

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

Date: August 25, 2022

Meeting #66

Project: 4515-29 Harford Road Multi-Family Building

Phase: Schematic Design II

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 second 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 team has not changed the objectives of creating a good urban infill building, minimize the disturbance as this is a brownfield site, and deal with the significant grade. There is also a URP that the team is responding to. Despite the site challenges and project goals, the team sought to address several comments given by the Panel at the last meeting on June 23, 2022.

Key changes:

- Building massing has been unraveled as suggested and moved from a doughnut building to a more snaking structure.
- The building takes advantage of grade to lower the height at key moments and align with some of the smaller neighboring buildings.
- There is more articulation in the façade and building heights.
- Resulting landscape, courtyard and parking have been more thoughtfully laid out in response to the building form.
- The urban design portion of the landscape architecture is more integrated and intentional; pedestrians are prioritized with raised, paver paths where they intersect with the driveway entrance.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for their presentation and praised the project team for taking previous comments to heart and revising the project. The Panel then continued with questions and comments together.

CLARIFICATIONS:

- *Design quality of the edge of the courtyard, can the team please explain?* There is a delicate balance of screening and openness. This has been designed with a masonry base wall to shield from the cars with a screen wall above. The screen wall will appear to float on a hedge from the inside out because of the grade change.
- *What material are the pavilions?* The base is masonry all the way around. The primary entry pavilion will have masonry to the top. The lighter color siding is horizontal and the darker is vertical board and baton.
- *Are the parking grades sloping down to the rear and the courtyard area is flat?* Yes, the courtyard is about 5' down from Harford Road and the parking is sloped down just a little.
- *Green rooves are appreciated, but are they accessible?* They are accessible for maintenance, and visually to the units on the upper story, but the program won't allow for a walkable roof terrace that is usable for tenants unfortunately.

Site:

- Color and excitement of the landscape is much appreciated. The edible landscape is especially appreciated – adds a layer of vibrancy and will help mitigate the parking with the lushness of the landscape.
- Playful streetscape features help it feel deliberate and the movement is great – helps it not feel so tight.
- Great that the community engagement is reflected in the plan.
- Plan seems to integrate the historic building on the site; reads more like a composition now, rather than two separate competing pieces.
- Courtyards offer a more gracious and intentional use of the space; transitions are more navigable. The ramps are wonderful and generous but is there a way to expand the landing even further and make it a little nook where people can hang out? Team is encouraged to test this idea.
- Because of the new layout the outdoor spaces are much more well articulate, and the parking is not perceived all at once as a sea of parking.

- The paved area around the stormwater management appears to be oversized. Look at squeezing the ratio of paving to parking spaces. The parking is starting to feel like it sits within the vegetation, which is very successful – see how far this can be pushed.
- Playfulness of the streetscape is appreciated, but Harford would benefit from the continuity that major boulevards enjoy. Is there a way to balance; to establish an urban continuity along the Harford Road edge and then within that balance, finding a way to mix it up? For instance, define the moments where the rules are broken and a playful element is introduced – at the entrance, perhaps, to draw attention without detracting from the richness of the design. Play up priority moments.

Building:

- The building with its new configuration feels as though it was made for the site. A site section would have been very helpful, but it is clear that this is much more nested into the site.
- Arrangement of program is appropriate for Harford Road and the site.
- Fenestration and scale of the building compliment historic neighboring building.
- Peek-a-boo entrance at the rear facing Harford Road is appreciated, but sliver of windows embedded in the masonry should be brought all the way down to the ground.
- Nice balance between the panels, masonry, and glass.
- Corner might have a bit too much articulation, creating a dark space at the back reentrant corner. The Panel notes that the perimeter is driven by the unit layout, and some of these tight areas could be mitigated with appropriate shade-tolerant landscaping.
- The interplay of the pavilions and how corners are turned works well; look carefully at the middle segment that encloses the courtyard and consider whether it feels too compressed with the taller masonry base.
- Now that the building has multiple points of access and entry, there is a different set of challenges. The volume at the front is the most prominent façade, but now the east façade is also very important because of the resident approach from the parking lot.
- The secondary entrances now have an opportunity to read with more emphasis. Can the entrances have a subtle anchoring element that doesn't undermine the main entrance at Harford? Bringing the dark paneling all the way down at key entry moments will help distinguish them and allow this to read as a little village anchored around various entry points.
- Allow the masonry to read as the base all the way around.

Next Steps:

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

Attending:

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

Kyle Mastalinski, Jared Spahn, Melody Simmons, Ted Ludvigsen, Susan Hastings, Thomas Creegan – Attendees

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

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