

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

**Date:** April 4, 2019

**Meeting #15**

**Project:** Perkins Oldtown Somerset

**Phase:** Master Plan

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**Location:** Perkin Oldtown Somerset areas/ East Baltimore

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Tim/ Pam- McCormick Barron/ Matt/ Kemal

Tim Pula with Beatty Development walked through the general timeline and process for the CNI grant and that the overall plan incorporating replacement housing with additional housing to create a mixed income redevelopment at the site of Perkins Homes.

Matt Fitzsimmons with Hord Coplan Macht walked through the overall CNI planning community meeting process and area. The redevelopment plan focuses on housing, people resources, and features that help neighborhood stability. The goals outlined for the overall plan:

- Improve mobility, connectivity and sense of place.
- Improve access to services, education, and recreation.
- Economic opportunity and access to amenities.
- Increase access to quality housing.

Matt walked through the context and noted that Caroline St. has great connective qualities and this was an opportunity to rethink it for more multimodal connections. The overall housing goals were then highlighted:

- All units replaced 1 for 1.
- Build first, move once if possible.
- Mixed-income and mixed-use community.
- Diversity of housing types.
- High-quality design, indistinguishable from market rate housing.

The existing schools' sites are important in terms of providing additional land for the relocation of existing housing and to create a greater mix of housing within the neighborhood. The overall plan for Perkins looks to relocate the City Springs School as the feature for the future public park and terminus to Bond Street. Massing Strategy is looking at 4-story multi-family mixed with stacked flats/towns for added unit diversity. The major streets are looking to maintain the 4-story read with a transition down to 3 levels along the southern edge.

Keval Thakkar of Hord Coplan Macht introduced the Block A concept. The block development includes 2 multi-family buildings fronting Pratt and the new park on Caroline Street with 3 bars of townhomes along Eden and the new EW Street. The team is investigating opportunities to take advantage of the existing slope to build in slight elevation changes within the floorplates and landscape that can help shape the view up and over the alley system and parking. Building B will have leasing space and central amenity spaces for the overall redevelopment with residential above. The building façade and the massing seek to emphasize the 3 separate use zones. In terms of precedents and architectural ideas, the team seek to move away from the red brick that is the predominant feature of the current

site and replace it with lighter tones and a more contemporary expression. The general strategy is to bring the masonry down to the ground at the primary facades and facing the park. The corners hold the 4-story masonry mass and the balance of the buildings have a 3-level masonry read with a recessive 4<sup>th</sup> level with the accent material. Building A borrows some of the same language as Building B using the same materials.

Tim Pula walked through the master plan change that swapped the City Springs School field (k) with (H) and the reduced size of S. Central Park.

There was discussion of unit size and type and how they are being allocated throughout the development. The “Community Services” piece was also discussed and how the team is allowing for it to evolve and to have locations within a variety of the future building sites and within the other Somerset and Oldtown areas. Money from CNI goes towards health, job training programs, etc. that is meant to help leverage other funds for those programs for a more holistic redevelopment approach.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Master Plan/ Perkin I Site:**

- The Panel is excited to see development and congratulations to the team for securing the CNI grant and the collaborative work in pulling all the pieces together to get to this point.
- There were questions as to what becomes of Bethel Street? The misalignment of the street between blocks G and F breeds confusion and the panel recommended that the team investigates keeping the larger block parcel there and finding an appropriate design for Bethel Street that organizes the uses that front it to the north and south of this site.
- Treatment in front of Block H along the park is important and needs to be designed as a public way so as not to read as the private park for Building H.
- In block A - the gaps between the buildings are very critical. The continual alignment of the massing along the street wall and the minimizing of the gaps will be helpful in the overall development to define the streets. Additional mass and or walls might be helpful in achieving this. Although the plan is reversing the frontage from what’s there today, the challenge is what happens to all the residual spaces? The middle blocks are infilled with parking but the space between the masses does not secure those inner block areas. Investigate strong connections from inside the buildings through and into those parking fields.
- Consider Albermarle Square as the learning opportunity within this development and introduce some of those lessons learned there into this. Designed as a walkable neighborhood but no one walks there because there is nothing to walk to. All the traffic is from car into parking lots and the breaks in the buildings are too wide there. This redevelopment can work to address those issues and build upon them to be more successful.
- The Panel was looking for the overall pattern of logic for what goes where and why? Eden seems to be secondary used for vehicular access and the EW streets are primary. If so, those primary streets should not have major breaks in the building walls and those breaks should be moved to the secondary streets. (The Panel highlighted massing on building block B and C). On Block C and D - sticks of 4 townhouse units seem too small and fragmented so perhaps there are opportunities to consolidate

