

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

Date: January 19, 2023

Meeting #72

Project: Penn Station

Phase: Concept Review

Location: Penn Station, Baltimore MD

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Charlie Bond and Jonathan Flesher of Beatty development introduced the project and began the presentation with a brief overview of the project area and context. Peter Stubb with Gensler continued the presentation with a visual reminder of the masterplan and phasing.

Peng Gu of Mahan Rykiel presented the proposal for the open space with the east and west plazas. Phase 1 of the masterplan will not include the commercial building along Lanvale and as such the open space responds with the use of hedges screening the existing parking lot. Both the east and west plazas include minimal plantings and decorative hardscape. The west plaza is highlight by a long overlook that allows the train to act as theater with a 8' tall fence to facilitate this while meeting all requirements.

Peter Stubb continued the presentation with a look at the changes to the architecture following the previous UDAAP. This included the reduction in size of the roof canopy and the removal of the canopy's porous material.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for the presentation and moved into clarifying questions and comments.

Clarification:

- *How is the building serviced? Through the parking lot?* The building will be serviced from the lower level where there is a service road.
- *Can you explain the access to the eastern plaza? How does this interact with the building?* The drawing is misleading, there is an outdoor area that overlooks the trains and that is directly adjacent to an interior kiosk. Access to the lower platform will be from the interior.

Comments:

Site

- The Green Giant is a true instant hedge, but it requires pruning. Have you considered a shrub instead? A shrub could act as the barrier without the maintenance requirements.
- There's a fine line between barren and elegant simplicity. It's trending to elegant simplicity, but be cautious not to cross the line.
- Alternatively, the open space feels too barren. How can you design the approach to the overlook at the western plaza to create a reveal of the trains below? Look for strategies that do not objectify the fence as the sole facilitator of the experience and integrate with remaining landscape towards creating a cohesive experience at the plaza. Utilize more vegetation to soften the plaza, plants that grow up and create more intimate spaces and frame views to the trains below.
- Consider more plantings along the fence/wall at the eastern plaza. Look back to your precedents, and create more hospitable experiences even with the understanding that this is a transitory space. Needs to feel inviting, optimistic, engaging. Reconsider the predictable expression of bollards, hardscape and generic wall surfaces in favor of forward-looking civic space.

Building

- At the hyphen consider utilizing the rhythm from the historic building in a new way to connect the two rather than reducing the language of the existing building and blending it into the new to maintain clarity of expression.
- Explore the use of a sharper edge at the roof that can make it feel more organic in nature. Currently feels very heavy with the blunt edge.
- The transition of the roof back to the building, specifically at the eastern edge would benefit from a thinner, knife edge, as well.
- Rounded corners of the new buildings at the roof transition need more study, appear foreign to the rest of the building
- Really study how lighting is incorporated into the ceiling treatment. Is there still opportunity to provide some perforation, transparency or lightness to the panels. Want to make sure it feels like a luminous copper cloud, and not heavy or oppressive 'lid'.
- How do people occupy the interior space? Where do they sit? Design intent is described but not yet fully expressed in the drawings presented.
- There are no views of the plazas from inside the building. Consider what this view will be and how the spaces will interact from inside out (arrivals vs departures).

Next Steps:

Work with Planning staff to complete the design review.

Attending:

Peter Stubb, Tyler Miller, Alan Gombera– Gensler

Charlie Bond, Jonathan Fleisher – PSP/ Beatty

Peng Gu, Elaine Ku – Mahan Rykel

Osbourne Anthony, Pavlina Ilieva and Sharon Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Chris Ryer – Planning