

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

**Date:** June 27, 2019

**Meeting #20**

**Project:** UM BioPark

**Phase:** Cont. Master Plan

**Location:** Baltimore Street and MLK Blvd.

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Team gave an overview of the project – recap of the schematic design, brief summary of where they are in the process now.

- Site can be seen as a gateway into BioPark / bridge from east and west sides of MLK – near existing park that will be considered but is not part of the development site.
- Towers are lab / office spaces; ground floor is incubator space, auditorium, ground level retail, and plaza that creates a “public-private” zone.
- Bike path along MLK (north-south) and a setback with ground floor retail that is protected under the projection (cantilever) of the tower. In-between space around the building – colonnaded area that acts like a loggia.
- Key entries and exits – entry off MLK and off the plaza. Service off W. Fayette that will be screened, intent to direct most vehicular traffic on west side of site (on Fremont Ave.) Buildings are positioned for visibility – sightline to the phase one building with a 30’ wide gap behind the existing firehouse.
- Programmatic shifts and materiality refinements. Minor updates to firehouse façade – interior refinements to cater to F&B tenant. New opening on the east side of the building to allow for a new entrance.
- Colonnade space that would allow for the interior space to flow out into the public area. GSF is staying the same but is reorganized. Entry space is visible from across MLK – aligned to entry of the building.

Site:

- Concern for change in scale, the drop off, edge condition of the Fayette, courtyard – more study of the park that W. Baltimore – raised area in the center, views are obstructed by trees and berm, circular patterns. Trees are located to form gateway and respond to trees in the existing park site
- Bike path has moved the sidewalk, 9’ width with planting buffers between vehicular traffic, sidewalk, and outdoor dining areas. Note that tree buffer may have to move based on existing utilities buried next to DOT ROW.

## Architecture:

- Addressing the houses across W. Fayette Street – towers are pushed back to meet two-story rowhouse scale with plantings to mitigate the building edge. Residential component will occur in Phase 2.
- Moving the drop-off eats into GFA and complicates the building -desire to keep drop area in the knuckle created by the existing firehouse building
- Materiality – upper levels will be a curtain wall with a fin to break up the levels; clear curtain wall at street level retail; brick.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The Panel asked clarifying questions regarding the site with regard to the plaza nearest MLK and its intent.

### **Site:**

- Q: The plaza area near the firehouse is very clearly defined in use and function. What is the intent of the plaza in front of the building? Gateway, seating, etc. – is it a forecourt to the building or is it something else? Feels very exposed and unprogrammed. A: It is about identity / visibility / circulation / presents the project. Intent of colonnade is to invite – will be the entry for all the of the UMB colleagues.
- While comments from first UDAAP about the trees and the building entry working to create an iconic point of arrival have been addressed, the entry remains quite austere.
- Special paving pattern relates to the district hall area – ends where building changes. Explore better alignment with the massing and seek some continuity of the bike path to the street corner.
- Grade change in section (south is the lowest and raise up about 10' at the northeastern-most point of the site) - commercial areas will step the outdoor plaza areas.
- Park will be redeveloped at some point in the future; the plaza area is a transition – the filters that allow for transition needs work. Sitting pieces are not designed for interaction; additional tables and chairs could bring more life as elements that could be moved around to activate the space.
- Street trees – part of the experience is about moving down W. Baltimore Street, but right now all the focus is in the courtyard. Improve continuity of the sidewalk along Baltimore St for added shelter.
- Planting zone between sidewalk and seating is to help mitigate grade change.

### **Building:**

- Brick on ground floor of the building (used to be light pre-cast to match the limestone on the firehouse). The lower levels are intended to look as if they are separate buildings.

Brick is intended to reflect context of firehouse and buildings around the site. Still looking at detailing and color of brick.

- Introduction of the two-story read of the building is intended to relate better to the lower landscape but *mimic* of the surrounding gives a feeling of inauthenticity. Change of materiality will help; doesn't want to look like a skeletal brick frame, perhaps use a darker brick color, terra cotta – so much brick in Baltimore, it starts to look generic and it dresses the building down. Precast from the last proposal has a better dialog – or could switch to something that is more abstract. Architectural expression of the firehouse is powerful – return to the exploration of the materiality. Sculptural element at the human scale is lost in the brick.
- Anchoring volume gets lost in all of the extrusions, potential to revise the color of the anodized panel – could it become darker to anchor the floating boxes. Will become clearer when the entry is decided. Study materiality and relationships of the volumes at the east façade.
- Composition is expressed vertically; is there room to consider the horizontal? Too much differentiation – before when everything was white, there was more cohesion. Now with all the color changes, feels less unified.

**Next Steps:**

Continue design development addressing the comments above.

**Attending:**

Jacob Shafer – UM BioPark

Mark Pelosi, Peng Gu – Mahan Rykiel Assoc.

Will Robertson – CGF

Caroline Moore, Gregg Aerlong – Wexford Science & Technology

Susan Williams – STV

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

Laurie Feinberg, Renata Southard\* – Planning