

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

Date: October 13, 2011

Meeting No.: 137

Project: Calvert Place Development

Phase: Schematic

Location: 2403 Calvert Street

PRESENTATION:

Katie-Rose Imbriano, Comprehensive Planner for Baltimore City, introduced the project by providing context for the development project. The site is within the boundaries of the Barclay/Midway/Old Goucher Small Area Plan, the Old Goucher National Register Historic District, and the Barclay Neighborhood Statistical Area. It is also located in the northwest corner of the Barclay/Midway/Old Goucher revitalization project area that is being developed by Telesis; however, this site is being developed by HTA.

Meg Manley of HTA introduced the 47-unit rental project. The developer aims at reaching a mixed income level (15% market rate, 75% workforce [60% of AMI] and 10% at low income. HTA's goal is the creation of a "fresh, contemporary and green" design that is compatible with the Historic District.

Peter Fillat with Peter Fillat Architects, presented the design. Sited on what is now a vacant parking lot at the prominent corner of Calvert and East 24th Streets, the building is proposed as a four-story, L-shape brick building, with a terrace and pergola at the third floor front corner and a landscaped space and six parking spaces at the rear yard facing the alley. (16 additional parking will be provided at a parking lot across East 24th Street). The developer will seek a zoning variance from the set back requirements for the O-R-2 zone so that the building can be sited at the zero lot line in conformance with its neighboring buildings, all of which are considered to be contributing resources to the historic district. The proposal calls for two primary materials: rough-cut cast stone and regular yellowish brick. A cementitious material will be used for the pergola and detailing at the fourth floor windows. Three projections above the roof line are necessary for the two stair towers and the elevator machine room. They will be constructed of masonry and will not be visible from the street. The projecting bays and windows will have substantive setbacks from the building plane.

Stuart Ortel, landscape architect with Stone Hill Design, presented the landscaping at the rear, the green roof, and the supplementation of new trees to the existing Bradford Pear street trees.

Two members of the audience, both area residents, provided comments: Jeanne Knight spoke in opposition to the project; Sandra Coles spoke in favor.

The Department of Planning has established the following Urban Design Goals for the project:

- 1) create an urban edge that meets and holds the street corner with infill development;
- 2) respect the adjacent row house context with height and massing of the new building;
- 3) incorporate a facade rhythm and material palette that enhances this prominent corner location; and
- 4) provide an attractive pedestrian-friendly streetscape environment around the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel found that the project was thoughtfully conceived, sees the project siting and corner orientation particularly strong, and the choice of materials reasonable. The following comments should be addressed when the project returns.

- 1) The base of the building needs to be more solid. The location of apartment units with windows on grade with the street is ill-advised. The design should include smaller windows and more masonry in keeping with the character of neighboring buildings. The Panel suggests re-locating the residential units to areas where the windows can be placed above the street grade and move public uses which can tolerate street locations where the importance of the windows is not as great.
- 2) Generally, the fenestration looks too commercial. While this is not too great a problem on the East 24th Street and Alley elevation, it is particularly the case on the Calvert Street elevation. This is caused by the lack of a solid base, as stated above, and the vertical division of the large windows into two rather than three parts.
- 3) Floor to ceiling glass in residential units can be chaotic as they typically look good in elevation but messy in reality. The windows on the fourth floor should be shielded by the use of a solid rather than picket railing. This will help the façade proportions to conform better to the historic character of the surrounding buildings.
- 4) The corner entry is an interesting feature that should be studied carefully to ensure that it functions well. Stairs, rather than a ramp, that make it appear as a porch would help to present a residential appearance.
- 5) The design and material of the corner 3rd/4th floor pergola should relate aesthetically to the window detailing so they appear related. As presently designed it is out of scale and the visual connection between it and the building needs to be improved. The choice of a cementitious material for the pergola should be reconsidered; wood or metal would be a better choice.
- 6) The building needs a stronger cornice.
- 7) The stair tower and elevator machine room should be articulated in a manner consistent with the building's architecture so that they are an attractive feature of the green roof setting.

- 8) The contrast between the two primary materials should be improved by increasing the “relief” between them.
- 9) The park at the rear of the building should be private and less fussy.
- 10) Research should be conducted into the possibility of replacing the Bradford Pear street trees with a taller and more sturdy street tree set 25 feet apart, rather than supplementing the existing in kind. The Landscape Architect should contact the City’s Arborist for assistance with this.
- 11) Overall, caution should be taken to ensure that as the design develops it retains a residential character.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic - Approved with above comments.

Attending:

Meg Manley, Justin Scruggs - HTA Development

Peter Fillat, Kevin Roycroft - Peter Fillat Architects

Stuart Ortel – Stone Hill Design

Sandra Coles – Greater Greenmount Community Association

Jeanne Knight – President, Old Goucher Community Association

Alastair Smith – HABC

Jay Brodie - BDC

Ms. Eig, Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg, Britt, Cameron - Panel

Tom Stosur, Katie-Rose Imbriano, Alex Hoffman, Lynette Boswell, Anthony Cataldo,

Bob Quilter – Planning