

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

Date: April 9, 2009

Meeting No.: 95

Project: Howard Street Improvement Study

Phase: Discussion

Location: Howard Street / Westside Baltimore

PRESENTATION:

Marty Baker, a planner for the MD Dept of Transportation, introduced the project as an effort to not only improve the Howard Street corridor but also show how surface transit can be an asset and catalyst for redevelopment. Otto Condon, of ZGF, outlined the goals for the project, which are 1) improve the economic vitality of the area, 2) improve the quality of the environment for pedestrians and transit riders, and 3) make aesthetic improvements. Mr. Condon, along with Abby Ferretti of Partners for Economic Solutions, presented various plans and drawings that focused primarily on a development strategy for the corridor and infrastructure design.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel felt that the overall goals of the study were good and that the study as shown was a good beginning; however, two primary concerns were raised. The first was that it was unclear as to where in the process the recommendations stood, the buy-in from various agencies – including Baltimore Planning and BDC, and the next steps. The second concern was that more work was needed on the development strategy. It was expressed by Panel members that a transit strategy and new streetscape were not enough to produce change in the area. Is the corridor meant to be an active zone or a transit thru way? This approach needs to be clarified and should guide the redevelopment of existing properties along the corridor.

The Panel also had the following recommendations and comments:

1. The Panel supports the goal of creating a great street without branding Howard Street. This would carry into the selection of street furniture, signage, etc – the idea being to create a standard that would be used elsewhere to create more unified transit elements.
2. Any measures that can be taken to “clean up” simple problems are applauded, as is the goal of eliminating the high platforms and thick railings. The goal of creating a more transparent environment is supported by the Panel and should guide standards from retail storefront design to street furnishings to transit cars. Additionally, are there other transit technologies that would eliminate the need for overhead wires?
3. The change of the rail lines and location of the roadway were well received, as was the setting of a streetscape “line” that would create a consistency of edge while accommodating road/rail way changes between the right-of-way. However, the Panel

would like to a greater discipline to the landscape and streetscape treatment – whether this is creating a regular spacing of street trees, lights, etc. or some other strategy that recognizes the difficulties with underground utilities.

4. The division of the corridor into different sections – office/retail, residential, and hospital/antique row – makes sense and should guide other treatments of the development strategy and streetscape design. Also, greater attention is needed regarding Howard Street as a seam (as described by the design team) and the opportunities for improving connections across Howard Street that serve as gateways and link adjoining neighborhoods and districts.
5. The Panel felt strongly that Howard Street should be an example of “green design” and incorporate the best examples of storm water management, best management practices, and tree planting details.

PANEL ACTION:

No action needed.

Attending:

Otto Condon – ZGF

Abby Ferretti – Partners for Economic Solutions

Marty Baker – MDOT – OPCP

George Hill – MTA

Yolanda Takesian – Kittelson & Associates

Mark Brown – BC DOT

Nan Rohrer, Sarah Husain – DPOB

Jay Brodie, Kathy Robertson, Paul Dombrowski – BDC

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg, Schack, Britt and Cameron

Gary Cole, Alex Hoffman, Carmen Morosan, Natasha Becker, Erv McDaniel, Melvin Hicks,

Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter - Planning