

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

**Date:** April 10, 2014

**Meeting No.:** 182

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**Project:** 414 S. Light Street

**Phase:** Schematic

**Location:** South Light, East Conway, South Charles and East Barre Streets

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**PRESENTATION:**

Anthony Cataldo from the City of Baltimore Office of Planning introduced the project, noting that the development team had met with the Office of Planning for a preliminary discussion. The site is located at a key intersection entering the Inner Harbor from I-95, Camden Yards, and the Convention Center. Primary urban goals for the project including create an iconic gateway, and activating the western edge of South Light Street.

Mr. Stephen Gorn, Chairman, President and CEO of 85 year old Baltimore-based development company Questar, introduced the firm, and the project and project team. In addition to Questar, STV is the local civil engineer, and architect Devon Patterson, AIA of Solomon Cordwell Buenz (SCB), a 90 year old firm specializing in large scale projects, including high rise residential towers based in Chicago and San Francisco.

Mr. Gorn and Mr. Patterson gave the following overview of the project:

1. The project includes the entire city block surrounded by the streets outlined above.
2. The site has an unobstructed view east over South Light Street, the Visitors Center and West Shore Park to the Inner Harbor, and to the west over Otterbein to Camden Yards, north into Downtown and south out to the Bay.
3. The total site area is approximately 1.9 acres.
4. The project will be executed in two phases.
5. Phase 1 will include a 43-story mixed use tower with 372 luxury apartments with amenity spaces at the 7<sup>th</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> floors, 12,000 SF of ground floor retail, and a 6 story parking podium with 460 spaces. Final (office, hotel or residential) uses, size and shape for Phase 2 will be determined at a future date as market economics dictate.
  - a. The architect presented alternative tower studies, with an elliptical building running parallel to Light Street as the selected direction.
  - b. The tower is positioned to anchor the corner of South Light and East Conway Streets, to act as a gateway to the Inner Harbor district and to Light Street, and to provide an uninterrupted long view to the water. Phase 1 is also positioned to maintain a view corridor to the water for Phase 2, expected to be positioned in the southwest corner of the site.
  - c. An internal alley extends from East Conway to East Barre, and bifurcates the site. It sits below below the parking podium and will provide service, limited delivery parking and parking garage access for both phases.

- d. The lobby to the residential tower is located on East Conway Street to activate the sidewalk, and to permit maximum retail frontage along Light Street.
  - e. The six-story parking garage podium is faced with single-loaded residential units on South Light and East Conway Streets.
  - f. The seventh floor amenity space extends beyond the residential tower mass on the East Conway façade.
  - g. Building form and material
    - i. The architect presented 3 precedent images of SCB's recent high rise residential work
    - ii. The form of the building is influenced by view sheds from the units. The curved plan forms evoke a maritime or boat hull metaphor
    - iii. The east façade is registered to the adjacent Sonesta Hotel with a massing break and setback at the 34<sup>th</sup> floor
    - iv. The building skin changes on various facades, with a predominantly slightly reflective glass with horizontal metal spandrels at the floors, and a two story grid on the north and south orthogonal facades
    - v. Amenity floors read as strong horizontal bands
    - vi. The garage is covered in a translucent curtain wall on East Conway
    - vii. 50 – 60% of the units have balconies; the south façade at the east corner includes projecting balconies
6. STV presented the site and phasing strategies
- a. Two unused southbound Light Street lanes will be incorporated into the site
  - b. A circulator bus layby will be incorporated into the site at the southeast 1/3 of the site along Light Street
  - c. A 25' wide elevated retail plaza with an edge planter provides code required height separation from the 100 year flood elevation, and creates opportunities for sidewalk café seating. Grade transitions will occur within the planter strip, and an accessible route will be provided at the northeast end of the site. A 2' cobblestone edge adjacent to the street, an 8' wide tree planting zone and 10' wide pedestrian walk line South Light Street.
  - d. The site area for second phase will be used as a construction staging area, and returned to a surface parking lot upon completion of Phase 1.

**COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:**

- 1. The panel asked questions related to:
  - a. retail plaza access from the street
  - b. building height relative to other buildings in Baltimore
  - c. zoning conformance
  - d. 2<sup>nd</sup> phase development - may be executed by Questar, or the next phase could be executed by others
  - e. massing studies for Phase 2 relative to the selected direction for Phase 1
  - f. is residential use expressed clearly enough in an all-glass building?

2. The panel complimented the development team, and felt that the project is generally moving in a good urban and architectural design direction. Following is a list of comments and concerns:
  - a. The project is well-presented graphically and verbally
  - b. Responsiveness to context is strong and appropriate
  - c. Streetscape improvements, proposed South Light Street lane realignment, building entrance and retail plaza engage the street in an appropriate fashion that will dramatically improve the pedestrian experience.
  - d. Material and color choices to date are consistent with form direction.
  - e. Top of the building, especially penthouse levels and mechanical penthouse, need refinement including balcony and unit expression, and shaping the roof profile
  - f. Continue to develop differentiated wall expressions, with special care given to the parking structure skin and the intersection/overlap of skin language (ie. The north façade where multiple languages collide)
  - g. Discuss sustainable design strategies and integration, especially related to site design, building envelope, energy efficiency and resource conservation
  - h. Strive to further articulate the façade with residential cues
  - i. Massing of enclosed 7<sup>th</sup> floor amenities needs better integration
  - j. The grid of East Conway Street elevation at the podium needs additional refinement
  - k. When Phase 1 building is complete, the restored parking lot should be landscaped and screened appropriately.

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:**

1. The 100 year flood plain has been recently remapped. Confirm impact on ground floor and retail plaza.
2. Discuss the project further with the Harbor Court Citizens Association.
3. Confirm that the proposed South Light Street lane configuration is consistent with the city's long term transportation plan.

**PANEL ACTION:**

Recommend approval of the Schematic Phase with comments and looks forward to further development that responds to the comments.

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**Attending:**

Stephen Gorn, Zach Gorn, Jason McArthur – Questar

Sharon Huber-Plano, Tony Cortreal, Addison Palmer, Kristen Gedeon – STV

Devon Patterson – SCB

Stanley Fine- RMG

Jon Laria – Ballard Spahr

Barbara Valeri\*, Henry Valeri\* – Towers at Harbor Court

Klaus Philisen – ArchPlan

Caroline Peri – Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

Tony Vittoria

Sarah St. Clair, Lauren Moloney – Waterfront Partnership

Patrick Terranova - BDC

UDARP Panel Members- Ms. Jones Allen and Ms. Meany, Messrs. Gary Bowden and David Haresign\*

Planning Department- Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa, Alex Hoffman,