

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

Date: July 8, 2021

Meeting #48

Project: Cross Keys Multifamily Building

Phase: Schematic II

Location: 5102 Falls Road

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Scott Scarfone from Kimley Horn gave a very brief overview of the PUD and site circulation. Mr. Scarfone then gave a detailed overview of the planting plan and explained how the team had addressed the landscape comments given by the Panel at the previous UDAAP meeting. The team explored options for parallel parking but decided to proceed with the head-in parking proposed initially, added a wider buffer between the building and Hamill Road (moving the building back approximately 5' - 6') and explored options for the main entry plaza, including plantings and special paving.

Phil Casey from CBT Architects continued the presentation with an overview of how the team addressed the Panel's comments on the architecture, specifically:

- Addressing the massing by responding to context – it was suggested that the building be organized into smaller volumes scaled for two city blocks rather than a single mass; the team addressed this by allowing the massing to read as a courtyard building and a bar-building.
- Organizing the façade and simplifying the articulation.
- Introducing scaled elements and more hierarchy through glazing, metal and brick.
- Scaling back the southeast corner to allow for views around the building and to preserve the sightlines.
- And re-thinking the amenity space and entry sequence.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for the presentation and for providing a clearly organized presentation that addressed many of the previous comments. They continued clarifications, questions and discussion together in the interest of time.

Clarification:

- *Does the southeast corner of the building need to be orthogonal, or could this be eroded or rotated more to give more space at the corner?* The team has explored options, but further pushing the building will result in loss of residential program; the building is currently pushed back as far as possible against the existing flood plan setback. Geometry of the building doesn't follow Hamill Road – building is currently pivoted to follow the western site boundary because of the flood plain and sewer easements.
- *In the northeast corner, what is happening with the topography?* The site drops away toward the Jones Falls flood plain area on the west, and there is a retaining wall that begins at about 2' tall and ends around 8' at the garage entrance.
- *Is there an opportunity to place parking along access road?* The grade is a little steep and parallel parking is not desirable in that location.
- *Townhomes along Hamill Road transition around the corner, is there an opportunity to wrap around the corner with additional residential program?* The team has tried to bring the residential around, but the parking requirements limit the amount of residential frontage at grade on the south side of the building.

Site:

- Some very nice organizational approach, but amenity jewel box and courtyard are surrounded by parking is not ideal; seem that this element wants to be more special and having the cars so close will change the character of the space.
- If the head-in parking at the front entrance is necessary, consider a more natural path or geometry that is a little more organic to allow people to flow through the site. As designed, the orthogonal parking is very inconvenient to pedestrian paths of travel.
- Consider the future of pedestrian traffic - as people circulate from the future office building to the retail area they will pass by this building and have to navigate between the parking, planter and courtyard.
- On this point, the "jewel box" volume could become longer and thinner to allow more breathing room between the parking and the building. This would allow the courtyard to become more elongated. All entry elements and amenity volume need further study for greater flow and cohesion.
- Entrance plaza may not need so much paving; this could be scaled down in favor of more vegetation.
- Plant palette is lovely but consider alternates to Buxus and Euonymus (which may be invasive).

- Make sure proper measures are in place to preserve the forested edge along the Jones Falls – these existing trees are a great asset and should be prioritized.
- Streetscape along Hamill should relate to the other side of the street if at all possible – realizing that the project does not extend across the street, the context is still important. (Note that the team will reach out to ask if trees can be added across the street along the edge of the green space).
- Grass strip along road makes sense, but pedestrian crossings need to be well established – connection to the park and retail needs to be anticipated and deliberate. Think about how these future connections will relate to or change the corner condition; consider movement of many people going to lunch or dinner in the future of the project.
- Consider developing a cohesive site material language for site walls and related elements instead of matching the building façade materials. Differentiation of the site materials will ground the project.
- Steps leading to individual townhouse-style units could be pushed out to allow the patios to retain a more rectangular form and improve usability.

Building:

- Breaking up the reading of the building into two volumes is very successful; reads more as assembly of masses rather than one large mass, which fits better with the “village” context.
- Bar segment is starting to come together, but the feature piece “jewel box” is still at odds with the rest of the base. Currently the base reads as several different pieces and could use more refinement.
- The tweaks in the façades have been fairly successful, but there is still an opportunity for a more focused study of façades, especially with regard to hierarchy.
- Clarifying the language of the bar building vs. the courtyard building will help the project relate to the site.
- The bar segment is adjacent to the shopping center (north), the courtyard portion of the building is adjacent to the residential and office (south and east), and west façade is adjacent to JFX.
 - North façade would benefit from a more horizontal reading, which could be achieved by lowering the brick by one story.
 - The logic of a pavilion reading on the south and east make sense, as they are adjacent to lower residential buildings. Current verticality of the smaller volumes is appropriate for these sides of the building
 - The west façade can maintain the large scale, with its proximity to the expressway.

- CBT has good case-studies to draw from; these projects have very successful proportion and could be useful / applicable to this project:
 - o Market Central: <https://www.cbtarchitects.com/project/market-central>
 - o 60 Kilmarnock: <https://www.cbtarchitects.com/project/60-kilmarnock>
- Elevated courtyard facing the green space is starting to work together with the separator of the masses and support the glassier elements on the ground level.
- Brick with darker and more muted tones are successful; this palette ties with the existing buildings, yet still looks fresh and modern when used with some textural differentiation among key elements.

Next Steps:

Continue to Design Development addressing comments above; proceed to Design Development.

Attending:

Zach Gorn, Stephen Gorn, Ruthie Schuchalter – Questar Developers

Scott Scarhone – Kimly Horn

Phil Casey – CBT Architects

Caroline Hecker – Council for Development Team

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

Melody Simmons – Baltimore Business Journal

Ed Gunts – Baltimore Fishbowl

Alex Vespoli, Anthony LaRocca, Jake Bolen, Marc Moura, Melanie Monaco – Attending

Eric Tiso, Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette – Planning