

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

Date: January 7, 2021

Meeting #41

Project: Westport Waterfront Master Plan

Phase: Schematic II

Location: 2001 – 2401 Kloman Street, Westport

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Dough McCoach of MRA began the presentation by thanking the Panel for the previous comments and restating the team’s goals, which have not changed since the last presentation. With this design, the team seeks to:

- Create equitable waterfront access consistent with the Middle Branch Master Plan, linking land to water
- Enable equitable growth
- Respond to the environmental edge of the waterfront and adequately address the waterfront overly district and critical area management, topography and flooding
- Introduce people to a new type of waterfront
- Connect and right-size mobility

Mr. McCoach continued the presentation with a brief overview of the Panel’s previous comments and the specifics of the updated site plan:

- Parcel A will contain 300 units of multi-family housing (6-stories) and 270 surface parking
- Parcel B - 275 townhomes (4-stories) and one surface parking space for each unit
- Parcel C - 350 multi-family units and 30K sq. ft. of retail (7-stories) and 500 surface parking
- Parcel D - commercial and office (4-stories) and 100 surface parking
- Parcel E - 250 units of multi-family housing (6-stories) and 250 surface parking
- Parcel F - 400 units of multi-family housing (6-stories) and 400 surface parking

The team addressed the following UDAAP comments from December 10th, 2020:

- *Need to have a clearer definition between public and private areas:* there will be 15.1 acres of public open space – some of this is trade-off for incursion into the critical area.
- *Reaching the water:* the team focused on how people will physically reach the water (public transportation, walking, etc.) and how people will reach the water visually; to

this end, the team has re-evaluated view corridors and configured the site plan to support existing views to the water.

- *Reinventing Kloman street, unraveling the various competing circulation:* the site will be organized to provide safe bike and pedestrian circulation at Kloman and Wenburn by adding a new 4-way intersection; the new Kloman Street will have a 60' ROW with bicycle and pedestrian provisions per the Complete Streets Manual; will be organized with vehicular traffic toward the rail and people toward the water.
- *Extend Wenburn to the water:* the park has shifted to the north, opening up a view corridor that widens significantly below the light rail
- *Engage the waterfront:* Public and private open space have been identified more clearly and are shown in section; the streets reach out to the water and the water reaches into the site, creating distinct districts; additional trails and spurs will be added to enhance the planned Greenway.
- *Urban design approach:* site has been broken into two districts (south of Wenburn and north); the south district contains a regular grid of rowhouses and contains streets that are typical of residential neighborhoods with sidewalks and street trees; the north districts have a mix of uses (multi-family, retail and office) - the buildings have been reconfigured to engage with each other and with the water; overall, surface parking has been reduced but the number of spaces remains close to 1,800.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for their presentation and for responding to all of the Panel's comments. The panel also praised the team for their willingness to revise the design. The Panel continued with clarifying questions and comments.

Clarifications:

- *Please clarify Parcel B (townhomes) – how is site arranged with regard to building, hardscape, and vegetation?* Streets are treelined with sidewalks and a 7'-wide planting strip between buildings and parking, the buildings front on to the main streets with hardscaped parking behind (18' tandem space on alley side). Buildings on water's edge will have a 10' patio above the public path area (elevation naturally rises in that direction).
- *Regarding the extension of the streets to the water's edge, does the overlook in Parcel A connect to Kloman?* There is an opportunity to connect to Waterview and Kloman, but these have not been planned. Team is looking into the specifics.
- *Regarding the main park at Koman and Wenburn actively bifurcating the overall Master Plan area into a north- and south-side: is this intentional?* Because the park cannot be

flanked on both sides by townhouses because of flood conditions, it seemed to be a natural break and would allow for all use to the space.

- *Is there a berm between the light rail and the CSX track?* Yes, the plan is to create a landscaped ramp up to the light rail platform to better connect pedestrians on the east side (current access is on the west side of the site only).
- *Where are the basic commercial amenities (drug store, café, etc.) – are they concentrated or sprinkled throughout?* Most logical places for retail would be either facing the park or facing the waterfront, with an innovation center planned for Parcel D. Team is planning for restaurant and café spaces, drugstore, basic amenities, but mindful not to overpopulate retail, thus creating competition with the existing neighborhood. Ideally, there would be a good balanced mix to support new and existing population.

Site:

In general:

- Graphics are much clearer, and the additional analysis and diagrams help to explain the overall design rationale. View corridors are much improved.
- To complete a “multi-modal” model, the team might consider a water ferry (if feasible).
- Kit of parts – now that the team has mapped strategies for the site, it’s time to go back and build on the idea of assembling the buildings and public spaces from a kit of parts to help it read as a neighborhood.
- Greatly improved from the last presentation; Panel would like to reiterate the team has done a very promising job and is encouraged to approach the project with the same openness to critical feedback in order to continue improving the plan.
- Master plan development can be thought of in two ways: the existing conditions and the interventions. Designers often run the risk of going too far or not far enough – work to achieve balance with the next iteration.
- Locate the larger scale buildings along the two ends to preserve flexibility, allow for a gradient of heights between the ends. Bookended site will have a nice continuity and frame the existing neighborhood from the water.
- Study the relationship between the Parcels (A, B, C, D, E) in more detail – open spaces are serving as separators between types of buildings (the overlook park, central park, etc.) Spaces could benefit from a cohesion of typology versus a change of typology. Doesn’t currently convey a feeling that you’re “some place” but rather that you’re between places.
- Reconsider the density/housing typology along the south edge of Central Park as it transitions to the rowhouses and back to the bookend at Waterview Ave.

