

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

Date: July 14, 2022

Meeting #64

Project: Harbor Point, Parcel 4 – Multi-Family Tower 2

Phase: Design Development

Location: 1000 Wills Street, Fells Point

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Michael Beatty reintroduced the project, which has been reviewed at previous UDAAP presentations. Other portions of the project – specifically, the south tower and podium – have completed the UDAAP process, and this tower, the north tower is a very exciting development as it will be the gateway to the new development from the existing neighborhood to the north. This presentation is a continuation of the Parcel 4 multi-family project. The tower massing was shown in previous presentations, but the massing was meant to be a placeholder and the building skin was not very far along in earlier proposals. The proposed design shown today is a very clean, modern design meant to be two simple buildings that sit atop the shared podium building.

The design team has not changed; BHC Architects and Mahan Rykiel are still the respective architect / landscape architect team. Todd Harvey of BHC continued the presentation with a refresher on the previous design. The tower proportions have not changed, and the façade is similar to the south tower, as was originally intended. The team worked to create a balance between the podium, which contains ground floor retail with structured parking above, and the residential units in the tower by incorporating a level of glazing to give a visual break while continuing the structural rhythm of the base through the tower.

Peng Gu with Mahan Rykiel continued the presentation by reviewing the outdoor elements including the linear park. The proposed landscape is meant to soften the intersection of the building as it meets the ground, and navigate a significant grade change from the plaza area to the lobby entrance at the east edge of the building, as required by the flood plain requirements.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for their presentation and praised them for a clear, clean and very concise presentation. The Panel asked a number of clarifying questions before moving into comments on the landscape and building architecture.

Clarifications:

- *Is it possible for the elevator to come all the way down to the grade at the corner? What is the purpose of all of the stairs and ramping at the corner?* The flood plain requirement that does not permit the lobby to be below 11' elevation. The team studied having the occupiable lobby space at the 11' elevation, with the elevators extending below, but there was pushback on the flood plain requirement even with an unoccupied loading dock. There is also a functional purpose of having the front-facing elements of the lobby all be on the same level.
- *Is it possible to create an entrance off of Dock Street where you are already almost at grade; could the building be notched in such a way to allow for an entry on the other side?* The elevation on Dock Street is only a foot or so higher than the current location of the entrance, so there would be almost the same amount of grade change and risers needed to accommodate.
- *What are the stair tread and riser dimensions?* The risers are 6", the treads are 12", and the ramps are below 5% which allows for the ramp to be built without railings.
- *Has the team studied the elevation of the base; for example, what is the street experience for a pedestrian walking along the edge toward the water?* The wall is granite and textured; it dies into the grade along the linear park.
- *What is the material of the structure between the podium and tower?* The structure is wrapped in the same concrete material as in the other tower.
- *What was the philosophical reason of keeping the towers in the same family; are they too close in character or was that purposeful?* The team wanted to keep the towers simple, clean and in the same vocabulary. The design intent of Harbor Point is that their underlying language is very simple and not overly fussy.

Site:

- The team's goal of visual continuity is starting to be successful with the landscape shown in the presentation. Widening the sidewalk at the corner is very helpful.
- Noted that 12" treads are the minimum standard, but if there is a way to squeak another inch into the stair treads, the team is encouraged to widen those to 13" to make a more comfortable stair experience.
- Allowing the ramp slope to remain under 5% is preferred; the condition at the corner is unfortunate but the team has executed the design well within the constraints.
- If there is an opportunity to use flood gates instead of going through all the gymnastics of the stairs and the 100+ foot ramp, the team is strongly encouraged to explore that option.
- The way the corner is arranged highlights the obstacles, instead of the wonderful linear park beyond. Incorporating a flood gate would allow for entry at grade and open up the entire plaza. Opening up the plaza will cue pedestrians into the linear park, versus the

current design which requires them to navigate around a raised island element (the stair and ramp) which is essentially an obstacle between the street and a great amenity.

- Introducing the simple technology of floodgates would also allow the lobby to turn the corner in a meaningful way and address the Dock street side.
- The Panel's comments are not to disregard the team's effort in finding a design that works with the constraints, but rather to encourage the team to rethink the site challenges in a new way. The comments are about functionality – how it will the site be best used? Stairs at the corner overshadow the public element of the lobby and the linear park.
- With regard to precedents: the team showed images of grand stairs that look out on to a plaza, but stair in the proposed design, which is steep and high, looks out on to the street and the garage entry across. As designed, it could be unfriendly and might discourage use.
- Consider shifting the entrance plaza in such a way to mitigate the topography. Even moving the sitting area toward the landings at the intersection of stair and ramp will help them feel a little more connected and integrated.
- The stair at the corner feels really crowded and steep. Take the components that have been explored and think about how they can be rearranged in such a way that makes it a little friendlier.

Building:

- In the perspective it appears on the east façade that every other bay of fenestration is thicker, which is a nice read. The elevation drawing shows this differently. It does not appear to have the slight differentiation between the longer façades (on the north and south) and the short façade (east), but the team is encouraged to explore this option by grouping the windows on the east side. This will give the façade a more prominent read while still keeping it in the same family of visual language. This would be an important differentiation considering the high visibility and gateway location of that volume.
- Fenestration at the sidewalk doesn't need to be so vertical. Select a window arrangement that is a little more reflective of retail and consider removing some of the mullions to allow the windows to read as wider.
- Signage is just gesture at this point – it will be good to see how this develops with more clarity as the building design moves forward.
- Simple language of the building is refined and compliments the building's massing and composition. There is one small improvement that can be achieved – the sameness is too much. The towers should be a family, not a replication on every single façade.
- The taller tower viewed from the ground will have a different context; it will read as a background building. The smaller volume will be more visible, which is why it will be important to address the different sides of the building in ways that respond to the

views from around the site. The simplicity can be maintained, but the shorter (east) façade could read a little more monolithic with more glazing. Study this in 3D, from the ground at the corner to see if there is something subtle and elegant within the existing language that can allow this façade to read more uniformly from the ground.

Next Steps:

Continue design addressing comments above.

Attending:

Todd Harvey – BHC Architects

Peng Gu – Mahan Rykiel

Michael Beatty, Max Beatty, Johnathan Flesher, Matthew Clever, Chris Seiler – Beatty Development

Ed Gunts – Baltimore Fishbowl

Melody Simmons – BBJ

Mr. Anthony, Ms. Ilieva, Ms. Bradley – UDAAP Panel

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