

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

Date: June 23, 2022

Meeting #63

Project: The Linden Multi-Family Residential

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: 825 Druid Park Lake Drive, Reservoir Hill

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

The project team, which includes MCB Real Estate, Dean Harrison, Carroll Engineering and Marren Architects, began the presentation with a brief introduction to the project and site. This is the project's initial presentation to the Panel. Martin Marren stressed the important location of the site, which is located directly across the street from the Druid Park Reservoir at the corner of Linden and Druid Park Lake Drive. Historically there were 16 crossing points to the park from the south, but with the widening of Druid Park Lake Drive, that number was reduced to 5 crossings, essentially cutting the park off to pedestrian traffic at key intersections.

The site is 35,556 square feet or 0.816 acre; the proposed use is multi-family. Building will be a total of approximately six (6) levels above grade, with one (1) level of parking below grade. The construction will be a two (2) level concrete podium with one level below ground and one above, and five (5) stories of stick-built above. There is a significant grade change over the length of the site, dropping from 225' of elevation to 214' or so.

The team studied precedents and the neighborhood context. The initial design includes a front drop off, but the team is working with DOT on placement as the current layout may interfere with a future bicycle lane.

The building contains residential units and retail at the northwest corner.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for their presentation and continued with questions and comments together. Because the site development is minimal, comments related to the site

were few. The site comments have been grouped together with comments about overall context, with the building comments following.

Clarifications:

The street section shown in the presentation; are these options developed by the team? No, these were provided by Baltimore City DOT. The team believes that the curb line will not move, and that the travel lanes will likely be reduced. There is potential to be some pinching

What happens if the drop-off is moved? There could be some drop off on Linden with a reorganized lobby while maintaining a strong connection to the park.

What is happening with the podium next to the courtyard as the grade drops away (on the north façade elevation)? The team is discussing options for the courtyard, but the edge will be planted to soften the change in grade.

Can the team elaborate on why they believe the drop-off is necessary? Future resident parking, short term parking not needing to find a spot in the garage, ride-share, move-in / move-out, and things like deliveries. The team believes the front drop makes a grand entrance on the waterfront.

Are there other massing studies that have explored other options; there are many styles, materiality, rhythms, etc. What is the attitude of the architecture? The team designed the bays to take advantage of waterfront views, the team strove to design the building to fit into the context without copying the architecture around it.

Has the team discussed how they will make the building feel strong next to something that is so architecturally strong? The team has not had that specific conversation, but they do have to make choices about how they spend on materials.

Site and Context:

- Site challenges are understood and appreciated; the configuration of Druid Park Lake Drive is beyond the control of the design team, but no matter the configuration, the drop-off is not the correct approach. Organizing the drop off on Linden is preferable.
- Site is not yet reading as coherent; consider using steps to negotiate the grade at the raised area instead of simply planting it. There are other ways to make this area intentional.

- Retail at the corner is a nice touch, but how it is handled is a little fussy with the railing and other details. This area should be edited down and be more integrated with the sidewalk to really make it feel like it's part of the public realm.
- The alley needs more study to improve its interface with the rest of the neighborhood.
- Complete streets movement makes the streets more park-like. It presents challenges and opportunities, and the team has an opportunity to become a part of the movement and really embrace this approach.
- The grand entry can be pedestrian-focused instead of auto-focused. The space can become very parklike; functionally it doesn't work at the front because it creates multiple potential conflicts with residents and visitors vs service uses.
- Coordinating site and landscape design with the complete streets improvements that are coming will serve the project well.
- Allow the corner to become a neighborhood hub – it doesn't need to be pinched so tightly to the building. It could become a sequence in the path to the park that really feels more like an extension of the park. The 45' space allows for a properly scaled landscape setting for the building and a buffer from the busy road. The sidewalk is too wide to be designed so close to the building – the sidewalk doesn't necessarily need to follow the arc of Druid Park Lake Drive exactly.
- Understanding the team wants to preserve the willow oaks, the sidewalk can be organized in such a way that the trees are not harmed.
- Accommodating all the needs listed by the team (see clarifications) in one space will actually cause various uses to conflict.
- Panel agrees that this project should be treated as a waterfront development. Agree that there needs to be a corresponding interface with the park and the reservoir. The panel encouraged the design team to study further the building facades with that goal in mind.
- All of the drop-off type of uses can be accommodated along Linden.
- Example of the Avalon project – although the services were designed to have deliveries in the rear, all of this is happening in the front. The example shows how important the design is for accommodating and directing use of space.
- The driveway at the front does not work for the building or for the Druid Park Lake Drive – there needs to be layering from public to private that is not intersected by vehicular traffic.

Building:

- The neighborhood has very respectable architecture. This richness poses a challenge and an opportunity for the team – the building needs to take an attitude to the architecture, but to do this, there needs to be a robust analysis. The project’s architecture seems to have been driven by the program instead of the context with only cursory references to generic architectural motifs (bay windows, rhythm of openings).
- The way the masonry transitions needs more work, there is a bit of confusion about the way the brick meets the bay windows.
- Opportunity to better define the central bay with a canopy.
- This feels like a first pass, there needs to be more thought about how the materials are applied, and more glazing.
- Look at the scale, proportion and approach of the neighboring buildings for inspiration.
- Commend the team on a very efficient building and overall strong massing concept.
- Materiality conflicts with the teams’ goal of fitting into the context; the architecture is so much less about the bay windows and the fussy details. The function and expression of the older buildings is driven the form and expressed on the façade. There is a very strong hierarchy – the Chateau for instance has one pavilion that is more prominent than the two supporting volumes. Design team needs to develop strong hierarchy in the proposed project as well.
- There is too much sameness in the elevations; the team is urged to express the corner volume more. The diagrammatic approach can help emphasize the corner volume. Brick could be removed from the two smaller volumes altogether to allow for a more robust masonry expression on the more important corner volume. The team could study variations of this idea.
- The windows are not clearly organized, but studying the volumes can help address that.
- The bay windows in cement-board cladding is a tired look – replacing these with balconies will greatly improve the architecture and create a stronger response to the park across.
- More robust architectural studies are needed next time, team is encouraged to study variations on the materiality including some that don’t incorporate so much contrast between materials in order to echo some of the more monolithic approach of the older buildings. Could be subtle changes to the color and texture that allows for the mass to read more uniformly from a distance, like similar tones for the masonry and non-masonry surfaces.
- Precedents should be other new buildings that exist in architecturally strong contexts and/or facing a park/waterfront – use the big ideas instead of single elements.

Next Steps:

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

Attending:

Dean Harrison, Josh Neiman, Martin Marren, Carla Ryon – 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