

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

Date: December 10, 2020

Meeting #40

Project: Madison Park North

Phase: Schematic I

Location: 700 – 800 North Ave., Reservoir Hill

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

David Bramble of MBC Real Estate introduced the project and team and gave a very brief overview. The project includes mixed use retail / residential multi-family and for-sale rowhouse on 8.2 acres.

Brittany Sink of MRA continued the presentation beginning with context. The design component of the presentation was framed within the larger urban design goals of the project:

- Restore the urban grid by reintroducing streets through the sites
- Tie down corners with retail
- Transition density with more density along North Ave.
- Provide public open space

DISCUSSION:

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

Clarifications:

- *Has the team studied facing the larger multi-family buildings toward North Ave.?* The team will consider it, but they have not studied the architecture too much to date.
- *Opening in the row houses Between Lennox and Watts – what is the dimension of the break?* This is not fully designed yet, dimensions are subject to change.
- *What is the rationale for location of the commercial?* There is existing commercial at the two ends. Garages face onto Lennox and Watts respectively.

Site:

- A lot of challenges with this site – looks like the team is in the very early stages of design, which is good considering there are several changes that need to be considered. Need a better understanding of why the densities are what they are – some sort of logic will help organize the building massing.
- Project well-served by iterative process – much improvement from first draft to proposed design today, but it needs to continue.
- Building massing at North Ave seems out of scale relative to residential community to north; has the effect of dwarfing the townhomes.
- Green space is well-distributed through parts of community, but lacking in other areas; e.g. townhomes along northern edge (contrast these with neighborhood to the north) with the lack of open space and surrounded by paving.
- Buildings address street – can imagine a pleasant streetscape experience. One possible exception: east end of Watts Street, where R.O.W. is a bit narrow for height of new building to south.
- Slide 24 – Open Space Linkage: North-south through-block pedestrian paths a good idea but feel a bit pinched between northern townhomes (could feel unsafe). These rows could benefit from deletion of a unit or two to allow for green space and more generous pedestrian pathways.
- Defining the entrance will help relate the buildings to the urban fabric. Studying circulation in diagram is needed to determine where the entrances want to be located.
- Seems like a lot of asphalt and not enough green space. Buildings don't address the few greenspaces in a meaningful way – if there are few green spaces, these need to be celebrated and seem like center points, not afterthoughts or left-over. Park on Bolton Street – placement needs some sort of rationale. Park needs to feel like a destination; the context is challenging with front doors on one side, and a large building with retail on the other, next to a wide boulevard.
- Brookfield Ave. extension is good intention, but lacking – collides with the stick of rowhouses, which also seems to be oriented incorrectly.
- Urban design intentions are good but need work before the plan delivers on these goals. For instance, paving is extended, but the urban grid has not been extended. Extending the grid would mean sidewalks, street trees, houses, etc, with similar organization. Honor and extend the grain of the existing fabric. Revisit earlier studies where the houses front onto the north-south streets like Bolton and Park.

- Identify primary and secondary streets to organize the program.
- Site goals seem to be to max out the number of units by simply stacking the layer without purpose or considering the quality of the space on the rowhouse sites. Understanding that the proforma needs to be delivered, use iterative process to refine the buildings and make a more cohesive final design.
- Rotation of houses on North Ave. is unsuccessful at addressing the street edge.
- Panel implores the team to revise scheme by studying the existing urban fabric and establishing a set of guidelines developed from the existing context that can help shape the new blocks.

Building:

- Fronts of rowhouses seem to face sides of buildings or parking garages in a lot of cases.
- Multi-family buildings will be stronger if the massing density is along North Ave.
- Massing of the rowhouses suggest lower in the front and higher in the back – this approach is very suburban. The neighborhood will benefit from having the primary façade be taller (3- or 4- stories) and will connect more to the existing context.

Next Steps:

Continue the schematic design of the project addressing the comments above.

Attending:

David Bramble – MBC Real Estate

Brittany Sink – MRA

Ed Gunts – Baltimore Fishbowl

Hallie Miller – Baltimore Sun

Charles Duff, C. Jett, Brandon Brooks, Sheena Ham, Richard Williams, Ronnie Snyder, Alfred Barry, Dave Polonsky, Chris Bauer, Mark Renbaum, James Sink, Dan Gilbert, Antoinette Peele, Samuel Storey, Eleanor Luken, Micheal Woollen, Addison Palmer, Stephen Howard, Rolando Maxwell, Jamonte Linthicum, Jerrell Perret, Courtney Edwards, M. Reid, Peter Smith, Jericak Robinson, Justin Thomas, Klaus Phillipsen, Johnny Macon, C. Chance, Felicia Jones, Justin Warthen, Matthew Wright – Attendees

Mr. Anthony, Ms. Ilieva (Ms. Bradley supplied comments via email) – UDAAP Panel

Howard Tutman – DHCD

Laurie Feinberg*, Chris Ryer, Ren Southard, Tamara Woods, Jeff La Noue, Matt DeSantis –
Planning