

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

Date: June 14, 2018

Meeting #4

Project: 1515 N. Washington Street – Southern Views Apartments

Phase: Schematic

Location: 1515 N. Washington Street, Baltimore, MD

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Mr. Keith Barker of Commercial Development provided a project overview of the planned four-story residential apartment complex comprising of two residential buildings and open parking set on a triangular lot. The site is bounded by Federal Street to the north, N. Washington to the west and Gay Street to the southeast. He discussed some of the challenges of development in this area including the significant decay that's present all around the site. He however noted some points of significance that still exist within the community including the Southern Baptist Church, the American Brewery, Bugle Laundry Factory, Mary Harvin Apartments and the Baltimore Food Hub. This development is one project of a larger program planned to spur more revitalization in the community.

The development team made reference to other urban improvements planned in the area that are relevant to the proposed site. For instance, planned under a separate development by others, is a concept to link John Hopkins Medical Campus to Clifton Park with a "green belt" running along Gay Street and immediately in front of the site. Also referenced was a new open space/park planned by the City, along Gay Street opposite to the proposed site.

Brandon Schultz and Allison McElheny of Cho Benn Holback + Associates discussed the site challenges including its topography, lot configuration, adjacencies and references, and presented a building block massing study developed to inform the concept design. They noted that observation of the surrounding context and building stock did not offer much to support strong references to a street wall except along Federal Street. They highlighted the steep grade across the site sloping down to N. Washington Street, that influenced the placement of buildings and parking.

The design team also highlighted some site improvements with concept for hardscape and landscape screening along Gay Street, and shared a preview of the building's massing and architecture.

DISCUSSION:

Site:

While the panel was sympathetic to the development and design teams' challenge of building on such a limiting site, there was concern with the placement of buildings and parking on the site. The panel noted that the building was sited in a manner that was not very responsive to the urban setting.

Although the presence of many vacant parcels in the immediate area may suggest few references to support the idea of a continuation of a street wall, the panel cited the blocks along N. Washington and north of Federal Street as positive cues to expand the urban street wall. They further stated that empty

lots/pockets and fragmented street walls are an unfortunate result of urban decay, and steps to reverse this condition includes filling in pockets and restoring the urban edges.

The design team should utilize and build on the strengths of the area and not its flaws. With some rework, sliding the building mass along Federal Street towards N. Washington, will complete the corner at Federal Street and N. Washington Street and strengthen the urban edge. Relocating the parking off the corner would be a welcoming step to define the corner and anchor the third quadrant of the N. Washington Street and Federal Street intersection.

The enlarged corner quadrant at Gay Street and Federal Street is a positive urban gesture. Reinforce this idea by taking advantage of sliding the residential bar along Federal Street and open up the corner in favor of a more generous and functional urban plaza, to improve and strengthen the crossing and connection to the planned park.

Consider tucking a portion of the parking below part of the residential floors to provide a more compact arrangement, with the parking entry further away from the corner and closer to mid-block.

The importance afforded to the main entrance, as observed in its fenestration and by virtue of its juxtaposition connecting the two residential bars, is significantly diminished by its access through the parking lot. Separate the main entrance access from the parking lot with appropriate screening and other design devices to provide an entry that's defined and distinct from the parking. Continue developing entry off Gay St to provide a more legible and intuitive alternate entry point into the building.

Continue developing the terraced and landscaped area along Gay Street so it is experienced as a part of the streetscape and compliments the open park planned across the street.

For the next review, expand presentation to include edges beyond the immediate site, so more guided and pointed comments can be provided, and show layout of the planned park.

Building:

Comments on building architecture were reserved for the next panel review.

Next Steps:

Addressing the comments able, this project will return for a Continued Schematic review.

Attending:

Allison McElheny, Brandon Schultz – CBH/QEA
Kevin Anderson – KCW
Adam Bednar – The Daily Record
Sean Kenny – www.smklight.com
Jason Whittington – CDI

Messrs. Anthony*, Ostovar, Mses. Walker, and Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hatfield, Director Tom Stosur, Wolde Ararsa - Planning