

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

Date: February 26, 2009

Meeting No: 94

Project: Mechanic Theatre Redevelopment

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: SW Corner Charles and Baltimore Streets

PRESENTATION:

Shalom Baranes, architect of Shalom Baranes Associates P.C. described the changes to the design since the introductory UDARP session of October 30, 2008. Mr. Baranes summarized the two major concerns from the earlier discussion as relating to the ways the building meets grade and the simplification of the design of the tower component. In addition to addressing those two issues he also described proposals for creating stronger connections to the terrace level, the elimination of the parking ramp at the corner, the incorporation of the freestanding corner elevator from the underground parking, the reduction of the size of the sidewalk transit pavilion resulting in a direct connection to the retail project's Baltimore Street entrance, and other site planning improvements. New massing proposals for the southern end of the theater façade along Charles Street were also discussed.

COMMENTS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel was unanimously supportive of the site plan changes regarding the elimination of the parking ramp, incorporation of the elevator into the massing of the building, revisions to the transit connection as well as the proposed stair element to the raised terrace.

In addition, the following concerns and recommendations were offered:

- A. Solid Wall Continuity – suggested continued studies of the relationship and role of solid wall (terra cotta) components including:
 - 1. Further explanation of the material and formal relationship of this component to the existing theater building design;
 - 2. Clarification of the use of terra cotta, in general. It was suggested that it should either be made more important, or it should be reduced or eliminated.
 - 3. The opportunity for solid wall components to create stronger “grounding” in more than one location – perhaps in fortifying the corner “tower” element or emphasizing places of entry (such as the retail, office and hotel entrances);
- B. Tower Expression – there was considerable discussion of this element. The comments ranged from suggestions that the façades remain too complex to requests for more solid elements. The idea of two different curtain wall systems,

along with solid terra cotta elements appeared to have reasonable support, although the exact mix of those elements remain in question and requires further explanation of the design intent.

- C. Transitional Corners –suggested further study and clarification of the design philosophy regarding the two transitional corners, where the proposed new tower meets the original theater building. One concern about the current condition is the potential dilution of the plinth as an important organizer from the original project.
- D. Retail Expression – it was generally felt that the lower level (pedestrian oriented streetscape) expression of the building lacked cohesive identity – either as part of the tower above, as an independent element, or in its relationship with the dominant plinth of the theater building. Comments regarding this element were as follows:
 - 1. Consider the role of canopies or low overhangs to provide identity and weather protection at entrances and show windows, particularly along Baltimore Street.
 - 2. Consider less dependence on billboard-type graphic panels as the dominant expression of the retail components of the building.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic design review to be continued

Attending:

Shalom Baranes, Dan Stuver – SBA
Skip Antonucci, Craig Rosenthal – DS Brown
Ben Greenwald – Arrow Parking
Stanley Fine, Caroline Hecker – RMG
R. David Kirby – For Mrs. Morris Mechanic
Ed Gunts, Lorraine Mirabella – The Sun

Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg, Schack, Britt and Cameron – Panel
Tom Stosur, Gary Cole, Kathleen Kotarba, Brigitte Fessenden, Eddie Leon, Alex Hoffman, Wolde Ararsa, Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter - Planning