those and look throughout the plan to finesse the buildings in order to strengthen the overall concept.

#### **Perkins I Architecture:**

- The Panel responded very positively to the search for an alternate to the red brick that overwhelms the area now.
- Work to more strongly identify the program pieces that are different/ not residential (leasing, amenities, etc) within the proposed architecture in the first phase. The current proposal appears to blend the uses almost too evenly.
- There is concern that each building on each block not all be the same. Is there an underlying context for the buildings on the same block but they are a little more removed from one another? The architecture that fronts the park can be a bit bolder and the other structures on the secondary streets are a little subtler/background building. Reduce some of the read as a 'Redevelopment Project'. Work towards the buildings on each side of the street begin to talk to one another rather than talking just within the block.
- The Panel was slightly disappointed to not see more retail in this phase, even if modest. Some flexibility should be built in a few key location to provide basic convenience amenity for the neighborhood over time.

#### **Somerset Building Site (S-3)- 420 Asquith:**

- Dana Henson of Henson Development walked through some of the general context of the Somerset plan.
- Mel Thompson of Grimm+Parker walked through the building site introducing the realigned McElderry/Asquith intersection and transition to Old Town Mall. The program is for appx. 62 residential units (36 units are Perkins Relocation) with a variety of unit sizes. The team is proposing a brick base with 3 levels of panel above (4 levels total). The garage is exposed on McElderry facing the OldTown mall structures but the project team is investigating the use of a metal screen within those facades.

#### **420 Asquith St. Architecture:**

- The Panel found this to be the boldest and most fun architectural expression within the Somerset area buildings. There are questions on why the brick base is the same for the residential units as well as the garage. Investigate treating each of those programs differently architecturally.
- The location of the entry does not appear to correspond to the other urban moves and is located further from the elevators that one would expect. Consider moving the bold architectural move south on Asquith to divert your attention from the corner down Asquith Street. It would also begin to build a residential relationship with 520 Somerset.
- Investigate shifting the garage entrance to not be in line with potential future connection to the OldTown Mall pedestrian way.
- The gap at the ground level utility zone should be enclosed at the street level for both aesthetic and security needs. Continue to investigate an architectural solution for this location as it related to the overall massing of the building.
- Asquith elevation is most successful and maybe the others can be simplified further.

#### **Next Steps:**

Master Plan review - Overall master plan review is complete. Continue to evolve the overall plan and strengthen the concepts as each block begins design.

Early Schematic reviews for Perkins I and 420 Asquith - Each project can move into Design Development while specifically addressing the comments above.

**Attending:**

Dana Henson - The Henson Group

Jessica Isault - BBJ

Matthew Fitzsimmons, Hannah Rosenberg, Keval Thakkar - HCM

Jim Determan - CGD

Pam Askew - McCormack Baron Salazar

Mel Thompson, Megan Kiel - Grimm+Parker

Tony Cortea - STV

Lembit Jogi, Cynthia Newman-Lynch, Dr. Dwanda Farmer - HABC

Messrs. Anthony, Mses. Wagner, O'Neill, and Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Anthony Cataldo\*, Christina Hartsfield, Marshella Wallace, Ren Southard, Tamara Woods,  
Matthew DeSantis - Planning