

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

Date: April 11, 2019

Meeting #16

Project: Port Covington - Office Building E-5A

Phase: Schematic

Location: Banner St. and Cromwell St, Baltimore MD

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Shawn Batterton with Weller Development introduced the project within the context of the overall office program development within the Port Covington Chapter I.

Joaquin with MGMA introduced the site context and the proposed office building. Specific attention was drawn to the history of Baltimore waterfront buildings having a traditional wharf design. This office building site is the closest to the waterfront and anchors the Chapter I development area in the overall plan. This building will also be the tallest within this phase. Joaquin walked through historical precedents and how they translated those into their current proposal ie. Base/middle/top, red brick masonry, top level penthouse material and plane change, etc. References were then made to other phase I buildings (E-6 and Rye Street Market block) with the use of brick and square openings and highlighting the retail base that has been established along Cromwell Street. The team then focused in on the site plan highlighting the 7-story mass with 1 level ground floor addition being used to fill out the block along Cromwell Street. The main entrance to the office building is along Banner Street, in the center of the proposed volume. The team is using an open-air structure on the non-retail bump-out located to the east of the main mass to complete the block. Renderings were then presented to show the current proposal within the context of the other Chapter 1 projects. The concept for the retail base is to allow each retailer to create their own identity. Signs, canopies, etc. would differ from retailer to retailer along the streetscape. The outdoor space is described as an oasis adjacent to the building. Stormwater management and hardscape is envisioned for this. Planters and structure are used to shield the loading and service area to the south. The industrial aesthetic is proposed within the masonry and steel details that create the enclosure to the courtyard. Elevations were then presented to highlight the main features of the architecture. Individual floorplans were reviewed to illustrate the program of the building.

DISCUSSION:

Site:

- The Panel then began a discussion surrounding the idea of flipping the site plan and providing the outdoor space along Banner Street on the west side of the side and aligning the L-Shape towards the future park/plaza space.
- Is there a way that the visual/implied datum that stretches through all the other blocks somehow finds its way into this site as the anchor, which currently seems

ignored? Further investigations/alignments with the west side entrance of E-5B needs to be done.

- Comments were then raised regarding the urban design of the site. The proposal along the private street feels significantly more like an alley rather than a street. The arrangement of the program and open space is not relating to the other side of the street - the spaces are not communicating at all. Closing in the open courtyard is a large barrier and the location of the parking access may need to shift north. Courtyard should read more a part of the public street space and not the private building.
- The panel recommended that the site design of this block is coordinated with the evolving block to the east in order to harmonize the urban experience on both sides of the street.

Building:

- The one story retail addition along Cromwell Street was questioned; can the additional square footage not be found within the major building? The team was using the bump out to hide the service area and to organize the block. It either wants to be more integrated or more unique and have a larger volume and presence (3-4 stories tall).
- Main building identity - relationship to the red brick historical reference. Is the building intending to recede into the base context of the development or is it intending to relate to the other special pieces of architecture? The intent is that the building is grounded into the site, not so much that it is a recessive building.
- The team needs to find ways to take the traditional language of the building but translate it with modern construction techniques. Avoid the flat, inexpensive read to the facades through meaningful details. The current proposal needs additional investigation into the details and the extrapolation of the concept into a current building. The team is looking at the first 22 feet along the pedestrian environment for finer level finishes but the entire building needs to have a quality of architecture that does not read as an application of skin material to a structure. The penthouse also offers an opportunity to not appear flat and inexpensive. Trying to emulate the historic looking building will constantly be met with concern. Find ways to extrapolate the idea into the contemporary; reference but do not replicate the idea.

Next Steps:

Continue into Design Development addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Morgan Gick, Wil McBeath, Joaquin Diz - MGMA
Shawn Batterton, Patrick Mell, John Giardina, Adam Genn - Weller Development
Kevin Lynch - SouthBMore.com
M Simmons - BBJ

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

Anthony Cataldo*, Christina Hartfield, Ren Southard - Planning