

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

**Date:** September 10, 2009

**Meeting No.:** 100

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**Project:** Baltimore Entertainment Facility

**Phase:** Introduction

**Location:** Gateway South PUD

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**PRESENTATION:**

Jason Schwartzberg, of the Baltimore Development Corporation, started the presentation with an overview of the project – a gaming facility called “Baltimore Celebration Casino” to be located in the Gateway South PUD on Russell Street. He was followed by Paul Micucci of Gaming Entertainment Management Corporation, the developer of the project, who spoke about their other projects and more specifically about the Baltimore facility – a 2 story, 200,000sf gaming facility to be located between Russell and Warner Streets and a 5 story, 2,500 car parking garage east of Warner Street. He then introduced the architects, Whit Petch and Kendall Wayow of Reich + Petch Architects.

The architects began their presentation by showing several other casinos and entertainment facilities that they have designed as precedents for the Baltimore project, in particular Casino Niagara and the Entertainment Centre: Kiev. They then outlined the following design principles for the project:

- Create a gateway to the City. A tall, iconic element would be located at Bayard and Russell Street, with an entrance plaza at this location. Signage along Russell Street would also be used to create a gateway.
- Create a sense of place. This would be accomplished by creating a pedestrian commons within Warner Street, flanked by restaurants and retail, with the main pedestrian entrance to the casino from the commons. The sense of place would also be achieved by using Baltimore industrial heritage architecture.
- Complement the Middle Branch Plan. The garage was located along the Middle Branch in order to minimize pedestrian activity and respect the wildlife habitat. The garage structure would also be “greened” by incorporating shrubs and plants at the edge of the parking levels facing the Middle Branch. Additionally, traffic congestion would be minimized by having the main vehicular access on Bayard, with a drop-off to the casino building.

The architects presented a series of plans, sections, perspectives, and images for the project and explained that, while the designs shown were developed to obtain a gaming license, they were also open to recommendations for changes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:**

The Panel thanked the architects and developer for presenting the project in its early phase. However, the Panel feels that additional studies are needed to devise a facility that truly creates a gateway to the City, creates a quality urban environment that connects with and related to its surroundings, and that expresses a character that was innovative rather than derivative.

1. Create a gateway to the City. All Panel members agreed that much work was needed to make the gaming facility a gateway to the City. While the Panel thought a tall, iconic element might help to achieve this, they questioned its location being set back from Russell Street (and visually blocked from the south by the Holiday Inn) and the creation of a plaza at Bayard and Russell. The Panel recommended rethinking this element in line with other recommendations of considering a traverse “spine” to the Middle Branch through the garage, Warner Commons, and the casino. The Panel also felt that the architecture of the building needed to create the gateway, rather than rely on signage. Additionally, it is unclear as to how the design team is treating Russell Street as an urban environment outside of the building. This relates to a greater concern as to how the edges of the project site and buildings are treated from an urban design perspective. Finally, the team needs to consider that the gateway to the casino is different than a gateway to the City.
2. Create a sense of place. The Panel felt that making Warner Street the center of the complex by locating and retail along its edges, and closing it to vehicular traffic, was positive. However, the relationship to Warner Street to the north, and to the stadia and the Light Rail station was unclear and not resolved. Panel members were also of varied opinions regarding the siting of the gaming facility along Russell Street and the garage along the Middle Branch. While flipping this relationship was not necessarily the recommended answer, the Panel would like to have the design team consider other relationships between the garage and casino building. Concern was also expressed about the length and size of the garage and felt that it might benefit from being separated or “broken up” in massing and façade treatment. Having one exit to the casino building possibly created too long of an internal walkway, especially from the northern most edge of the garage. Additionally, the large expanse of roof top parking and associated lighting was a concern in that it will be very visible from the elevated roadways to the east.

Finally, the proposed architectural language of “industrial heritage” was questioned. The Panel felt that this looked too much to the past and had the potential to become “thematic”. It urges the design team to fully explore a more progressive and modern architectural language, like that shown for the Kiev project, for this facility. Additionally, since the project was required to achieve LEED Silver (or equivalent) rating, the expression of its sustainability and relationship to the natural edge of the Middle Branch should also be explored and emphasized.

3. Complement the Middle Branch. As stated previously, the Panel was of mixed feelings regarding the location of the garage adjacent to the Middle Branch given that its size and relationship to the open space and trail effectively walled off the open area and provided no access. Concern over safety of people using the trail was expressed and should be considered. One recommendation made by the Panel was to create an overlook from the garage to the Middle Branch that was part of a “spine” with the casino building and gateway element. Questions were also raised about the environmental impact of the

garage to the Middle Branch and the relationship to the critical area – given the large expanse of impervious surface and the amount of storm water runoff that will be generated. The Panel would like to review of copy of the Middle Branch Plan and be briefed by the Planning Department on the Middle Branch Plan and the critical areas plan prior to the next presentation of this project.

4. Miscellaneous Items. Other issues that came up were: How is the access to the parking garage on Bayard, the need for a turn-around, and exiting the parking garage all being handled? This is unclear. Bayard Street will certainly be an important entrance drive to the complex, as it is now designed. Clarity is also needed regarding the various entrances to the buildings, including service, staff, and visitors. Pedestrian connections to the casino need further study – currently getting people to the casino relies too heavily on shuttle buses, in particular the staff parking and M&T Stadium and the Light Rail station. Finally, a better relationship between the Greyhound bus station and the casino is needed.

**PANEL ACTION:**

Introduction only – no action needed.

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**Attending:**

Paul Micucci, Michael Cryor – BCEG  
Whit Petch, Kendall Wayow – Reich + Petch Architects  
Susan Williams – STV  
Jayme Wood – Hillman PR  
Ronald Kreitner – Westside Renaissance  
Sarah Husain – DPOB  
Molly Moyer – GBC  
Robert Embry – Abell  
Jay Brodie, Jason Schwartzberg, K Giordano, Phil Croskey – BDC  
Annie Linskey – Baltimore Sun  
Clint Tearman - HCD

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Bowden, Schack, Britt and Cameron – Panel  
Tom Stosur, Gary Cole, Natasha Becker, Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter - Planning