- Team suggested they were learning from the Canton and Federal Hill waterfront neighborhoods but improve on that – this plan is *already* better because of the multiple connections to the water. Team is encouraged to look at precedents outside of Baltimore that have always been waterfront connected (smaller communities in Santa Monica – Ocean Park and Oakwood are great examples where a street of houses arrives at a shared amenity – the water)
- One additional set of graphics are needed; development will happen over many years. What are the key elements of the masterplan that will hold the plan together? The team needs to develop a framework of streets, open space and waterfront experience. This will encapsulate and ensure the ideas you have on paper are built in the future. Should be a straightforward document to develop; this framework is essential to preserving the big ideas.

Public Open Space:

- Shoreline program seems vibrant – with the shoreline, there is an opportunity to maximize the 30’ buffer for environmental stewardship / educational purposes.
- The rhythm of the waterfront is nice with a series of open spaces along the path; this will contribute to the feeling of unique and distinct zones along the edge – good opportunity for placemaking.
- Panel assumes the parks, public open spaces and landscaping in general will be designed for flood resilience – would like to see more detail about flood mitigation and resilience features in future designs.
- Overlook access seems a bit convoluted, as does the CSX trestle – provide pedestrian access to these public spaces; should be punctuated with a node of some kind to announce the connection.
- Address rail / transportation with the centralized park: green space is a good start but could be enhanced by connecting the light rail to the water could with a bus drop at the park; opportunity to introduce a multi-modal ‘hub’ here. Adding a loop could also alleviate traffic congestion at Klomen and Wenburn – right now the street alignment invites cut-through in Parcel B, which wants to be a quieter residential neighborhood.
- Important to continue to study the site in section; need to see a north-south section through the centralized park from the rowhouses on Parcel B to the mixed-use multifamily on Parcel C to understand the change in scale.
- Park relocation is starting to make a lot of sense; opportunity to make this a community hub with an open, friendly feel but achieve a lot when it comes to helping to organize the various transportation elements.

Parcels A-B (south district):

- Parcel A – needs more frontage on Kloman Street to give a sense of cohesion to the townhouse site; perhaps move some of the townhouses to this site to diversify the typology instead of strictly following the existing site boundaries and letting them designate the border (seems arbitrary). Let the neighborhoods blend into each other a little more – may help solve some of the challenges on Parcel B, as well, to utilize a smaller apartment building typology.
- Parcel A: Picturesque scenario can be achieved by revising the building to the south of the parking lot, allowing a more L-shaped building to mitigate the view of the parking, with a more limited gap; will help this feel more like a glimpse into the site and less like a sea of parking.
- With regard to the townhouse community (Parcel B), it seems to be very built-up with only a very narrow strip of green – feels a bit sterile and hard. Team should study ways to include more relief; could be achieved with pocket parks or with widening the landscaped portions, etc.
- Parcel A and B need more refinements to reinforce the ideas about waterfront continuity – can there be more fluidity in the types of townhouses? This would allow for buildings to turn corners and mediate conditions – specifically things like stacked flats and small multi-family like 4-stories where there are no buildings to back up to. Utilizing more typologies would allow for more open spaces and episodic experiences. Especially apparent at the north and south on the waterfront sides; diversification of type will give the ability to front more effectively onto the public spaces that enhance the ideas of the landscape elements. Potentially eliminate townhouses (with the understating this still needs to work with the team’s pro forma) in favor of a few well-placed smaller (neighborhood scaled) multi-family options.
- Introduction of more structure of the townhouses makes sense, but the fronts and backs need more resolution. Look at revising the typology between Kent and Wenburn – an in-between sized multifamily that steps down in density a little; to give a sense of arrival and allow the townhouses to feel more nestled and protected.

Sites C – F (north district):

- Major adjustments to the plan in Parcels C – F are successful, especially the adjustment of the park, the addition of the “Trestle Park” and reinforcement of open space with building placement.
- Regarding Parcel D – it’s still unclear how people get from Kloman to the waterfront, except through the parking lot.

- Strategy of the multi-family buildings is starting to emerge; they have more of a relationship to the site and feel more urban.
- The idea of tying Parcels C, D, E, and F together is starting to work – these need more refinement, but they feel much more like a single site.
- Commercial program needs to be resolved more to help define the buildings; connecting to the existing neighborhood is important – what are the bigger picture plans for commercial (ex. along Annapolis Road) to create a synergy between the existing neighborhood and the newly built area.
- Parcels C, D, F: Stronger wall on Kloman and more thoughtful gaps between the buildings, but the parking lot on Parcel D is undermining these successes.
- Building in Parcel C might need one less story and relocate the lost units further north on Parcels E and F, making them taller and achieving more of a gradient down to the lower rowhouse neighborhood.

Next Steps:

Continue the schematic design of the project addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Ray Jackson – Stonewall Capital LLC
 Doug McCoach, Brittany Sink – MRA
 Al Barry – AB Associates

Ed Gunts – Baltimore Fishbowl
 Hallie Miller – Baltimore Sun
 Melody Simmons – BBJ
 Jim Brown, Ethan Abbott – Rails to Trails Coalition

Xi-edsa, Stephen Moore, Andre Robinson, Johanna Alonso, James Alston, Glinda Jackson, Brian Voss, Kiesha Allen, Calvin McCargo Jr., Sharee Richardson, Lisa Hodges-Hiken, Klaus Philipsen – Attendees

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

Laurie Feinberg*, Chris Ryer, Ren Southard, Jeff La Noue, Brent Flickenger, Matt DeSantis, Tamara Woods, Cedrick Lee – Planning