

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

Date: March 11, 2015

Meeting No.: 200

Project: 301 East Cromwell Street – Sagamore Distillery **Phase:** Schematic

Location: 301 East Cromwell Street, Baltimore, MD

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Scott Veith (Ayers Saint Gross) presented the Schematic Design for the Sagamore Whiskey Distillery proposed for 301 Cromwell Street waterfront property with occasional interjections by Shawn Batterton from Sagamore. A visual description of Sagamore Farms was offered, with a focus on both the existing structures that populate that site and the quality and character of the rural landscape. In particular, Mr. Veith acknowledged the desire of the client to utilize Sagamore spring water in the making of Whisky on the waterfront site.

Mr. Veith also described the industrial history of the proposed waterfront site, including an old distillery found on historic maps. In more recent history, the site was used for the distribution of coal and other materials by train to the piers along the waterfront. In addition to presenting the visual history of the site, including large cranes and other industrial site elements, it was acknowledged that the site and piers are set between large shipping docks and the oversized vessels that periodically sit adjacent.

Finally, Mr. Veith acknowledged the typology of distillery and brewing buildings, in particular those found in Ireland, as precedent for the proposed structures at 301 Cromwell Street, and the desire to have an active distillery with all of the inherent processes, a restaurant, and visitors' center, along with visitor parking and back-of-house necessities.

A simple diagram was presented as the starting point for the distribution of the program buildings, demonstrating a logic and narrative for the site through the arrangement of geometric shapes. In addition to those elements of the distillery, a waterfront path is set along the waters' edge, separating the docks from the proposed buildings with their 100' setback. This east/west element is intended to offer connection with future adjacent development. It is the goal of the concept to "embody the spirit of Sagamore" on the site.

The program buildings separate three courtyard, the first of which is intended to serve as a visitor gathering space and for "heavy" programming. It is bound by three buildings and a trellis structure that separates the space from the adjacent road, as well as a water tower and fountain. The second courtyard serves the proposed restaurant, and the third acknowledges the adjacent estuary in its character.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The panel acknowledges that there are too many typological references in play presently (too many themes), and that although there is a desire by the client to acknowledge Sagamore Farm, the transference of a rural agrarian typology is in conflict with a post-industrial, estuary-adjacent site. In addition, both agrarian landscapes and industrial landscapes are about efficiency, not “pleasure”, and while they can be and are beautiful in their own aesthetic, simplifying the design elements in distribution and character will improve the clarity of the narrative, and more effectively reference the “spirit of Sagamore,” as desired. Strive for elegant simplicity (either the character of the farm or the traditional brewery/industrial environments), not overly-referenced, mixed metaphors. Perhaps revisit the current schemes with the simple, powerful diagrams of the concept in hand.

Site and Building:

- Within the context of oversized ships and an industrial waterfront, scale is an important factor in the success of the proposed effort. Cromwell is a road of significant size, as well. Strive to work with the authorities to have that portion of Cromwell that is immediately adjacent to the site adjusted in scale or character to positively inform the proposed project. The road should “go through the park”; the site shouldn’t simply be adjacent.
- The theme of “spring water” is disingenuous to the amount of energy and effort it will require to haul the water to the site, pump it up to the water tower, and use it in the process. Perhaps a more appropriate reference to water should involve what qualities and characteristics make Sagamore water so appropriate for the distillation process. Or, how cleaning the Baltimore’s estuary strengthens the prospect of industry. The story of water at this location is about the water’s edge, not about trucked water. Perhaps develop a narrative about the cleaning process of water and Sagamore’s sustainable practices. Presently, the narrative is too narrow and lacks authenticity.
- Consider walling the parking “corrals” as one would find in an industrial site. It will strengthen the edge condition of the property, both on the west side with visitors and on the east side with the docking trucks. Where there is parking, please utilize permeable pavers. Again, the theme of water can be pervasive.
- The physical architecture should reflect a level of sustainability that allows for their character and disposition to be an integral part of the distillery story.
- Simplify the first courtyard (plan) to reflect the efficiency of industry and a typical distillery environment. Wavy lines and curvilinear edges are not a part of this vocabulary. Consider rethinking the water tower to reflect the characteristics of the former industry that stood on this property. Compositionally, consider the tower and the adjacent trellis as part of the same vocabulary.
- The panel was extremely pleased at the inclusion of a waters’ edge path system – the first of future development, and the gestures for connecting across Cromwell, even though there is nothing to which connection can be made at present. Ensure that design elements along the water path are genuine in nature, not trivialized or pastiche.

- Develop a conceptual approach to the pier in the same manner as the current project is being developed to ensure that a holistic design can be rendered when that element comes on line.

PANEL ACTION: Recommend continued development addressing the above comments and a return Schematic presentation.

Attending:

Joel Fidler, Scott Veith – Ayers Saint Gross

Andy Dawson – WRT

Jesse Lindsay – WBCM

Kristine Adey, Shawn Batterton – Sagamore

Kevin Lynch – SouthBmore.com

Cynthia Jones – SLIA

Joan Floyd – RNA

Eric Lyons – FTLA

Natalie Sherman – Baltimore Sun

Patrick Shelly – McGuire

Raven Thompson - BDC

Dr. Meany, Messrs. Bowden and Rubin* - UDARP Panel

Director Tom Stosur, Christina Gaymon, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa, Theo Ngongang