

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

Date: May 6, 2020

Meeting #46

Project: Service Center

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: 2507 Howard Ave., Remington Neighborhood

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Evan Morville from Seawall introduced the project, which is modeled after a project in Philadelphia and will be the first of its kind in Baltimore. Apartments will be offered at a discounted rate to residents who volunteer on a hyper-local level. The program includes ground floor retail, office at the second level, and four stories of residential above for a total of six stories.

Gordon Godat from JP2 Architects continued the presentation with an overview of the site, which is located on Howard Street and bounded by alleys on the south and east, and rowhouses on the north. There are rowhouse and commercial uses across the alleys on the south and east sides. The existing building is a two-story masonry building and the existing structural conditions would limit the height of the building, so the team has proposed an “exoskeleton” to enable additional vertical development. Articulation of the existing building’s façade will be maintained, and windows covered in a previous renovation will be re-exposed.

Discussion

The Panel thanked the project team and proceeded with clarifications, questions and comments.

Clarification:

The team addressed the following comments from the previous UDAAP Session:

- *What are the materials on the 4-story vertical addition?* The team has not fully resolved the material, but a “brick look” is preferred. Traditional brick is not feasible due to the weight and the limitations of the new structure. Team is considering a thin brick

material, but there is a strong emphasis on the details with soldier course and inset in portions to ensure the authentic look of any material selected.

- *What is the setback on the south side with the balconies?* Approximately 15'.
- *Please clarify the exoskeleton structure:* The existing building does not have adequate footings and will not support the additional 4 stories. The team will maintain the second-floor level and will adjust the ground floor to level. New vertical addition will be wood-framed and braced along the south side, outside of the existing façade.
- *What are the immediate adjacent uses to the north of the site?* There are residential buildings, and the team has already reached out the owners. The townhouses are built into the hill, with the rear at grade and the front dropping away to expose a portion of the basement. The uses along the south are commercial.
- *What is the impetus behind saving the masonry structure since the structure is so limiting?* Building was purchased in 2014, and the structure is fine for the existing building, but will not support additional vertical development. The development team prides themselves on reusing and salvaging buildings, and this project fits with that aim.

Site:

- Project, mixed-use, program is commendable, as is the team's effort to save the existing warehouse.
- North side against residential buildings needs more study; consider relocating the residential entrance to the north side to differentiate the experience for residents from the office / retail use.
- On the south side, the ground plane and entries need more organization and creative thought about using the grade to an advantage.
- Consider using a terraced strategy to navigate the changing grade and multiple entries set by existing and different floor levels.

Building:

- The Panel questioned whether the 4-story addition really needs to adopt the quasi-industrial language and read as an extension of the existing building. Setbacks clearly make it something new. Additionally, new fenestration does not align with the existing.
- New mass should read as a separate and provides an opportunity for differentiating between the old and the new. As designed, it reads as top-heavy.
- Addition could be more clearly distinguished as something new by taking on a different materiality. Look at the postindustrial quality of the neighborhood and consider using a

non-brick material. Something lighter and more ethereal would align better with the limitations of the structural system.

- Use the exoskeleton as an opportunity to set up what happens above in the new building – there is an opportunity to align the new structure and the new window bays. Establish datums for the exoskeleton and use them to rationalize the new building; consider bringing the exoskeleton further up into the new building.
- Placement of the upper addition – it is possible to shift the massing to allow for balconies on both north and south sides (even if they are different depths). Exoskeleton is an opportunity to reimagine the project; explore ideas through a series of simple massing diagrams to study where the new mass should be located.
- The façades need to be more distinguished based on the immediate context (front, side, etc). The front of the building (Howard Street elevation) needs to look more like a front on the upper floors.
- Placement of graphic on Howard will add unnecessary noise. Team should consider exploring a recess at the middle portion of the addition, allowing the north and south sides to read as volumetric instead of a single flat surface. This will add relief to the massing, even if the impression is small, and give more importance to the corners.
- If the addition does intend to be an extension of the existing building, it needs to respond to the existing language more.
- Canopies need to be tied to the datum of the structure and should be placed with purpose; current placement feels random and overdone.
- New building has changed dramatically; awnings and additive elements detract from the raw authenticity of the warehouse. Understating the exoskeleton is necessary; edit down the elements that are not necessary. The old warehouse should express itself with honesty and establish a clearer relationship to the vertical addition.
- Cap at the top needs more study as does the area connecting old and new.

Next Steps:

Continue design addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Gordon Godat, Jack Byrnes – JP2 Architects

Evan Morville – Seawall Developers

Kelly Lindow, Jessica Krueger – CityScape Engineers

Ed Guntz – Baltimore Fishbowl

Jessica Lannetta, Caroline Hecker, Brandon Brooks, Klaus Philipsen – Attendees

Mr. Anthony, Mses. Ilieva and O'Neill – UDAAP Panel

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