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

Date: May 21, 2009 **Meeting No:** 96

Project: Uplands Phase 1: Rental Housing **Phase:** Schematic

Location: Uplands PUD

PRESENTATION:

Nichole Battle of Pennrose Properties, project developer and member of Uplands Visionaries, introduced the Uplands Phase1 Rental Housing project. Following the recent approval of the Uplands Master Plan, this project is the first phase of a multiple-phase development. Phase 1 is located in the upper northeast corner of the master plan site.

Susan Williams of STV, project engineers, provided background on the site. She itemized the numerous challenges (topography, accessibility and visibility, horizontal road alignments, grading, parking, tree presentation) that the developer is addressing in this phase, necessary modifications to meet these requirements, and how the master plan has been modified to provide a more responsive design. She explained that there will be 118 off-street parking spaces for 104 units.

Ms. Battle then discussed sustainability and the project's commitment to LEED – New Development. There are the re-use of materials, bike paths and tree-lined streets planned. She was joined by architect Gil Rosenthal of WRT who described the 7' - 12' retaining wall along Athol Avenue that is necessary to satisfy a number of site requirements, including accessibility and visibility. He discussed the need to remove trees damaged by the demolition and the tree replacement program.

Mr. Rosenthal, as architect of the rental housing, presented a summary of the community design process that resulted in the 2004 Design Guidelines. Critical to this phase of the project is Design Guideline *7. Locate new housing that reflects the character of nearby homes.* Two types of housing types will be used in Phase 1: mansionettes (large three-story building that looks like a "mansion" and houses multiple units) and townhouses (groups of moderate sized vertical housing units with apartment units stylistically similar to an urban row house). The townhouses are presented into distinct sub-types: Building B, Building C, and Building F. Mr. Rosenthal explained that the community has requested that the mansionette type be modified to include an entry door to each unit on the building's perimeter rather than having a single door opening into hallways with interior unit entry doors. Generally, there are strong community preferences for dormers and other roof forms as well as brick and stone materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel complimented the presenters for the clear description of the community design process and their handling of the issues that needed to be addressed in Phase 1. The findings from the extensive community charrettes appear to have been well-integrated into the overall design. The use of a kit of parts as the approach to the design was well-received by the Panel , as it assures a

level of compatibility and articulation that should result in a cohesive, but not repetitious, new neighborhood. The Panel was pleased with the direction of the design of the housing types and their placement and encouraged the project architects to continue developing the designs. The following additional reservations, comments, and recommendations were offered:

Overall Site Plan:

a. The breaks in the street frontage of Maplewood are too great. The potential of excessive asphalt overpowers the street frontage and it appears more hardscape than building. The circulation pattern should be studied to reduce the number of entrances/exits to the parking areas.
b. The green buffer between the asphalt of the parking areas and the asphalt of the street is insufficient. It should be larger to allow the landscape to dominate.
c. More effort should be made to allow the area in front of the buildings to read as lawns rather than terraces.
d. More trees should be planted throughout the area, and especially in the southern section.
e. The articulation of the buildings should be studied to give them more a sense of being anchored to the ground (i.e. the sense of a foundation) rather than simply set upon it.
f. The orientation of some of the buildings toward parking lots and some away from parking lots is unsettling. This should be reconsidered to achieve a more traditional arrangement of front of buildings to streets and backs of buildings to service. In the alternative, all buildings should front parking lots.
g. The remaining topographical variety of the site should become a design feature that is reflected in the building's articulation. This would give the streetscape more interest.
h. Care should be taken to ensure that the overall area looks like a developed neighborhood rather than a "project."

Building B:

a. The siting of this group, to be located on the eastern edge of the project, requires a lot of fill which in turn requires a retaining wall. The use of a horizontal motif in the retaining wall defeats the stylistic presentation of the units as townhouses. One panel member suggested that the design needed to be more "relaxed."
b. The Juliet balconies are in themselves a good detail, but they should be functional. The associated windows should be lengthened to allow access to the balcony at least as a place for plants.
c. The center section of the group is too plain and squat. It needs some articulation. It appears to be squished in between the flanking buildings.
d. Study whether the placement of materials should be reversed.

Building C:

a. The pairs of small windows seem out of place. They should be modified to match the other windows.
b. The design of the two end buildings should be studied to counter the feeling of tightness seen in the drawings.

Building F:

a. The roofline breaks, resulting from the changing topography, are too timid.

Mansionette:

a. The exterior entry at the center of the facade is awkward. The stair is too high with too many steps. The double entry doors at the center are awkward. Alternate configurations for the placement of the doors and the stairs should be studied.
b. The design appears "nervous." The design is not settled and the doors look applied rather than integrated with the massing.
c. The blank wall should be articulated.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic – Approval withheld pending further development.

Attending: Nichole Battle; Pennrose Properties
Susan Williams and Anthony Corteal; STV
George Bryant and Gill Rosenthal; WRT
Ivy Dench-Carter; Uplands Visionaries
Sharon Grinnell, Caroline Paff – Doracon (Uplands Visionaries)
Nicole Earle – HABC
Angela Bethea-Spearman – Uplands Visionaries
Ray and Stephanie Hillis – RTH Consultants
Greg Countess – Community Rep
Lorraine Mirabella – Baltimore Sun
Jay Brodie - BDC

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