

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

**Date:** October 15, 2020

**Meeting #38**

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**Project:** Penn Station Building 1

**Phase:** Concept Review

**Location:** Penn Station, Baltimore MD

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Brian Taylor of Amtrak began the presentation by thanking agencies and partners involved in the redevelopment of Penn Station. Peter Stubb with Gensler continued the conversation with a brief overview of the project area and context. The Master Plan has been a years-long effort that includes renovation of the historic station headhouse at the south of the site, a new commercial mixed-use building along Lanvale at the north of the site, and a new terminal building between the two. The historic building currently sits as an island; the project team has focused on reconnecting the historic building to the neighborhood on all sides. New entry points and connections will align with multi-modal transportation options for better connection. New plaza spaces and retail at ground level will enhance the transportation experience.

**Project information:**

- The site has approximately 8' of elevation gain from St. Paul to Charles, fluid ground plane has been planned for the whole site.
- Ground floor retail and commercial are planned with residential above for the mixed-use building. This building is in early stages; presentation shows general massing only.
- Landscape approach is to minimize contrast between the indoors and the exterior - more fluid transition between the station and the site.
- Pedestrian movement was studied to inform decisions about the plaza / transition areas, which could be outdoor seating, outdoor dining, etc.
- Focal points and programmed areas are planned around the site, but details have not been considered this early in the design; landscape diagrams are focused largely on organization of the site. Precedent images are included to give clues about the planned character of the space. Transparency, connection

and pedestrian safety are priorities; artistic benches and paving will act as defining elements.

- A woonerf is planned for the front of the station; currently the street in front of the historic head house is a drop off zone and connects directly to JFX; the new woonerf will be a right-turn only onto Charles, greatly diminishing the traffic cut-through demand in front of the building.
- The new station building is shown as a massing at this early stage of design, but some details have been considered including use of copper, green roof and overhangs. While the new building will not be duplicative, the team has tried to relate the new building to the old building through glazing, rhythm and scale.

### DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for the presentation and for this exciting project moving forward and moved into clarifying questions and comments.

- *What is the rationale for the shape of the building, the ins and outs, etc?* The commercial building is very tall, and the station extension is very low. The connection between the buildings and the fact that they share some functions and services reflects the geometry of the buildings. Pathways and required spaces demand larger fluid open spaces.
- *Has pedestrian walk-up traffic impacted organization of the site?* Yes, the north portion of the site with more capacity for residential and commercial. The station as it is currently laid out isn't working for pedestrians and was considered in the design.
- *Is the high-speed rail access from within the concourse?* Yes, the platform will soon be under construction and there will be a little lobby in that area with a connection to that platform area.

### Discussion:

- Allocation of space and how the transportation is organized around the site is very skillfully done. Drop off zones, pedestrian zones and amenity zones are necessary; little plazas around the station will contribute to the success of the project.
- Great clarity about pedestrian approach from the north of the site; the south is a bit more challenged. On Charles from the south, the diagonal forecourt delivers pedestrians to the station. Currently, this is very contested with

several street crossings - opportunity to resolve this in a manner that prioritizes pedestrians. The St. Paul side of the site also needs to be resolved on the south end.

- On the north, the two plazas are terrific. Consider shrinking the one on the west and enlarging the one on the east. The angles are not yet working together - there needs to be a larger space there to deal with the thrust of the geometry.
- Hardscaping - noble idea to recall the track bed and bring it into the paving, but it makes the plaza seem too busy. If the ground plane could become a little more simplified and directional it will be more successful. It should do two things: 1.) bring people into the station; and 2.) move pedestrians along the sidewalk.
- South plaza is beginning to work better to accommodate pedestrians. Consider providing larger pedestrian relief areas where drop-off meets pedestrians at crossings on St. Paul and Charles streets and slightly redirect alignment of entry and exit points to improve pedestrian safety. With regard to the size and scale of the plaza, the grand scale of the building can be acknowledged with more hierarchy in the plaza. More hierarchy will also help with organizing the space.
- Existing opaque barriers on bridges are likely not going away; may need to turn the corner toward the station. Opportunity to make these more transparent.
- The new commercial building and entry of the train station expansion at Lanvale and St. Paul needs more resolution, more hierarchy. There needs to be a strong attitude about how the historic buildings, the new train station and the commercial building relate to each other. Commercial building can become very dominant, but the new station also wants to express itself.
- Concourse with glassy box is very clearly expressed, podium of the commercial building will also be very glassy - the new train station has the potential of reading as an extension of the commercial building instead of reading as its own (different) use. The panel suggested that the design team work towards avoiding the new station read as an extension of the commercial podium.
- Back of house piece should be recessed from the building instead of protruding. If recessed, it distinguishes itself from the commercial building, and allows the entrance to be more prominent and clearer. Having an understanding of how the programming elements of concourse that extends across the tracks will be organized will help to inform the geometry and the new volume. Sliding the wedge volume to the west will be crucial for better reading of the entrance.
- The historic station building has a very formal geometry and the new building is much more eroded and angular. While it makes sense that the new station should have its own language, it may have gone too far. If language of the concourse is extended to the bridge and beyond, the new building should take on some of that language. If contrast is sought instead, then continuing the

formal language at the concourse level is out of place. The idea that the new building is a glassy pavilion to enjoy the activity of the train - a great, pure idea - but the vocabulary of the bridge is adding a third element that compromises the purity of that idea.

- Roof is powerful image, but needs to be edited down to clarify its role as a 'weightless' surface. Columns on the west side undermine that role. Consider dropping the shade canopy on the west side down to the concourse level to allow the main roof to shine.
- Employ some flexibility on the commercial side and keep it as separate as possible. New elements should be like a handshake with the existing elements. The infrastructure impacts the site, the buildings, every element. The angles of the infrastructure are very complicated - try to make the new forms less complex and downplay them to lessen the noise.

### **Next Steps:**

Continue design addressing the

### **Attending:**

Peter Stubb, David Dymond, Tyler Miller - Gensler  
Charlie Bond, Tim Pula, John Renner - PSP/ Beatty  
Brian Traylor - Amtrak  
Peng Gu, Elaine Ku - Mahan Rykel

Klaus Philipsen, Melody Simmons, Joshua Bauman, Chris Seiler, Hallie Miller, Ed Gunts,  
Amy Lambert - Attendees

Mr. Anthony, Mses. Ilieva and Bradley - UDAAP Panel

Laurie Feinberg\*, Ren Southard, Martin French, Tamara Woods, Matt DeStantis -  
Planning