

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

Date: August 16, 2012

Meeting No.: 152

Project: Rotunda Redevelopment

Phase: Schematic

Location: 40th Street/38th Street/Elm Avenue - Hampden

PRESENTATION:

The meeting was opened by Chris Bell of Hekemian & Company, the developer who in turn introduced Architect Eric Wohnsigl and Landscape Architect Brian Reetz of Design Collective, who together reviewed the changes and further development of the project design since the last presentation. The major elements presented included the following:

1. Site plan revisions which grouped utility areas nearer to service areas;
2. An enlarged public plaza area through the elimination of 18 head-in parking spaces that previously surrounded the plaza. The inclusion of additional peripheral trees for stronger place definition. Concrete unit pavers would be employed on adjacent plaza streets;
3. Additional street trees and landscaping were added along 40th Street in place of the current vehicular entrance. Elm Street and 38th Street were shown with continuous 30 ft tree spacing;
4. Revisions to the architectural treatment of the new buildings that extend the corner treatments and regulating piers to grade. On the Rotunda Building itself the existing major piers would remain dominant and additional regulating piers would organize the new exterior shop openings; The revised food store space would have a primarily brick and glass façade but be differentiated from the existing building.
5. The pedestrian entrance from Elm Street was enhanced through additional landscaping, a series of “off-set” garden terraces and planned retaining and screen walls to hide electrical transformers;
6. Explanation and rationale for the various building setbacks were discussed along Elm and 38th Streets;
7. A potential major pedestrian connection to the adjacent Hopkins property was also presented.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel expressed support for many of the revisions and complimented the design team on the improvements indicating generally that the project was heading in a good direction. The Panel suggested that further study would be appropriate in the following areas:

1. **The Plaza Area** – Continue to look for ways to make this area more useful to the general community/public. Consider a covered structure for all-weather use. Fortify the connections to both the Elm Street entrance and the Hopkins property from the plaza. Also consider larger tree specimen in this location for a more imposing “instant” landscape.
2. **The Elm Street Entrance** – There was considerable concern expressed about this element. Consider de-coupling or disguising some of the aspects of the current design to avoid large conflicting curbcuts for trucks and automobiles near this mainly neighborhood pedestrian

entrance. Totally rethink the proposed large glazed retail openings facing this residential street.

3. **Food Store Retail Expression** – Consider making the inserted food anchor store stronger in its appearance and more “different” from either the existing or the new buildings.
4. **Retail Strip Façade Balance** – Consider creating a sense of balance amongst the retail façades that fronts the plaza area. The use of a different material on the façade of the end retail space creates an unbalancing effect in relation to the other retail spaces.
5. **Residential Buildings** – Restudy the rooftop areas of the buildings and seek to make a more declarative top floor or penthouse statement taking more advantage of potentially spectacular downtown and wooded Guilford/Roland Park views. Since buildings are so long, continue to look for ways to introduce more relief and playfulness in the façade, including larger windows, grouped windows and balconies. Look at creating more variety in the base level treatment of the “townhouse” units in response to the variety already expressed in the neighborhood.
6. **Streetscape, Lighting and Signing** – The panel looks forward to a comprehensive presentation of these elements in establishing the overall “feel” of the project. Particular emphasis should be placed on entrance or gateway elements, the treatment of the signature 40th Street classic façade, cinema and overall project signing as well as individual tenant signing criteria.

Comments were presented by interested parties including Councilwoman Clark and concerned neighbors.

PANEL ACTION:

Recommend approval of Schematics with above comments.

Attending:

Chris Bell – Hekemian & Company

Brian Reetz, Eric Wohnsigl, Shannon Ryan, Alyse Talbott, Anna Owen Dennis– Design Collective

Al Barry, Nate Pretl – AB Associates

Will Beckford – BDC

Councilwoman – Mary Pat Clark

Adam Bedner – Patch.com

Larry Perl – Messenger

Julie Lee – Neighborhood

Melody Simmons – The Daily Record

Genny Dill - Neighbor

Messrs. Bowden*, Burns and Cameron - UDARP Panel

Director Tom Stosur, Melvin Hicks, Katie-Rose Imbriano - Planning Department