

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

Date: December 9, 2021

Meeting #55

Project: The Baltimore Arena

Phase: Schematic Development

Location: Downtown

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Murray Beynon with SCI Architects introduced the project team, outlined their experience with similar projects and explained the timeline for construction which extends from February 2022 to February 2023. Mr. Beynon continued with an explanation of the interior alterations, and their impact on the exterior. The presentation finished with a description of exterior alterations by Mr. Beynon and landscape architect Colleen Vacelet. Ms. Vacelet detailed the proposal to create a plaza at the east elevation. Major design elements include the following;

- The interior will be opened at the upper levels of the north elevation to allow views both into the arena space and out to the city.
- Underutilized mechanical space at the fifth floor will be reduced to allow for suites and public space.
- The eastern elevation will be transformed to create an entry plaza following the removal of the secondary road at Hopkins Plaza.
- At Howard Street the team will utilize art installations and lighting to soften a series of emergency exits and blank brick walls.
- At Baltimore Street the exterior elevation will utilize scrims to energize the previously renovated elevation.
- The main entry will be located at the corner of Baltimore and Hopkins Plaza adjacent to the new plaza.
- One of two design options includes elements reminiscent of sails, to honor sailing history and give building a dynamic feel.

Discussion

The Panel thanked the project team and proceeded with clarifications, questions and comments.

Questions/Clarifications

- What does TBA mean? *The Baltimore Arena.*
- Along Baltimore Street, explain the bump out/terrace? *At level three there will be a bump-out and terrace, at level four bump-out and terrace, at level five no bump-out just terrace.*
- At Baltimore Street façade how are you modulating the façade? *Through paint application to give depth to elevation.*
- Immediately above the entry are you adding glass? *No, it is already there and being maintained. An interior scrim will be used to get the coloration that the light will absorb and come through as a softer color on the outside.*
- Are there steps at the café space at the plaza? *No, there's a six-inch step and an additional 6" step will be installed.*
- Explain the new light poles at the plaza and their placement in reference to needs by trucks? *The lights hold the line that trucks will use to move in and out of the arena.*
- Is there anything planned for the upper portion of Howard Street? *Once we complete Hopkins and Baltimore, it is intended to continue to work on Howard Street.*
- When would trucks use the space for loading and unloading? *Plaza can still be used when trucks are loading and unloading, but not intended to be used by trucks during programmed events.*
- On the Howard Street side, it looks like the utility poles are changing is that accurate? *No, will work with MTA and DOT regarding larger infrastructure improvements at later date.*
- Is the ground plane on Howard changing? *We're redoing the sidewalk on all three sides.*
- What is the VIP area? *For spectator events it provides direct access to a major hospitality area. When there are events in conjunction with the convention center this could become a major entrance for combined events.*
- Will the vegetation shown directly in front of the main entry be in raised beds? *Not yet decided.*
- Is the only alteration in Option B the introduction of the sail elements? And in Option A the alteration is painting? *In either option the upper floors will be painted.*
- What are some ideas about addressing Baltimore Street? *There is an upcoming meeting with MTA and DOT to understand short- and long-term plans and to work in concert with them.*
- If you had your way how would you address Baltimore Street? *Adding street trees and street furniture to create an improved urban street.*

Site

- Concerned about only using art to activate Howard Street. The elevation needs to be addressed by alterations to the building done in concert improvements at the ground plan such as landscaping and the introduction of spaces to pause along the street.
- Pay attention to what the experience will be when there's no event.
- What is the character of all sides of the building? How are they utilized?
- Need to animate Howard Street to bring the energy all the way around the building.
- Great move creating a pedestrian experience at Hopkins. However, because it will handle a large amount of people vegetation at grade will likely not survive. Consider a tree grove or playful ground plane treatment.
- Create a vibrant stretch of trees along the edge of the new plaza to create a viable healthy tree edge.
- As you've shown the various ways the plaza can be utilized it highlights that plantings and planters will become a part of the architecture.
- Activating the outside spaces is really exciting and needs to be scaled appropriately to the people and the structures around it.

Building

- More attention needs to be given to the Howard Street elevation, both at the street level and above.
- The exterior is a bit of an afterthought. Need to consider the design from the outside-in, now that you've completed it from the inside-out.
- The reference to the maritime heritage and the sails is a bit too expected and obvious. It's important that the building can stand on its own. If you stick with the theme it needs to be more sophisticated, maybe the sails are more of a screen treatment that can change throughout the day. Need to make the maritime theme contemporary and forward thinking, something the arena really deserves in terms of its exterior treatment.
- Currently the building has a vertical feel, the proposal introduces a horizontality, which works well.
- A fresh quality will come out of coating the elevations especially at night, however there is some concern about how this will impact the pedestrian experience during the day.
- There's so much happening with the exterior, it's ok to let some portions of the building be recessive so that don't compete with the more important elements.
- The existing fin like treatment at the upper levels along Howard Street fits well with adjacent buildings. Great example of the way the building can speak with it's surroundings.

- Skeptical of the proposed paint treatment and how it will bond and how it will age. The exterior of the building needs to reflect the future of Baltimore. Encourage creative exploration of the exterior treatment to do this.

Next Steps:

Continue the design by addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Murray Beynon, Sylvia Jacobs – SCI Architects

Kristen Apgar, Colleen Vacelet – Intreegue Design

Kim Clark, Colin Tarbert - BDC

Brandon Brooks, Carl Schmidt, Cary Euwer, Derek Webster, Dan Henson, Mike Schwan, Peter SP, Ryan Fluehr, JP, Bob Bob, CB, Tim Tamburrino, Don Graham, Janet Marie Smith, Paul Young, Marcus Brimley, Ryan Brown, Dominic Wiker

Ed Gunts – Baltimore Fishbowl

Melody Simmons – Baltimore Business Journal

Kevin Lynch – SouthBmore.com

Mr. Anthony, Mses. Ilieva and Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Tamara Woods, Caitlin Audette, Ren Southard, Eric Tiso, Matt DeSantis, Jeff LaNoue, Chris Ryer
– Planning