

**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**

**URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** October 27, 2022

**Meeting #69**

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**Project:** 2525 Insulator Drive

**Phase:** Schematic Design

**Location:** Port Covington

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Niels Theodule with the development team introduced the team and oriented the panel to the site. Addison Palmer with STV discussed the unique site location including the surrounding development identified in the Port Covington Master Plan. Frank André with Hord Coplan Macht introduced the design by first identifying the design goals of the team and looking to the history of the site to inform the building design.

The team then shared the proposed building massings which include an urban edge along Cromwell Street, with recessed elevations to the south to address the water and proposed residential community.

The east building is a wrapped building that is more connected to the historic site through the use of red brick and contemporary nods to the historic buildings. The brick is concentrated at the ground floor and corners. Along the east and west elevations the building utilizes light monitors to add interest and create unique units.

The west building is a podium building that has a more contemporary feeling with floating volumes that take advantage of the water views.

Heather English continued the presentation with an overview of the landscape plan for the courtyard of the eastern building that aims to create a variety of private and public spaces.

Frank Andre completed the project with rendered views of the proposal.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Panel thanked the project team and proceeded with clarifications, questions and comments.

**Clarifications:**

- *The bike path extends around Cromwell and continues down below Hanover Street Bridge, correct? Can pedestrians walk this way too?* Yes, it is a multi-use path for both pedestrians and bikes.
- *The amenities are shared between both buildings, is that accurate?* Yes, they compliment each other to provide residents a broader range of amenities.
- *Is the parking area north of Nicks for Nicks sole use?* Yes, it is under their ownership and it will be rebuilt following a land swap to clean up the edges.
- *What will the access be from the southern edge?* It will only be accessible by pedestrians. No connection to the parking lot to the south.
- *What are the materials on the west building?* There is a lighter gray brick base with primarily cementitious material above.
- *What is the rationale in putting both amenity spaces on the south end and generally placing all the active uses to the rear of the buildings?* We have explored this - while the vision for Cromwell Street is a walkable active space it is not there yet and has heavy truck use, additionally we found value in concentrating activity near where activity already exists at Nicks Fish House.
- *Are the light monitors functional?* Yes, they add special features to create premium units and one contributes to the outdoor amenity space.
- *What is the purpose of the stair adjacent to the lobby?* This will tie the lobby to the upper story amenity space and encourage residents to utilize the stairs.

#### **Comments:**

- Appreciate the beginning slides and the analysis of the site and context, and the connection between the two buildings. This is a good moment to pause and consider the proposal and make sure that none of your decisions are undermining your overall goals.
- You've set up a dialogue between the two parcels with a lot of programming including a tremendous amount of parking.
- Worried that with a lack of commercial space the buildings will appear empty with all the amenity space to the rear and no physical or programmatic connection along Cromwell.

#### **Site:**

- At Cromwell Street create more of an intentional public space: programming, visual articulation, planting, etc.
- At Cromwell Street consider stronger tree canopy coverage, especially at the street edge.
- Appreciate the widening of Insulator Drive to take advantage of connecting the trail and Cromwell Street. However, concerned with the amount of curb cuts along Insulator Drive. Could the southern edge be developed with a service access? Recommend greater attention to pedestrian experience
- Currently the south end of the properties are facing parking lots and these rather than being the heart of the building, are the back door of the neighborhood.
- Urge the team to reconsider the design of Insulator Drive to limit or eliminate the curb cuts. One reason being the bulk of the development happening will occur north of the building, eventually

the secondary lobbies may become the primary entrances as residents interact with the rest of the district. Think about how Insulator Drive can connect the two buildings to create a more active space.

- Currently it isn't clear how a resident of the west building would easily connect to the east building. Would love for there to be an intentional experience to connect the two.
- Recommend moving the back of house uses to the southern edge, perhaps even consolidating some at the east building to the eastern vehicular entry.
- Check in with the development to the east as they created a hierarchy of streets, make sure that your project works with the overall development plan.

#### **West Building:**

- At the south-facing courtyard the view to the water is emphasized, which makes sense, but in the foreground is a sea of asphalt and a lot of parked cars. Mitigate the immediate view with low screens and planting that direct the eye up and out toward the better view. This also provides some visual separation for the courtyard from the parking and restaurant (especially for people at the swimming pool)
- Large trees shown on elevated courtyard – is there sufficient soil volume?
- Needs street trees around the buildings – closer spacing (35' on center is typical) and add where missing altogether
- How is the north green area being programmed? This is an opportunity for open space amenities that are consistent with the park edge along the water. The identity of the development should be established here, at Cromwell, and carry through to the other areas.

#### **East Building**

- At the eastern building don't quite understand the stair that bisects the lobby entry plaza. Encourage you to open that corner up and create a seamless connection between the intersection and the courtyard which will likely experience a lot of foot traffic.
- The east building in particular seems to be turning its back to Cromwell. Encourage you to take a look at that frontage again and consider placing an amenity space directly along that edge.
- In the east building, both corners are absolutely symmetrical, but you don't have a symmetrical condition. So there's an opportunity to take the palette that you've created and really look at the organization and make sure that the goals you've identified are met.
- With the sawtooth, struggle with seeing them on a taller building and utilized in a four by two arrangement. Perhaps consolidate them along the length of one elevation – one method to break the symmetry of the building. If used along Insulator this would allow for a quieter architecture to the east adjacent to the townhomes.
- Appreciate the designations for public, private, semi-public and semi-private spaces in the courtyard – how are these areas delineated so they serve those functions as intended?
- Confused about public/private designations with the fence.
- Suggestion: create elevation in the courtyard for interest and spatial separation. For example, mound the central lawn and/or use raised planter areas at the edge
- Would like to see more intimacy within the courtyard with more of an organic feel to the park which is too formalized at the moment.

- Appreciate the wonderful character created by the private areas along the southern edge of the courtyard.
- Study the courtyard with the vegetation, be very strategic in where you're positioning your main tree canopy – that's all that going to mitigate the flat ground plane and provide a transition to the tall volumes surrounding it. In the renderings show how flat the south elevation is. Start to modulate this elevation, potentially with a horizontal motif that can begin to create the intimacy that's missing.
- The curve in the courtyard is such a big gesture that it is overwhelming yet unrelated to the rest of the geometries and space. Consider removing and see what naturally develops by refining the relationship between various uses and their spatial identity.

**Next Steps:**

Refine the design based on the comments from the panel and work with Planning Staff prior to returning to UDAAP.

**Attending:**

Sofia Pung, Luke Petrusic, Frank Andre, Wei-Chung Chang, – HCM

Annie Fulton, Niels Theodule - Greystar

Heather English, Addison Palmer - STV

Carley Milligan - media

Messrs. Anthony, Bradley and Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

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

Ted Ludvigsen, Peter Smith, John, Brian Helfer - Attendees