

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

Date: May 16, 2016

Meeting No.: 226

Project: McHenry Row II, Phase One

Phase: Schematic

Location: 1215 East Fort Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21230

PRESENTATION:

Project Developer, Mark Saperstein, introduced the project by reviewing previous efforts on the 9.4-acre site. The former industrial area has been in conversion to a mixed-use development at the center of which are fields for the South Baltimore Little League. Mr. Saperstein described the efforts for improving the quality and character of the landscape throughout the site, including the fields, the addition of sidewalks to improve connections between the fields and the adjacent neighborhood, and improvements within the CSX easement to the south of the site, in order to facilitate deliveries to buildings along the southern edge.

Mr. Jerry Simon of Lessard Design reviewed the existing conditions of the project's adjacent parcels. The history of the site includes use by Coca-Cola and Philip's Seafood prior to the mixed-use development efforts. There is a commercial-use building immediately proximate to the proposed apartment structure. A sunken courtyard will unify the new and existing buildings.

Mr. Simon continued to describe the design intent for the new apartment building, citing the warehouse vocabulary existing on the site, as well as other contemporary elements, including the use of red as an accent color. In addition, this insert building – between the newly completed 600-car garage and the existing commercial building – and its amenity elements were reviewed.

Mr. John Kraft of Kimley Horn Landscape Architects described the landscape elements and streetscape of the project area, and the intent of “marrying” Phase One and Phase Two by expanding upon the vocabulary of previously implemented landscapes. Mr. Kraft also acknowledged the use of stormwater elements as a means of creating an amenity within the habitable areas of the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

In general, the Panel found the approach to the project thoughtful and appropriate. The massing is articulated well. Additional “erosion” of the building's massing will make the form too eclectic and potentially confusing. The inset balconies are a “bit too random” as distributed presently. They should be used to organize the façade.

The general consensus of the Panel is that the red branding element is poorly placed on the Harper Street elevation. It bridges the element between the apartment and the garage, which will result in an expansion joint, and it doesn't acknowledge any key feature or focus of the interior programming of the building (such as a lobby or important entry). If this element is to be expressed on the façade, it should be about prominence and use, not simply decoration or a superfluous application. The process of refinement needs to continue. It is less about adding and more about editing the composition.

The landscape is well articulated and the site furnishings are contemporary and handsome. Connections along the entry drive are not yet meaningful and require a design exercise that considers greater context. The site lighting strategy should be revisited holistically. Applied definitively, this will unify the complex. Consider redefining the main streetscape to reinforce and intensify the walking experience: use street trees consistently and evenly along the main drive. The "marriage" between the commercial property and the new apartment is thoughtful and appropriate, as represented in the sunken plaza.

While the design intent was well received, the presentation was confusing. When next meeting with UDARP, please provide north arrows on all plan drawings. In addition, provide greater context for the discussion. Provide enlarged plans for legible review. Provide sun/shadow studies for the review of publicly-accessible spaces. Coordinate section and elevation markings with plans. And, please consider more frequent use of perspective studies to allow the Panel to understand what is seen from a human scale.

PANEL ACTION: Recommend Schematic approval with comments

Attending:

Mark Sapperstein – Developer

Jon Kraft, Michael Casey – Kimley Horn

Scott Slosson, Alex Mandel – 28 Walker

Jon Manshaw- BBJ

Jerry Simon, Priya Sambasivam – Lessard Design

Stanley Fine – RMG

Natalie Sherman – Baltimore Sun

Messrs. Bowden, Haresign, Rubin* and Ms. Ilieva - UDARP Panel

Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Matthew DeSantis, Wolde Ararsa - Planning