

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

Date: February 2, 2015

Meeting # **236**

Project: Metro Heights at Mondawin

Phase: **Final**

Location: 2700 Reisterstown Road, Baltimore, MD 21215

PRESENTATION:

Ron Wilson, Director of Housing Initiative for Enterprise Homes introduced the project design team and the context for the multifamily housing building. The project received Schematic Phase approval on July 28, 2016, and received extensive commentary. Mr. Wilson noted that, based on HUD guidelines, the Noise Impact studies required removal of exterior public space from the development that are adjacent to Reisterstown Road and Liberty Heights Avenue, including the corner balcony and ground level space for sitting and play areas. The bio-retention area has also been removed.

Nancy Liebrecht, architect with Marks Thomas Architects, and Lydia Kimball, Landscape Architect with Floura Teeter Landscape Architecture reviewed the areas that were studied in further detail in response to comments from the Schematic Design review, including:

Building Massing

- Face of buildings align with immediately adjacent existing facades along both Reisterstown Road and Liberty Heights Avenue, and step out in approximately 2' increments as the masses approach the corner
 - In response to the panels suggestion for further study of the stepped façade along Reisterstown, the architect shared a model that adjusted street fronts that fully eliminated the stepping, and reduced from 3steps to two steps in the street wall
 - Architect suggests maintaining in current plan configuration
- 4 alternate studies of the corner porch and balcony; design team preferred alternate with a 3 story flush façade with the mass biased toward Reisterstown Road, above a large canopy on the primary façade that wraps the corner toward Reisterstown
- Color Studies of a variety of the façade, with a selected alternate 1
- Reisterstown elevation – modification at secondary entry slot with continuous canopy, and upgrades to upper story
- Alternate studies of Liberty Heights, with selected alternate matching Reisterstown elevation

Site Development

- Street trees are provided in a planting strip adjacent to the street, providing requested sense of separation between the street and pedestrian
- As required HUD guidelines, seating areas at main corner entry and southwest alley
- Adjusted corner entry plaza, stair access, ramping and immediate entry forecourt
- Proposed community-inspired sculptural art adjacent to the intersection
- Railing details and planting plans

Comments from the Panel:

The Panel found the design progression inadequate in response to the comments provided during the schematic design review and the presentation not fully developed for a Final Level Review. The panel

strongly suggested that the design team re-evaluate the specifics of the initial Schematic Design review in addition to the comments provided at the last meeting. The panel offered the following comments on the studies that were provided:

Building Massing

- The selected design approach to the corner with a 3 story flush façade above a canopy is acceptable. The panel made the following specific suggestions for further consideration and study:
 - Adjust the location of the bay to a more traditional relationship to the corner, centered on the flanking walls
 - Center the entry doors on the stair from the Art Plaza
 - Either re-introduce a front porch that comes to grade with contemporary columns, or improve the canopy design.
 - Porch or canopy can be inset from the edges of the front façade of the corner bay
 - Further refine the corner bay with interpretative mullion spacing, and thoughtful spandrel treatment
- The panel was split and somewhat ambivalent about the steps in the major mass segments, and leaves it to the developer and architect to decide on the final approach. An approach that best responds to the overall elevation design and bullet item below would be most productive.
- In lieu of identical treatments to both street facades, consider alternative treatments, as noted in the Schematic Design comments, of Reisterstown and Liberty Avenue facades that relate more strongly to the scale and character of existing architecture on both streets. Subtle changes in masonry and cementitious panel color and texture can also facilitate the different readings.
- The canopy at the Reisterstown secondary entrance seems over-scaled for the importance of the access point. Consider reducing to a canopy over the entry door.
- Consider providing a full story masonry base and differentiating the top with alternate shades of cementitious board along the alley elevation. Introduce scale detail that breaks the length of the façade, recalling the box bay rhythm on the street facades.

Site Development

- Street trees as proposed are a significant improvement from the Schematic Design proposal.
 - Reevaluate need for two easternmost trees on both Reisterstown Road and on Liberty Avenue
 - Carefully consider increasing width and detailing of tree pits, consistent with current informed practice
- Proposed Art Plaza is an improvement to address the intersection
 - Eliminate low plantings at the edges of the Art Plaza. Focus energy around the sculpture.
 - Reconsider geometry – semicircle versus angular resolution driven by street geometry
- Reintroduce a generous public access to the entry forecourt
- The panel was ambivalent about the direct stair access shown on the current proposal versus forecourt planting separation on Schematic Design. The design and ownership team can select a final direction, with the following comments in mind:
 - If the corner entry stair is retained, focus on entry and resolve the geometries
 - Consider an entry forecourt geometry that is more sympathetic to the bay and porch/canopy geometry
 - The plants in beds should not obscure the entry canopy, though they can focus or direct views
 - Planter walls should be seating height as much as practicable
- Reevaluate the sidewalk and planting at the secondary entrance. Do not allow planting to interfere with the canopy.

- Railing details and planting plans appear headed in the right direction

Panel Action:

Recommended further development of Final Design development with comments above.

Attending:

Ron Wilson, Enterprise Homes

Nancy Liebrecht, Marks Thomas Architects

Lydia Kimball, Floura Teeter Landscape Architecture

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

Thomas Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield - Planning