

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

Date: October 11, 2007

Meeting No: 69

Project: Four Seasons/Legg Mason Project

Phase: Continued Schematic

Location: Aliceanna Street/President Street/Promenade

PRESENTATION:

Michael Beatty, of H&S Development, updated the Panel on the design modifications developed in response to the Panel's previous comments which generally concerned the podium and the promenade. Steve Fotiu, of HKS, described the changes to the podium and Richard Jones, of Mahan/Rykiel, Landscape Architects, described the modifications to the promenade which addressed public/private domain issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

I. PROMENADE / SITE ISSUES

1. The Panel was generally pleased with the modifications to the promenade in front of the Four Seasons Hotel. However, concern was again expressed that the width of the promenade in front of the Legg Mason building was too narrow to easily accommodate seating for the venues at the base and permit adequate room for public circulation. The Panel suggests further study of this area and recommends very limited outdoor seating at the building base, if any at all.
2. The "Sails" at the bend of the promenade were extensively discussed. Some Panel members believed these elements to be too large, while others felt they should be raised. Some further study is suggested.
3. Most Panel members believe that the trees at the end of the access road should be eliminated. Alternatives discussed include plantings of bamboo or plant material in containers that would provide more flexibility in locating these elements.

4. As expressed at the previous meeting, the Panel still believes that the entry drive would benefit from a stronger “Gateway” feature. The Panel was not in agreement as to what this might be, but suggested that an articulation in the paving might be considered.
5. The Panel urges that where benches might be planned for public use that these be of a design with backs.
6. The treatment at grade of the southeast corner of the Legg Mason tower requires additional study.
7. The sculptural element developed to disguise a mechanical vent still appears problematic. Its alignment with the buildings appears too rigid and there is still concern about its appeal to skateboarders. It was suggested that giving design responsibility for this element to an artist might produce a better result.

II. PODIUM

Panel members generally agreed that the modifications to the podium were an improvement. Comments included the following:

1. Eliminate the “pilaster” articulation in favor of a “frame” expression.
2. Bring the face of the Legg Mason building to the ground at the entry in the entry drive. The same podium expression is not necessary on both sides of this entry drive.
3. The proposed use of limestone for the podium is not fully supported. Now that the podium design has been clarified, greater harmony between the towers and the base would result in a stronger integration of these two elements. The use of a stone veneer of a color similar to the glass of the towers would give a unified appearance to the design and is strongly recommended. It is a means to accept the podium, but mitigate the wedding cake effect of a tower sitting on a base.
4. The small “towers” that articulate the podium at the end of the entry drive and at two corners appear to some extent to be vestiges of the earlier design. The extent of the horizontal banding may over-articulate these elements and the roof “lids” are inappropriate. It is urged that these tower elements not become overly important.

SUMMARY

The Panel is generally most pleased with the further design development of this project. The previous concerns relative to the promenade and the podium have been greatly diminished. The Panel trusts that its latest comments will be given every consideration to ensure that this complex will achieve its promise as one of Baltimore’s signature projects.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic Design approved with comments

Attending:

Michael Beatty – H&S Development Company

Michael Ricketts – SBE&R

Todd Harvey, Paul DeMillo, Gautam Sultane – Beatty-Harvey Architects

Steve Fotiu – HKS

Richard Jones, Brett Manvilla, Peng Gu - MRA

Ed Gunts, Lorraine Mirabella – Sunpapers

Jay Brodie – BDC

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Bowden, Schack, Britt and Cameron – Panel

Doug McCoach, Theo Ngongang, Peter Conrad, Ken Hranicky, Bob Quilter - Planning