

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

Date: August 25, 2022

Meeting #66

Project: 5810 York Road Multi-Family Building

Phase: Schematic Design II

Location: Rosebank Neighborhood

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

The project team includes MCB, Larry Jennings and Junica Properties. David Marcozzi of Ci Design began the presentation with an over view of the project.

Proposed development is a mix of new and existing construction intended to fill a need for high-quality, reasonably priced apartments. The site is comprised of 3 lots, each zoned C-2, which will be consolidated into one lot of about 25,000 SF. The existing structure on the 5810 York Road site will remain and is leased by businesses. A new building of approximately 56,000 gross building area will be constructed on the rear portion of the site – the proposed is a 6-story building with parking tucked underneath (concrete podium with stick-built above). Site allows 112 units; the proposed building contains 73. The units are intended to serve workforce housing needs (60% AMI) which requires a ratio 1:2 for parking per zoning. 38 parking spaces will be provided. Halwyn Avenue, a public street, will be used to complete the parking loop.

Key Focuses of this project:

- Keep existing retail at York Road, including the music school
- Prioritize pedestrian circulation
- Sustainability – seeking LEED Silver Certification
- Creating a good infill building that is tucked into the site while still carving out room for a courtyard space
- Strategically locating parking below the building to not detract from the small site and continue to allow for vehicular circulation along the south edge
- Highly efficient building to allow for high-quality yet reasonably priced apartments

DISCUSSION:

The panel thanked the presentation team for the design approach and clear presentation and began with clarifying questions before continuing with the general discussion and comments.

- *What are the existing buildings?* The small buildings include the Music Workshop and other office and retail space. The buildings will undergo a facadectomy to be completely renovated.
- *You chose to connect them, why?* The new construction will not be connected to the existing buildings in any way.
- *Why attach them? The buildings are so different?* To achieve the desired height due to zoning restrictions.
- *How are pedestrians separated from Halwyn?* Halwyn Avenue although identified as a public street is only connected to this site and would not experience any traffic other than users of the site.
- *The site plan shown by the civil engineer is different than the illustrative, which is correct?* The illustrative plan is accurate.
- *The courtyard is meant to function as an amenity space to the residents and shared with retail?* Yes, that's correct.

Site & Circulation:

- This is a main arterial road that is finally seeing new housing near a relatively healthy commercial corridor. This deeper lot has the opportunity to help fill in the missing pieces in the area.
- The site is so constrained that its form is almost predetermined, therefore the articulation gains more importance.
- The courtyard as the sole amenity space is a little exposed to York Road and likely won't get heavy use; however, it fits well and is welcoming.
- The centered entry pathway from York to the building works well.
- Relying on planters at the courtyard is risky, as they can get very dry in the summers. Consider additional plantings along southern edge to provide further separation from the street.
- The landscape is successful at bringing pedestrians into the site.

Building:

- The proposal has very strong branding, is this appropriate? Understandable that it needs to be able to address York despite the setback, however, as currently designed the branding feels like a theater marquee, which is inappropriate for an apartment building.
- Concerned with the multi-story verticality of the branding lights. How do you get the vertical emphasis you need, without the marquee? Consider balconies that are introduced off the vertical massing. Then the project is more clearly identified as an apartment building. The mesh material could be included in the balconies, and some of the lighting retained to create the desired effect, but it would be softer and more appropriate for an apartment building.
- The proportions of the rear elevation undermine the successful efforts on the other sides of the building. Could there be an opportunity to create a simplified vertical element at the rear that connects to the vertical element at the front elevation? This could be as simple as running the darker material at the center of the rear elevation between the two apartment volumes on each side of the central hallway.
- Consider modifying the coloration of the building. The darker base at the front of the building is successful in creating a lighter feel for the upper levels, maintain the darker base to reinforce this throughout the building. Connected to that, the darker material on the upper levels could be an alternative color that isn't as contrasting, this will further allow the upper massing to feel lighter and float above the base.
- The building could be too stark within its surroundings. Verify the appropriateness of the proposed colors by turning on the color in the renderings to better consider the palette, and, if necessary, consider a slightly warmer tone.
- Encourage you to take a closer look at the ground plane, and how this lot will connect and interact with the surrounding properties. Consider screening the parking at the ground level to complete the massing of the building and finish the building.
- Additionally, consider the material of the ground itself. Could an alternative material create a more intimate street and courtyard to bring a residential character to the approach.

Next Steps:

Continue the project by addressing the comments above before returning to UDAAP.

Attending:

Osbourne Anthony, Sharon Bradly, Pavlina Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette- Planning