

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

Date: December 1, 2016

Meeting No.: 234

Project: Warwick Avenue Apartments

Phase: Discussion

Location: 300 Warwick Avenue, West Baltimore

PRESENTATION:

Architect Peter Fillat introduced the project to the Panel. The program, as defined, consists of 80 apartment units, supporting amenity functions and 51 surface parking spaces. The site is located along Warwick Avenue and is positioned between the MARC rail line to the south and an existing one-story industrial warehouse to the north. The “C” shaped plan fronts onto Warwick Avenue and is positioned diagonally across the site, parallel to the MARC rail line, creating a dynamic expression as a counterpoint to the existing city grid. Exterior materials proposed by the Architect include masonry, cementitious panels and ribbed metal panels. Site amenities proposed include two social gathering spaces to the north between the project and the existing one-story warehouse. A covered porch or loggia is proposed along Warwick Avenue for socialization opportunities.

PANEL COMMENTS:

SITE/URBAN DESIGN:

In general, the Panel expressed support for a new residential project in West Baltimore but questioned the appropriateness of this project within an existing industrial/commercial context and several blocks removed from an established residential neighborhood. Given these contextual and locational disadvantages, the need for “connectivity” acquires greater importance. To that end, the Panel was pleased that portions of the building, including the entry lobby and social amenity space, embrace Warwick Avenue, reinforcing the existing network of streets and sidewalks.

Although the Panel appreciated the dynamic nature of the building plan and its diagonal placement across the site, concern was expressed about the nature and quality of the resultant open space. The Panel questioned whether the triangular shaped spaces between the proposed building footprint and the existing warehouse were socially purposeful. Concern was voiced that a landscape architect had not been involved in the placement of the building, the formation of meaningful open space and the advancement of a strong streetscape design which would promote urban connectivity and contextual continuity.

The absence of meaningful collaboration between the architect and landscape architect was further manifested in the lack of matriculations on site to suggest clear designations of public, semi-public and private open spaces.

ARCHITECTURE:

Overall, the Panel felt the architecture was too “institutional” in nature. In particular, the Warwick Avenue façade and front porch/loggia conveyed a rather stark expression void of the idiosyncrasies and nuances usually associated with residential projects. The nature and design of the loggia appeared to be more like a retail arcade in its sensibilities than a “front porch” for residents to gather and socialize. The Panel encourage the Architect and Developer to employ more “referential elements” like French balconies, and bay windows in concert with a more playful pattern of varying window sizes and shapes.

Changes in both exterior material and fenestration appeared arbitrary and did not reinforce the massing concept or promote a more convincing architectural narrative. The Panel questioned the employment of strong vertical bay projections, combined with a “non-directional” grid and frame applique; instead of emphasizing a more horizontal expression which would reinforce the “sweeping” nature of the proposed massing. The exterior treatment appeared to be “disconnected” to the exuberant expression of the building massing. The Panel urged the architect to restudy and reconcile.

PANEL ACTION:

Discussion only.

Attending:

Natalie Sherman – Baltimore Sun
Al Barry – AB Associates
Eugene Poverni – PSG
Peter Fillat – Fillat + Associates
Steve Mogno – Foundation Development

Bowden, Burns*, Haresign, Illeva, Rubin –UDARP Panel
Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Kyle Leggs, Martin French,
Matthew DeSantis – Planning Department