

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

Date: August 27, 2020

Meeting #36

Project: Parcel M

Phase: Schematic

Location: 1101 N. Wolfe Street, Baltimore MD 21213

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Project overview: Beacon Communities is a Boston-based developer of affordable and market-rate housing. This project is a 7-story, 107 Unit Rental Apartment Building (LIHTC) with 53 surface parking spaces - new construction. Total building area is 129,920 sf. Rehabilitation of existing school building to 43 rental apartments, 80,159 SF. To take advantage of historic tax credits, an existing building on site will be reused, and a new corner market will be inserted between new and existing building.

Neighborhood Context: The project is located in the New East Baltimore Community, four blocks north of Johns Hopkins Medical Campus. The surrounding blocks are a mix of new 3 story brick rowhouses & multifamily buildings. Eager Park is across Wolfe St to the west of the existing school. Recently constructed 3-story townhouses are located to the south. A stone church & brick commercial structure are across Washington to the east. A triangular parking lot is to the north with an elevated train bridge crossing the intersection of Biddle & Washington.

Existing Site Conditions: The site consists of the vacant 1950's East Baltimore Community School & 26,000 SF of modular structures housing the Bridge Academy Program. The rectilinear classroom building orients along Wolfe St with the cafeteria along Biddle. The auditorium & gymnasium are located in the center of the site.

Urban Design Goals: To create a gateway building at the north edge of New East Baltimore while completing the residential block along Chase St. & activating the corner of Wolfe & Chase.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the project team for sharing the thought process and iterations before showing the design.

Clarification:

- *Is there a landscape architect on the team?* Not currently.
- *Wolfe and Washington – are these two-way?* No, both are one-way; Wolfe runs south, and Washington runs north.

- *Is appendage on existing building new or existing construction?* The appendage is new construction. There will be entrances on Biddle, but primary entrance will be through lobby A at the corner of Wolfe and Chase (on the Chase Street side, due to grade change).

Site:

- Exciting project and keeping the building will make the project so much more special; great potential use for lower buildings.
- Landscape architect should be brought on ASAP to help solve the challenges in making a cohesive site design, building placement and parking layout. Parking is very problematic in current location.
- Something nice about Scheme 2 – holds the block well and doesn't push the massing up past 5 stories; parking would need to slide west into the middle of the site (could be entered under the building). Bringing the height of the building down could also have positive cost implications.
- Courtyard space feels leftover and cavernous at the north base of tall buildings; could be unpleasant if not studied more closely.
- Shallow recess of the building could be pushed back more to create garden space and bookend the project; allows the building to have a little more outdoor space on the street side – team should explore the idea of simply inverting or mirroring the building on Wolfe Street side.
- Massing of the northern side of the site does not have enough eyes on the street; residual spaces between bar building and gymnasium are a challenge. These spaces need to be passively defensible; challenge is not just about landscape but also about building porosity. Could provide an open park between buildings at Chase and Biddle, and provide entrances to each building.
- Solve problems between parking and railway underpass – needs to be a much stronger corner to ensure pedestrian safety, site cohesion, etc.
- Activated rooftop crops could create partnership with market and reinforce social cohesion between neighbors.
- Community input – what has the project team heard from the community?
- Study the entry points: where are the openings, how does the building relate to the site edges / activate the edges?
- Next time: focus on delivering a concept package including landscape.

Building:

- Could the small market space at the corner be a little more embedded? Feels tacked on. Could be improved by pushing the space further under the canopy, rather than relying on the wall to connect it to the building. Against the existing building, it feels

compressed and foreign instead of anchored. To avoid this space feeling temporary, study a more iconic design; this element has the ability to be multi-story.

- Opportunity to have the dancing columns extend out and the market can be tucked under for a more indoor-outdoor read of the façade – also can be integrated more.
- Disparity between building sizes and how they respond to urban fabric (the taller building wants to be on the park side, which is unfortunate since that is the location of the historical building). Anything that can be done to reduce the height from 7 to 6 stories should be explored – look at tuck-under parking, reducing the parking, extending the U, etc.
- The project really identifies as two individual structures – issues need to be worked out through lobby and landscape, etc. for more clarity.
- In an alternative scenario, new volume would be more of a T than a U and connect back to the gymnasium.
- Push to develop the gymnasium program; who and how people are using it will impact the form of the new massing, and how it is accessed.

Next Steps:

Continue design addressing comments above.

Attending:

Peter Fillat, Kevin Roycroft – Fillat + Architects

Ben Phillips, LeAnn Hanfield, Billy Kan – Beacon Communities

Amalia Deloney, Melody Simmons, Brandon Brooks, Karen Johnson, Ed Gunts, Councilman Robert Stokes, Doris Minor Terrell, Linda Allen, Denise Richards, Cheryl Washington, Carley Milligan – Attendees

Mr. Anthony, Mses. O’Neill, Ilieva, Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Laurie Feinberg*, Ren Southard, Tamara Woods, Matt DeSantis – Planning

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