

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 13, 2007

Meeting No.: 71

Project: Sheraton Four Points

Phase: Schematic

Location: 25 South Calvert Street

PRESENTATION:

Robert Greenberg, principal with Gordon & Greenberg, reviewed his hotel work in Baltimore and then introduced the proposed hotel project within the context of the properties operated by the hotel owner, Sheraton Four Points. The new hotel will replace existing buildings located at the NE corner of S. Calvert Street and Water Street. Mr. Greenberg presented the schematic design. This included reference to the concept design introduced at the November 8th meeting. The building will be 13 stories with the main entrance on Water Street and the service/loading entrance on S. Calvert Street. The exterior of the buildings would consist of a taut glass and metal panel façade, accented by a corner tower with a dramatic projecting embellishment at its top.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

Although the revised scheme has improved from the original concept proposal in a number of ways including the reduction of the frenetic character of the façade (primarily by omitting the brick base and the HVAC grilles) and strengthening of the building's base, the panel reiterated its disappointment that there was insufficient information about the neighborhood context, specifically images of the adjacent buildings, site plan of a wider area showing building footprints, and a simple massing model. . The panel requested a simple massing model (preferably actual rather than digital), elevations (which include the adjacent buildings) of all exterior walls, and a site plan showing the site and its context be brought to the next meeting so that the project could be more fully understood.

Other comments include:

1. The building's character is ambivalent. The panel recommended an approach that would strengthen its character as a dramatic corner building, rather than trying to fit a contemporary building into the neighborhood by watering down its design. The building's proportions are off and the base and top of the composition should be strengthened by employing a stronger color of granite and the top should be emphasized by accentuating the drama of the embellishment. The three different slopes should be omitted and other approaches studied that will allow the corner to achieve the desired prominence.
2. The building's mass, specifically the relationship of the walls with the corner tower should be studied to improve the tower's strength at the corner. The top should read

- as a single movement. The tower should read as a strong cylinder from which the building's massing evolves.
3. The effect of the horizontal string courses wrapping the building's façade is one of wallpaper rather than tension.
 4. The articulation of the north elevation, which is exposed above the adjacent building and therefore quite prominent, should be studied to introduce windows that will both serve the hotel and enhance the view of the wall from afar. A pattern of windows should be introduced.
 5. The proposal to limit the addition of trees to the Water Street frontage should be discussed with the appropriate Baltimore City agencies. The panel recommends more trees not fewer.
 6. The datum lines expressed in the color change across the facades do not work. The use of two colors of metal panel is not effective as a tool to help the building fit into its historic context. The panel recommends using only one color of metal panel and to allow the building to read as a strong contemporary corner element rather than try to be both an interesting corner and a background building. The color as proposed is very dark and somber, perhaps too somber.
 7. The entrance canopy needs to be re-studied.
 8. The panel thinks that the placement and design of the Four Points name and logo is inconsistent with the contemporary character of the design. The panel suggests careful consideration of the location of the signage and using just the text and not the logo.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic approval withheld.

Attending:

Bob Rosenfelt, Carla Ryon, Dawn Clamp – Colbert Matz Rosenfelt, Inc.
Robert Greenberg, Scott Greenberg – Gordon & Greenberg Architects

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Ramberg, Schack, Cameron and Britt – Panel
Gary Cole, Bob Quilter - Planning