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

Date: September 13, 2018 **Meeting #7**

Project: Port Covington – Chapter 1 Streetscape **Phase:** Schematic

Location: Port Covington, Baltimore, MD

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

An overview of the project was provided bySteven Siegel of Weller Development. He noted that the project will provide 18 million square feet of development inclusive of 4.9 million square feet for the Under Armour Campus (UA). It is currently the largest planned urban revitalization project in the region. Its location downtown with convenient access off the I-95 corridor contributes to the UA vision to help reposition Baltimore for revitalization. Phase I of the project is planned off the energy and identity of the Distillery.

The master plan was recapped as part of the overview showing the proposed project street grid with connection to the downtown street network. The area of focus shared for panel discussion was limited the proposed blocks fronting onto the east waterfront bounded by Peninsula to the west, Atlas Street to the north, Tidewater Street to the east and Cromwell Street to the south.

RJ Eldridge of Toole Design Group discussed the project's desire to use streets to create vibrant places that provide multiple opportunities for the communities. He presented a framework of varying street types including primary streets with high retail activity, secondary streets, arterial streets carrying through traffic, pedestrian only streets, and streets planned to accommodate higher pedestrian traffic but reduced vehicular traffic. The concept for a flush street was also introduced as a test project for the area, located along Cromwell Street between Anthem and Distillery Streets. A protected bike path network was shown as part of the proposed street plans with some shared use paths circulating around the waterfront. It was noted that the project is seen as a positive demonstration of multi-modal connectivity in the region.

RJ Eldridge noted a change to the street grid from the last panel review. Block sizes were made more regular and streets extended through. Green spaces along the waterfront now connect to the proposed street network. The updated street network is planned to emphasize porosity, be barrier free and encourage design that is more human-centered than auto-centered.

The design team presented a framework for building street character with consideration for: street edges defined from curb to building, providing flexible spaces, and exploring adding pavement textures and urban features to reduce travel speeds. Typical section and plan views of key streets were presented showing parking, vehicular travel lanes, curbs, bike paths, sidewalks, buffer zones, trees and utility zones. Storm water features were provided and integrated in zones with other proposed sidewalk and street elements.

DISCUSSION:
Comments from the Panel

Street:

Design updates to the street were viewed as an overall improvement by the panel. Creating more regular sized blocks was positive and better defined than the seemingly idiosyncratic nature of street grid presented at previous panel review. The panel noted that multiple similar sized and continuous complete blocks are better grounded in planning principles, but expressed some concern with the smaller blocks along Cromwell Street. The panel noted that while such small dimensioned blocks depart from the typical block size, they reduce frontage and create a more fragmented block system between Atlas and Cromwell which lessens the importance and hierarchy of other "A-type" streets. The design team should contemplate consolidating the smaller blocks along Cromwell to provide more continuous street frontage and strengthen the idea of selective vistas that connect through to the waterfront.

How the character of the street unfolds relies on how successful connections are made and how clearly separations are identified. Spatial volumes on each street should be further studied to add variety and quality to the street experience while ensuring all functional aspects are met. For instance along Cromwell, a generous use of street trees and plantings help define the character of the street, but at the plaza tree cadence may vary, be clustered or eliminated altogether to mark a clear distinction that identifies an intervening civic and urban feature adjoining the street. Along the plaza edge, consider bollards in lieu of or in combination with trees, or an alternate arrangement of street furnishings and features. While similar and familiar elements define continuity of the streetscape, transitions are a part of the dialogue that defines the overall street character, so attention should be given at a granular level to develop the fabric of each block but use these unique discoveries to layer and build blocks that complement and stich together community and neighborhood.

The panel noted that changes in paving materials, texture and color are accepted ways of providing separation and spatial contrast, but cautioned that it isn't enough to provide a calming effect on traffic. They suggested that the development consider some streets being one-way streets; single lane flows, having raised speed control devices, creative parking arrangements that slow traffic as well as sidewalk bump-outs at crosswalks. These and other structural arrangements should be contemplated as augments to the visual and tactile features presented, to ensure that traffic speeds are reduced, and that streets in designated areas of the development are given over to the pedestrian without preclusion of the development's preference for cars on all or most streets. The concept of a raised roadway set flush with the sidewalk needs considerable study to clarify how the suggested visual, tactile and structural cues are integrated with a flush plane; and the qualitative nature of the streetscape shared by people and cars.

The street cross sections presented the approach to typical activities planned for each street as well as the character anticipated. Circulation was zoned to fit travel lanes and parking, buffers, trees and landscaping, street lighting/utilities, storm water management (SWM) features and sidewalks, as well as varying combinations of amenities, furnishing and bike paths. The panel praised the standardization of the street section as it provides a framework and rationale for using functional and foundational street elements to define the street and its character, while allowing for flexibility. The panel suggested further study of all streets to correctly organize the standard features with consideration for moving parts, from fast moving traffic to slower moving bikes to people walking, standing or sitting. The panel noted that Winans Cove could be reorganized, although the design team noted that it could potentially be similar to Tidewater, and Peninsula Drive should be studied to provide the similar framework as the other streets; faster moving to slowest moving organization.

Next Steps:

The team will continue into Design Development review with the Panel focused on the updates and full development of Cromwell Street from Peninsula Drive to McCommas Street. Other streets will be updated as discussed in the meeting and integrate planned bus routes within the development.

Attending:

Addison Palmer, Ryan Barth – STV
Ken Ray, RJ Eldridge – Toole Design Group
Alex Jackson – Maroon PR
Steven Siegel, Casey Larkin, Adam Genn – Weller Development

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

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Director Tom Stosur, Tamara Woods, Jeff LaNoue, Matthew DeSantis, Brent Flickinger, Laurie Feinberg, Bruna Attila - Planning