

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

Date: November 12, 2015

Meeting # 216

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

Phase: Final

Location: 711 S. Central Ave.

PRESENTATION:

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

- the creation of a two story façade statement for Whole Foods at the intersection of South Central and Lancaster Street
- the manipulation of the top floors of the residential tower so that the east and north wings are differentiated in their architecture expression,
- the reduction in size of the garage openings along S. Eden Street to a more appropriate residential scale, and,
- the reduction in prominence of a continuous water table line along the base of the building.

Mr. Jason Castillo, Landscape Architect for Mahan Rykiel, identified changes to the proposed landscape and streetscape design. They included:

- the addition of a continuous cadence of trees along S. Central Avenue
- the increase in width of the Lancaster Street sidewalk, and,
- the addition of trees and raised planters along the north side of Lancaster Street

PANEL COMMENTS:

The Panel viewed many of the proposed design changes (as identified above) as positive. The proposed two story mass for Whole Foods at the corner of S. Central and Lancaster appeared resolved and appropriate in scale given the prominence of this urban corner. Additional trees along S. Central Avenue and Lancaster were viewed as a significant improvement to the public realm.

S. EDEN STREET ISSUES:

The Panel continued to express concerns about the quality and viability of the public realm along S. Eden Street and the potential negative impact the proposed project may have on the existing adjacent residential development.

Given service requirements and the reduction of width of S. Eden Street to accommodate the Whole Foods program, The Panel continued to urge the Design Team to creatively rethink Eden Street to improve the pedestrian environment and north/south connectivity to the waterfront. Ideas offered by The Panel included:

- extending sidewalk pavers across Eden Street at Lancaster and Aliceanna Street

- converting/transforming Eden Street to a “plaza” with vehicular access and providing continuous surface pavers from the eastern edge of the proposed project to the western edge of the existing development; and,
- providing above grade planters on both sides of South Eden Street

EDEN STREET FAÇADE:

The proposed ground level “landscape wall”, consisting of randomly scattered planting boxes and metal panels, failed to address The Panel’s previous concerns about the viability of a green screen element. In juxtaposition to the overall Eden Street façade, this element seemed “fussy” and self-important.

The Panel felt that the horizontal layering of this façade in which the ground level feature wall, the 130 foot long horizontal mechanical grill and the garage component where each expressed independently, lacked a visual cohesion. The Panel urged the Design Team to consider creating one unified façade in which the mechanical grill could be divided into a series of scaled openings consistent with the grid/openings of the garage above. The Panel encouraged the Design Team to study ways to “extend” the grid and material of the garage to the ground plane, with the goal being to de-emphasize (not accentuate) service doors and mechanical grills.

SERVICE DOORS:

The Panel expressed their continued concern with the use of industrial metal service doors given their visibility from the existing residential project directly across Eden Street. The Panel continued to advocate for a need to change texture and material of these service doors to break down perception. Members urged the Design Team to look at the service doors at the Renaissance Hotel and Galleria, which when closed, appear to look like a gridded window wall system with opaque glass.

LANCASTER STREET SIDEWALK:

The proposed solution to widen the sidewalk along Lancaster Street to 14 feet by narrowing the street width was viewed positively. However, The Panel asked for assurances that the proposal would be approved by regulatory agencies.

“ART WALL”/ELEVATOR BANK WALL:

The Panel remains concerned about the visual impact of a solid 58’ x 96’ wall screening a bank of elevators. The Panel noted that the Design Team’s preferred Option D was not significantly different from the current Option A. (Drawing A4, November 12, 2015). The Panel reiterated that the urban design goal is to reduce the scale and prominence of this element and to find a solution which is architecturally driven and relies less on applied artwork. The following suggestions were offered by The Panel for study:

- extend and connect the Whole Foods façade (Option B) and allow for sidewalk retailing opportunities in front of the elevator bank. (The Panel noted that the existing Whole Food facility activates the sidewalk and façade with sidewalk retailing).
- reduce the size of the garage openings to a residential scale and extend grid/frame/and screen if front of all or part of the elevator bank wall
- reduce the size of the art installation and have it set within a projected frame

PANEL RECOMMENDATION: Recommend continued development addressing the comments above.

Attending:

David Schrader – SGA Architects

John Syrgley – SGA Architects

Craig Bachik, Brian Fincher –Navarro and Wright

Bob Mock- GWWO

Todd Niefeld – CSP

Michael McBride, Diane Miceli – Baltimore City Public Schools

Adam Boarman, Paul Taylor – BC Rec + Parks

Bowden, Burns*, Haresign, Rubin - UDARP Panel

Tom Stosur, Christina Hartsfield, Anthony Cataldo, Kate Edwards, Wolde Ararsa, Laurie Feinberg – Planning Dept