BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 7, 2010 **Meeting No.:** 106

Project: Downtown Zoning **Phase:** Discussion

Location: Transform Baltimore

PRESENTATION:

Laurie Feinberg, Division Chief of Comprehensive Planning of the Planning Department, provided an overview of the updating of the City's zoning code with particular emphasis on the downtown. Along with Laurie were the City's consultants Camiros, David Benn of Cho Benn Holback + Associates, and Rachel Edds.

The last time that the zoning code was updated was in 1971. Because of this, the zoning for the downtown area has become a mix of B-4 and B-5 (with little difference between the two) as well as a series of urban renewal plans that were band-aid approaches to changes over the years. Additionally, the current downtown zoning area includes the Mt. Vernon area, which causes problems in terms of use and character.

In order to simplify the code, develop new tools to grow and attract new development, and preserve the unique character of the area, one of the first goals was to update the boundary area for the downtown to reflect current development patterns and strategies. The area is now (approximately) bounded on the north by Center Street, to the east by President Street, the south by Key Highway, and the west by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Additionally, the boundary area extends to the northeast to include a portion of the Old Town redevelopment area and adjacent parking lots and southeast east to include Harbor East and Harborpoint. Abutting the downtown are the historic neighborhoods of Mt. Vernon, Jonestown, Otterbein, Ridgely's Delight, Fells Point, Seton Hill and Old Town.

Secondly, a series of guiding principles were established, in particular making all of the downtown a B-5 category with a single FAR. Other principles include a single use structure, street level building design guidelines, prohibiting new surface parking lots, creating controls for structured parking garages, and creating a uniform treatment for the promenade. Height limits were also presented.

In particular, the Planning Department and consultants presented the idea of creating "character zones" and "icons" to recognize areas within the downtown zoning area that needed special consideration, asking the question of whether these areas should have a different height limit. As part of this discussion, the treatment of entry gateways and

view corridors were also discussed as well as a presentation of modeling tools that the City could use to study proposed projects within the downtown.

DISCUSSION BY THE PANEL:

The Panel thanked the Planning Department and the consultant team for their thorough presentation, their public outreach, and the thought that has gone into the zoning recommendations. Points of discussion included the following:

1. The Panel believes it was a good idea to identify special character areas as well as icons, landmarks, and entry gateways. They also agreed that a change in height in these areas from the rest of the downtown zoning area was appropriate. Three of the areas presented – Redwood Street, the Government Center, and Charles Street – seemed right, while the fourth on Howard Street was questioned. However, the Panel felt that it was important to identify the purpose of these areas and develop the zoning code in a way that enhanced the particular areas and icons, which would address the areas surrounding the landmarks in scale, bulk, set backs, and design standards. In particular, the inclusion of set backs on Redwood Street were recommended because of the narrowness of the blocks – recognizing that the height of development on Baltimore Street could affect Redwood.

2. The Panel agreed that a transition zone on the east side of the downtown area that would step down in height to the adjoining neighborhoods was a good idea and suggested that this treatment might benefit other edges of the downtown area, such as at Seton Hill and Otterbein.

3. The Panel also recommended that taller "point" buildings could be located along the Inner Harbor but that these sites should be designated.

4. Questions about the difference between design standards (musts) and design guidelines (shoulds) were addressed. The Panel applauds the inclusion of design guidelines in the downtown, which would help in the review of projects, but cautioned that the Planning Department needed to be careful in the relationship between the two, and to make sure that the "musts" did not create a mediocre standard for development.

5. Use of modeling software that would allow a building's massing to be studied from multiple views, and the requirement of designers and developers to present their projects in this format, was also encouraged.

6. Finally, the Panel welcomed any future opportunities to review the zoning rewrite of the downtown as well as other areas of the City.

PANEL ACTION:

Discussion only – no action needed.

Attending:

Les Pollock, Arista Strungys - Camiros
David Benn – Cho Benn Holback
Carolyn Boitnott, Amelia Greiner – Citizens
Lorraine Mirabella, Ed Gunts – Sunpapers
Rachel Edds – Edds Consulting, LLC
Kirby Fowler, Nan Rohrer – DPOB
Nate Pretl – AB Associates
Molly Moyer – GBC
Ron Kreitner – Westside Renaissance
Jay Brodie, Paul Dombrowski, Colin Tarbert, Ben Stone – BDC

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg and Cameron – Panel
Tom Stosur, Laurie Feinberg, Alex Hoffman, Erv McDaniel, Anthony Cataldo, Eric Tiso, Bob Quilter - Planning

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 7, 2010 Meeting # 106
Project: Children's Hospital Addition **Phase:** Final

Location: 2401 West Belvedere Avenue; Sinai Hospital PUD

PRESENTATION:

Scott Davis of Hord Coplan Macht Architects reviewed the changes to the design since the last presentation. The changes included exterior landscape adjustments, a decrease in the size of the entry door and an increase in the width of paving directly outside of that door, as well as additional green roof areas near the play area at the upper level. Proposed materials were also described.

