BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: March 25, 2021 **Meeting** #44

Project: Newman Towers Renovation **Phase:** Schematic I

Location: Loyola University of Maryland, Cold Spring Lane

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Meredith Sullivan of Loyola University introduced the project, which consists of renovating two 9-story towers on Cold Spring Lane. The project will be a multi-phase, multi-year effort to address moisture and air quality in the residential buildings by reskinning them to allow for new HVAC systems and additional moisture barriers to be added.

Casey Smith of Hord Coplan Macht continued the presentation with a short history and overview of neighborhood context. The original buildings were constructed as condominiums in the late 1950s / early 1960s and were acquired by the university to provide additional housing for students and have remained largely the same since acquisition with minor renovations. This project will greatly alter the look of the building from the exterior and bring them up to date both aesthetically and functionally. To minimize interior interruptions, the team has designed an exterior duct system that will be clad in EFIS.

Process:

- Material selection must meet certain standards (lightweight and efficient)
- EFIS also provides additional moisture barrier
- Organize shafts to break down the façade and create a visual rhythm
- Colored glass added for visual interest

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the project team for their presentation and commented on the potential of the project: as more mid-century buildings require upgrades, this project may become a precedent for others to study. The panel moved into clarifying questions and followed with comments.

- *Are there any additional renovations planned for the lower central portion of the building connecting the two groups of towers?* Only a roof replacement.

- *Is there any site programming or scope?* No site impact or scope – the project is limited to the reskinning only.
- *Did the shafts drive the verticality of this project?* Yes.
- *Brick breaths, but EFIS does not – how will the gasses be dealt with between these different envelope materials?* There will be a venting system installed.
- *Dimension to the wrap is proud of the façade – will the last bay lose some of the window opening?* No, the there is enough room between the window and edge of the building to accommodate for the dimension of the wrap and structure.

Building:

- Interesting to see a proposal that reimagines older buildings in a fresh way. Team needs to consider how the new fresh look relates to the rest of the campus. There is a materiality and look to new and newly renovated buildings on the rest of the campus, and this re-skinning is an opportunity to relate these buildings to the campus.
- A lot of merit to what is proposed - using the utilitarian shafts as an opportunity to reimagine the building is a great opportunity.
- New skin impacts the architecture of the existing building. Horizontal banding of the existing façade sets it in a specific era – there is a sense of force about it. For verticality to work, playful elements should be used to reinforce this element. More purposeful placement will be stronger.
- Lower middle piece of the building that connects the towers needs to be addressed; updates could be modest but leaving it as-is will make it appear as a sad remnant and detract from the overall project.
- Where the new wrap meets the ground feels unfinished and needs more study.
- Once there is work and disruption there will be plant loss, an opportunity arises to see the building settled more in the landscape.
- Where reimagined materials and volumes meet the ground, the visual weight is a lot for the base making it appear weak. Differentiating the base will give it more prominence and strength and help to ground the building. Consider building out the base a bit with a darker color and provide a reveal to give the vertical volumes a place to sit.
- Does the building need to be broken down into so many volumes? Frame makes sense on the volume that pops out, but it undermines the volumes that are standing back because of the HVAC trunk competing with the frame. Gasket piece could stay but removing the frame will help them to integrate more into the façade.
- Opportunity to articulate the entrances by capturing them in the frame. This could really dignify them and reinforce them, make them more prominent from the street. Use the frame to reinforce the entrance – consider removing the frames on the towers that are set back from Cold Spring Lane to establish a base volume.

- Canopies at the front doors need more energy and study.
- Fine line between fun / funky and overwhelming / busy with the colors. Simplifying elements and changing toward a more unified façade language will achieve a better reading overall and provide the project with more hierarchy.
- Whimsical elements are appreciated, but is green the right color? Makes sense from the exterior, but difficult color for interior.
- Creativity and resourcefulness are applauded – overall thinking and problem solving but needs more resolution to feel cohesive and fully resolved.

Next Steps:

Continue project addressing the comments above.

Attending:
Helen Schneider, Meredith Sullivan – Loyola University
Scott Walters, Casey Smith – Hord Coplan Macht
Craig Rasmussen – James Posey Assoc.

Kate Grubb Clark – Attendees
Ed Guntz – Baltimore Fishbowl
Melody Simmons – Baltimore Business Journal

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

Laurie Feinberg*, Ren Southard, Tamara Woods, Martin French, Chris Ryer – Planning