

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

Date: April 14, 2016

Meeting No.: 224

Project: Port Covington Master Plan:
East Cromwell Street and
East Waterfront Districts

Phase: Discussion

Location: Port Covington and Cromwell Street

PRESENTATION:

Ms. Caroline Paff, Vice President of Sagamore Development, reviewed areas of the Master Plan which received prior UDARP action and identified issues and opportunities in the planning of the East Cromwell Street and East Waterfront Districts.

Mr. David Manfredi, Principal with Elkus/Manfredi Architects, presented refinements to the East Cromwell Street and East Waterfront Districts. As described by the Architect, East Cromwell Street, from Hanover Street to West Peninsula Drive, is proposed as a six lane divided Boulevard. The proposed 190' wide Cromwell Street right of way will accommodate pedestrian and vehicular circulation, a 14' foot wide bike lane and linear bio retention zones on both the north and south side of Cromwell Street. As East Cromwell crosses over West Peninsula Drive, the entry point to the Under Armour campus, the street transitions from a six lane commercial Boulevard to a two lane neighborhood street accommodating parallel parking on both sides.

The Design Team has proposed a large urban plaza which will be defined by East Cromwell Street and the Under Armour Campus to the south, Violet Street to the East, Red Street to the north and West Peninsula Drive to the west. The 3.3 acre civic plaza will accommodate a strong visual and pedestrian axis from Founder's Park to the Under Armour Campus and public waterfront.

As conceived, the East Waterfront District is defined by a four block section along East Cromwell Street starting at Violet Street and terminating at White Street. The scale of the buildings and street grid proposed is intended to be more fine grained and of an intimate neighborhood scale. Critical view corridors to the waterfront along this section of East Cromwell are provided at Teal, Pink and White Streets.

PANEL COMMENTS:

The Panel complemented the Developer and Design Team on a thoughtful and comprehensive presentation. The refinements to the Port Covington Master Plan within the East Cromwell Street and East Waterfront Districts were, generally, well received. The Panel did offer specific comments to the proposed refinements to these Districts.

EAST CROMWELL STREET DISTRICT:

- Although the Panel did acknowledge the possible need for a six lane divided Boulevard from Hanover Street to West Peninsula Drive, in order to accommodate vehicular traffic to and from the Under Armour Campus, they questioned the scale and width of the proposed 190' foot wide right of way. The Panel felt the width, comparable in size to East Pratt Street at the Inner Harbor, isolated the south side of the project and presented challenges with future connections to the Lock Insulator site should it be redeveloped. The Panel challenged the Design Team to reduce the width of the right of way. Suggestions offered included eliminating one or both sides of the parallel parking and/or Bio Retention zones.
- The Panel raised concerns about the circuitous bike path proposed from the west side of Hanover Street to the Urban Plaza and Violet Street. The proposed bike path route, which would direct bike traffic to cross East Cromwell to the north side at Purple Street and then back to the south side of Cromwell Street, seemed influenced by the desire to avoid conflict between bike traffic and vehicular traffic generated by the Under Armour Campus. As proposed, the circuitous path forces bicyclists to cross six streets within a four block area. The Panel strongly recommended that the bike lane remain on the south side of East Cromwell which would reduce the number of street crossing down to four.

URBAN PLAZA:

The Panel acknowledged that at this stage in the Master Planning/Development process the final nature and programming of the proposed urban plaza cannot be determined. Recognizing that it is a relatively large open space of approximately 3.5 acres, the Panel offered comments intended to enhance the chances of a successful and meaningful open space.

- The major conflict point in the Urban Plaza appeared to be at the intersection of Violet Street and East Cromwell where pedestrian, vehicular and bike traffic converge at one point. In order to reduce this conflict, the Panel strongly recommended that Violet Street be reoriented to be parallel with Teal Street and consistent with the street grid of the East Waterfront District.
- The Panel noted that successful urban plazas are almost always defined and contained by continuous building street walls and massing. To that point, the Panel felt that additional study was needed as the lack of continuous building street wall on the north and south side of the Plaza allowed and encourage the open space to “filter out.”

- The Panel raised some concern about the location of a parking ramp to the underground garage on the west side of the Plaza. Additional study seems to be merited in order to visually screen this element.

EAST WATERFRONT DISTRICT:

Although the Panel appreciated the fine grained scale and intimate character intended for the block north of the Distillery and between Pink and White Streets, they felt further study was needed to understand the vehicular and pedestrian circulation and the nature of the proposed open spaces internal to this block. Are the proposed open spaces parking lots, green lawns or hard surface plazas for open air street markets? Why does Coral Street not have parallel parking if this block is intended to be retail/shopping focused?

- The Panel expressed some concern about the lack of definition/clarity in the design nature of the open space at the north east terminus of East Cromwell. Is this space intended to be a pedestrian plaza or a valet court for hotel visitors?

PANEL ACTION:

Discussion only.

Attendees:

Frank Grauman – Bohlin Cywinski Jackson
 Jacob Kain, David Manfredi – Elkus Manfredi
 Liz Williams, Michael Pokorny, Caroline Paff, Steve Siegel – Sagamore Development
 Ryan Barth, Marbara Mosier, Addison Palmer, Susan Williams – STV
 Brandon Rowe – Bohler
 RJ Eldridge – TDG
 Betsy Boykin – Core Studio Design
 Mike Blier – Landworks Studio
 Ronnie Younts – YDI
 Jennifer Dowdell, Chris Streb – BioHabitats
 Sam Minnites – WSP/PB
 Kevin Lynch – SouthBMore.com
 Klaus Philipsen – ArchPlan
 Graham Young – DOT

Ms. Ilieva, Mssrs. Burns*, Bowden, Haresign – UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Tom Stosur, Christina Hartsfield, Tamara Woods, Brent Flickinger,
 Matthew DeSantis – Planning