.

**[13]**The Panel recommends weaving all the neighborhood components into the Forest Theater campus design. Share the vision plan with stakeholders and continue to expand on the social and economic possibilities for Forest Theater and the surrounding neighborhood.