

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

**Date:** May 12, 2011

**Meeting No:** 128

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**Project:** Lexington Square

**Phase:** Continued Schematic

**Location:** Lexington, Park, Howard, and Fayette Streets

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**PRESENTATION:**

Tom Stosur and Bob Quilter of Planning presented a brief update of on the project's status, working sessions with the developer and architect, UDARP, CHAP, and Planning staff, and the outcome of CHAP's meeting on May 10th. It was reported that on May 10<sup>th</sup> CHAP moved 1) to approve the design concept for Read's, with final review to follow when further specific window and facade treatment details are developed, and 2) to defer further consideration of other buildings in the project boundary for special listing or landmark designation until May, 2012. As part of this item, the developer is to return to CHAP by December 31, 2011 with a progress report on design plans for the entire project, with the understanding that the facades and full building preservation will remain as proposed at the May 10, 2011 meeting. At that time the developer will also report back to CHAP with its plans for commemorating the civil rights events associated with the building.

Peter Fillat, project architect, presented the proposed design showing changes to the project since UDARP's previous review.

Read's: The proposal for Read's includes retention of the facades, including masonry, window openings, ornamentation, and flag pole. The rehabilitation of the façade will be similar to the original design, but not a restoration. Notably, new windows will be used in creating a similar fenestration pattern and a new ground floor storefront band will be constructed. The developer and architect will work with CHAP staff to finalize the design. The architect stated that the developer understands that the design for the two visible exterior walls requires CHAP approval. Exploratory demolition on Read's (as well as the other buildings) necessary to make final design determinations, will only occur when the project is financed unless the City of Baltimore, which owns the buildings, decides to conduct this work.

McCrary's/Rainbow: The terra cotta façade is not being incorporated into the project as CHAP did not require this action.

New High-Rise Tower (Hotel and Parking Garage): The massing for the hotel has been changed to minimize the “collision” effect in the earlier scheme, however, the mass will not be set back from the street. The parking garage massing will remain as previously proposed, without a setback or overhang.

Public Space: The developer believes that the correct place for public space is the sidewalks. Various schemes, including paving patterns, sculpture, lighting, landscape, etc. will be used to activate the sidewalks.

Rooftops: The roof area next to the Howard Furniture building may likely be associated with a restaurant.

Citizens offered comments for consideration.

### **COMMENTS OF THE PANEL:**

First, the Panel wishes to express its appreciation for the many citizens and the groups they represent who took the time to present comments about the design.

Second, the Panel is disturbed over the history of this project and the continuing avoidance of addressing the significant historic issues that surround it. It is clear, that the original intention for this block was the retention of significantly more historic fabric that is currently allowed. It is hoped that the difficulty that has resulted here will serve as a lesson for the future, and that historic buildings (not just facades) will be recognized and protected and this protection will remain intact throughout the life of a development scheme. Once the buildings are demolished, they will be gone, and although we all sincerely hope that the new project will provide substantive new life and real economic benefits for this part of our city, we will always know that such success came at a dear price.

Third, the Panel was disappointed that the four walls and structure of the Read’s Building were not being retained, that the McCrory’s/Rainbow terra cotta façade was not being retained, and that generally the original agreement with MHT was not being followed. However, UDARP understands that CHAP had the opportunity to expand protection for the visible walls of the buildings in the block and did not choose to act on this at this time. As a result, the Panel’s comments are primarily directed at the design and the preservation strategies presented by the applicant.

The Panel’s comments regarding the project design were as follows:

Read’s:

- 1) The masonry base of the building should be re-introduced to ground the building at the street.
- 2) The entries should be framed by masonry as they were in the original design.

#### Tower:

- 1) The shifting of the brick building “through” the glass building minimized the “collision” and diminishes the effect of the design. Some panelists believe this is an improvement but others do not. This design should be studied to create a convincing massing, especially as currently proposed, it will be very difficult to read the relationship from the adjacent area.
- 2) The architect’s argument relating to the 20% additional height rule of the URP was compelling as the Panel interprets the point of the 20% rule is to find a good relationship among the heights of adjacent buildings.

