

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: October 27, 2022

Meeting #69

Project: Center West Block J Poppleton

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: 5001 E Eager Street, Baltimore MD 21205

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Pavlina Ilieva recused herself from the Panel before introducing the project and team. The presentation began with an explanation of the neighborhood context and early schematic design. This is the third building in the LDDA footprint for the Center West development. The first two buildings are located to the south of this site. There is also a Planned Unit Development (PUD) for this area, and the various parcels will have a mix of heights ranging from 5 – 8 stories. The intention of the PUD is to have the 5-story buildings transitioning down to the neighborhood scale at the edges and the taller 8-story buildings will connect to the UM Bio Park edge with more density. This project stands at 68’ tall with 5 stories of stick-built over 2 stories of podium – the first two podium levels contain parking but are wrapped with units, lobby, and a small commercial space at the southwest corner. The developer is LaCite’ Development LLC; the Architect of Record is Bonstra Haresign Architects and PI.KL Studio is the Design Architect. The team also includes Landscape Architect Richard Jones.

About the project:

- New age-restricted housing
- 200 apartment units & resident amenity
- 53 +/- structured parking
- Focus on urban compatibility
- 7-story multi-family residential building
- Active-use ground-level urban edge
- Neighborhood anchor

The project aims to tie into the neighborhood context, which includes the existing rowhouses, Francis M. Wood High School and Greater Model Park, and the newer Centre West buildings to the south. The team strove to make the best use of the site while meeting the program requirements. The building is setback to provide more sidewalk and allow for more programming. Activating Schroeder and N. Amity Streets was a priority for the development team.

The form of the building was studied through a series of diagrams looking at a variety of building layouts. The resulting project has a continuous base, with two courtyards – one facing east (breakfast courtyard) and one facing west (afternoon). The lobby is located at the northwest corner.

Richard Jones continued the presentation with an introduction to the landscape strategy. Because of the larger setbacks, there is adequate space for including street trees and a small semi-public space along the south edge of the site. The landscape will modulate to compliment the program, and at important moments, the sidewalk will be extended to create both path and place.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the project team and pointed out that this project is on the west side of Baltimore. It was noted that this type of development has not been seen in the area for a long time, which makes it significant. The Panel then began with questions before continuing with the general discussion and comments.

- *Can you please clarify the need for two levels of parking?* PUD requirement is 4:1 at the approved minimum. The parking is on two levels so that it can be wrapped with units.

Site:

- The PUD is intended to stitch the north and south sides of West Baltimore together. The neighborhood was divided by the highway (Route 40) but the new buildings can help this edge, just west of Downtown, feel more unified.
- It's clear that having a complete project team - with a landscape architect – helped to shape the site. It is extremely helpful when the **landscape site** is considered early, and the building and site develop together. The porosity of the façade into the courtyards, the extra setbacks to create a mews on the south side – these elements make the building feel as if it is a more neighborhood scale. The early successful moves should be protected as the project moves forward and faces value engineering **and other challenges such as unit- and parking-yield.**
- Successful projects come from discipline. The Panel appreciates that this project is being approached from the outside in and relates to the greater fabric of the area.
- Site plan is evolving nicely; the site is small but to satisfy the parking requirement, the project punctures the sidewalk twice. Instead of bringing the ramp in off Saratoga, can it be located on Amity? The area across the street on Saratoga will eventually be developed.
- **The relationships between the courtyards (using a connecting corridor) and interior amenity spaces are strong, creating a sequence of open-space options and a fluidity of movement in and out of the building**
- **Commend the use of larger landscape material on the elevated courtyards, as it contributes to the character of the streetscape**

Integration of Site & Building:

- The dual courtyard is appreciated, and the form is tied to its function, which is nice, but the western courtyard seems too deep.
- The lobby is very celebratory, but immediately adjacent there are loading docks, which sends a mixed message of having the front door right next to the back door.
- Moving the entrance allows for the mews that wraps the corner into Amity Street, tying into the existing language of having a ground level open space. This would require the team to figure out the ramping system.
- This first pass has a nice palette – not just in terms of the materials, but in terms of the various pieces of the project. The plant selections might tie the courtyard to the ground level experience, but the more important experience the second floor

Next Steps:

Continue the project by addressing the comments above and meet with Planning staff before returning to UDAAP.

Attending:

Pavlia Ilieva, Zenairee Garcia, Kuo Pao Lian – PI.KL Architects
Dan Bythewood, John Edwards, Ian Arias – Development Team
Richard Jones – Landscape Architect

Ted Ludvigsen, Joanna Sullivan, Peter Smith, David Alcala, Eduardo Frontera, J Alexander – Attendees

Osbourne Anthony, Sharon Bradly – UDAAP Panel

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