

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: October 21, 2021

Meeting #53

Project: Perkins Phase 3 & 4 Buildings

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: East Baltimore

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Keval Thakkar of HCM began the presentation with an overview of the first two phases of the project. Some of the earliest phases are built or in construction, while other phases are awaiting permits. Mr. Thakkar continued the presentation with a description of plantings and stormwater retention, operational and circulation patterns on the sites related to today's presentation. The next phase, Phase 3, contains several buildings including double-loaded multi-family buildings with parking on site H, and additional multi-family buildings on sites E, F and G. The buildings contain 1-, 2-, and 3-BR units, with the larger units along the primary streets. There are considerable grade challenges that had to be considered while developing the buildings for Phase 3.

Block H: The team used linear buildings for inspiration and precedent, while also considering the new buildings surrounding the park. A mix of materials is used to create hierarchy and definition within the building façade on the front (park side), but the palette is limited to a fiber cement panel on the rear (parking lot) side.

Block G: The building configuration has been adjusted from the previous meeting, including minimizing the amount of entry points, organizing the play area and trash collection points, and improved Bethel streetscape by adding a green buffer to help with the transition between the public and private space along the edge.

Some of the changes to the Master Plan include:

- Gap between the buildings (G and F) was substantially reduced and mews units were eliminated from the plan.
- Parking configuration was revised on site G.
- Buildings fronting the park have evolved to have a pavilion organization to articulate the façade.
- Block G building was inspired by industrial buildings, and incorporates angled bump-outs to capture views toward the park along Bond St.

DISCUSSION:

The panel thanked the team for the presentation and strongly encouraged them to include any changes to the Master Plan in each presentation in which the change is relevant, to help guide discussion and reorient the Panel. Good things are happening with regard to palette, ground plane, etc. This discussion focused mostly on massing and façade articulation.

Clarifications

- *Does the parking open on to Pratt Street?* No, the parking is closed in on the Pratt Street side and does not intersect with the pedestrian pathway.
- *Within the Master Plan, are there any guiding principles for materiality and how / where things are used, or was the Master Plan more about form, massing, and placement of buildings?* There was consideration for materiality, but these were not fixed or prescriptive.

Site H:

- The relationship to the previous phase building creates a departure; this departure fragments the façade reading on the park side – there doesn't seem to be a cohesive logic between the two buildings. This is an important group of façades - they front onto a major urban space. The buildings should frame the park, and the pavilion approach doesn't achieve that.
- The corner transition that frames the primary entrance looks very similar to the corner at Pratt Street undermining the hierarchy offered by the park-side entry. The precedents are more successful at highlighting the entry; team is encouraged to simplify the Pratt Street corner and revisit the entrance corner to make it more distinct.
- More contrast in the building is welcomed. As designed, the building is a little bit on the safe side, almost too much so. Reserve the more generic language for other buildings on the site where a more recessive language would be helpful.
- Southeast corner is the more successful side, with less generic language. Corner volume is interesting; the team is encouraged to look for ways to use that corner volume to inform the rest of the building.
- Elevated form is encouraged for the façade facing the park – pavilion language is good for the smaller streets not facing the park. The expanse of the park can support a larger volume on the façade – revisit earlier comments related to the park façades.
- Buildings do not have to match – including variety around the park would be welcome but be careful to balance the buildings to avoid having them clash. Think about the harmony between the buildings, massings can be consistent without being identical. Set a group of rules for the park side, vs. the street side. These rules can be applied as ground level variations, or park side variations, etc.
- Allow the strong composition of Phase 2B building to inform the Phase 3A building. Keep some of the massing moves, but change colors and openings, etc. Save the pavilions for other places where they will be more useful and help to mitigate the size of the façade.
- Organize the base to be more consistent; the units facing the park with the entry could benefit from having a little more front yard and sense of privacy. These units could have the stair and

stoop reconfigured to make the landscape into a more vibrant ground plane and add layers to create a more private zone. Look for inspiration of the porches around Patterson Park.

- Northeast corner at Pratt and Bond feels a bit more forced – proportions aren't as successful as the southeast corner. Make this the "B" corner (as opposed to the "A" corner with the entrance) by simplifying it and quieting it down. Allow it to compliment vs. compete.
- Addition of balconies could help with organization and visual transparency.

Site G:

- The edge improvements along Bethel are successful – it sets up for future development on Broadway. Reduction of the number of curb cuts is successful, but trash facing Bethel undermines the efforts to improve this from a "service alley" to a smaller walkable street. This undermines the ability of the adjacent properties to develop as street-fronting. Consider revising the trash pick-up process to be accessed directly from the building or on the parking lot side rather than the street.
- More attending to the hardscape at Bond intersection would be helpful; this will be a collection point and the organization will be important to how the site functions. This, and the rhythm of the trees need to relate to what is happening across the street in the park.
- Is there an opportunity to allow the buildings G and F to touch? As designed, the access is not meaningful (it terminates on axis with the trash enclosure). If the passage stays, it needs to be more meaningful. If it can't be closed, underplay it.
- Attention to the various façades is appreciated, and this articulation is more successful in balancing the brick and metal.
- Entrance materials and prominence are meaningful; the scale of the entrance piece (as it relates to the school across the street) is successful.
- Consider whether or not the buildings need to touch.
- Windows – verticality is appreciated, but the piece at the top of the angled bay do not make sense with the rest of the façade; consider simplifying these.
- Use Block H to inform subtle moves at the base; fewer big moves and more subtlety in Block G are appreciated.
- Direction generally makes sense but wrapping the corners and transition to the secondary facades on Bethel needs careful consideration.

