

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

Date: March 25, 2021

Meeting #44

Project: Old Town Redevelopment – Phase I Buildings

Phase: Schematic

Location: 400 N. Gay Street

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Dana Henson and Donald Kann re-introduced the project and team. Vipul Talwar walked through the new building approach and Kristen Gedeon walked through the courtyard design. For this phase of the project, the team is focused on the rehabilitation of the historic buildings at the southwest corner of the mall. These buildings will be redeveloped to have commercial ground floor with residential units above. One building – the Incubator Space – on the 500 block will also be included in Phase 1. While not adjacent, it is important to the team that existing residents have access to retail space as well. The team revisited comments from the previous presentation presenting new elements such as interim parking, streetscaping with larger sidewalk and parking along Ensor Street, concepts for the rehabilitation for the existing structure that will be used for the incubator space, concepts for the façade restoration and new infill for the 400 block (multifamily buildings), and a proposed building along Orleans Street at East Street which would include additional units, a new courtyard, ADA improvements and drop-off on East Street.

Main project considerations:

- Historic facades will be renovated and preserved where possible – one building has burned and an infill project will be located on that site.
- Primary entrance for the apartments above ground floor retail will be located on Orleans Street (rear) of the site.
- A total of residential 51 units will be developed, with 16 on the north side and 35 on the south, connected by a main hallway adding 12 units in the new construction.
- New Building Approach- New three story building at Orleans Street and East Street will be approximately 35'x70' building block , and building height will be between 35' – 40'.
- Introduction of a new courtyard to serve the residents from the creation of the new building along Orleans. The courtyard will be approximately 2700 square feet.
- The existing sawtooth buildings that currently back Orleans Street will be rehabilitated with new punched openings added and entrances along Orleans Street to allow them to front Orleans Street.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the project team for their presentation and combined both questions and comments.

Overall/Site Design

- The overall sentiment from the Panel was that the proposed site design changes were good and began to address several of the concerns outlined at the previous UDAAP meeting.
- In general new plan does a lot to address some of the comments and good moves.

Courtyard and East Street Entrance

- The re-imagined Orleans new entry via courtyard seems to have a primary goal to be circulation and some respite places in the courtyard. Likes the idea of the courtyard to some degree and likes the private/ quiet second entry.
- Courtyard could be beautiful and used less as a circulation space and more of a gathering space. Careful planning is needed. Loggia is unnecessary because space is tight. Plants make the space work, so consider what goes there very carefully.
- Courtyard is more of a passage way and not a cohesive space. It's very small and may not need the trellis. Relook at the space and design as an outdoor room for residents and not as a pass through.
- Courtyard does not need such a forceful pathway entrance in the space. Consider doing a hardscape "banding" approach in the courtyard to define the space and fill that in, making it a destination.
- Improvements with drop-off along East Street is good.
- Take another look at the ADA access off of East Street. Should not do a separate stair from the ADA ramp. Maybe consider a sloped entrance. This piece will need careful design.
- One approach to address the ADA ramp/stair area on East Street is to integrate the sloped into the landscape. Study the sidewalk elevations and may consider a terraced planting approach.

Orleans Street Frontage

- Adding the new building along Orleans adds so many positives- it caps the older buildings and strengthens the corner, closes in the expansive views to the adjacent hotel loading/service dock.
- Concern about the transition from the sawtooth building configuration along Orleans to the new building. This is a hard thing to transition.
- Interesting re-imagining of Orleans, but still awkward transition from existing sawtooth building configuration to the linear frontage of the proposed building.
- Wonder about frontage on Orleans- is there enough buffer? Is a bit more of a setback needed there to better transition from the existing buildings to the new building?

- Consider doing a vegetated buffer on Orleans along the sawtooth edge that completes the geometry of the new addition. Use the landscape to reinforce the end result perhaps with a mix of plantings and pathways. This will reinforce connections between old and new.
- Play with how you skin the building and how the new addition terminates.

Historic Building Renovations and Pedestrian Spine

- Applaud the renovations of historic buildings into multi-family, but there are alignment challenges between existing window openings and continuous floor levels.
- Questions to consider - how will the spaces respond to the broad boulevard (pedestrian way)? How will the existing buildings respond to the grand boulevard? Need to see this interaction, especially in light of the hardscape and landscape design of the pedestrian spine presented in the master plan presentation.
- Some concern about the precedent images shown- they don't particularly fit the scale of what you are proposing. Could take differing approaches (i.e. where does the historic end and the new begin or try to blend the new with the historic.)

Next Steps:

Continue project addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Dan Henson, Dana Henson – Henson Development

Addison Palmer, Kristen Gedeon, Donald Kann, Vipul Talwar – STV Architects

Addison Palmer, Earl Divers, Ed Gunts, Lindsay Thompson, Joe Hudson, Jacquelynn Mays Espinoza, Arlisa Anderson, Melody Simmons, Anthony Cortea Jr. – Attendees

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

Stacy Freed - DHCD

Lembit Jogi, Kevin Gallaher, Cynthis Newman-Lynch – HABC

Tamara Woods, Eric Tiso – Planning