

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

Date: February 24, 2022

Meeting #58

Project: North Charles Village PUD

Phase: Master Plan

Location: 3000 – 3400 Charles and St. Paul Streets (approximately)

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Doug Schmidt of Workshop Development introduced the project, and Josh Neiman of MCB Real Estate presented additional context information. Aaron Zephir of Moseley Architects continued the presentation by showing basic massings of the buildings that would be affected by the proposed expansion of the North Charles Village Planned Unit Development (PUD) boundary. This presentation to UDAAP is prior to the repeal of Baltimore City Ordinance 03-639 for the North Charles Village PUD and a replacement ordinance expanding the PUD footprint (to be introduced at a future date by Councilperson Ramos).

The current footprint of the North Charles Village PUD is roughly along N. Charles and St. Paul Streets between 31st and 33rd Streets, with a portion of the footprint extending north of 34th Street. The new footprint would include buildings at the corner of 34th and St. Paul Street (3311 – 3327 St. Paul, zoned R-8) and buildings at the corner of 32nd and St. Paul (3121 – 3115 St. Paul, zoned C-1).

The development team showed massings on the two sites for which the PUD would be expanded. The massings indicated a proposed maximum envelope of approximately 90' but these massings showing the maximum allowable envelope do not represent final building design; the buildings affected by the new expanded PUD boundary would return to UDAAP for individual review before submitting for permits. The future buildings would also be subject to neighborhood design review committee guidelines, per the PUD ordinance, which would help to shape how the vertical elements are arranged on site, including setbacks near existing historic, lower-scale buildings.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for the presentation and moved into clarifying questions and comments together. Because of the unique stage of this project, the format of the discussion was more open, with the development team responding to comments and questions in a conversational format.

- *You mentioned the PUD limits heights to 60' but these massings shows 8-stories; how is that possible?* The current PUD will be repealed and replaced. The replacement is seeking additional height, some of which is existing and can be transferred. The original PUD was put in place in

1996, which allowed for more development (mixed use, more density) to enhance the Hopkins University campus. The former PUD has created a lively district with more density to support ground-floor retail, and the replacement PUD is seeking to do the same.

Master Plan:

- The presentation is unusual in the fact that it doesn't show the proposed PUD, analysis of the state of the current PUD, how it adapts, etc. The plan showing new versus old is helpful, but the replacement PUD offers an opportunity to look at the scale and physical makeup of the neighborhood – to study what is there and what could be there in the future.
- The nature of a PUD assumes future development and adaptation of a developing corridor. Important to discuss the nature of the corridor, the type of urbanity it will create – not just another generic block to fill with development. Charles Village has a feel, a character; the PUD will need to help maintain and expand on that character.
- It is important to understand the case for this building typology (mixed use residential, 8-9 stories) and how it impacts the surrounding area, beyond just how tall it is. The area is changing and growing, but the surrounding context is of a different scale and won't change very much. Address this shift carefully in the future design phases of the project, with context-sensitive forms that help to transition the differing scales and heights.
- There needs to be more clarity, ground rules, of the intent of the corridor going forward. The project team notes that three new major projects have been implemented successfully (construction completed) since the PUD was passed. These include the Village Lofts (which replaced rowhouses), the Charles Commons (replaced a Royal Farms and rowhouses), and 9 East 33rd Street. All of these projects are relatively dense, ranging from 6 – 12 stories. How does the proposed project relate to the developing urbanity of the area?
- The proposal anticipates removal of the last of the rowhouses within the PUD footprint to replace them with higher density buildings.
- Most of the development has happened along St. Paul Street; the original intent of the PUD was to transform the neighborhood around JHU to a “college town” within an urban setting. The project team feels that this original intent has been accomplished within the given footprint. Additionally, there are many examples of successful development projects of higher density around major college campuses throughout the country. University of Pennsylvania's urban campus is one of the closer examples of a high-density development surrounding the campus and bordering a lower scale, older portion of the city.
- Continuing an evolving urban fabric along the stretch of St. Paul Street – this is a thriving district with a captive audience; one could wonder why the development hasn't happened sooner. However, the lower scale that existed previously was very Baltimore-centric and what remains still has value. Addressing the character of Baltimore and promoting that character in future development is important.

- New development cannot be generic – it needs to carefully consider the context in order to create a sense of authenticity in the later design phases of the project.
- Height can be increased, but the heritage of the neighborhood, the charm of the area, needs to be maintained. The transition becomes more difficult to accommodate the larger the buildings get (uses, sizes of retail spaces). If the transition becomes abrupt instead of incremental, it can disrupt the urban fabric – the neighborhood feel of walking down the street. Instead of raising the height, is there an opportunity to expand the PUD and creating a transition zone to mitigate the risk of over saturating this compact site with too much density? If not, manipulate the building forms to help with the transition in the later design phases of the project.
- How the building is stacked 3-dimensionally is important. Is there a massing approach to better address the surrounding buildings – the PUD should help guide the new building’s attitude. What is the vision of the building – iconic? responsive? – the moves need to happen on the massing scale instead of on the surface. Three additional floors of housing do not necessarily preclude that from happening successfully, but special consideration needs to be paid through the future design phases of the project.
- Rules addressing the building forms need to be wrapped into the design guidelines, as do the right of way (ROW) proportions, the vocabulary of the street, building façades, etc.

Next Steps:

Address the panels comments above.

Attending:

Al Barry – AB Associates

Aaron Zephir, Tom Liebel – Moseley Architects

Josh Neiman – MCB Real Estate

Dough Schmidt, Justin Williams, Richard Manekin – Workshop Development

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

Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Chris Ryer – Planning