

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

**Date:** July 17, 2014 **Meeting No.:** 188

---

**Project:** City Arts II **Phase:** Schematic

---

**Location:** Greenmount Avenue and Barclay Street

---

**PRESENTATION:**

Mr. Charlie Duff, President of Jubilee Baltimore; introduced the project to the Panel. As described, the project consists of three components: a community park located along Barclay Street; a cluster of five townhomes located East and South of the park along Brentwood Avenue; and, a four story residential building containing sixty units and located along Greenmount Avenue.

**THE BARCLAY STREET PARK:**

Ms. Joan Floura, representing Floura Teeter Landscape Architects; identified the three goals for the project. They are:

1. To engage the neighborhood and make the park an integral part of the community,
2. To design for safety, well-being and sustainability, and
3. To accommodate program components requested by the community

The program components consists of a “splash pad”; a multi-use events space; a non-traditional play ground with earth berms and sitting walls; and, a small grove of fruit trees. The planting proposed for the park consists of willow oaks along Barclay, swamp white oak and sweet gum trees within the park to provide shade, red bud ornamental trees adjacent to the townhomes, and a small grove of fruit trees.

**THE BRENTWOOD AVENUE TOWNHOMES:**

Mr. Rich Villa, principal architect with Ambit Architecture; described the project as consisting of two groups of three story “paired townhomes” forming the eastern edge of the park and one “stand alone” townhome forming the southern edge of the park. All five townhomes will have parking pads accessed off of Brentwood Avenue/ the alley system. Pedestrian access to the paired townhomes are thru gated and fenced walkways. The materials chosen by the Architect include newport brick for the main facades and German siding for all other facades.

## **CITY ARTS II: RESIDENTIAL BUILDING:**

Mr. Keval Thakkar, architect with Hord, Coplan, Macht Architects; identified the site challenges including existing underground utilities and easements. To accommodate the constraints, the building has been separated at the ground level to create a vehicular access drive off of Greenmount Avenue connecting to the parking located to the back of the site along Brentwood Avenue. Ground level uses include five walk up apartments and a residential lobby with amenity spaces. The upper three floors accommodate 55 residential apartments.

Mr. Chris Harvey, principal with Hord, Coplan, Macht Architects; presented the exterior massing and façade treatment for the building. As conceived, the building is designed to look like two separated industrial loft structures connected by a three story glass and steel bridge above the vehicular entry drive. Each building has its own cadence of windows and masonry piers and distinguished by different colors and textures of masonry. The common or connecting material gesture is the dark brick below the windows.

## **COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:**

The Panel was appreciative of the Development Team's previous and current commitment to the neighborhood. They expressed confidence that the City Arts II project, if properly designed and executed, would be transformative for the neighborhood.

## **MASTER PLAN:**

In general, the Panel was pleased with the site organization and the logic for the location of the three components: park, townhomes, and multi-family residential. The major concern expressed by the Panel was that the components appeared to be planned in isolation and that the opportunity for connectivity, from the City Arts II building on Greenmount Avenue thru the site to the park along Barclay Street was not fully advanced/realized.

Specific moves that impeded connectivity included the gated walkway between the paired townhomes and the gated walkway to the entries of the paired townhomes. The placement of the back west wing of the City Arts II building and the resultant indirect path from Brentwood thru the parking garage to the residential lobby entry contributed to the connectivity problem.

### THE PARK:

The Panel was pleased with the overall organization of the program components and the purposefulness and variety of the trees specified. The Panel expressed concern about the lack of a defining edge along the north limits of the park and the “dead end” nature of the Southeast corner of the park. The Panel recommended the following:

- Study the northern boundary of the park to provide a defining landscape edge while achieving some visual porosity for safety consideration.
- Provide a lighting plan that will effectively illuminate the park at night but not be intrusive to the adjacent residents.
- Provide more detail on the park furniture, playground equipment and hardscape treatment.
- Coordinate with the townhouse Architect to improve direct, free flowing access from the park to Brentwood Avenue.
- Provide detail on the landscape treatment along the walkway between the paired townhomes.

### THE TOWNHOME COMPONENT:

Having previously reviewed this townhome prototype, designed by the Architect for another project; the Panel felt the prototype may need to be modified to be more site specific/sensitive. The Panel expressed concern about the remoteness of the northern and southern townhomes entries along the east edge of the park. Concern was also voiced about the gated walkway from the park to Brentwood Avenue, as it impeded connectivity between the three project components.

The Panel offered the following for consideration:

- Study pairing the entrances to the four townhomes along the eastern edge of the park and reduce the need to have a continuous gated and fenced walkway along this edge.
- Study a way to eliminate the gated walkway between the paired townhomes while addressing security and safety issues.
- Restudy the need and desirability to recess the townhome entries, creating a “floating” brick pier.

## THE CITY ARTS II RESIDENTIAL BUILDING:

In general, the Panel was pleased with the exterior design of the building and supportive of the “two building” read along Greenmount Avenue. The Panel raised concerns about the placement of the west wing, the layout of the parking and the location of the stair shaft in preventing a clear and direct path to Brentwood and the park beyond.

- Study shifting the west wing of the building to the south, along the alley; to create a more direct path and sightlines to the lobby entry from Brentwood Avenue.
- Study reducing the depth of the bridge element so there is more of an expressive setback from both the Greenmount Avenue (east) and west facades.
- Study making the bridge element visually lighter and more structurally expressive. The Panel questioned the use of the dark gray/black panels.
- Study the façade and corner facing east LaFayette Avenue as an opportunity to provide artist wall graphics and/or to accommodate one or two street level entries for apartment units.

## PANEL ACTION:

Recommend approval with comments.

## **Attending:**

Keval Thakkar, Helepnn Vaheer, Chris Harvey – HCM

Martha Cross – TRF

Rich Villa – Ambit Architecture

Susan Williams – STV

Adriana Mendoza, Zachary Baier, Joan Floura – FTLA

Polly Duke – Homes for America

Ryan Potter – GEJ

Rick Conrath, Molly Haffner – GTM

Charlie Duff – Jubilee Housing

UDARP Panel Members- Ms. Meany, Messrs. Burns\*, Bowden and Haresign

Planning Department- Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa, Heather Martin, Andy Cook, Jill Lemke