#### Parking Garage Projection (next to Tower):

- 1) This small building needs to relate better to the tower and the smaller buildings on its other side. It should not read as part of the adjacent tower.
- 2) The Panel is interested in seeing design details of how the components of the garage and those of the apartments above will relate

#### New Buildings:

- 1) Scale of the new buildings seems appropriate.
- 2) Parapets are too thin on the “Power House” and “Sports Club” buildings and should be strengthened.
- 3) Care should be taken to avoid new facades reading as “wallpaper.” They should look contemporary but should do so with the sense of depth and wall and roof returns necessary to give the appearance of real buildings.
- 4) Take care that new building skins match appropriately at corners (i.e. a glass curtain wall should not meet a masonry wall of the same “building.”).

#### Signage:

- 1) The project needs to develop a strong program of signage. The Panel appreciates that this is an early stage of design, but finds the signage depicted on the drawings weak.
- 2) The large scrim is particularly problematic and work needs to be done to convince the panel of its value to the scheme. This is true in the size/scale, material, and organizational logic.

#### Awnings:

- 1) The Panel was split on the success of the arched awnings at the Howard/Fayette corner near the bus stop, suggesting that this component be reconsidered.
- 2) The more traditional awnings look good.

#### Public Space:

- 1) The Panel supports the idea of creating an interesting streetscape along Howard that will allow the sidewalk to become a complementary public experience.
- 2) It supports the idea that the sidewalk should include art, interpretive material, various paving materials and patterns, lighting, trees, furniture, etc. to add interest to the pedestrian experience.
- 3) It believes the relationship of automobiles to pedestrians should defer to the pedestrians. This is particularly important at the entrance and exits of the parking garages, which should not have openings that are unnecessarily wide, and should have paving that is aesthetically pleasing rather than strictly utilitarian.
- 4) The Panel encourages the developer to work closely with the Planning Department staff in devising a successful streetscape.

#### Rooftops:

- 1) More green roofs should be created both to improve sustainability and to enliven views and possible public use (restaurant on roof next to Howard Furniture)

#### Overall Preservation:

- 1) There is real concern over the condition of the buildings as they have been unoccupied and unmaintained for many years. As owner, the City of Baltimore should work with the developer to determine ways to protect the buildings while the project waits for financing.
- 2) No building should be demolished until a) there is concrete evidence that the developer can and will initiate the plan immediately upon razing the buildings; and b) the plans to support the facades have been reviewed and approved by structural engineers with *bona fide* historic preservation experience and experience with similar efforts.
- 3) Designs that integrate the historic facades into new buildings should protect the original depth, scale, and ornamentation to avoid any sense of “wallpaper.”

#### Commemoration of Civil Rights Events:

The Mayor should appoint a committee to work with the developer to determine an appropriate commemoration of the history of the civil rights events that occurred at Read's. This committee should be composed of representatives from groups that have expressed a sincere interest in resolving the means and methods of commemorating the event.

**PANEL ACTION:**

Schematic design approved with comments.

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**Attending:**

Bailey Pope – The Dawson Company

Peter Fillat, Kevin Roycroft, David Marcozzi - PFA

Larry S. Gibson, Mary Ernish, Gary Harkness, Cecil Clarke - Citizens

Johns Hopkins, Julie Sandhaus – Baltimore Heritage

Tyler Gearhart – Preservation Maryland

Nell Fehl – National Trust for Historic Preservation

Ron Kreitner – Westside Renaissance

Mark Reutter – Baltimore Brew

Russ Robertson – Parktons LLC

Douglas R. Kington – Kington Commercial

S. Todd Yeary – Community Churches for Community Development

Nate Pretl – AB Associates

Drew Tildon – HJM

Brigitte Fessenden – Historic Consultant

Ed Gunts - Sunpapers

Caroline Peri – Downtown Partnership

Colin Tarbert – Mayor’s Office

Paul Dombrowski, John Thompson – BDC

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg, Britt and Cameron – Panel

Tom Stosur, Gary Cole, Stacy Montgomery, Alex Hoffman, Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter - Planning