

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

Date: April 20, 2023

Meeting #76

Project: Belvedere Place

Phase: Design Development

Location: Central Park Heights/Pimlico Good Neighbors

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Michael Gaines introduced the architect Azhar Ameen with Grimm and Parker Architects who then presented the updated project. The team has revised the project to respond to costs reducing the size from a twin LIHTC project to one that only includes a 4% building. As such the building which previously included interior covered parking and a central courtyard now includes surface parking and outdoor amenities are located at the southern portion of the site.

Claire Fishman the landscape designer then presented the changes to the landscape design which include the bump out at the intersection of Belvedere and Palmer and include the adjacent public and private amenity spaces to the south of the site.

Discussion

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

Questions/Clarifications

- *When you designed it originally what was the separation between the 4% and 9%? The larger portion to the rear was the 9% and the portion along Belvedere was 4%.*
- *Is the existing condition along the west edge of this property an alley? It is currently an edge of a parking lot that will be removed, with the rear of the commercial buildings facing Park Heights Ave.*
- *How is stormwater being handled? There will be modular wetland facilities within the surface parking lots that will deposit the water into the storm drain.*
- *What are the dimensions of the walking path oval? The width of the inner lawn area is a 48' width by roughly a 93' length. The walking track itself is 6' wide. The total length of the walking track is 260' and the green space within the track is 3975 sq. ft.*
- *How do you intend to transition between the two outdoor amenity spaces? There will be an ornamental fence with larger plants acting as screening as well as community art that will provide separation between the two park spaces.*

- *There's a concrete spur near the picnic table, can you explain what that is for? Its used to connect to the architecture and*

General:

- Really appreciated this project with the previous program, it is unfortunate that the program had to change.
- The reduction in units requires a significant change in the design. If you were to design this building with the current program is this the design you would choose? If not, how do you modify the design to speak to the site and current program.
- Return to the original concept and figure out what was critical to the design and the amenity spaces and how they connected to the Church and the goals of the program. How can you reconfigure the design that for this changed program?
- As it stands, the building no longer extends the full length of the site and the outdoor space feels completely exposed. Explore modifying the plan to terminate the curved leg sooner and turn it 90 degrees, signaling the end of a block that transitions to an open space. The parking lot then gets transformed to a longer form located along the alley and the interior space becomes the private amenity space. This more closely mirrors the intent of the previous design.

Site:

- Now that the private space is very visibly off limits to the public, this could be perceived as divisive and exclusive. If the private and public spaces remain adjacent to one another then they should be visually separated. The relationship between them should be solved spatially, without having to rely on a decorative fence and screening panels alone.
- The space where people live should be connected to the amenity space, rather than the parking lot.
- The draw to connect the site to Pimlico is understandable, however the reference in the oval walking path isn't successful given the limited site. The paths in the amenity space should lead to destinations within the space – no dead ends.
- The main entrance seems overworked and busy with the very contrasting pavement and need for one to walk around the planter, which isn't intuitive. Study how people will actually want to walk through the space, then locate planters and seating around these strategic routes.
- At the main entrance the plaza does feel more connected to the church across Palmer Avenue with the bump-out. Consider utilizing a raised crosswalk as well.
- Consider how the interior spaces feel when you look out. You have such an important mission here – the courtyards were so thoughtfully programmed to address the mission and that is no longer evident in the new design. Bring that back to drive the design. Let the sacred space occupy prime position on the site.
- The pathways need to feel more effortless, more study and simplification.

- Show trees and other vegetation in plan and how they relate to the built elements, again how do they impact views from the interior – specifically the upper levels.
- All of the buildings to the west are commercial, don't forget to pay attention to that edge – and have deliberate transition into this space from the commercial edge.

Building:

- The treatment of the façade along Belvedere is so well articulated, and that ends along Palmer – reconsider the character and articulation on all the facades, including the rear elevation that faces the outdoor amenity space. Consider distributing the articulation along all the elevations, not just focus on one.
- The materials appear very generic – what is your vision for the project? How can this be special and of this neighborhood? Understanding there are cost limitations, the design team needs to find cost-effective solutions so that the exterior of the building is celebrated and emblematic of the bigger vision of the project.
- Some of the elevations really need good design work, study the window configuration and how it impacts the proportions. Introduce some design logic to the elevation. Consider the bays along Palmer – how can these be developed in their own language. If the curved leg of the building is modified as recommended to turn and create a stronger south façade, use the southeast corner to provide a secondary anchor for the building that signals importance and value for the entire site.

Next Steps:

Continue the design and address the comments above. Work with Planning staff to address comments and review materials.

Attending:

Michael Gaines - BRIDGES Community Development Corporation

Azhar Ameen, Laura Manville, Lauren Gilmartin, Mel Thompson – Grimm & Parker

Claire Fishman – Landscape Architect at Carroll Engineering

Al Barry, Brandon Brooks, Peter Smith, John Tamburrino - attendees

Carley Milligan - BBJ

Kelly Baccala - DHCD

Osbourne Anthony, Pavlina Ilieva and Sharon Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Chris Ryer, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Kari Nye – Planning