

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

Date: July 14, 2022

Meeting #64

Project: 804 N. Franklintown Road

Phase: Design Development

Location: 804 N. Franklintown Road

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Jerryn McCray, the architect, reintroduced the project and walked through changes to the project, which includes refinement to the landscape and more specificity of the exterior façade materials. The materials include gray masonry at the base, insulated metal panel along the sides of the building that are most visible to the public, and stucco at the rear of the building, which will be less visible.

The building shape has evolved to respond more clearly and simply to the site, with one big move, which is how it responds to the remaining façade. The simple palette is meant to compliment the historic façade that will remain on site. The balconies have been designed to work with the structure as it connects to the skinning of the building while maintaining some separation between the existing façade and the new building.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked Mr. McCray for the presentation and asked clarifying questions.

Clarifications:

- *Is the masonry around the base continuous; does this go around the entire building? Where is the EFIS located?* The towers are vertical elements that will have masonry all the way to the top, and the base will have masonry all the way around (including the back edge that encloses the alley).
- *Much of the building is up against the street line or the adjacent property lines, except for the interstitial spaces at the south and east, correct?* Yes, that is correct, and [the architect] did consider a green roof since the site has been maxed out by the building, but the structural load was beyond the budget allowance. Instead, they explored opportunities to use the space under and around the building.
- *What is the purpose of the wall between the building and the church?* There is desire to define the edge of the property but stepping the wall will keep some visual connection.

The two-story building at the front allows for some visual control of the property, and feels more public so it doesn't need as much protection. There is more foot traffic along the south edge between the proposed building and the church, and thus, some concern for cut-through traffic based on existing neighborhood patterns.

- *What are the reasons for the varying heights in the wall along the alley with the church?* Larger scale where we want to define the space more to discourage access, or lower where opening the view is a priority.
- *Do you have a landscape architect?* Yes, the in-house landscape architect with the civil engineering firm (Colbert Matz Rosenfelt).

Site

- Spend some time on creating deliberate spaces around the building. The building and site need to address the positive and negative balance of space. There needs to be a more deliberate attempt to make purposeful outdoor spaces and meaningful spaces that embrace indoor/outdoor experiences.
- The current massing doesn't seem to respect the site in terms of the relationship between built elements and landscape elements; consider how the building is meant to interact with the site and all of the constraints.
- Including a landscape architect in the project can help with this balance of building and landscape. Panel recognizes that unit yield is important, but creating meaningful outdoor spaces are equally valuable for marketing purposes, and more importantly, contributing to the livability of a multi-family project located in an urban setting.
- There is an opportunity to explore adding a street scape – it is noted that the team did explore adding streetscape, but the existing sidewalk at the front of the façade to remain is only about 6' wide. The team wanted to wrap the landscape around to make a meaningful connection to the nearby park, but the building footprint has changed and some of the clarity of this move has been altered to accommodate the new building shape.
- The wall between the building and the church sends a mixed message; the wall says both "do not enter" and "come sit here" at the same time because of the varied height. Decide what the goals of the wall are, and then design it to address those goals. Perhaps the space could be a collaboration between the buildings and create a plaza used by the church and by the residents of the building or at least have some visual continuity.
- Consider a 4' fence with plantings on both sides, which will achieve the desired security feature while also encourage the visual connection.
- The visual porosity provided at the front is nice – the main façade is starting to work well, but the aforementioned wall is undermining the success of the porosity of the front façade. Through enhanced landscaping, the area can be more private while still being visually shared with the public.

- The landscape and canopy / trellis elements are in competition. Consider landscaping that works with the trellis, such as a vining plant, or consider reducing the metal canopy to allow for trees.

Building:

- This is an exciting project because of the tension and compression that exists between the site, the church and other existing buildings, and the juxtaposition of the street grid. The Panel appreciates the passion about the ideas expressed in the presentations, but there is an opportunity to prioritize the ideas and clarify the project with just a few small edits.
- Execution of the materials is still not clear. For clarity, use a diagram to present the variations of the materiality, or how the transitions are occurring. What are the pieces that are continuous? What are the datum elements and how do they allow other elements to stand proud and shine? The coloration is reading as a distraction, rather than allowing the most important features to be expressed. All of the elements are leading to a murky reading of the project.
- The Panel encourages more editing in the materiality to help prioritize the important elements. Reduce the number of new ideas – lean on the ideas that are essential to the project and strengthen those ideas through the design moves that reinforce them. Revisit the parti of the project to better understand the driving goals.
- Cornice is a recreation and as designed, it seems very oversized. As the design evolves, try variations of the cornice that are more realistic in scale.
- There are many competing interests of existing building façade, new building massing to get the proper unit count, client opinions, public input, etc. Remember that the Architect is the leading and guiding force. The design has been skillfully explored and lots of ideas have been considered. The Panel very much appreciates these explorations, but they offer a neutral view of how to balance all the competing elements while really setting the project up for long term success.
- The Panel comments are for the best interest of the project. There are pieces of the project that have improved and some things are working well, but go back to the early goals, when the intent of the remnant façade was extremely clear. Some of that has been undermined in this new iteration by the overworked panels in the new facade. See if there is a way to work that clarity back into the project.
- The seams cutting through punched openings don't have the same rigor of the façade on the original design. Apply more rigor to the insulated metal panel to calm down the visual reading of the building.
- The comments about connection of the balconies are more about visual than physical connection between the elements. The integration of old and new is key to the parti of this project.

- Now is the time to consider whether the elements are reinforcing the ideas that are integral to the main idea or if they are detracting from it. If multiple tones of the insulated metal panels do not reinforce the main idea, then take it back to one color.
- The aesthetic of the vertical reveals carried up from the base through the EFIS at the back façade will help it feel more unified – not suggesting the materials change, only the articulation of those materials.

Next Steps:

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

Attending:

Jerryn McCray – Architect

Carla Ryon – Colbert Matz Rosenfelt

Mason Campbell - Colbert Matz Rosenfelt

C Hill - Owner

Klaus Philipsen - journalist

Ed Gunts - journalist

Jessica Lanetta - BBJ

Jonathan Moore

Shae Hite

Johannes Kettler

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

Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Matt Desantis, Chad Hayes– Planning