

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

Date: January 23, 2020

Meeting #28

Project: UM BioPark Gateway

Phase: Continued Des. Dev.

Location: 4 MLK Blvd.

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Will Robertson with ZGF introduced the project team and briefly reviewed the context of the area, master plan, and the building design. A review of the previous design was presented for reference along with review of the previous UDAAP comments.

Signage was revised to respond to the previous comments at the top of the corner element. A new sculptural signage element is also being proposed within the ground plane/corner stair to identify the BioPark and/or building. A review of the glazing treatment of the north and south volumes was explored, showing the Panel a variety of the options that the team investigated. The team prefers the vertical fins in the second volume to contrast the corner element. The revisions to the drop-off area include cutting back the masonry curved wall to allow access and remove the pedestrian door, additional planting was added, lit bollards were added to the drop-off zone, and additional trees and planting were added to screen the temp. parking area. The firehouse is proposed to have new windows with a grey metal frame. Those with the pre-cast of the main façade relate to the new District Hall with the pre-cast structure and metal infill panels in the glazing and signage band. The circular tree seats were eliminated in favor of moveable seating and set concrete seat blocks.

The streetscape was revised to extend more of the standard streetscape along MLK to the corner of Baltimore Street, using the new standard to highlight the corner plaza area between the Firehouse and District Hall. A gradient is proposed within the grey pavers within the plaza to subtly differentiate between the Firehouse zone and District Hall. A circular planting area is proposed around each of the trees in the plaza which anticipate using lirioppe and a 3-foot grass closer to the trunk for interest.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel asked questions related to the angles of the precast fins in the District Hall elevation relative to the symmetry of the façade, the use of landscape circles at the base of the trees within the plaza space, the stair/ramp location within the plaza, and the alignment of the stair at the corner of Baltimore Street and MLK.

Site:

- The revisions and simplifications to the landscape plan are welcomed.
- The Panel found the infill planting around the trees is an odd relationship between the hard paving within the plaza and the plane of the landscape. Is there an alternative to transition those zones or to add some level of urban layering? Is it landscape at all? Is there physical vertical separation or do you eliminate the groundcover and add more physical trees? Reconsider liriopse as the plant material, there needs to be more presence and mass to the ground cover in this application if it's to be used.
- Consider realigning the stairs within the plaza to eliminate the safety hazard that the current alignment presents. Turning them 90 degrees to the ramp would solve this confusion.
- The Panel suggest holding the implied building/property line along MLK in the corner stair and shift the deflection of the steps to the Baltimore Street side.
- The idea of a sculptural sign along the Baltimore St at MLK edge is a welcomed idea and can offer an edge to the plaza. Finessing the angles and alignments of the elements will strengthen this concept.
- The implied circle at the edge condition of the streetscapes along MLK seems foreign and may want to be rectilinear to respond to the overall site treatment and geometries within the project.
- Continue refining the design of the curved wall and landscape along the vehicular drive to screen the rear of the existing properties. Consider a solid wall that is extended into a more open grid that can allow dense planting to take over and provide so much interest at the plane of the wall that there is little draw to the rear of the existing buildings. Or reconsider the curved wall altogether in favor of keeping the rear rectilinear blast wall and allow the landscape to be more robust to screen the utilities. The result may read more urban but also do more to screen the rear of the properties and focus the eye to the ground level.
- Consider addressing the northwest corner at Fremont Ave. and Baltimore Street to allow for the flow of pedestrian traffic from the rest of the BioPark into the Phase I and II of this site.

Building:

- Consider keeping the vertical mullions in the secondary volume but slightly changing the glass color to just slightly further differentiate the volumes.
- Signage at the ground plane is working very well. Consider signage at the top that uses the corner glazing in more interesting way.

Next Steps:

Continue the design development of the project addressing the comments above with Staff.

Attending:

Will Robertson - ZGF

Peng Gu – Mahan Rykiel

Caroline Moore, Gregg Herlong – Wexford Science and Technology

Susan Williams – STV

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

Anthony Cataldo*, Renata Southard, Jeff LaNoue, Matt DeSantis – Planning