

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

Date: January 10, 2008

Meeting No.: 72

Project: UMB BioPark Research Bldg #3

Phase: Schematic

Location: SE corner W. Baltimore and Poppleton Street

PRESENTATION:

William Gaudreau, of Gaudreau Associates, began the presentation with an overview of the project and how it relates to the previous research buildings as well as the original master plan. Jim Bartlett (Gaudreau Associates) then presented the design of the building, a 6-story speculative research building located at the corner of W. Baltimore and Poppleton Streets. Mr. Bartlett highlighted three factors that shaped the design of the building: site and context, program / function and formal issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel felt that this was a very good start to the design of the building. However, there were many questions and issues regarding the building's relationship to the pending revised master plan (which was presented prior) which made it difficult for the Panel to make substantive comments for a schematic level approval. Since the master plan for the BioPark is in the beginning stages of being expanded and revised, the Panel feels that it is important for the building to be better informed by, and inform, the developing master plan. Thus, the Panel would like the architect and master plan team to work together prior to the next presentation so that the building's design can be better reviewed within the future intentions and growth of this area.

Additionally, the Panel had the following comments:

Form of the building: Several panelists commented as to why the building had a symmetrical form. While the symmetrical rationale behind the floor plan and building entrance is clear, the rationale behind the outer expression of the building's façade and form are not as clear. Additional thought should be given to the building's form based on its being on a corner and its relationship to other projected buildings and open spaces.

Identity: Comments were made regarding the building looking like a suburban office building, its similarity to the other two research buildings, and its monumentality. While the Panel is not suggesting that the building look completely different from the first two completed buildings, it does suggest to the architect that they study the amount of brick used and the possibility of introducing more of an additional material (such as the metal panel being proposed), its use of corner elements / towers, and the cornice treatment, specifically the overhanging curved element. The work being done inside of the buildings is exciting and innovative – an expression of this might enhance the exterior and inform the master plan and its design guidelines.

Entrance: The Panel felt that the entrance was difficult to identify and needed to be more significant, whether through the use of a canopy, material treatment, or other measures. Additionally, the scale of the entrance needs to be studied in relationship to the building's base treatment and pedestrian scale (see below).

Pedestrian scale: The Panel agrees with the architect that the building will eventually be part of a larger ensemble that limits the overall view of the building. Thus, the Panel feels that it is important to better address the pedestrian scale of the building since this is what most people will experience and see. In particular, several Panel members felt that the two story base was too high and did not work for future retail, including the awkwardness of the sign band. Also, the architect should study bringing some of the curved elements and playfulness at the top of the building down to the ground floors to reduce its scale.

The depth of the ground floor façade along Baltimore and Poppleton Streets should also be studied, along with the width of the sidewalks. The different depth of planes on the façade is encouraged; creating more indentations or relief would further alleviate the sheer wall quality currently presented. Additionally, the width of the sidewalk on both Baltimore and Poppleton Streets should be further studied and informed by the master plan; simply aligning the building with the current set-backs may not be the best approach, especially if there is an opportunity to include other sidewalk features such as a shuttle bus stop, bicycle racks, street trees, outdoor seating opportunities or stormwater management.

Finally, retail is encouraged on the ground floor, especially if an entrance can be located on Poppleton Street. How this is accomplished with the floor elevations needs further study, as well as how store fronts and doors will be accommodated.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS:

Several community members were in attendance and voiced their thoughts and concerns:

Jane Buccheri and Betsey Waters of the Hollins Roundhouse neighborhood expressed concern that the building looked dull and sterile and asked that the architects and client be more creative and innovative, especially at the lower floors of the building because this is where neighbors will be interacting with it as they travel on Baltimore Street. While voicing support for the project, they reminded the client that the BioPark would be a legacy for the neighborhood. They also asked the client to make sure that the closing of Callender Street did not negatively impact access to the rear of buildings to the south.

Ted Naos, a nearby business owner, felt that the building needed more attention at the ground floor, and that it looked too much like the others. He also felt that the building needed to better relate to the adjoining neighborhood and accommodate particulars of its location, such as the shuttle stop.

Jeff LaNoue, of Jubilee Baltimore, encouraged the client to include retail in the building that would complement the retail of Baltimore Street and Hollins Market and enliven the streetscape beyond 9-5.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic approval withheld until Master Plan concepts are presented.

Attending:

Jane Shaab – UMB/UMB Biopark

Stephen Hanssen, Sandy Weeks, Catherine Vorwald – Wexford

Susan Williams – STV

Amelle Schultz, Dana Perzynski Ayers Saint Gross

Bill Gaudreau, Jim Bartlett, Chris Taylor, Jung Han, Stephen Leonhardt – Gaudreau, Inc.

Ted Naos – 907 West Baltimore Street Owner

Jeff La Noue – Jubilee Baltimore

Betsey Waters, Jane Buccheri – Hollins Roundhouse

Micha Dannenberg – Hollins Market

Lorraine Mirabella – Baltimore Sun

Holly Arnold – Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

Jay Brodie, John Thompson – BDC

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

Doug McCoach, Brent Flickinger, Carmen Morosan, Bob Quilter - Planning