

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

MEETING MINUTES

(Revised 3-23-10)

Date: March 11, 2010

Meeting No.: 109

Project: Saratoga Street Garage Project

Phase: Revised Schematic

Location: 18 West Saratoga Street

PRESENTATION:

Peter Fillat, of Peter Fillat Architects, presented the revised plan for the automated garage. What was an above ground garage of approximately 80' plus mechanical is now an underground automated garage (354 spaces) with an entrance at grade and a one-level parking structure (approx 24 spaces) above.

The automated parking structure is built out to the front edge of the site, aligning with the retaining wall of the adjacent Rectory lawn. Entrance to the automated garage is from Saratoga Street. The proposed front wall is a stone material. At Saratoga and Sharp Streets is proposed a glass elevator that takes people to the second level parking. Two stair options were shown – one along the west edge that separates the garage wall from the existing retaining wall, and the other with the stair located along the eastern edge of the garage.

The second level parking lot is entered from Pleasant Street, and is roughly the same level as eastern edge of the Rectory lawn. Because of storm water management requirements, the decision was made to cover the second level parking lot with a “green” roof structure approx. 14' high (lower than the Rectory building dependency roof eave). The parking structure, which consists of brick piers, aligns with the edge of the Rectory and has an aluminum trellis structure in front (facing Saratoga Street). Between the trellis and Saratoga Street is a planted area, with trees, shrubs, and lawn – two options were shown. The parking structure is setback from the Rectory property line and has low shrubs along the edge. Small trees and shrubs are also planted along the Pleasant Street edge.

The residential component of the previously approved design has been eliminated.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel welcomed the change from an above ground automated parking garage to one that is primarily below ground – creating a garage that is much lower in height and more in scale with the historic Rectory. Given the changes, the Panel had several recommendations:

1. Automated garage. The Panel is comfortable with the location of the automated parking garage portion of the project, with consensus being that the stair location on the western edge of the building (adjacent to the rectory lawn retaining wall) is preferred. This allows for a separation between the new front wall and the existing stone and brick wall. More information is needed, however, regarding the material and treatment of the stairs since they are immediately adjacent to the historic property. The stairs should be commodious and inviting, with quality materials and adequate lighting as well.

It was recommended that the height of the front wall match that of the adjacent retaining wall, and that the size of the stone for that wall, and its coursing and proportion needs further study since it will be most visible in relation to the existing stone wall. Further study is needed regarding the glass elevator – concern was expressed as to how close it is to the alley as well as to the color of the glass (which should be clearer rather than having a greenish tint). Also, questions were posed as to the size/height of the garage entrance opening, how it would be treated (fully open? any doors?) as well as how the interior is treated, given its visibility from the street.

2. Second level parking / green roof structure. Although some Panel members questioned the need for the green roof structure and whether a surrounding trellis structure was more appropriate, the consensus of the Panel was in favor of the green roof structure. It was recommended that the trellis structure in the front be lowered in keeping with the scale of the adjacent Rectory. Also, the proportion of the brick piers and the trellis need further study to better relate to the Rectory. It was further recommended that a low wall between the piers be included to block the headlights of cars into the Rectory property as well as toward Saratoga. Care should be given, however, to maintain visibility so as to not create a dark and unsafe place.

The “looser” planting arrangement for the landscape space between the trellis and Saratoga Street was also preferred, with additional consideration given to the plantings at the edge to create some additional seasonal variety as well as plants that might better drape over the edge. Additionally, the Panel felt that it was too difficult to judge the color of the proposed brick with the lighting in the room.

Finally, several members from the surrounding community made public comments regarding the project. Their concerns were:

1. Several people questioned the process for the review of the project, public notification and meetings, and whether policies and criteria were being followed.
2. Concern was expressed regarding the construction of the garage next to an historic building, and the negative impact that this might have on the structural integrity of historic wall and the foundation of the existing building. Tyler Gearhart of Preservation Maryland noted that the Old St. Paul’s Rectory is a Baltimore City Landmark, individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and that the Rectory and this development site are located in the Cathedral Hill National Register Historic District and North Charles Street Special District designated in the Central Business District Urban Renewal Plan/Ordinance. He also stated that these designations are integral to the design and development requirements for the site.

3. The need for a “green” roof was questioned
4. While several people acknowledged that the new design was better in terms of height and scale, they also expressed concern for what might be allowed to be built above the garage in the future, and whether some type of covenants were needed.
5. Concerns with stacking of cars waiting to get into the garage on Saratoga Street as well as from Pleasant Street were expressed. In particular, given the small size of Pleasant Street, it was asked that improvements be made to the street, including making it one way, to minimize the impact of the second level parking.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic approved with comments.

Attending:

Richard Hillman – Southern Management
Courtney Capute – Venable
Peter Fillat, Thomas Keller, Basil Rousos – PFArchitects
Stuart Ortel – Stone Hill Design
Tyler Gearhart, Henry Lord – Preservation Maryland
Rob Hendrickson – Boyd, Benson & Hendrickson
Cleaveland Miller – Old Saint Pauls
Frank Gant – GBA Architects
Latoya Staten – Downtown Partnership
Ed Gunts – Sunpapers
Jay Brodie – BDC

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