

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

Date: October 27, 2011

Meeting No.: 138

Project: Revised Master Plan and PUD

Phase: Introduction

Location: New East Baltimore Community

PRESENTATION:

Scott Levitan, Senior Vice President of Forest City Enterprises, provided the logic and background of this revised master plan, describing a process of re-evaluation while the 4 year-old development process continues. The major proposed physical changes, promoting an overall “wellness” theme, are as follows:

- The creation of a 6 acre north/south linear park as the main urban gesture and community heart extending from Ashland Avenue to Biddle Street;
- The re-enforcement of Ashland Avenue as the main east-west commercial/mixed use Street and Eager Street serving as the primary east-west residential corridor.
- Construction of a 150-200 room “Gateway Hotel” on the site south of Ashland at the southern end of the new park;
- Rethinking the large footprints of the earlier proposed laboratory/research buildings to provide for more and smaller buildings to respond to a more diverse market;
- Re-evaluating the housing plan with particular focus on providing a stronger and diverse internal community for the proposed new neighborhood school;
- Devising a diversified retail strategy with both immediate and long range implementation plans.

Also presented were Urban Design Goals established by the Department of Planning for this master plan. They are as follows:

- Integrate this new community into the existing surrounding East Baltimore fabric in an imaginative and complementary manner;
- Incorporate vibrant mixed use, a diversity of housing types and community services;
- Establish lively open spaces;
- Integrate identified historic resources;
- Promote design excellence for all components;

- Achieve the highest level of sustainable attributes possible.

Numerous other aspects of the proposed plan were discussed in detail and will be the basis of subsequent presentations and approvals.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel felt strongly that the new proposal has many admirable urban design features and believes that the suggested new approach holds great promise and is a significant improvement over the existing master plan. The following additional points were raised by the Panel:

1. To suggest that the “Gateway Hotel” could be a taller building, perhaps planned more as a mixed-use site than accommodating just a single use.
2. To request that the width of the new Linear Park be studied further and that some familiar precedents be presented at a future meeting.
3. To question the appropriateness of the mid-rise residential buildings near the school and backing to a news-like alley, unless a way is found to design them to be more family-friendly.
4. To suggest more attention be given to buffering of the existing railroad tracks.

Community comments centered on a lack of involvement of neighbors in planning decisions, and the need for commitments to provide youth centers and childcare facilities throughout the plan.

PANEL ACTION:

Introductory discussion only, no action required.

Attending:

Scott Levitan – Forest City

Dennis Miller – EBDI

Lisa Francis, Lawrence Brown, Donald Gresham – CHRWG

Sylvia Chappell, Gloria Peterson – Reclaiming Our Community Association

Tony Cortea – STV

Nate Pretl – AB Associates

Lorraine Mirabella, Ed Gunts – The Sun

Melody Simmons – The Daily Record

Gary Haber – Baltimore Business Journal

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Bowden and Britt – Panel

Tom Stosur, Gary Cole, Wolde Ararsa, Laurie Feinberg, Natasha Becker, Bob Quilter - Planning

