

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

Date: September 10, 2015 **Meeting No.:** 213

Project: 711 S. Central Ave (701 S. Eden St) **Phase:** Schematic

Location: 711 S. Central Ave

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Michael Hickok, partner with Hickok Cole Architects; reintroduced the project to the Panel. He indicated that numerous City agencies have reviewed the project since the January 22, 2015 UDARP meeting. Mr. Hickok noted that the major outcome of the agency review process was the decision by the Department of Transportation to accept the proposed service dock mid-block location on South Eden Street.

Mr. Devon Perkins, Design Architect with Hickok Cole, identified changes to the design based upon previous Panel comments. Those changed included:

- The lowering in height of the north wing of the tower and increase in height of the east wing, such that the entire “L” shape tower is a unified 253 feet in height.
- The simplification of the massing which allowed the north east and south east corners of the tower to extend down to the ground reducing the visual impact/importance of the garage base; and,
- The reconfiguration of the entry mass of the Whole Food component so it can “sit proud of” the residential component above.

Mr. Jason Castillo, Landscape Architect for Mahan Rykiel; presented the proposed streetscape design which included street trees along S. Central Avenue and Aliceanna Street. Mr. Castillo indicated that underground utilities along S. Eden Street and a narrow nine foot wide sidewalk along Lancaster Street prevented the accommodation of trees on these streets.

PANEL COMMENTS:

The Panel expressed appreciation to the Developer and Design Team for their continued advancement of the design. In general, efforts to simplify and clarify the design components were viewed favorably.

SITE AND URBAN DESIGN:

- Eden Street service dock: The Panel expressed disappointment that an alternative location could not be found by the Design Team and Department of Transportation for the 80 foot wide service dock. Given the service dock's fixed location, placed prominently across from the main entrance to an existing multi-family residential project, the Panel expressed a strong view that the proposed Architecture treatment, which relies on industrial metal garage doors and unproven vine screens; did not mitigate the negative visual impact of this element. The Panel instructed the Design Team to develop a more creative and less utilitarian solution. Possible solutions offered, and worthy of exploration, included changing the material and design of the garage doors and/or reorienting the placement of the doors to be perpendicular to the angled service docks and to the east building façade.

STREETSCAPE:

- S. EDEN STREET: Given the lack of street trees and the concentration of service docks and garage entry points, the Panel expressed concern that S. Eden will be pedestrian unfriendly and potentially unsafe. The Panel urged the Design Team to offer solutions to improve this pedestrian environment.
- LANCASTER STREET: Viewed as a significant east-west route for pedestrians, the narrow nine foot wide sidewalk proposed was viewed as inadequate to accommodate both pedestrian traffic and customer traffic generated by Whole Foods. The Panel felt the sidewalk width should be comparable to the width of the sidewalks along the existing developments to the east and west of the proposed project. A minimum width of 14 feet was recommended to accommodate pedestrian traffic and street streets. Investigation into increasing the sidewalk width against the building or re-imagining Lancaster Street altogether as a woonerf inspired design should be considered.
- ALICEANNA STREET: The Panel was pleased with the pedestrian environment proposed along Aliceanna Street.
- S. CENTRAL AVENUE: The Panel felt the cadence of trees should extend south to screen the solid wall of the elevator bank. The Panel questioned if there is a need for an automobile drop-off and pick up area for customers of Whole Foods.

BUILDING MASSING:

- TOWER: The Panel did not react favorably to the change to unify the heights of the north and east wings of the tower, although they understood the rationale for the move. They urged the Design Team to explore ways to architecturally differentiate the top portion of the north and east wings. Options offered for consideration included increasing the current one story "glass penthouse"

expression on the east wing to a two story glass expression and/or to employ the placement, design and materiality of the mechanical penthouse elements to differentiate the two wings and the roof top silhouette.

- **WHOLE FOOD BASE AND ENTRY ELEMENT:** The Panel felt the one story Whole Food entry element at the corner of S. Central Avenue and Lancaster Street lacked the prominence that a major ground level use should be afforded and was visually dominated by the residential component above. Given that Whole Foods functions on two levels at this highly prominent corner of the project the Panel urged the Design Team to explore a more “honest” two story expression for the Whole Food base element.

ARCHITECTURE:

- **WEST ELEVATION ELEVATOR BANK “ART WALL”:** Given the overall scale and composition of the South Central avenue façade, the Panel expressed concern that the “art wall” was too dominate of an element and relied on an art installation to solve an architectural problem created by the bank of elevators. The Panel felt strongly that the “solution” should be architecturally driven and that if there is an “art component” in the composition it should be less prominent and of a smaller scale. To reduce the scale and impact of the blank elevator bank wall the Panel suggested extending the Whole Food’s two story base connecting the separated Whole Foods components on this façade. To further reduce the scale and impact of this solid wall the Panel suggested extending the garage façade grid on the parking floors directly above the last stop for the elevators. The net results would be a smaller scaled and proportioned wall for art installation which could be slightly projected from the plane of the façade.
- **THE CONTINUOUS “WATER TABLE” BASE LINE:** The Panel questioned the dominate use of a continuous, undifferentiated dark masonry “water table” base expression around the entire project and urged the Design Team to restudy in order to mitigate the appearance of a “fortress like belt line”. Given that there are several massing elements that rest on the ground plane (residential tower, garage, Whole Foods), the Panel felt the water table base expression should respond to different ground plane conditions and in some cases, like the two story Whole Foods element; not be expressive at all.

PANEL RECOMMENDATION:

The panel recommended approval of the Schematic Design with comments to be investigated and addressed in the subsequent reviews.

Attendees:

Toby Bozzuto, Jeff Kayce – Bozzuto

Ylilia Beltikova, Mike Hickok, Devon Perkins, Jason Ovalle, - Hickok Cole

Jason Castillo, Nan Rohrer – Mahan Rykiel

Jason Huss – Harbor East Management Co
Caroline Hecker – Rosenberg Martin
Chris Krupinski – Rkk
Ed Gunst – Baltimore Brew

Messrs. Bowden, Rubin, Haresign, Burns*, and Ms. Ilieva - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Theo Ngongang, Laurie Feinberg – Planning Department