COMMENTS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel generally felt that the project had changed very little since the prior presentation and suggested that the design team revisit many of its schematic design assumptions with the intent of bringing more clarity and strength to this first phase of what promises to be a major new hospital entry experience. The areas to be re-addressed are as follows:

A. ***Landscape – Site geometry/relationships*** – Panelists expressed concern that the current handling of the angular geometry of certain elements of the scheme was awkward. One approach would be to make this angular geometry stronger through reinforcements such as consistent landscaping treatment to both sides of the entry, the use of paving patterns which might help in resolving the conflicting geometries, as well as reconsideration of the entry location and the design of the large covered open space which serves also as the entry to the existing building. A second suggested approach would be to abandon the angular approach all together and instead seek a "normal" (right angular) geometry that reflects the dominant relationship of the building to the drop offs and parking area.
B. ***Pedestrian Crossings/covered open spaces***– Concern was voiced about the clarity and lack of directness of the final pedestrian path from the building to the parking area. It was suggested that the path be more open ended (i.e not terminate at the stair block) and that it be placed under cover rather than open to the sky. This discussion raised the issue of the role and consistency of treatment to all other pedestrian crossings to the parking areas in the future. There was some concern that the large "open space" beneath the addition, which leads to the relocated existing building entrance, might be an uncomfortable area. Please clarify.
C. ***Entrance / Revolving door element*** – The Panel suggested that the entry element be restudied and that it have a stronger relationship with the relocated pedestrian crossing and the adjacent large covered open space.
D. ***Columns***– The Panel suggested that the size of the columns on the exterior be restudied.
E. ***Second level play area***– no further review

PANEL ACTION:

Final Approval withheld.

Attending: Dorothy Hellman – Life Bridge Health
Scott Davis, Brantley Davis, Josh Kilrain – Hord Coplan Macht Architects
Jay Brodie, Paul Dombrowski – BDC

Ms. Eig, Messrs. Bowden, Cameron, Ramberg – Panel
Gary Cole, Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter- Planning

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 7, 2010 **Meeting No.:** 106

Project: Lyric Theatre Expansion **Phase:** Re-Introduction

Location: Maryland and Mount Royal Avenues

PRESENTATION:

Jonathan Fishman of RCG Architects described the history of this project and its current budget and reduced scope. The substantial brick wall behind the stage is to remain and generally restored on the exterior, facing Maryland Avenue. A "crossover" passage from left to right behind the stage is to be constructed (attached to the exterior wall) as well as a new flyloft above the existing gable roof form. The flyloft will be zinc-clad.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

Members of the Panel commented as follows:

1. To express approval of "less is more" approach and also zinc colored material shown.
2. To express doubt about partial glass cladding shown for the "crossover" addition and disapproval of the "billboard" approach shown.
3. One Panel member expressed to the contrary some interest in the "billboard" approach and some transparency at the "crossover".
4. To express the view that the bridge to stair connection seems unresolved.
5. To express additional doubt about the "billboard" proposed as it seems the wrong place for such a marquee.
6. To suggest that a sign placed elsewhere would better direct one to the actual entrance.
7. To recommend an approach to the crossover that would better relate to the historic back wall as a whole. It would better take the form of a catwalk or fire escape attached to or responsive to the historic wall. A delicate metal structure might be expressed to advantage. A roof sloping away from the back wall could diminish the apparent height and bulk of a "catwalk".
8. To recommend that a future presentation might consist of alternative sketch studies.

PANEL ACTION:

None – Re-introduction only.

Attending:

Jonathan Fishman – RCG Architects
Sandy Richmond – Lyric
Mackenzie Paull – DPOB
Neb Sertsu – UB
Ed Gunts - Sunpapers
Jay Brodie, Paul Dombrowski – BDC

Ms. Eig, Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg, and Cameron – Panel
Alex Hoffman, Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter - Planning