**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**

**URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** March 31, 2020 **Meeting** #31

**Project:** Yard 56, Phase 2 **Phase:** Schematic

**Location:** 5601 Eastern Ave.

**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Tamara Woods introduced the project on the former Pemco site – 2015 is the date of the first PUD, but that was repealed and replaced. Development plans, final design approvals and building heights were carried over into the new PUD. Currently the retail component and street infrastructure at the east side of the site are under construction. Bob Northfield then introduced the project and team and gave some additional context. The site is a 60-acre brownfield that is being developed as mixed use. Today’s discussion will focus on Phase 2 of the project – the 3-story medical office building and 7-story multifamily building.

Project Priorities:

* Maintain strong east-west pedestrian connection
* Respond to the PUD guidelines for street scaping and build-to lines

**Medical Office Building:**

The medical office building aims to create a gateway into the Yard 56 project area and act as a pedestrian terminus. A stormwater management park to the north makes for a nice view from the upper floors. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation concentrated at the east edge of the building, with parking garage behind (south) of the building, which creates two main entrances – one at the front (north side) and one at the parking garage (south side). First floor will have commercial use on Bayview Ave. with a flush walkway to promote seamless transition between blocks – materiality is taken from Phase 1. Site slopes approximately 5’ from north to south and 10’ from east to west. Building features an open glassy corner at the northeast, a combination of brick (two colors) and darker inset panels.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Panel thanked the project team for their clear diagrams. Before transitioning to the residential building, the panel chose to ask clarifying questions and give comments for this building. Questions were related to the seating area, drop off capacity, use of the corner piece, retail access, and streetscape requirements set forth by the PUD.

**Site:**

* Opportunity to have container plants added to the ground-level senior center’s outdoor seating area. Adding as much planting as possible will improve outdoor experience. That side of the building, including the street scape along Eastern Avenue should have a softness and lushness that reflects use and needs of users. There should be no sole reliance on the SWM pond/park on Bayview's campus.
* Brick site wall along Eastern should be made from site materials instead of the building materials; sloped walls do not match the language of the building – instead this should be terraced with additional taller plantings to help screen the busy road from the terrace.
* North entry stair in general needs more study – opportunity to push the stair closer to the corner and create a more generous entry sequence:
* The main entry landing on Eastern Ave is very tight at 6ft.  Explore making this bigger, possibly recess the entrance to give more breathing room.
* Treads on the stairs should be more generous at 15” instead of the standard.
* Explore the possibility of reorienting the entry stairs parallel to the building.
* Explore changing the orientation and placement of the ramp – current location is cumbersome for pedestrians coming along Eastern Avenue.  Consider moving to Bayview Ave and doing an arrival / lobby at the corner location in the tower.
* Potential to move stair on to corner.
* More successful approach between site and building on the Bayview Ave side.
* Circulation can be cleaned up – remove redundancy in crosswalks / mid- block crossing from the south elevation to the garage.
* Confirm that the length of the drop off space is enough.
* Look again at pedestrian connections and walk paths along Bayview and Eastern Avenue with particular detail in navigating grade shifts and entrances.

**Building:**

* Idea of the corner reads well, but signals entry point – opportunity for something different. Corner statement needs to be bolder at the top (looks coplanar w/ signage).
* Façade has too many motifs and interruptions; clarify by having a simpler background piece (change in material and spacing of piers on the northwest corner is not needed)
* Let the minor facades fade into the background more
* Look for motifs from context around the site - Needs to see more context along Eastern Avenue to better understand how the MOB fits into the context of Eastern Avenue (church to the west, retail to the east). How does the MOB relate?
* Tonality of brick should be more different from the smaller one-story retail. Consider coding brick colors. For example, tan can be used to reflect certain uses, i.e. entry points and ground retail
* Consider a weather protection device (canopy) above the seating area at the northwest corner (Senior Center) to also help emphasize the material differentiation between the east and west side of the building.

**Apartment Building:**

225-unit building wraps the precast double-bay parking and retail component on Bayview. This building is directly adjacent to the 3-story medical office (south). The taller portion of the building (7-stories) along Bayview and building steps back toward the south to give a little more room between sidewalk and building. Residential lobby entrance breaks with the formal geometry to act more like a vertical marquee and the opening to garage is treated to have a porte cochere experience that will be friendlier to pedestrians. Materiality strives to break down the large scale of the building.

***Additional note from Planning Department*** – a small “park” improvement is planned as part of John Rurhah Elementary School INSPIRE project for the DOT-owned parcel at Foster Ave. and Umbra Street (southwest corner of PUD site). Mary Colleen Buettner (Planning) is working with Yard 56 project team on improvements and connections.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Panel asked clarifying questions and gave comments together in order to make the most of remaining limited time.

**Site:**

* Overall vibrant and textured feel from the renderings – this needs to be reflected in the planting plan to become a reality.
* Look at additional strategies for quiet areas to enhance the outdoor environment.
* Green space seems to be circulation oriented only. Add in more meaningful respite greenspace/ pocket areas for users besides benches in the streetscape. This part of the site should feel more residential and a transition from the more retail / office parts of the PUD.
* Expansive amounts of pavement off of West road and loop access road behind the building. Work to reduce this pavement and possibly eliminate the loop road by consolidating.

**Building:**

* Bayview Garage entrance directly adjacent to the apartment lobby entrance is problematic to pedestrians and the feel of a pedestrian-friendly street; consider moving the entrance to West Drive so that space can be given over to a pedestrian gathering area instead.
* If the garage entrance remains, consider pushing the lobby entry in to give more room
* Tucking the parking into the building is very successful
* Reusing the same brick inconsistently around the site is confusing – team is urged to set some rules for materiality- materials should have relationship to volume *and* program. Brick does not make sense as an appliqué. The use of brick on the MOB is more successful than on the residential building. Explore other materials and brick as it relates to the volumes and program as an expression of the uses and volumes. For example, the color may change as planes and volumes intersect.
* Additionally, think about the urban design moves related to the brick – use light brick to define and reinforce these (ie. Eastern Avenue, community access, ground floor retail)
* Greater differentiation between the parts will work to benefit the overall read
* Massing is well-crafted - massing and openings are fresh and current, but need greater differentiation to help define the parts of the building.

**Next Steps:**

Continue design addressing comments above.

**Attending:**

Robert Northfield, Theresa Lucarelli – BCT Architects

Al Barry – AB Associates

Tyson Woodby – HCM

Jamie Lee, Patrick Reid , Joshua Neiman, Scot Foster – Project Team

David Bramble, Jaye Matthews, Michael Dobkin, Dan Henson – Attendees

Mr. Anthony, Mses. O’Neill, Ilieva, Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Laurie Feinberg\*, Ren Southard, Chris Ryer, Tamara Woods, Matthew DeSantis – Planning