

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

Date: September 30, 2021

Meeting #52

Project: 401 W. 26th Street (26th & Sisson)

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: 401 W. 26th Street (26th & Sisson)

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Al Barry, consultant for the project developer, introduced the project as an industrial use site that was rezoned in 2017 to an IMU category. Joel Fidler with Ayers Saint Gross introduced the multi-family residential project. Site constraints include CSX rail line to the south/east along with a steep grade down to the rail line, 60' ROW at W. 26th Street, and cell tower on site along Sisson Street. The site is located near both industrial buildings and typical Baltimore rowhouses. The proposed building is composed of two masses, one five-stories tall and the other four-stories, for an overall max. height of approximately 60' tall. Tarek Saleh, lead designer presented the design study, explaining the choice of a transitional design intended to respond to the context. Construction is wood frame above a concrete podium. Abigail Thomas, presented the landscape proposal including street trees and a richly vegetated patio on deck.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for the presentation and asked clarifying questions.

- *What is the intended programming (short term vs. long term rentals) and intended renters?* Annual leases for population looking to live in Remington.
- *Where will the fiber cement panels and metal panels be located on the building?* Metal panels at front, fiber cement at rear wrapping at side.
- *Are there underground utilities that may conflict with street trees, similarly are there overhead powerlines that may conflict with street trees?* Utilities are generally in the street and should not impact street trees.
- *How will stormwater management be handled?* Stormwater management will be completed through green roof and one area at north.
- *What is the vehicular circulation pattern?* Vehicles enter at one of two entrances off 26th street and exit at Sisson Street. A temporary entrance will be north of the cell tower until the adjacent bridge is complete.

Site:

- The panel expressed concern with site conditions, specifically, the buildings across 26th Street and any street level activity associated with their industrial uses. Recommend that the team completes an analysis on this industrial activity - are trucks going in and out and when? Are trucks parked for long periods of time along the street? Following this analysis consider changes to the building – should the entry be relocated, screened, or setback? Is this the appropriate massing? If the courtyard was moved further west would that help mitigate the industrial context?
- Utilize landscape to help create a stronger buffer from industrial properties.
- The location of the courtyard facing north loses the opportunity of views to the south, which would not be impeded by future development thanks to the rail line.
- The courtyard will be in shade as it faces north, it's important that the large-scale trees can thrive as they are critical to the scheme.
- Ensure sufficient soil volume to support the courtyard trees as well as street trees.
- The rear of building has a back door feel, it's important to create a finished and deliberate look with stronger attention to materiality, paving and vegetation. Make this a 360 building.
- What happens at the small parking lot? Can that be transformed into a retail opportunity or outdoor communal space for better connection and interface with community instead of a few parking spaces and no activity?

Building:

- Concern that the building is designed for a future condition, rather than the existing condition. Needs to walk a line where the building can evolve with the community.
- Study how the building meets the ground and how that impacts its presence in the community.
- Create a more continuous experience along the urban edge, potentially by creating additional ground level access points, moving attention from one single door.
- Urge reconsideration of what happens at the corner of Sisson and 26th to create a truly public space. Can the corner be activated? If so, how is that reflected in the façade and landscape (besides the doors in the storefront) for a stronger urban gesture.
- Along Sisson Street the design needs to be completed and finished – consideration of cell tower screening, landscape, gates, views into the property.
- Allow spaces to transform as the neighborhood changes to respond to changing community needs.
- The massing still reads as two buildings, use material in a way that stitches the massing together.
- The brow at the top is successful in that it engages the various pieces, however it would be more successful if it turned down or met the rear block in a clear way.

- The building would benefit more if you used the traditional materials in a modern way. Can the generic “warehouse style” translate to something more specific to this project?
- Reconsider the color of the brick to something that can contrast with the sharp metal edges and be interpreted in a modern way.

Next Steps:

Address the panels comments above and work with Planning staff prior to returning to UDAAP.

Attending:

Al Barry – AB Associates

Joel Fidler – Ayers Saint Gross

Tarek Saleh – Ayers Saint Gross

Abigail Thomas – Ayers Saint Gross

Tim Shook - Ayers Saint Gross

Richard Shure – development team

Jared Barnhart - MRA

Jonathan Moore

Klaus Philipsen - journalist

Melody Simmons – BBJ

Ed Gunts - journalist

Amanda Rothschild - GRIA

Corey Jennings - GRIA

Shae Hite

Johannes Kettler

Mr. Anthony, Mses. Illeva and Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette – Planning