

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

Date: June 23, 2022

Meeting #63

Project: 4511 Harford Road Multi-Family Building

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: Harford Road, Beverly Hills Neighborhood

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

The project team includes MCB, Core Studio Design, and Alexander Design Studio. This is the project's initial presentation to the Panel. Charles Alexander began the presentation by showing the project context in relationship to Morgan State University before moving closer to the site. The team studied the Harford Road corridor for ways to develop a project that fits into the revitalizing corridor and reinforce the "urban village" feel of the street. The project will need some vehicular access, and the team tried to balance this need and not make the car the most important factor.

The building responds to the restrictions of the site with setbacks and parking requirements, but the parking is tucked behind with the building pulled up to the same setback as the neighboring building. The building is all residential, but the team did study mixed-use before deciding that it doesn't work with this proforma. The active amenity spaces will be located on the Harford Road side with higher ceilings. The project is on a brownfield site, which has driven some of how the building is positioned on the site.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for their presentation and continued with questions and comments together.

CLARIFICATIONS:

- *What is the width of the sidewalk on Harford?* The entry is 18' – 19' and 10' at the rest of the frontage. The trees in the renderings are just to show intent – the team is still studying where exactly the trees will be placed.

- *Has the team studied anything other than a courtyard building for this site?* The team did study many options, but there was a challenge with dead-end corridors. This shape allows for better street frontage on Harford Road.
Do the grades continue to drop off? The grade drops to the east and then the site flattens out for a bit before rising again toward the homes beyond the easternmost parcel boundary.
- *What plans are there for the adjacent historic structure?* The historic building is going to be addressed by a different architectural team; the historic building is included in the presentation because the new building responds to it.

Site:

- Including a landscape designer early in the project will help the team to properly site the building, can contribute to the conversation about the integration of the building, and offer creative solutions to the kinds of constraints the team has mentioned. Parking issues can be alleviated with the incorporation of the landscape architect who can help position the building and ensure that trees have adequate soil volume.
- The Panel reviews projects through a lens of longevity. For this particular stretch of Harford Road, look at not just what it is now or how it has been changing recently, but what it could be in the future. The team is encouraged to push a portion of the front façade back - potentially the portion clad in lighter material.
- Pushing a portion of the building back allows for future infill retail development, that can respond more closely to the scale and type of structure familiar to the Harford corridor. The proposed frontage on Harford Road is working against the possibility of future development and introduces a scale of urbanity that dwarfs everything else around.
- The building seems very close to the sidewalk; is there a way to provide a continuous planting strip and substantial pedestrian movement? Potentially a bike lane.
- ADA and accessibility - because the site does have grade changes, the team needs to think through how to accommodate access without overwhelming the site with ramps.
- Potential to have some of the parking under the building.

Building:

- There is an opportunity to open the building up on one side; the courtyard is lovely, but it doesn't really seem like it fits on this site. A different type of building – a bar building for instance - could help to shape the site into smaller zones. One of the legs of the 'donut' could swivel and create a space for outdoor space and parking together.

- As currently sited, the design concentrates all the desired density in a highly visible portion of the site while leaving the remaining larger portion of the site covered in surface parking. The panel urges the design team to explore and develop solutions that make better use of the site but breaking up the parking and building massing into smaller portions while maintaining the desired efficiency.
- The building is completely out of scale and out of character here – it feels enormous for the site. This is apparent in the way the team has struggled to break up the massing.
- If the massing cannot be redesigned, there needs to be more effort in breaking down the mass carefully.
- Roof line needs more work; forward-thinking design is appreciated but the building needs to relate to its surroundings. The roofline crashes into the façade – needs to be separated and float above for this to work as a concept.
- Architectural articulation within the courtyard is successful and can be used to inform the remaining exterior.

Next Steps:

Address the Panel’s comments above for next UDAAP presentation.

Attending:

Charles Alexander, Amy Bonitz, Katherine LePage, Reni Lawal – Project Team

Dimitri, Olivia Sharp Suter, L J, Arlen Cullors Jr., Alexandria, Rolando, Greg Baranoski, Jonathan Bettel, Ed Gunts, Brandon Brooks, JP, JoAnn Trach, Tom Creegan, Alva Irving, Jody Landers, Carmen, Janelle Cousino, Carley Milligan – Attendees

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

Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Nichole Stewart, Matt DeSantis, Jeff La Noue – Planning