

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

**Date:** May 16, 2019

**Meeting #18**

**Project:** UMB BioPark - Gateway

**Phase:** Schematic

**Location:** E. Baltimore St + MLK Blvd.

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Jane Shaab introduced the project to the Panel and the goal to connect the Biopark to the rest of the University of Baltimore campus.

Paul Arthur Heller began the presentation of the site context and the goal to bridge across MLK, create a gateway, and to work in connection with the broader community. The existing firehouse structure was identified and will be incorporated within the redevelopment. A review of the previously approved master plans discussed the evolution of the Biopark planning and intent. An investigation of the existing streetscapes and characters was presented.

Will with ZGF then presented the evolution of the physical building mass. The program for the buildings will be 330,000 GSF office/lab. The ground floor program is intended to be a more public event/co-working, community inclusive use. Phase II is intended to be 270,000 GSF on mixed use as well. The site around the existing firehouse is viewed as the knuckle of the pedestrian/activation of the Baltimore Street corridor in tandem with the public/shared use program of the Phase I building. The proposed plaza is intended to be a public/private outdoor room. The site circulation plans were reviewed with the drop-off located along N. Freemont and with service off W. Fayette. All the service trucks will fully enter the site for access to both building phases. Retail is proposed along the MLK frontage and the main lobby for the building is located off the firehouse plaza with connection to MLK. A review of the bulk massing and building sections identified the concept floorplans and building use diagrams. The elevation concepts for the front volume of the new building is a re-interpretation of the cast stone of the firehouse. A more cohesive glazed elevation is proposed for the northern volume on the site. The District Hall has an individual box identity in volume and the firehouse is proposed to have increased openings into the new plaza area.

Peng Gu with Mahan Rykiel presented the landscape plan proposal by first looking at the overall pedestrian experience along MLK Blvd. Design goals for the MLK Streetscape were introduced. They include breaking the perceived wall dividing the east and west side of MLK, promoting a complete street experience, and to create a variety of moments along the Boulevard. For this site the team is proposing to open the building to the street for activation,

create a complete street with retail and wide pedestrian ways and bike/transit infrastructure, integrate the different uses within the development that merge with the history of the site and broader context. The connection to the open space across the street is a high priority and the team is working to engage that space with the new plaza to complete the node. Following the conceptual diagramming, the goal is for the open space to be a relaxed environment that creates a welcoming carpet for the overall development. Trees and materials are placed to create the individual spaces desired within the program goals. The simplicity of the landscape design is to help tie together the variety of architectural expressions, old and new. The circle as a motif is being explored as a connection to the existing circular designs within the broader context. The team is investigating ways to incorporate it in more subtle ways within the plaza design. The individual streetscape approaches were reviewed to highlight the changes in the streetscape that are proposed to respond to the unique context of each street. Lighting is intended to play a role in the landscape design to express the dynamic environment and to be inviting to the broader public.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The Panel expressed its gratitude for all the analysis and the thoughtfulness in the presentation and the design work done to date for this project.

#### **Site:**

- The team will need to continue the impact of the adjacent buildings that are outside of this redevelopment in its impact on the plaza space that is being created.
- Continue to investigate the opportunities for additional landscape design that the park to the south offers for the entire redevelopment of this project.
- The drop off area from Freemont will benefit from additional design development to both serve the needs of the users and mitigate the dichotomy of placing 2 high-energy nodes. Consider the placement of the drop off as it might be too close to the W. Baltimore intersection; can it be moved north within the Phase 2 site?
- There is some concern with the edge condition/design for W. Fayette St. The change in the architecture alone may not be working to successfully mitigate the change in use to 2 level rowhouse. The street treatment of the first 2-3 levels of the building needs to be designed to respond better to this environment.
- Let the plaza break into the ground level to really create the 'carpet'. Along MLK, investigate how wide the sidewalk really needs to be. Perhaps the retail expands/pushes into the ground plane and the sidewalk is reduced slightly to offer additional landscape space.
- Re-align the Baltimore St. crosswalk to be more gracious and direct alignment to the new plaza. Reconsider the 2 street trees along Baltimore in favor of the more relaxed landscape design taking the entire block here to connect to the existing park space to the south.

- *\*Reach out to Mr. Jeff LaNoue in the Dept. of Planning to coordinate the proposed bicycle improvements along MLK Blvd with this project\**

**Building:**

- The concepts proposed with the volumes and folding the planes are well received and a clear evolution of design has occurred.
- Consider additional study of the volume and architectural approach to the lower 3 levels as they meet the ground. The volumes above the ground plane are very welcoming into the new plaza but the lower volume is working against that larger move. The scale of the glass volume of the District Hall is reading more as an obstacle than intended by the design team. Investigate the opportunity to fold the glass plane into the plaza behind the larger frame; bring that comfortable interstitial space to this corner and wrap it into the plaza.
- The location of the lobby and the approach through the plaza is successful and allows the public spaces to occupy the main corner.
- Investigate a pedestrian scaled covered area/datum along the retail frontage and how that wraps to Fayette Street as an ability to scale the mass to interface with the existing rowhouses. The scale of this element may change from elevation to elevation and then may be different in Phase II to further scale the redevelopment.
- Refine the alignment of the new buildings and the existing firehouse.
- There is some concern with the fine angle of the Phase 2 building along Fayette and Fremont – it reads awkward in the pedestrian scale at this moment.
- Investigate the tower in Phase 2 step back from Fayette but also grow in dimension towards the Phase I building to offset the square footage.

**Next Steps:**

Continue into Design Development addressing the comments above.

**Attending:**

Jane Shaab – UM Baltimore

Caroline Moore, Gregg Herland – Wexford Science and Technology

Paul-Arthur Heller, Will Robertson – ZGF Architects

Peng Gu, Mark Pelosi – Mahan Rykiel Associates

Stephen Leznhardi – Gaudreau

Susan Williams - STV

Mssrs. Anthony, Mses. Wagner, Ilieva – UDAAP Panel

Anthony Cataldo\*, Christina Hartsfield - Planning

