

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

**Date:** September 11, 2014

**Meeting No.:** 192

**Project:** PEMCO Planned Unit Development

**Phase:** Continued Master Plan

**Location:** 5601 Eastern Avenue

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**PRESENTATION:**

Mr. Al Barry, AB Associates and Mr. Robert Northfield, architect with BCT Architects presented a revised preliminary schematic site design with 2 design options to the panel.

The revised site plan options continue to strive for a placemaking site plan within the confines of flexibility with respect to current and future market dynamics. The revised site plan options have a singular boulevard entrance commencing at Eastern Avenue at the northern edge of the property and then ending at a cul de sac at the southern edge with a parcel designated as Parcel "C" potential residential/hotel/commercial. The 2 schemes vary in the placement and type of land uses that may eventually be developed on the site. According to the presentation, Parcels, A,B,C, F are constant with smaller retail uses under multi-family residential while parcels D and E will either follow the urban village form or be a large retailer with significant parking designated in Parcel D.

The applicant has created a substantial landscaping plan which focuses on native species. The storm water management areas will be landscaped with grasses and multi-seasonal plantings. There will be a differentiation of paving material to enhance the pedestrian experience as well as paving differentiation between pedestrian and vehicular movement within the site. The Eastern Avenue edge is intended to have bio-retention features along the +/-42 ft. wide streetscape softened by landscaping. The entrance street will feature a 20 ft. median with plantings. Street trees placed in planters will line the length of the streetscape. In the streetscape bisecting Parcels, B,C and E, there will benches, lighting and multiple crosswalks to assist in traffic calming and pedestrian activity.

As stated in the first presentation of this project, the stated purpose of the urban design scheme is to extend a pedestrian friendly "urban grid" into the site, reinforced with Gateway buildings on Eastern Avenue and create a mixed use neighborhood center with residential and commercial, defined as potentially both office and retail.

**COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:**

The revised scheme continues many of the urban design contradictions found in the schemes previously presented to the panel. The panel understands the need for flexibility in land use choices based on future market conditions. However, the choice of a suburban model versus an urban village model continues to challenge the panel with respect to the eventual urban design plan that will be built on this site. The continued mixture of urban design composition is very troubling to the panel. For instance, the proposal shows a 114 ft. boulevard for one block lined by a narrow 15 ft. sidewalk containing numerous 6-7ft. wide tree planter boxes every 30-40 ft. The boulevard which narrows after one block culminates after a second block in a cul de sac. The street grid is realistically centered only on one street, especially if the larger retailer scheme is eventually chosen for development. Elements of a pedestrian centric urban design approach can be a powerful activator of the space and contribute to a compelling urban design site plan.

However, in summary the panel's comments lead to the creation of an active place within the development and a restatement of our first review.

The guiding principles for the development plan are:

1. Establish a continuous "street wall" of buildings along the main street
2. All ground levels uses along both sides of the main street should be active uses: retail, residential and or office entrance lobbies. Allow no structured parking to front onto main street.
3. Provide a strong building edge along Eastern Avenue with active retail. Discourage blank facades and or "black box" retail.
4. Sidewalks along the main street should be wide enough to encourage/accommodate outdoor dining.
5. There needs to be a regular cadence of street trees along the main street which are properly sized to encourage pedestrian flow.. The store front read of the building is missing. Perhaps the windows could float in the 2 story opening accentuating their presence on the street. In addition, the store front panel should come down to the street. Unfortunately there seems to be no weaving of the 2 story façade with the remainder of the building.

### **PANEL ACTION:**

Continuation of the Master Plan Process.

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### **Attending:**

Al Barry - AB Associates  
Robert Northfield, Troy Marrocco - Brown Craig Turner (BCT) Architects  
Caroline Paff, Scott Frederick, Dave Frederick – MCB  
Matt Bishop – MRA  
Brian Dembeck – Johns Hopkins

Ms. Meany\*, Messr. Bowden, Burns and Haresign - UDARP Panel

Director Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa –Planning Department