

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 15, 2022

Meeting #71

Project: 2525 Insulator Drive

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: Port Covington

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Niels Theodule with Greystar introduced the project and discussed how the development team has been working diligently to address the panels comments. Frank Andre with HCM then reoriented the team to the site and surrounding developments and shared the changes that have been made to the overall site since the last presentation to UDAAP. This includes revising their design goals by adding five additional goals that included thinking about the buildings as more connected, the reduction of curb cuts on Insulator Drive, and creating a stronger connection and balance between interior amenity spaces in both buildings.

These goals are achieved by moving back of house spaces to the south of the west elevation, elongating the lobby along Insulator and engaging Cromwell, and adding the pool terrace to the roof of the east building. One big change is the introduction of a pedestrian bridge that would connect three levels of the two buildings. The designs have similarly been changed to be more connected and share a material palette.

Heather English, a landscape architect with STV, presented the landscape design including street improvements along both Cromwell and Insulator and the updated design of the courtyard of the east building where attention was paid to creating a variety of spaces for different types of use.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel congratulated the project team for taking the comments from the previous session to heart and bringing the project to the next level. They then proceeded with clarifications, questions and comments.

Clarifications:

- *Is the courtyard on structure or on grade?* It is on grade.

- *In the section the Cromwell Street sidewalk was 32' wide, but with plantings on either side what is the walking space? Approximately 14'.*
- *What is the sidewalk width on Insulator? Roughly 11' on each side. There's a 4' planter with a 7' walkway. The building undulates which does change the width. There is also a 1' step out zone.*
- *The panels on the East Building adjacent to the curb cut, can those be a screen or other less opaque? No, these are to back of house spaces such as trash rooms and loading zones.*

Comments:

Site:

- Appreciate the change on Insulator Drive to relocate loading and minimize curb cuts. Adding the lobby and community type space will improve pedestrian experience and activate Insulator between S. Cromwell and Locke.
- Continue to explore opportunities to be generous with sidewalks especially at corners which are key decisions points for pedestrians as well as convenient meeting spots. For instance Units 2A.1 and 2A.2 along Locke are right at the corner with no relief. Consider articulating unit configuration to provide some landscaping relief.
- The transformers are still problematic at the southern edge of the West Building. Consider recessing into parking bays behind the electrical room and give the corner back to pedestrians. There appears to be a gap between the blast wall and the electrical room, for various reasons this gap should be eliminated. If the property line doesn't allow for the podium to go over them, continue to integrate them into the building at the ground level so that it appears continuous with the building. Consider screening or gates for transformers at both buildings that will help achieve this.
- On the west elevation of the West Building there is a proposed dog park, consider adding foundation plantings and shift the amenity further away from the building.
- Don't quite understand how the Hanover Street Bridge, bike lane, and other landscape elements will work together on the western edge of the site. What other bike friendly uses can be added to the space that will activate it and create a safer more hospitable space?
- The development creates unique spaces with different character for each of the outdoor spaces. Being able to occupy different spaces at different times is important, and the project succeeds in this as each outdoor space will provide entirely different experiences.
- Recommend that you begin to think about the interior urbanism of the project – a complete three-dimensional experience between both buildings. So that if a person is in a space in the building they understand how that space is connected to each space within the building. Rather than thinking of hallways between discrete spaces, think of a complete system of spaces as a procession with hierarchy and clear identity that is different than remaining circulation.
- The update to the large courtyard in the east building really elevates the design and responds to the panels previous comments creating a welcoming and functional space.

Building

- While it may be practical to have a bridge connect both buildings for the convenience of residents accessing amenities in either building, it is overkill to do it with a 3-level bridge. This is

not a multi-purpose institution with multiple uses and security zone. A single level crossing in favor of a multi-level structure will benefit the project more in scale that is compatible with the massing of the two buildings. It can also create a moment in each building at discrete points where the building is interrupted to allow access and an elevated connection.

- Alternatively, as we continue to look at the proposal the pedestrian bridge makes more sense understanding the shared parking and amenities. Additionally, the bridge introduces a nice break in the view down Insulator Drive. A reduction to only one level might be too weak, but should be considered.
- Miss the sawtooth, understand that it can be very costly and difficult to make it work in residential architecture. Wonder if in substitution to that element there can be one move building that breaks the monotony of the roofline. Perhaps the sloped portion of the West Building can be more dramatic and anchor the building with a strong hierarchal element. Perhaps this happens at both the darker elements on the West Building, the one facing Cromwell and one facing the water.

Next Steps: Continue working with Planning Staff to move the design review process forward.

Attending:

Sofia Pung, Luke Petrusic, Frank Andre, Wei-Chung Chang, – HCM
Annie Fulton, Niels Theodule - Greystar
Heather English, Addison Palmer - STV

Klaus Phillipson, Melody Simmons - media

Sharon Bradley and Pavlina Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Matt DeSantis, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Jasmine Kimble, Jeff La Noue, Chris Ryer – Planning