

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

Date: December 23, 2021

Meeting #56

Project: 804 N. Franklinton Road

Phase: Schematic Design II

Location: 804 N. Franklinton Road

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Architect Jerryn McCray reintroduced the project, which is a 42-unit multi-family residential with 33 parking spaces. The project is located in West Baltimore, near the MARC station. The site consists of a warehouse building, a portion of which will be preserved. Immediately adjacent to the site is a church, a tall multi-family building, and a city-owned park to the north.

The project has evolved, with revisions based on comments from the previous presentation. Previous intent was to simplify the building and push it to the rear of the site and focus on the interplay between the preserved façade and the new building.

Today's proposal responds to comments with following design drivers:

- Determining how the new building addresses the street / attitude to the existing grid;
- Not letting efficiency of the building footprint get in the way of good design;
- Preservation of courtyard, usable space that honors the existing building;
- Clarifying ingress and egress to minimize confusion;
- Organizing circulation and studying points of overlap between pedestrian and vehicular traffic;
- Using the landscape to create a continuity of experience between the interior and exterior of the building and buffer the irregularity of the site with a beautiful, usable space.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked Mr. McCray for the presentation and for including process sketches, as they are very helpful for understanding the progression of the design. The Panel asked clarifying questions, followed by comments. Note that Panelist Ms. Bradley was unable to attend the meeting but has supplied written comments.

Clarifications:

- *How has the street grid influenced the parti of the design; the over-arching grid is primarily east-west, but the street where the site is located is diagonal?* The building lends itself to rectilinear shape because of the residential use and is aligned to face the dominant (diagonal) street frontage.
- *What is the difference between amenity spaces and common spaces?* Amenity spaces will have more programming (gym, etc.) and the use will be fixed, the common spaces will be flexible (party room, for example).
- *Please clarify the units; what are the sizes?* There will be 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units. Some of the amenity spaces do not require windows, and have been located to absorb points within the building that would not suit residential units.
- *What is the materiality?* The team has not finalized the materiality, but a repetitive pattern wrapping the building would possibly be fabricated in some kind of metal trellis. There would be transparency at the ground level, especially at the front.

Site:

- Kudos on the ability to interpret comments and advance the project.
- Moving the building closer to the street is a good move; however, the overall massing as it relates to the street needs more resolution.
- Placement along the street establishes a strong urban presence; the 10' setback is generous and creates a nice buffer between the new and old, but the weaving of the new structure and the existing (old) façade needs more work so it is more integrated.
- Building massing and the residual space between the church could benefit from an exploration of the grid that aligns with the cardinal directions.
- Explore the courtyard, play off the space between the building. There is compression occurring in the courtyard, it will be an interesting little space, but needs more work in resolving conflicting geometries. Avoid introducing additional angles and geometries (property line fence) and work to organize existing in a contiguous fashion.
- Enormous opportunity to develop a warm, welcoming landscape with planted areas along the street edge and at the main entry. This will help with the institutional look of the renders. Relatively small community feeling building; the more the building is wrapped in landscape will help it feel more nestled into the neighborhood, and will help it feel like "home" for the residents.

Building:

- In general:
 - Layering starting at the curb edge is nice, and highlights the interesting features of the project, but needs to be clarified into a few distinct elements - existing brick, porous balcony/loggia, building façade, etc..
 - Transparency at the street level is good; consider paving elements at the street and how they engage with the building to pull from the outside in.
 - Slimmer volume is appreciated; small design opportunities can be realized as the project advances.
 - The existing cornice shown in renderings is out of scale (too large); If the cornice needs to be replaced, it should be sleeker and smaller as not to overwhelm the skeletal facade.

- Layering:
 - Keeping the new building closer to the façade helps with the interplay, but the façade still feels objectified; balconies help the building to claim the wall; a few suggestions to improve the connection:
 - Allow the structure to be tied more to the building – this will help the existing façade to feel more integrated and less planar. Consider horizontal members connecting the two facades and articulation with the balconies;
 - Consider preserving an additional segment of the existing building and allow the brick to turn the corner so it reads more as a masonry volume rather than a plane;
 - Use balconies as intermediate layer by visually overlapping/sliding between the two facades, like those closer to the church, which creates a more layered feel.

- Lattice / abstracted street grid element:
 - This detail appears overused – a more strategic approach of its application would be more successful. Decoration can be fine but if overplayed it will appear fussy. Be reserved with occurrence of this element; be selective in where it is placed. Keep the lattice to significant openings – the gate to the garden and the entry, for instance.
 - Use a diagrammatic approach to develop more clarity about how the abstracted street grid elements are placed to enhance special aspects of the project
 - More reserve will help with the design rationale while also reducing the cost of the building.
 - The massing is successful in addressing the irregularity of the site; but the lattice fence reinforces and highlights the challenging geometry of the site. Underplay

the fence and move it further into the site and buffer it with vegetation so it conforms to the design and not to the property line geometry. A more subtle approach will improve the quality of the outdoor space and make it more cohesive with the adjacent church lot.

- Materiality:
 - Building is appropriately efficient, materiality is humble; the interstitial space is the opportunity for this project to shine. Housing component should remain very straightforward and uncomplicated.
 - Material palette should be simple, selective, and elegant. Interplay of solids and void can be highlighted by the heaviness of the masonry (which needs to feel more massive) to contrast the delicateness of the trellis.

Next Steps:

Address the panels comments above and work with Planning staff prior to returning to UDAAP.

Attending:

Jerryn McCray – Architect

Carla Ryon – Colbert Matz Rosenfelt

Mason Campbell - Colbert Matz Rosenfelt

C Hill - Owner

Klaus Philipsen - journalist

Ed Gunts - journalist

Jessica Lanetta - BBJ

Jonathan Moore

Shae Hite

Johannes Kettler

Mr. Anthony, Ms. Illeva – UDAAP Panel

Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Chad Hayes– Planning