

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

Date: February 18, 2016
Project: North Avenue Gateway II

Meeting No.: 221
Phase: Discussion

Location: 3044 West North Avenue, between Rosedale and Longwood Streets

PRESENTATION:

Anthony Cataldo introduced the project and Mr. Kevin Bell, representative of the WODA Group. Mr. Bell noted that this project is WODA's 3rd multi-family project in the neighborhood. Two previously developed buildings, North Avenue Gateway IA and IB are immediately south of the proposed North Avenue Gateway II. The proposed project will remove some existing blighted homes, and replace it with a new 4 story affordable multi-family building. The project has received state low income housing tax credits financing. Mr. Bell introduced the project team to discuss context and preliminary project design.

Mr. Keith Sullivan, architect from Marks Thomas, provided a detailed overview of the context. Mr. Sullivan noted the sites location in the Walbrook neighborhood within the Greater Rosemont and Mondawmin Area (GRAMA) Master Plan. The site is several blocks east of Walbrook High School; and Gwynn Park, south of Hanlon Park, and south west of Coppin State University. Within the immediate neighborhood, the blocks immediately west are predominantly commercial along North Avenue. East of the site along North Avenue, row houses establish a residential character. Two row houses immediately east of the project site have been successfully renovated; there is a turreted row house on the corner of Rosedale Longwood Street that has a collapsed roof and floor structure. The site also is a transition point from multi-family buildings to the west and the row house scale of the neighborhood to the east, and immediate north. Mr. Sullivan provided photographs of the immediate neighborhood context, including photos to be demolished, blocks in the immediate vicinity on all cardinal points, and the new development immediately south. The site has significant grades of approximately 20' from the high point at the northwest corner to the low point on the southeast corner.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the development statistics:

- 4-Story wood-framed building
- Approximately 82,000 gross square feet
- Sixty-five one, 2 and 3 bedroom units
- 2,100 sf of retail

Urban design goals include:

- Continue revitalization of North Avenue by redeveloping an area with a high rate of vacancy and decay
- Develop North Avenue as a walkable mixed-use corridor
- Maintain residential character of the neighborhood

- Support city-wide effort to increase tree canopy
- Increase visual appeal of neighborhood through landscaping and “greening” of projects
- Transform vacant lots from liabilities to contributing assets that provide social, economic and environmental benefits

Mr. Sullivan presented the proposed site design, typical and ground floor plans, and building elevations. Key points include:

1. Site Plan
 - a. The building is a long bar parallel to North Avenue
 - b. Retail is located at the southwest corner closest to existing retail beyond N. Rosedale
 - c. There is a main building entry for the multi-family residential and community rooms approximately midblock
 - d. There is an offset in the building footprint, with an approximately three foot shift immediately east of the entry
 - e. A landscaped break occurs between the recently renovated HABC row houses and the eastern end of the new building, and continues to the alley behind the site
 - f. The decrepit turreted corner row house at the corner of W. North Avenue and N. Longwood Street is demolished and replaced with a row of trees, a hedgerow and a lawn
 - g. The rear yard is fenced and gated
 - h. A drive aisle slopes down from N. Rosedale Street to a double loaded parking and loading precinct, and rear access to the ground floor service area and lobby
 - i. A fenced community garden for building residents is provided between the concrete alley and Herbert Street, with a short face on N. Longwood Street
2. Proposed Building Massing and Elevations
 - a. Articulation along the front façade is intended to be sympathetic to the facades of the Phase I Buildings A and B
 - b. There are three major masses, with a vertical blade and predominantly glass tower marking the entrance
 - c. Vertical blades articulate each end and allow for a material shift
 - d. Two bays are proposed for each major building mass that flanks the entrance
 - e. Materials are a combination of red brick with cement board
3. Landscape Design
 - a. Ms. Lynette Pinhey from Human & Rohde provided an overview of the landscape architecture, including a discussion of street trees, planting against the building in non-retail and building entry areas, the pocket park, the rear yard and the community garden

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PANEL:

The panel was generally complimentary of the general direction for the project. Specific panel comments for further study included:

1. Site Plan
 - a. The panel suggested further study of the proposed entry, including location opposite the building breaks and articulation at Phase 1. A more significant setback could set up an effective forecourt at the main entrance to the building.

- b. The panel questioned the lack of a front yard as the block transitions from commercial to the west to more row house typology with large front yards to the east, and requested the design team to reconsider. Creation of front yards could occur east of the main entry. Could the first level units push in to define that zone?
 - c. The panel noted that the break in the street wall between the renovated HABC row houses and the new block seemed inconsistent with the established street wall along W. North Avenue, and suggested consideration of shifting landscape to the front yards.
 - d. The panel noted that the long two way drive access to parking in the rear forced a very large dedication of open space to paved drives.
 - i. The panel requested the team to evaluate other alternatives, including a one way drive aisle
 - ii. Potentially starting the ramp sooner, and increasing the ramp slope to allow for tuck-under parking to start sooner
 - iii. With a narrower one-way drive aisle, provide a planted screen between the drive aisle and the 10' alley
 - e. The turreted row house at the corner of W. North Avenue and N. Longwood Street plays a symbolic role marking an intersection and the end of the rowhouses. Could the development team and the city work together to restore the row house?
2. Massing and Elevations
- a. The general massing, with adjustments noted in Section 1 above, was embraced
 - b. The panel requested that the W. North Avenue and N. Rosedale Street elevations be placed in context with the adjacent buildings, extending partway into the adjacent blocks
 - c. The team may reconsider the secondary blades at the east and west ends of the building, either further diminishing their height or using a less significant transition device
 - d. Bay fronts are an important scale device in the row house areas of this neighborhood. The panel suggested increasing the number of bays to fit the rhythm of the street beyond, and developing a contextual rationale for height and placement.
 - e. Consider capping the top of the windows with masonry in lieu of cement board.
 - f. The panel will be interested in the development of the cement board joinery.
3. Landscape Design
- a. Consider extending the street trees to create a continuous planting row along W. North Avenue in lieu of breaks at the retail and building entrance
 - b. Provide larger scale paving and planting plans and sections, particularly along W. North Avenue

PANEL ACTION:

Discussion only, no panel action was taken.

Attending:

Faith Nevins, Keith Sullivan – Marks Thomas Architects
 Fred Thompson – Gower Thompson Inc.
 Lynette Pinhey – Human & Rhodes, Inc.
 Zebulin Culver, Kevin Bell – The Woda Group
 Joe Corson – The Blue Book

Mable Gordon – Citizen for Community Improvement
Earl R. Elsey, Jean Elsey – GBGW Neighborhood Association Inc.
Jon Munshaw – BBJ
Klaus Philipsen - ArchPlan

UDARP Panel Members – Ms. Pavlina Ilieva, Messrs. Gary Bowden, Rich Burns and David Haresign*

Planning Department- Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Chad Hayes, Theo Ngongang, Tamara Woods