

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

Date: October 4, 2018

Meeting #8

Project: 900 E. Fleet Street

Phase: Schematic

Location: 900 East Fleet Street, Baltimore, MD

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

The project team was introduced by Sarah Alexander with support from Stephanie Farrell, all from the design firm of Torti Gallas + Partners, and AJ Luce and Ken Meile from Monument Realty.

Ms. Alexander presented the neighborhood context with views of surrounding streets and adjacent uses as well as immediate streetscapes at Albemarle, Exeter and Fleet Streets. A figure ground was also presented showing comparative lot/parcel sizes. Larger parcels and building footprints of Harbor East to the south and southwest were compared with smaller building footprints on smaller lots in Little Italy to the north and north east. She discussed the building placement on the Verizon site, noting that while most of the footprint will occupy the open space on the existing site, along Fleet Street and along Exeter Street, a part of the proposed footprint will encroach on the south section of the existing Verizon building. This will necessitate a partial removal of a linear segment of the existing Verizon structure. The proposed multi-story building will then abut the existing Verizon building.

The L-shaped site resulted in a L-shaped building fronting on Exeter, Fleet and Albemarle Streets programmed to fit ground floor retail, six stories of parking and eleven stories of residential units. The lobby is located at the corner of Albemarle and Fleet to relate to Harbor East for access and visibility off President and Fleet. Parking access and services for trash removal is from the alley connecting Albemarle with Exeter. Retail frontage extends along Exeter wraps the corner and continues along Fleet to the residential entry. Additional amenities will be provided in a two story partial penthouse at the roof.

A building massing study was presented showing tower and podium. Articulated elements of façade to breakdown mass and create interest. Windows elements articulated and grouped every other floor. The base is clad with brick which extends up the building mass that defines the tower above the entry off Albemarle and Fleet Streets. Along the retail, glazed openings sit on a brick base which provides flood protection for the development.

DISCUSSION:

Site:

The panel was complimentary to the design team's approach to organize the program so that residential units front onto Fleet Street and parking is located to the back and away from the main street façade. The panel also acknowledged the design team's challenge to fit the program into a limited site.

The panel expressed concern with the lobby and entry location. Further study is required to overcome the challenge of a direct pedestrian connection to Harbor East resulting from poor sightlines at the corner of

President and Fleet Streets; and to deter mid-block crossing at Albemarle and Fleet. The design team noted a preference for locating retail at Fleet and Exeter to relate to the existing retail at the other three quadrants of the intersection.

Consider the anticipated foot traffic along the north side of Fleet Street as well as placement of street trees and retail entries. Any opportunities to widen sidewalk should be explored where feasible. Providing relief at corners is encouraged to improve circulation, safety and visibility at corners, in particular at Exeter and Fleet Streets however, additional study is needed of the proposed corner chamfering. Drop off/pull off area on Albemarle Street is appropriate at the main entrance, but bus stop on Fleet Street should be shown if located within proximity of the entrance and drop off area.

Building:

The building massing is expressed in three parts as podium, upper mass representing the main body of the building, and corner tower to articulate the entrance. Setting back the upper mass along Fleet and Exeter is a recall of other Harbor East buildings with the two-part massing as well as an attempt to relate in scale to the street facades along Exeter and on Fleet east of Exeter. While this traditional approach works an alternative massing that expresses a vertical mass without podium relief can be contemplated as well. With high pedestrian traffic and retail anticipated along Fleet Street, the panel suggested the team investigate articulation and/or relief within the first 2 levels of the building. A study in the urban character of that space is needed as the project moves forward.

The concept sketches showing the idea of taking elements within a discrete area, window, balcony spandrel, column etc. and organizing them into an interesting configuration grouped over a larger area to help break down scale; then applying that as a module to develop and articulate the façade, is welcoming. In an abstract manner it echoes the scale of the Bagby building's fenestration. At the podium and tower however, altering the fenestration scale provides contrast but may not articulate the simple mass and L-shaped plan configuration quite successfully. Applying brick to the podium and expanding it up into the tower further contrasts with the grey tones envisaged for the upper mass and body of the building. Changing the material to brick/masonry but retaining the same 'lattice' pattern and goal was questioned and needs investigation.

The ensuing façades along Fleet and Exeter Streets and transition through the tower to Albemarle appear to be an attempt to use past strategies implemented at Harbor East built more than fifteen years ago, that include multi-part facades with mixed material palette tied to the multi-partite façade articulation. Much of the surrounding area has a mixed vernacular, including Little Italy and the developed blocks in Harbor East. The design team is encouraged to revisit the use of materials that articulate the façade and consider alternatives that allow a distinct but contemporary expression. Use the unique site location between the larger volumes built in the Harbor East area and the low volumes existing in Little Italy as an opportunity to transition yet be different.

Next Steps:

The design is a welcomed approach to framing this section of Fleet Street and continuing a streetwall west of Exeter Street. Continue Schematic development as noted in panel's comments. Please be sure to include all facades at the next meeting.

Attending:

AJ Luce, Men Meile – Monument Realty
Meredith Cohn – Baltimore Sun

Sarah Alexander, Stephanie Farrell – Torti Gallas
Melondy Simmons – BBJ
Will Dorfman – Downtown Partnership

Messr. Anthony*, Mses. Wagner, O’Neill, and Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hatfield, Laurie Feinberg, Matthew DeSantis, Bruna Attila - Planning