

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

Date: December 11, 2014

Meeting No.: 197

Project: 225 N. Calvert Street

Phase: Continued Schematic

Location: Site fronting North Calvert to the west, East Saratoga Street to the north, Davis Street to the east and the historic Court Square Building to the south

PRESENTATION:

Frank Andre, AIA, Hord Coplan Macht presented a brief recap of the proposed project in a re-emerging neighborhood with vacant and underutilized buildings, a relatively narrow street grid surrounding the building with a parking structure facing the front door of the building. The goal is a vibrant neighborhood through thoughtfully designed retail and residential uses that act as a catalyst. The iconic vertical silhouette of the building remains while taking advantage of the large rooftop for outdoor building amenities. The ground floor is activated on North Calvert with retail including a fitness facility and associated tenant amenities. The reskinning intentionally uses the assets of the existing building to achieve a layered expression.

A major aspect of the design proposal is the screening of the parking structure with perforated aluminum panels fastened with a clip system at each concrete slab. On North Calvert and wrapping onto Saratoga Street, the colored panels would be overlaid with a mural based iconic images of Baltimore's history and people. The panel system would be colorful and have LED lighting. The retail façade on North Calvert Street would have 12' sidewalk and a 4-6' canopy beyond the face of the building. In addition, the building has a major graphic on the new penthouse levels at mid-section on Saratoga Street and Davis Street marking the building's address reference. The Davis Street façade will be wrapped in refurbished brick taking advantage of the original materiality of the building.

The key aspects of the proposed Landscape Plan are raised planters with ornamental trees/evergreen shrubs at the entrance and along the street length of the building on North Calvert, new lighting fixtures along North Calvert to supplement City fixtures and lighted bollards 4ft. in height along Saratoga Street. The Hanover paver treatment on the sidewalk along North Calvert Street is proposed to be a pattern of concrete pavers in a grey/light blue shade. This material and treatment provides a welcome new standard for the neighborhood.

COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:

The Panel generally viewed the design changes as responsive to the Panels' comments in the prior meeting. The architectural design is a strong response to create urban revitalization with a youthful vigor. The stronger modern design approach is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. However, there were still some concerns regarding some of the refinements. The reuse of the brick on Davis Street needs to be carefully considered as the current approach does not seem well integrated with the overall design. Consider the 'framing' being used within the building elevations as a way to relate the different approaches to one another, but also offer some clear separation of the parts. The ground level seems squat or 'pinched' by the weight of the fenestration above and the team should investigate ways that the linear nature of the ground plan may be accented or punctuated at the entrances (perhaps vertically at these points). The garage treatment with the colored aluminum panels and mural should be reviewed as this approach

requires a strong graphic designer well versed in super graphic to be successful. Overall the different components of the elevations would benefit from additional coordination in texture and color to read more cohesively.

The streetscape proposed on North Calvert Street lacks significant ‘place making’ and the canopy treatment should be reconsidered. The current proposal along North Calvert creates a design rigidity which misses an opportunity to herald new streetscape goals for the emerging neighborhood. The streetscape approach may want to be reconsidered and precedents such as Lenfest Plaza should be explored. The Panel would like the landscape architect to demonstrate in section the utilities that present a constraint as proposed plants may not survive the winter weather. The planter strategy was questioned and should address street furnishing for storm water especially if trees are not possible.

PANEL ACTION:

The Panel recommends schematic approval w/comments.

Attending:

Frank Andre, Josh Kilrain, Chris Parts, Cedric AlKazzi, Sharon Pula – HCM
Josh Olsen, Ken Meile – Monument Realty
Natalie Sherman- Baltimore Sun

Dr. Meany*, Messr. Bowden, Rubin and Burns - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Zane Hadzick –Planning Department