

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

Date: December 9, 2021

Meeting #55

Project: Belvedere Place

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: Central Park Heights/Pimlico Good Neighbors

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Michael Gaines introduced the development team consisting of BRIDGES Community Development Corporation, Bon Secours Baltimore, and WinnDevelopment. Mr. Gaines then shared the vision and masterplan for a vibrant, urban mixed income community. The masterplan consists of five components, of which the proposed project is one.

Azhar Ameen, Lauren Gilmartin and Mel Thompson of Grimm and Parker Architects then presented the project, first grounding the site in the Pimlico Masterplan which will be located directly to the north and the Baltimore Urban Renewal Plan which includes Design Standards. Clair Fishman of Carroll Engineering then presented the landscape design.

Important elements of the proposal include

- Site conditions, including the introduction of a new boulevard extending directly north of the site.
- Project will use both 9% and 4% low income housing tax credits.
- Retail space proposed along Belvedere St., main entrance for residents along Palmer directly south of Belvedere, new community park to south along Palmer
- Buildings steps down from five to four stories as it moves away from Belvedere.
- Active courtyard at second floor completely enclosed, passive courtyard open to the south.
- Garage at ground level adjacent to community park will utilize artwork either with murals or screening.

Discussion

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

Questions/Clarifications

- Are there any grade changes on the site? *It's pretty flat, drops 3-4' from Belvedere to Spaulding.*
- The properties immediately to the west, are those the rear of commercial spaces? *That's correct, all commercial with no residential. According to URP will remain commercial.*
- What is the community to the immediate south? *Along Park Heights it is retail.*
- What are you doing with the building to respond to the new Boulevard proposed? *To address the terminus there will be a prominent move in the form of a projecting bay, will develop more as project continues.*
- It would be helpful to understand how you came to this design; how does it relate to the church across the street? How was it decided that the lobby should be along Palmer. Is there a diagram that illustrates how this was created and how it informs the massing? *The URP spoke to this a bit, want to maintain retail along Belvedere and wanted residential entrance to be not far removed from Belvedere while not directly on the main street. Garage located along Palmer to allow some space from intersection to limit backups. Park to south to provide adjacency to existing residential community.*
- How will the programs outlined in the masterplan relate to one another, i.e. with the nutrition center is there any intent for urban agriculture, etc.? *It is the intent to have a symbiotic relationship for the projects in the masterplan.*
- Curious to know more about the programming of the courtyards? *We definitely discussed this and the logic to making the internal one the active one was due to the location of the amenity spaces adjacent to the courtyard, which lend themselves to large congregational events. Still exploring options.*
- All the roofs are green in the renderings, are they intended to be green roofs? *Currently reviewing stormwater management requirements, at the moment leaving it open as a possibility, but also limited by cost.*

Site

- We understand that this is part of a masterplan for the area, but the site needs to respond to all the immediate adjacencies and not just the masterplan. Need to better understand how this proposal responds to its surroundings.
- The sense of intimacy achieved at the internal courtyard is missing from the outward facing courtyard.
- Consider creating a series of diagrams that can explain the relationships, how does the program relate to everything else around (retail, church, etc.).
- Excited about the introduction of the community park but think there's a better way to integrate it that can be more meaningful.

- The loading zone feels forced located adjacent to the most prominent feature of the programming along Belvedere.
- Focus on the mission and vision identified in the masterplan rather than precedents. Make sure every inch promotes, supports, and celebrates this vision.
- Make sure the streetscapes are animated, perhaps with stormwater management which can bring life to the streetscapes.
- Use this as an opportunity to understand how the program can fit on the site. Now that you've fit the program to the site, step back and use what you've learned about the project and allow it to evolve in a meaningful way.
- Pay attention to the landscape and purposefully use all the space to address the heavy program. Give an equal attention to the south part of the site.
- With reorganization of the site, maybe the community park becomes more of the active space that can connect to the amenity space

Building

- Curious if other massing options have been explored, such as a façade that follows the curve of Palmer.
- Consider locating the garage entrance further from the lobby entrance. West facing façade shows that the site is a bit crowded and it might be nice to provide some relief there.
- Don't dress up the garage wall, fully integrate it, see it as an opportunity. Every part of the project should speak to that mission and vision.
- The courtyards are well proportioned, they have enough space to breathe, if building massing is rethought maintain the proportions.
- Let the roof at the southeast be something that is green and changes with the seasons. Maybe there is a symbiotic opportunity with the nutrition center for urban agriculture.
- Currently the forms and massing are very plan driven. Pause now to zoom back out and take a deliberate and meaningful approach to the exterior, specifically the Palmer Street elevations.
- If the north volume is about harnessing commercial energy from the boulevard, then what is the true capacity of the south portion of the property? What kind of program should be here? is the garage wrapped with programming? Pair these questions with studies on efficiencies to explore how you can add value.
- Some important things to consider – north portion is most predictable, makes sense to place retail here. To make the building a hub, the southern-portion needs to be studied.
- As you look at the design, question where access to the building is provided. Get the parking to work most efficiently.

- Embrace the curve, what if the eastern leg moves toward the curve creating a strong urban presence. Another direction is to look at it from the two square courtyards and it's the ground plane that responds to the curve. Study those two options and become more strategic.
- Consider making the active courtyard the one open to the exterior to be more connected with the neighborhood.

Next Steps:

Continue design addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Michael Gaines - BRIDGES Community Development Corporation

Azhar Ameen, Laura Manville, Lauren Gilmartin, Mel Thompson – Grimm & Parker

George Kleb, Lisa Stachura – Bon Secours

Claire Fishman – Landscape Architect at Carroll Engineering

Dan Henson, Al Barry, Brandon Brooks, John Tamburrino

Ed Gunts – Baltimore Fishbowl

Melody Simmons - BBJ

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

Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Eric Tiso, Caitlin Audette – Planning