Site F:

- Strategy of the 3 floor bays on the park side is appropriate but be careful to edit. Less is more in this instance – when changing the color, plane, etc. the façade will become noisy. Consider keeping the color above the two story base the same lighter color.
- The wood bookends will benefit from a downplay of what is happening in between to reduce the visual noise and reinforce the hierarchy. Refer to precedent images to clarify the language of the primary and secondary elements in the façade.
- The south corner will benefit from a more deliberate carving of the black volume and further editing to make it more robust and less eroded.

- Wood elements are more successful as a volume – consider removing the wood elements as strips that show up within the volumes, as this feels a bit fussy. Perhaps the wood is more appropriate on the balconies.
- Scale, sameness, fun, permanent – terms used by team are evident in the precedents. Consider what the building says – the statement of the building will need it to fit into the whole, but at the same time, be completely unique onto itself.
- This building is very close to expressing the terms the team identified; the language is coming together, and the pieces are all there, it just needs to be articulated a little more clearly.

Site E:

- Façade would benefit from the pavilion language in this instance (on Gough) to relate to the townhouses. Start with the 3-story corners and gradually move toward the 3-story townhouses. This is a natural progression into the surrounding neighborhood.
- The panels are arranged to come to the ground only on the 4-BR flats. The rhythm that the metal panel bays is setting up conflicts with the townhouse read. This area needs more study – perhaps bring them all the way to the ground on one side and allow them to start at the second story after turning the corner.
- These façades will benefit from setting rules (keeping all the bays above or bringing them all down).
- Number of stoops seems excessive, could be cleaned up and minimized.
- Base would benefit from a continuous reading, which could be achieved by bringing the metal-clad bays up.
- Consider what is happening across Bank Street; address the ways in which the buildings can transition and relate to the existing context.
- This building reinterprets the language of the old Perkins development – not in a negative way, but it relates to the context in a way. This project lends itself to the notion of a “recovered memory” – a nod to the past, but with an approach current design.
- Corner is ok as monumental, but moving east along Gough, the building needs to take on a more residential scale.
- Team is strongly encouraged to bring the brick up to 3-stories instead of alternating between 2- and 3-stories. If the team wants to include the 2-story element to relate to the scale across the street, consider leaving 2-story element on one side and transitioning to 3-story on the other (do not mix the two on the same façade).
- Activating ground level will be helpful.

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

- General:
 - Streetscapes and planting at buildings:
 - Thoughtful design, attention paid to pedestrian experience
 - Some separation from public/private space is recommended (low fences, etc); planted areas may deteriorate with high pedestrian volume, dog-walkers etc
 - Provide “step-out” strip where parallel parking is planned, and tree box fences

- Particular care will be needed on Gough, Bank, Bethel St.s – all locations where building facades are set closer to streets, and street trees have to carry most of the responsibility for the visual and functional streetscape experience - tree selection, soil volume, treebox protection, etc.
- Blocks E, F and G:
 - Definite improvement of Bethel streetscape design, and it begins to set a higher-quality precedent for development to the east, which will better serve this edge of the Perkins project
 - More efficient and pedestrian-friendly parking configuration, and addition of green areas and amenity spaces are also good moves.
 - There are still sidewalks up against the building in some areas, though:
 - Blocks F and G – the western-most sidewalk in the parking area crosses behind parking spots (?) and is also immediately outside units in southwest corner? (or are the units only adjacent to the amenity space?)
 - Block E – similar question: in the northwestern area of the parking lot, does the sidewalk cross behind parking spaces? It appears that the sidewalk along the western and northern edges of the parking lot are immediately adjacent to service and parking, for the most part, but the units at the southern edge and eastern edge of the building have paving right up to the façade. I don't know what the answer is – clearly there are challenges in fitting the parking spots, circulation and green spaces, but I'm concerned about the parking lot directly abutting units without any buffer.

Next Steps:

Continue addressing the comments above as each building develops. Remember to include slides that address the masterplan in each of the UDAAP presentations for orientation purposes. Buildings E and H will return to UDAAP; the

Attending:

Tim Pula -Beatty Development

Keval Thakkar, Santosh Chandane – HCM

Pam Askew, Trace Shaughnessy – McCormack Baron Salazar

Melody Simmons – BBJ

Messrs. Anthony, Bradley and Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Kevin Gallaher, Lembit Jogi, Cynthia Newman-Lynch, – HABC

Stacy Freed, Jaye Matthews – DHCD

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

David Ferguson, Precious Washington, Trace Shaughnessy, Arlisa Anderson, Emma Weber, Klaus Phillipsen, Steven Stern - Attendees