

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

**Date:** April 20, 2023

**Meeting #76**

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**Project:** 4503 Frederick Ave.

**Phase:** Design Development

**Location:** Frederick Avenue, Baltimore MD

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**PRESENTATION:**

**Context / Background:**

Pavlina Ilieva first recused herself from the Panel before she introduced the project, which is in the Irvington Neighborhood of Baltimore. The project team includes developer Win Willis and iO Studio. A summary of goals of the project included the developer’s unwavering commitment to enhance market-rate affordable housing in an equitable manner. This project seeks to provide a high-quality, yet affordable, option for this market while also focusing on community development. This project will be the first of its kind, with a residential food-forest garden, and programs for residents on homeownership, youth education, financial literacy. The building will feature ‘luxury’ amenities not typically included in markets like the Irvington neighborhood.

The site is rectangular and very long (close to 500’ – more than a typical Baltimore City block), with a significant grade change from the highest point at Frederick Ave. The context along Frederick is varied with single family, rowhouse, high school and rec. center.

The site includes an existing house that will be razed to make way for the new building. The building includes 53-units of multi-family housing. The design team worked to blend into the neighborhood by massing the building in such a way that it appears as 3-story along the front. The site grade dropping away allows the building, which has a linear, F-shaped configuration, to have 5-stories at the rear. Lower levels include parking tucked under the building, and amenity spaces bookend the parking and the front lobby sides.

Richard Jones of iO Studio continued the presentation with a description of the landscape. Space in the forecourt and the rear area between building and the stormwater management areas will be landscaped and programmed, including having some food production, circulation, and social gathering functions. At the forecourt and entrance, the team strove to eliminate steps in favor of accessible grades. The team took great care to address the views into the site and conceal services, creating a landscape that is attractive and, at the same time, blends into the block and becomes a good neighbor.

Finally, the team studied materiality and decided on a clean, warm material palette. The proposed façade materials include concrete, metal and wood.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The Panel thanked the team for the very clear and thoughtful presentation and noted that this is an exciting opportunity for a very interesting site. The Panel then moved into clarifying questions and comments.

## **Clarification:**

- *Is the landscape completely non-toxic?* The team really focused on non-toxic, not only for humans but also for pets.
- *The team found an elegant solution to the accessibility issue at the front; is the whole path accessible?* Yes, the path is below 5%.
- *Has the team started to have conversations with the adjacent neighbors?* The developer has talked to neighbors and there does not seem to be concern about this multi-family building; rather, neighbors seem to be excited about the project. The developer has been present in the neighborhood and shared renderings at community meetings. The project is very collaborative – it is meant to feel like a community project. The team also plans to go door to door to discuss the height and the views into the rear yard.
- *Is there a specific reason for positioning the driveway on the west side instead of the east?* There is a fire hydrant, and the grade also a bit higher on the opposite side. Additionally, the garage openings are positioned so as to create a variety of unique spaces.
- *The curb cut for the driveway for the adjacent property appears to be close to the driveway; how does the team plan to address this?*
- *There is a potential challenge in the mature trees on the east side of the site; what is the team's plan for these?* The foliage is all very overgrown. This site does not have many trees because of the previous function as a nursery. Windows are setback 15' from the property line, so there will be sufficient buffer between the building and the neighbor lot where most of the mature trees are located. The team will study the locations of vegetation in relation to the neighboring trees and decide where the new landscaping and plantings are most appropriate.
- *Please clarify the stormwater strategy:* Dry swales and 3 bays that run east to west; the team plans to plant the swales.
- *Is there access to Irvington Park at the rear of the site?* The team plans to add a fence at the rear and possibly add a gate for residents to access the park more easily.
- *Please clarify the strategy for the balconies:* Oriented always so that the primary façade faces the approach.

## **COMMENTS:**

### **Site / Landscape:**

- This project 'feels' very Baltimore – there are many community gardens in the City and many residents are very resilient, making use of what they have. The Panel is very excited to see the project and feels that it embraces the resilient spirit of the neighborhood.
- The immersive landscape is a sophisticated approach. Orchard is applauded.

- Panel notes that a large, multi-family building could be disconcerting in this context, but the massing is thoughtful and integrates well with the neighborhood.
- Placement of trees helps to articulate the landscape and work with the scale of the building.
- The landscape is exciting and immersive – it's very intentional and clear about the development goals for community-building. This landscape has an opportunity to reinforce community bonds and strengthen social cohesion within the building and hopefully the neighborhood, too.
- Scale of the plaza and green spaces at the end of the building are appropriate for a range of functions.
- Plants and path allow for very passive environmental learning – bird, butterflies, natural systems – will be opportunities for residents to learn and engage with nature.
- Site plan is well articulated; each space has been thought about, but not overdone. There are a lot of opportunities here. Team should consider an opportunity to incorporate a segment of the path on the west side, adjacent to the neighbor, to add a little bit of buffer.
- The project is very exciting – it could be used as a blueprint for other projects that have challenging sites.

#### **Buildings / Architecture:**

- This is an extremely long site at 500' and the building is 300' long – this could be perceived as a very long building, but the intentional carving out of courtyards helps to create a more appropriate scale.
- Team is applauded for creating a series of unique spaces within the courtyards, each of them unique, yet relating to one another.
- Proportions of the building are great – massing is thoughtful, with a clear attitude in the way they address themselves as public or private.
- On the balconies at the entry – could these be a little different to highlight the entrance? For instance, if they project out a bit, they could both highlight the entrance while also relating to the neighbors who have porches.
- Materials – board and batten, concrete, screening – these are nice, natural materials. The material balance needs to further compliment the very sustainable nature of the project. This could extend to color, as well. There is an opportunity to have more vibrance or darker color to compliment and/or blend into the landscape.

#### **Next Steps:**

Continue moving the plan forward with consideration to the Panel's comments. Work with Planning staff to complete design review.

#### **Attending:**

Pavlina Ilieva, Ryan, Kuo Pao Lian - PI.KL

Richard Jones - iO Studio

Win Willis - Developer

Jessica lanetta, Johnny Martin, Ted Ludvigsen, Ed Gunts – Attending

Anthony Osbourne\*, Sharon Bradley - UDAAP Panel  
Ren Southard\*\*, Caitlin Audette, Matt DeSantis, Chris Ryer - Planning

\* UDAAP Chairperson

\*\* Assigned Planning Staff