

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 18, 2007

Meeting No.: 51

Project: The Icon @ Lighthouse Point - Master Plan

Phase: Discussion

Location: Lighthouse Point PUD

PRESENTATION:

This discussion session began with Laurie Feinberg, Southeast Comprehensive Planner for the Department of Planning, presenting an overview of the Boston / Lakewood Study. This project site is within the study area. The study, prepared by the Department of Planning (and pending adoption), includes guidelines and recommendations for development in the area that address open space, pedestrian conditions, land use, transportation, and possible building configurations for the remaining developable sites – including the possibility of a ‘tower’ within the Lighthouse Point PUD area in the range of 200’ in height (the current height restriction is 72’ on this portion of the site).

Marco Greenberg of Cignal Corporation, developer of the Icon project, then presented a project analysis and their current plans. Mr. Greenberg also presented a history of the development of Lighthouse Point, including the original PUD and subsequent amendments, the transition of the site from boat related uses to residential / mixed use, and recent discussions with the Planning Department and community regarding the current project proposal.

Lastly, Luis Bernardo of Design Collective presented a series of plans, drawings, and studies for the Icon project – a mixed-use project located within the Lighthouse Point PUD on the site bounded by the Boatel on the west, Boston Street on the north, the Tindeco property on the east, and the harbor/promenade on the south. The proposal calls for a 260’ (including mechanical) high building – an 18 story apartment/condominium tower sitting on a 5 story base of parking, retail, and housing / amenity spaces. To the north (along Boston Street) and south (along the promenade) of the building are public open spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel was generally favorable of the project, which will require major amendments to the PUD and urban renewal plan, due to among other issues the proposed tower height. Comments were framed around two issues: broader urban design ramifications and site / building configuration.

Urban Design

Most Panel members felt that the Lighthouse Point site, given its location on the harbor, was an appropriate location for a taller (than 72') building, particularly in relation to the other nearby tall buildings – the Anchorage and Canton Crossing Office Tower. However, there was some disagreement as to whether the Icon really created any dialogue with these two buildings and the framing of the harbor in this area.

Site / Building Configuration

Panel members were favorable to the general location and massing of the building – feeling that setting it back from Boston Street reduced its height impact along the street and placed the tower closer to the water and furthest away from the neighborhood. There was some question as to whether the building created a strong enough edge / frame to Boston Street. Concerns were expressed that the building footprint and massing was being driven too strongly by the parking garage and that a more variegated massing could be studied for the lower portion of the building to minimize its bulk. Also, how the project would interface with future development opportunities on the Tindeco site was another concern.

Generally the Panel was comfortable with the height of the tower and the attempts to create a slender profile as well as integrate the mechanical enclosure with the architecture. It recommends the architect consider different edge / end treatments, rather than just a slab configuration, and continue giving attention to how the building meets the sky. Also, having the tower meet the ground was considered a good move and perhaps more of the tower could be exposed along the promenade to strengthen the integration of tower, base, and ground plane. As the design proceeds, the Panel encourages the architect to treat the project as a unified building that happens to have different programmatic elements.

The location of retail along the front (Boston Street) and western edge was viewed favorably, although it was recommended to consider a one-way main retail street through the project to provide additional width to the sidewalks and a more gracious pedestrian environment.

The inclusion of open space is encouraged, although the use and 'meaningfulness' of the plaza along Boston Street was questioned. More information about how these spaces will be used / programmed is needed to effectively comment on their design. Additionally, pedestrian access from Boston Street to the promenade needs further study – to understand the relationship between vehicular access, parking, and pedestrian areas.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS:

Several community representatives presented their views on the project. Five of the six who went on record (including a letter from the Canton Community Association) were against the Icon as currently proposed, expressing grave concerns about the height (favoring the current height restrictions), that the building is out of scale with the adjoining Canton neighborhood, that it will negatively impact traffic along Boston Street, and that they were unhappy with the process in developing the Boston / Lakewood Study.

Also speaking was Al Barry, AB Associates and representing the ownership of the Tindec development to the east. He suggested that the owners of the two sites get together to look at both development parcels, given that the open space proposed along Boston Street relies on particular building configuration on the Tindec site, as well as other building massing and site relationships.

PANEL ACTION:

Discussion only.

Attending:

Armando Cignarale, Marco Greenberg, Randy Mohr, Tom Faust – Cignal Corporation
Luis Bernardo, Warren Strovel – Design Collective
David Naumann – Bay Café
Caroline Burkhart, Nancy Braymer – Canton Square
Carolyn Boitnott – Waterfront Coalition
Gerry Aronin – Canton Cove
Claire Williams – Burgess & Niple
Al Barry, Alex Hoffman - AB Associates
Mark Berman – Tindec Wharf
Bob Aydukovic – DPOB
Jay Brodie, Paul Dombrowski, Shubroto Bose – BDC
Jill Rosen – The Sun

Ms. Dietsch, Messrs. Ramberg, Schack, Britt and Cameron – Panel
Gary Cole, Laurie Feinberg, Thor Nelson, Ken Hranicky, Brigitte Fessenden, Andrea Houseman, Bob Quilter - Planning