

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

MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 10, 2009

Meeting No.: 105

Project: Anderson Site Redevelopment

Phase: Introduction

Location: Maryland / 25th / Howard / 24th Streets Vicinity

PRESENTATION:

Donald Kann, of KANN Partners, along with Susan Williams and Jennifer Leonard of STV Incorporated, presented the draft master plan for the redevelopment of the former Anderson Auto dealership and miscellaneous other properties. The project is bounded on the north by 25th Street and Huntingdon Avenue, on the west by CSX Railroad tracks and Sisson Street, on the south by 24th Street, and on the east by Maryland Avenue. Howard Street passes through the middle of the site running north/south. The site has an elevation drop of 30' – 35' from Huntingdon Avenue to 24th Street (west of Howard Street), and a drop of approximately 15' from 25th Street to 24th Street (east of Howard Street).

The proposed redevelopment of the site includes, west of Howard Street - a Lowe's on the south and west, a supermarket above it, a free standing pharmacy on the northwest corner (set back from Huntingdon), a bank that will be located in the existing Honda dealership building on the northeast corner of the block, and a parking structure (two levels covered and one on the roof of the structure). The top of the parking structure is approximately 4' – 5' above Huntingdon Avenue. A parking garage that is being converted to a storage facility, which is not owned by the developer, sits at the northwest corner of Howard and 24th Streets.

The block east of Howard Street is to be a mix of intermediate and small retail, 60 – 70 units of rental housing, and a two-level parking structure that takes into account the elevation change. Smaller retail uses will be incorporated into the existing showroom building at the SE corner of Howard and 25th Streets and along Maryland Avenue. Two intermediate-sized retail structures are located above the structured parking along 24th Street. The residential units are located above the retail on Maryland Avenue. The parking is located primarily in the center of the block and is fronted by the retail.

The primary points of entry are where Huntingdon bends to become 25th Street, on 25th Street west of Maryland Avenue, on Maryland Avenue, and on 24th Street, near Sisson (the primary entry to the Lowe's. There are also secondary and services entries on Huntingdon, 25th Street, and 24th Street.

To guide the master plan a series of urban design goals were established between City Planning and the development team. They are as follows:

- Establish a clear rationale for which street frontages are considered important to activate and which are less important and may accommodate secondary frontages;
- Establish project identification features at key pedestrian and vehicular entrances;
- Create open spaces that benefit adjacent uses and pedestrian activity;
- To the best extent possible, limit the public visibility of parking and loading areas and effectively screen those that are visible;
- Integrate and connect pedestrian and vehicular circulation with the existing neighborhood pattern and incorporate Universal Design to ensure accessibility for all;
- Relate the scale and architectural character of the project with that of adjacent communities;
- Incorporate a “green attitude” to the site in general and to parking areas and streetscape specifically – landscaping and trees should be utilized to the best extent possible;
- Consider increasing the number of residential units to create a truly mixed-use project.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel thanked the design team for presenting the project in its early phase, as well as the outreach that they have undertaken to the surrounding communities. The Panel welcomes the mixed-use approach to the site as well as the creative manner in which the design team has tried to utilize the grade change to minimize the impact of the big-box retail as well as the structured parking. However, the Panel feels that there are several issues that need to be addressed in order to effectively address the goals established for the project, including:

Establish a clear rationale for which street frontages are considered important to activate and which are less important. While the design team stressed the importance of 25th Street as an important retail street and connection to the Remington neighborhood, there is very little retail located along the street. Reusing the Honda dealership building does nothing to activate the street; instead the Panel felt that a new retail building should be located at the southwest corner of Howard and 25th that holds the corner and complements the existing retail building that will be kept opposite. Also, it was suggested that the retail extend further along 25th Street from the Maryland Ave corner. The Panel was also concerned with the depth of the retail on Maryland Ave. and the split between entrances from the street or from the parking court. Finally, concern was expressed about the amount of either blank or decorated walls that had no activity other than vehicular – in particular 24th Street, Howard Street, and the southeast end of Maryland Avenue.

Integrate and connect pedestrian and vehicular circulation. Vehicular circulation into and through the site was clear; however, pedestrian circulation to the retail uses was unclear if not minimal and difficult. Too much of the pedestrian access into and through the site has to pass through parking lots or across access drives, especially at Huntingdon / 25th Street. Given the size of the lots, the Panel suggests that the design team consider breaking up the lots into more appropriate block sizes by treating access drives and pedestrian frontage of the retail as “streets” that better integrate into the fabric and access of the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, the Panel was concerned with the inclined entrance drive off Huntingdon and the disconnect that this edge had from the pedestrian activity on Huntingdon, and asks that the design team look at how this can be improved as a neighborhood edge.

Create open spaces that benefit adjacent uses and pedestrian activity. There was discussion regarding the open space and “identification element” shown at 25th and Howard; it was felt by most of the Panel that this made no sense as a community space but that there might be an outdoor space along 25th Street west of Maryland that would be more of a plaza used by adjacent retail/commercial. More information is needed regarding the streetscape treatment – the Panel suggests a series of street sections at the next presentation. A “green” attitude should be extended to the treatment of the surface parking lots and the roofs of the buildings.

Relate the scale and architectural character of the project with that of the surrounding communities. While the initial presentation did not get into “architecture”, the intentions of the design team, in particular along 25th Street and Maryland Avenue, appear to be in the right direction. However, as previously mentioned, the Panel is concerned by the amount of street frontage that is either blank walls, parking structure, or screen walls. The Panel also questioned whether the existing stone building at the southwest corner could be incorporated into the project, given that its scale is compatible with the neighborhood to the south and that the adjacent proposed Lowe’s garden center could certainly benefit from the use of stone as wall and/or spatial-defining materials.

Finally, several members from the surrounding community made public comments regarding the project. Their concerns regarded the amount of blank walls along the edges, the height of the residential along Maryland Avenue, the lack of retail along Maryland Avenue, and access to the Lowe’s (recommendation being to have it off Sisson rather than 24th).

PANEL ACTION:

Introduction only – no action needed.

Attending:

Donald Kann, Shaw Rahman – Kann Partners
Susan Williams, Tony Cortea, Jennifer Leonard, John Mack – STV
Jon Laria – Ballard Spahr
Majid Jelveh – Shaw Jelveh Design

Kara Kunst – City Council
Nate Prett – AB Associates
Mackenzie Paull – DPOB
Leon Pinkett, Ben Stone – BDC
Ed Gunts – Sunpapers
Joan Floyd – Remington Neighborhood Association
John Dean – Maryland Avenue Business
Daniel Shub – SDYM
Stephen Gewirtz

Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg, Britt and Cameron – Panel
Tom Stosur, Gary Cole, Wolde Ararsa, Kyle Leggs, Gary Letteron, Jill Lemke, Lisa Morris,
Alex Hoffman, Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter - Planning