

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

Date: May 6, 2020

Meeting #46

Project: Park Heights Redevelopment

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: Park Heights

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Dana Henson began by quickly reintroducing the project, which is a joint venture of NHP and Henson for the 17.3-acre site. The first phase includes two buildings and a portion of the single-family detached. It is a comprehensive development with a variety of unit types.

Catherine Fennell continued the presentation with a description of the first phase of the project. The project includes diversity of housing opportunities, with new single-family homes in the \$140-\$160,000 range. Though there are limited funds for infrastructure, the goal is to better connect across Park Heights Avenue, create a variety of open spaces, create a sense of permanence and solidity to give Park heights a new image.

Dave Stembel from Torti Gallas continued the presentation with an overview of the team's approach before Sharon Huber-Plano from STV with a detailed description of the site landscaping.

The first phase of the development includes two new multi-family buildings along Park Heights Avenue, one senior and the other family units with a new public open space in between at Virginia Avenue. The remainder of development is primarily single-family houses, both townhouses and single-family detached. There are also some small, 6-unit apartment buildings to be developed in later stages. Though the apartments are phase one, the remainder of the site will be activated early on with gardens, tree farms etc.

Dave Stembel presented the updated buildings. The intersection of Virginia and Park heights is the center of the development with significant plaza space and entries. The team addressed comments on the tower, the façade and the courtyard. In addition, the team presented ideas for the single-family houses, which will be a variety of types and styles.

Discussion

The Panel thanked the project team and proceeded with clarifications, questions and comments. Note that Panelist Cheryl O'Neill recused herself due to prior involvement in the project.

Clarifications:

The team addressed the following comments from the previous UDAAP Session:

- *How did the team address the comments from the previous UDAAP Session?*
 - Comment 1: Doors on Park Heights Avenue have been continued around a newly chamfered corner at Woodland Ave.
 - Comment 2: The team also addressed the houses on Virginia Avenue, which now are facing Virginia Ave. and reinforcing the importance of this street, which is meant to be a gateway into the new community.
 - Comment 3: Plaza location has also been adjusted.
- *Regarding curbside management for the senior building, how will that be handled?* Parking will be in the rear, and there is curb-side parking on Virginia and Park Heights Avenues.
- *How will trash and maintenance be handled?* Trash collection and loading will occur at the rear (alley side) of the buildings.
- *Will the single-family houses have garages, fences, additional vegetation [to create a buffer or distinction between the properties]?* Garages are an optional add-on, there will be an HOA to regulate fences, etc.

Site:

- In general, the teams' responses are appropriate; the setback along Park Heights Ave. is appreciated and gives the street a more human scale.
- Based on the program, the multi-family building on Park Heights Avenue makes sense, but there is some concern about the business of Park Heights Ave. and the use as a senior building.
- There are inconsistencies in the urban design approach; street trees on Park Heights Ave. create gaps instead of maintaining a consistent rhythm to define the urban street wall. It is important to maintain continuity and relate to the street type (bigger canopy trees on Park Heights Avenue can be spaced wider and transition to the community side where the trees can be smaller and closer together).

- Planting plan needs more clarity – landscape will not be fully controlled where there is individual home ownership. Ideas about what is planted in specific areas under the planning and scope of this project need to be outlined more clearly.
- Understanding of the actual fencing (including materiality) needs to be addressed; the heights and materials need to be studied in three-dimensions. There needs to be a clearer understanding of how the differences between public-facing multi-family buildings and single-family detached will be handled – expect a more nuanced approach between houses, versus a more regimented approach with multi-family.
- Next iteration should identify landscape plantings and fencing placement, including all options for home owners. Team is encouraged to maintain a low fence height at the fronts of homes and multi-family and consider eliminating the fences between units altogether.
- Planting plan at the door yards has a systematic layering; there is an opportunity to apply this strategy to either side of the courtyard building to create a feeling of continuity around the entire block. More consistency for placing certain plantings will help. For instance, consider informal planting on Woodland at the alley in addition to the location at Virginia to maintain the consistency along the alley.
- Push the drop-off parking at Virginia Ave. to the north to give the corner more room.
- Three types of landscape language exist in this proposal; these need to be articulated and applied with more purpose.
- Green space is ample but fragmented in its distribution. Consider consolidating the parking to reshape the green lawn and extend it toward Virginia Avenue.
- Concern for how well the plaza at the corner of Park Heights and Virginia will be utilized, team is encouraged to continue studying how to strengthen relationship between the exterior plaza space and the community spaces on the interior of the building.
- Pick-up / drop-off area needs more study on Park Heights Avenue, whether that is a bump-out or some other treatment.
- Parking and rear door yards at the rear of the senior building is very pinched, consider reorganizing the space to make this area feel more purposeful.

Building:

- Entrance on chamfered corner reads as very public and will be problematic for residents in those units.
- Consider rotating houses near the corner of Woodland and Homer to face Woodland, similar to the strategy on Virginia Ave.

- Next iteration needs more study in 3-dimensions to really understand how the volumes relate to each other.
- The single-loaded corridor at the ground level of the the senior building needs more study.
- Entrance of the senior building does not connect to the plaza in a meaningful way; see additional comments regarding the plaza in the site comments above.

Next Steps:

Continue design addressing the comments above. Note: these comments can be addressed at building design phase, no need to return for master plan.

Attending:

Tom Gallas – Torti Gallas Architects
Tony Corteal, Kristen Gedeon- STV
Catherine Fennell and Eric Price – NHP Developers
Dan Henson and Dana Henson – Henson development

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

Laurie Feinberg*, Ren Southard, Tamara Woods, James Ashford – Planning

Kelly Baccala - DHCD