

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

Date: October 20, 2016

Meeting # 232

Project: Somerset Multifamily Apartments

Phase: Schematic

Location: McElderry and Aisquith Streets, and N Central Ave
Oldtown Mall, Baltimore MD

PRESENTATION:

Dana Henson, Vice President of The Henson Development Company introduced the project design team and the context for the mixed use, retail and approx..104-unit multifamily housing building. The new 4-story building occupies approximately ½ a city block immediately east of Oldtown Mall. The proposed +/- 121,000 sf, 4-story building is a portion of the first phase of the approved Master Plan for Oldtown Plan.

Mel Thompson, Architect and Principal with Grimm + Parker presented the podium building with retail fronting McElderry Street, at grade loading access and a parking ramp to a lower subgrade level of structured parking from an alley accessed from Aisquith Street, and access to at grade parking located below the residential floors and behind the retail. The building is carved along the alley on floors 2 – 4 to create two landscaped courts, and to provide light and air to the liner units. Façade studies include contemporary brick, cementitious rain screen panels, window wall and storefront, massed in a base-middle-top organization. The center entry includes a canopy and larger scaled windows, and the prominent corner at Central and McElderry is marked with larger expanses of window wall and a white grid. The secondary corner at Aisquith and McElderry is marked with less exuberant window wall. The long McElderry façade is broken into five major massed with some façade relief and material change. The alley façade includes implied bays.

Comments from the Panel:

The Panel found the project presentation generally incomplete with respect to illustrating and explaining the physical context of the proposed building and the relationship of the building organization, entries and site circulation to the surrounding area. The panel recommended that the project team provides site plan and aerial drawings/diagrams that reference surrounding street and building edges with corresponding street names and graphic symbols as well as context blocks massing (existing and hypothetical) for elevation and perspective views.

The Panel was generally pleased with the design direction of the building, and offered the following comments that address recommendations for further development:

- **Site Organization and Landscape Design**
 - The panel recommended that further development of the site in conjunction with a project landscape architect in order to examine important site relationships and opportunities for a cohesive urban environment. Consistent vegetation strategy is required along all street edges and the remaining landscape on the site.
 - The panel suggested eliminating some street parking immediately in front of the primary building entry on McElderry to provide a proper forecourt.

- Consider aligning the entry lobby and its portico with the new north-south street that fronts the village green, or centering the lobby/portico on the village green.
- The panel requested further study of the loading access.
- **Building Organization and Articulation**
 - The panel praised the contemporary architecture of the project and preliminary materials selections, with reservations about the joinery of a Hardie-like cementitious panel.
 - The panel praised the depth of setbacks and massing moves suggested in the drawings.
 - The panel requested the design team to study the seemingly more traditional cornice expression along McElderry, and to develop a consistent attitude about the topping of slots, e.g. those that flank the entry dropping the cornice.
 - The panel asked the team to consider the design of the alley wall on the ground floor with possible penetrations and green screens, if the landscape architect agrees.
 - The panel will be looking for greater detail of window walls and operable sections, the wall systems detail intersections, retail and building signage, and exterior lighting as the project

Panel Action:

Recommended approval of Schematic Design development with comments above.

Attending: Dana Henson, The Henson Development Company
 Mel Thompson, Grimm + Parker
 Ronald Miles – Dunbar Coalition/Change4real
 John Morris, Catherine Benton-Jones – Change4Real

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

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Tamara Woods - Planning