

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

Date: April 30, 2015

Project: Canton Crossing Residential

Phase: Schematic

Location: Cardiff Street and Highland Street

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Jeff Price, representing the developer Pollack/Shores, introduced the project to the Panel. The project site is located within an existing P.U.D. and is bounded by Danville Avenue to the south, Cardiff Avenue to the north, Baylis Street to the west and to the east, South Highland Avenue. As described by Mr. Price, the program includes 350 residential units, 557 structured parking spaces and ground level retail along Cardiff Avenue.

Mr. Michael Poole, Principal with Poole and Poole Architects, presented the project schematic design components. They include a five story structured parking garage along Cardiff Avenue and, on the southern portion of the site, a five story residential block above a one story parking podium. Mr. Poole indicated that existing deed restrictions prevent residential use on the northern portion of the site along Cardiff Avenue. Exterior elevations presented indicate the use of a variety of materials including masonry, cementitious panels and Hardy plank.

Mr. John C. Murphy, representing several heavy industrial uses located just south of the proposed residential project, addressed his clients' concern for the project as presently designed. He indicated that Danville Avenue is currently closed and used as an active service yard for his clients' industrial businesses. He raised concern that the residents occupying apartments along Danville Avenue could be subjected to severe noise and visual intrusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

Given the adjacent industrial uses along Danville Avenue, an existing garage along Baylis Street, a proposed garage along Cardiff Avenue, and an existing "big box" retail center along Highland Avenue; the Panel questioned the desirability/viability of the proposed low rise residential approach. Within this surrounding context, the Panel expressed concern that as an isolated residential enclave, it lacked any "connective thread" to existing residential neighborhoods.

The inherent "walkability" of the site, promoted by the Development Team; was not convincingly demonstrated to the Panel thru a comprehensive streetscape strategy and landscape plan.

The Panel questioned why the major asset of the site, proximity to the harbor and the potential for commanding water views; was not exploited thru a more dense high rise approach verses the proposed sprawling low rise scheme presented. With respect to the design of the low rise scheme proposed, the Panel offered the following comments:

STREETSCAPE/URBAN DESIGN:

1. The Panel noted that the narrow width (seven feet) of the sidewalk along Cardiff Avenue was not sufficient to accommodate retail generated pedestrian traffic nor did it provide for an opportunity to create a positive pedestrian experience.
2. The Panel expressed concern that all of the surrounding sidewalks, ranging in width from seven to ten feet; were not sufficiently wide to create a meaningful “walking” environment able to accommodate pedestrian traffic, landscape treatment and street trees.
3. The Panel expressed concern that the “sidewalk” along Danville Avenue was not adjacent to a public accessed street and likely not to be a positive pedestrian experience. As designed, this ten foot zone is depicted as a hardscape buffer between the proposed project and adjacent heavy industrial uses. The Panel recommended a significantly wider buffer zone with the ability to accommodate a Bosque of trees.
4. The Panel noted that successful pedestrian sidewalks are almost always fronted with active ground level uses. With the exception of limited retails uses along Cardiff Avenue, the remaining ground level uses in the project are devoted to parking.

MASSING AND ARCHITECTURAL FENESTRAION:

1. The Panel expressed concern about the “bulk-like,” monolithic massing of the project and the long continuous façades along Baylis Street and Highland Avenue. With the exception of minor balcony, window, or cornice projections, there were no significant setbacks in the façade to visually breakup the massing and reduce the scale of the project.
2. The attempt to disguise the parking garage as part of the residential component contributed to the appearance of a “super block”. The Panel felt the garage façade could be less “fussy” and more distinguishable from the residential component.
3. The Panel raised concerns about the lack of a clearly identifiable and appropriately scaled residential entrance. As currently designed, the two dual entrances appear as “side doors” or secondary entrances.
4. The Panel was disappointed that, with the exception of limited ground level retail along Cardiff Avenue and two minor residential entry points; the entire ground floor was devoted to parking. It was felt that such a dominant ground level use would not contribute to creating active and meaningful pedestrian environments.
5. The Panel noted that the Design Team did not affectively screen the ground level parking and that the architectural base needed additional study in the context of the overall façade composition.
6. The Panel felt the facades seemed overly complicated and busy. A calmer visual approach, with a limited palette of exterior materials would be merited.

PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS:

As a Panel charged with both Architectural and Urban Design review, it is critical that the surrounding context of proposed projects is fully described thru site plans, site sections and elevations. To that end and for future presentations, the Panel requires the Design Team to provide the following:

1. Site sections depicting the scale and scope of proposed and adjacent buildings.
2. Street elevations depicting the facades of both proposed and adjacent existing buildings.
3. Site plans which identify proposed streetscape improvements and are placed in the context of adjacent existing streetscapes.
4. Photographs of existing surrounding context.
5. Detailed streetscape plans which identify sidewalk width, paving material, planters and street trees.

PANEL ACTION:

Approval of schematic withheld.

Attendees:

Jeff Price – Pollack/Shores
Michael Poole – Poole and Poole Architecture
Caroline Hecker, Esq. and Stanley Fine – RMG, LLP
Bob Rosenfelt – CMR
John Coppe - Riparius
John C. Murphy – Attorney
Natalie Sherman – Baltimore Sun

Christina Hartfield, Anthony Cataldo, Wolde Ararsa, and Tom Stosur – Planning
David Rubin, Rich Burns*, Gary Bowden, and Judith Meany – UDARP Panel