

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

Date: November 15, 2018

Meeting #10

Project: Southern Views Apts.

Phase: Continued Schematic

Location: 1515 N. Washington Street

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Keith Barker of Commercial Development provided a brief project overview, followed by Allison McElheny of Cho Been Holback + Associates, who reviewed the site context, emphasizing the character of the surrounding streets, and presented the updated building design. Craig Richmond, the Landscape Architect, provided a detailed discussion of the landscape plan. Highlights of the presentation are as follows:

Building Design

- Massing
 - In response to panel comments, the building massing has been adjusted to strengthen the urban design and reduce the impact of the surface parking lot on N. Washington Street. Adjustments include rotating the parking lot away from N. Washington Street, and shifting the building west from the corner of Gay and towards N. Washington Street. An open space is created at the corner of Gay and Federal Streets that allows park views from the surrounding buildings and creates a new urban space.
- The pedestrian sequence entering the building from the parking lot has been improved; a new convenience entry from N. Washington Street has been added.
- Façade
 - An overview of the material palette and rationale for its application to the building facades was presented in both elevations and three-dimensional views.

Landscape Design

- A detailed presentation of the landscape design was made. This included a discussion of the fencing that will surround the building along Gay and Federal Streets, as well as the variety of plantings and landscape spaces around the building and along the entry sequence.

Comments from the Panel:

The panel responded very positively to the changes to the building massing and façade design and had the following comments and recommendations to improve both it and the Landscape Design.

Landscape Design

The panel felt the landscape design was too internally focused and did not respond to or engage the broader context, especially at the corner of Gay and Federal Streets. The panel emphasized that the area is undergoing change, and the landscape design should respond to its future as a more populated and active area and engage the surroundings, rather than being internally focused. They had the following specific recommendations:

- Fencing:
 - The fencing along Gay Street should be relocated to the top of the retaining wall, setting it back from the sidewalk; this will provide security without such an oppressive presence along the street;
 - The corner of Gay and Federal Streets should be redesigned to recognize it as a public space. The current location of the fence does not allow enough sidewalk space. The fence could be removed at this corner, or its location adjusted to create a public and engaging space, realizing the potential of the revised building massing;
 - The portion of the fence along Federal Street should be aligned with the building.
- Plantings
 - The panel felt the plantings around the building were overly complicated and would be improved with substantial editing. More emphasis should be placed on their support of primary paths of movement.

Building Façade Design

In general, the panel supported the current façade design and strategy but had the following comments:

- The panel appreciated the clear set of rules established for the use of materials and façade components but felt they should be applied more rigorously. Specifically cited was the discontinuity of the dark brick base along the Gay Street façade. All felt it should be continuous and not interrupted;
- The wood panel boxed bays add an important playful element to the façade but should be studied further. Their window type could be varied and their location very close to material transitions should be further studied to eliminate the visual conflict between the various components;
- One of the panel members questioned the similarity in tone between the white panels and light brick, and felt the inside/outside concept would be strengthened if the color or value difference between the two was more emphatic;
- The light brick façade has a consistent treatment to the narrow versus the wide windows. The white panel façade however does not have the same consistency – sometimes the narrow window gets the wood panel and sometimes the wide window. A more consistent language/set of rules should be established.

Signage

The panel felt the large 1515 building sign on the corner of N. Washington and Federal Streets was misleading since it did not relate to a building entrance. They recommended the sign be removed from the building and relocated as a monument sign along N. Washington Street, or to one of the building entries. Given the public nature of the N. Washington and Federal Street intersection, the panel encouraged the idea of a public space in the building at the ground level, if possible.

Panel Action:

The project will move to Design Development Review addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Mr. Anthony, Ms. Iieva, O'Neill,* Wagner - UDAAP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Marshella Wallace - Planning