

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

Date: December 23, 2021

Meeting #56

Project: Old Town Redevelopment

Phase: Phase I

Location: 500 N. Gay Street

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Dana Henson introduced the project and team. Donald Kan, and Sharon Huber-Plano, of STV, and Davin Hong, of Living Design Lab, continued the presentation with a very brief overview and continued with explanations of how the design has evolved. Since their last presentation, the team has been able to enter the existing building to assess the existing conditions. The floor plan presented today was developed based on these existing conditions. Phase I building, a historic renovation with new addition, will house about 10 units at the ground entrance, with the lobby entrance toward the middle of the block. The entrance was placed at the location of a collapsed portion of the row; as that portion of the building would need to be rebuilt, it made sense for the team to utilize this new portion for the entrance. Additionally, an amenity space added to the courtyard is intended to give the courtyard a more public feel.

The design has progressed addressing the following:

- Additional plantings to buffer between the public street and private residences;
- Courtyard is now at grade and has been reorganized with planting at the perimeter;
- Maximize glazing in public-facing buildings wherever possible.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the project team for the clarity of their presentation. Panelists began with questions and followed with comments about the site and building together.

Site and Building

- The project doesn't yet feel fully resolved, but introduction of landscape is a positive step. Continuous planter along the public side is appreciated, but this element needs more resolution. The planter creates a uniform barrier that seems extruded; there are opportunities to integrate this buffer into the project more.

- Raised planter might be too much on the new addition but feels appropriate on the saw-tooth edge. Continue planted edge at the southernmost saw-tooth condition.
- The courtyard is more successful, and the elevated plantings will serve the purpose of privacy and foundation preservation. Consider articulating the space with areas for conversation and other uses. Also study how these spaces relate to the fenestration.
- Revisit the residential entrance:
 - It currently reads as a retail entrance;
 - Design language of the storefronts will communicate ideas about what happens behind them;
 - Clarify the language about residential (private) vs. retail (public)... the reading matters when there are a lot of openings and storefronts in the same plane.
- Setting the base heights of the buildings to be consistent will help to clarify spaces and give definition with a strong regulating line.
- The Incubator building needs more study – this is an opportunity to introduce something more exciting. Removing the bottom rail of the glazing will help with the verticality. Can the building read as a 3-bay building with a different type of fenestration (overhead doors or else) as supported by the program?
- This historic portion has come a long way – every time it comes for review, it feels more intentional. Shifting the attention to the corner piece is helpful in allowing it to read as two volumes and minimizes the irregularity of the saw tooth.
- The dark colored piece looks very pronounced and needs to be more recessive. It introduces yet another height, material and façade to the building where cohesion and simplification are imperative. Consider a material that isn't brick; look at smaller openings; perhaps it becomes a 3-story unit; gasket will need to be resolved, so it reads as a transition and not a third element. Study proportioning it as if it were one of the rowhouses to help tie it to overall proportions and rhythm of the building.

Next Steps:

Continue project addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Dan Henson, Dana Henson – Henson Development

Addison Palmer, Kristen Gedeon, Sharon Huber-Plano – STV Architects

Donald Kann, Vipul Talwar – Waldron Studio Architects

Davin Hong – Living Design Lab

Precious Washington, Arlisa Anderson, Brandon Brooks, Catherine Benton Jones, Jess Iannetta, Cynthia Newman- Lynch, Andrew Beyea – Attendees

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

Lembit Jogi, Kevin Gallaher, Jaye Matthews – HABC
Tamara Woods, Caitlin Audette, Ren Southard – Planning