

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

Date: April 14, 2011

Meeting No: 126

Project: 403-427 North Washington Street Development

Phase: Discussion

Location: Middle East URA

PRESENTATION:

Bob Rosenfelt with Colbert Matz Rosenfelt, civil engineers, introduced the project. The site is currently zoned R-8. The lot is 16,000 square feet and is located mid block with an alley to one side and to the rear. The front of the building will be landscaped with street trees. The proposal includes parking at grade set under the building, which is accessed from the rear alley and exited directly to the street at the front of the building.

Sas Gharai, architect with SGA Companies, Inc., presented the building's design. The proposal is for four stories above the parking level. The ground level, which includes the parking, also includes a lobby, mechanical spaces, and an office space that will be occupied by a community organization. The building's front (west) and side alley (south) elevations will be clad with brick, while the rear (east) elevation, which is adjacent to an alley and faces two and three-story row houses, is proposed to be clad in Hardi-Plank (there is no rear wall at the ground level as it is open to parking), and the north wall, adjacent to the townhouses, will likely be stamped concrete. The façade (west) and south elevation are presented in a traditional aesthetic with a base, shaft, and cap. The denticulated cornice is proposed to be composed of Phylon.

COMMENTS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel wishes to be clear that its comments did not address zoning issues and should not be taken as presenting an opinion of the project for the purposes of zoning review.

The Panel was disappointed that there was insufficient information (photographs, more complete site plan) about the building's context and the architect's intention (lack of a color rendering).

The Panel's comments were as follows:

- 1) The building's height at 50 feet is demonstrably taller than the nearby row houses, making it seem misplaced. To minimize the disparity, it is important to avoid making the

building stand out more than it needs to and to seek to reduce the sense of height through the elevational composition.

- 2) It is suggested that it may be preferable to simplify the design from that proposed so as to give the building the character of a commercial building or warehouse as is sometimes found in older neighborhoods, rather than trying for a more formal appearance that is often associated with a more “downtown” location.
- 3) The use of a light brick for the building’s base adds to its formality; limiting the brick to the darker color may help the building fit more successfully into its context.
- 4) The rhythm of the façade composition is not completely worked out. It should emphasize the entrance bay.
- 5) The entry canopy should reflect the character of the façade design and not be presented too traditionally.
- 6) The cornice should be strengthened. The partial parapet should be extended around the edge of the building and incorporated into the cornice.
- 7) Consideration should be made of the effect of the final selection of windows on the overall design; if the windows will be more contemporary in appearance, the design should be simpler.
- 8) The proposed change in material for the rear of the building is unsuccessful. The Panel suggests finishing the rear using brick as proposed on the front (west) and south side.
- 9) The piers at the ground level at the rear of the building should be aligned with the rhythm of the windows above and beefed up so as to appear structural.
- 10) The open character of the rear of the ground level to allow parking concerned the Panel as it feared that it might engender inappropriate activity at night or weekends when the building was not occupied.
- 11) The retention of the one existing street tree had a negative effect on the plan for the new trees and it is recommended that this one tree be eliminated to allow for a uniform pattern of street trees in front of the building.

PANEL ACTION:

No action required.

Attending:

John Mogavero – Developer
Bob Rosenfelt - Colbert Matz Rosenfelt
Sas Gharai, SGA Architects, Inc.
Carol Hecker – RMG
Paul Dombrowski - BDC

Ms. Eig, Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg,
Britt and Cameron – Panel
Anthony Cataldo and Bob Quilter -
Planning