

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

Date: October 21, 2021

Meeting #53

Project: Harbor Point, Parcel 4 Hotel

Phase: Design Development

Location: 1000 Wills Street, Fells Point

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Michael Beatty began the presentation with a brief re-introduction to the project, which was previously presented at UDAAP meetings in May and September.

Todd Harvey of BHC Architects and Alexander Beatty continued the presentation detailing the design objectives and addressing comments from the panel. Jinpeng Gu from Mahan Rykiel Associates focused on the landscape portion with an in-depth overview of the changes to the park following the redesign of the hotel in September and addressed the panels comments from May. The team's priorities included visual and physical connections between the ground floor and the linear park, a focus on the material details, and the activation of public spaces.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for their presentation and appreciated the development and the opportunity to see the landscape and building together. The panel welcomed the refinements to the building, which are successful in meeting design goals of porosity and a weightless feeling.

The panel continued with clarifications and questions before giving comments.

Clarifications:

- Please elaborate on the window openings and their development over the project history. *The windows have a singular vertical element, similar to the previous iteration where a grille is located as required for MEP needs. The intent is for the windows and grille to appear as single opening.*
- At the north elevation how does concrete slab meet the arch? *The concrete is integral to the structure and engaged with the brick, but not within the same plane as the brick.*

- Have you studied making the southwest corner float similar to the other corners of the project? *Yes, we studied it and it was not possible due to the size of the arch.*
- The final leg of the north arch isn't going down to grade, and doesn't appear to be coplanar, can you explain? *This is a transition point as the arches along the east and west elevations land at different elevations.*
- Where is the elevated seating along Point Street? *Very southwest corner of the park.*
- What is the use along the western edge of the park, garage or retail? *Retail.*
- Wonder if some of the steps can transition into seating? *Seating walls are included at all stairs to create informal seating.*

Site:

- The use of ramps at the north and south creates an easy sense of transition that works well with the porosity at the ground floor of the building.
- Concerned with the location of the front door of the hotel which is both depressed and deeply set within the site. Consider how that will function or if it will be integrated into the operation of the hotel.
- The hedge needs more specificity - as designed, the appearance is somewhat relentless - it flattens the plane and is very heavy-handed. The edge should be softer - does not need to be overdone, but more study is needed. Could be more friendly and welcoming along Caroline Street edge.
- Site plan layout started as a linear park nestled between the buildings. Now the shape is different; much more open. Is the landscape forcing a linear park when it is not needed? The park is no longer visible as such. The outdoor seating, planting, benches, retail - these are not serving the purpose of a park, rather they only serve the retail. Perhaps there is an opportunity to revisit this space and dedicate a significant portion of the space for leisure, rather than waiting space for restaurants. This portion of the space could even be programmed for seasonal events. Opportunity to make this space into a destination rather than a pass-through.
- There is a zone on the north end of the park, the next zone happens in the retail, etc. There are only divisions in the vertical (linear) direction, but horizontal (cross) zoning needs to be studied as well. Layers of activity will add to the richness of the park.
- Trellis option needs more study - the rectangular structure juxtaposed next to the sculptural quality of the arches may appear as afterthoughts. The landscape elements should work in concert with the architectural elements to reinforce the connections between the spaces, rather than have them compete and clash.

Building:

- At the southern side explore carving out the remaining corner to further reinforce the open, weightless feeling.
- Important for the windows and opening to be absolutely right - the windows will upgrade or downgrade the building. Subtle moves will impact the read of the facade, so it's imperative to get them right.
- At the north point explore having the two ending arch elements end at different elevations to maintain the rhythm of each plane.
- Level of detail on the arches: contemporary detail will require a close eye. This will be hard to pull off; it will need to look clean, simplified, and effortless.
- Columns get buried in the planter on one side but are expressed on the other. It would be helpful if these sides read the same - allowing the arches to land more deliberately is important.

Comments provided by Ms. Sharon Bradley, UDAAP Panelist, outside of the in-person review:

- Beautiful transitions at northern and southern ends:
 - Integrated ADA compliant access
 - Balance of landscape and hardscape
 - Inviting sense of arrival, draws one into space
- But the subsequent tiered gathering spaces (eg. shown on Slide 23, bottom left image) are barren and inconsistent in character with ramp/stair areas, as well as the lushly planted areas shown along Caroline Street. More planted areas and trees are needed in these terraced areas of the linear park.
- As stated in other comments, the park is laid out less as a park - a place to pause or gather - and more as a corridor, a place to move through. The exception is in the space along the hotel, serving those building uses only. The strong linearity of the space is reinforced by site elements that are equally linear and parallel to the building facades, instead of creating a sequence of spaces of differing proportions (pausing moments), and shifting the axis and the movement through the space.
- At the northern point of the building, under the “arcade” feature, heavily planted areas are shown. It seems unlikely that the plants will get enough light and water to survive there.

Next Steps:

Work with Planning staff to address comments above.

Attending:

Todd Harvey, Peter Duke – BHC Architects

Jinpeng Gu – Mahan Rykiel Associates

Michael Beatty, Max Beatty, Jonathan Flesher, Chris Seiler, Alex Beatty – Beatty Development

Melody Simmons – BBJ

Klaus Phillipson – Attendees

Mr. Anthony and Ms. Ilieva – UDAAP Panel

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