

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

Date: May 8, 2008

Meeting No.: 81

Project: State Center Master Plan

Phase: Introduction

Location: Madison / MLK / Dolphin

PRESENTATION:

Michael Gaines, Maryland DGS, and Chris Patusky Maryland DOT, introduced the project, which is a public-private redevelopment of the State Office complex (an area bounded by Dolphin, Madison, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and Howard Street). Caroline Moore, SBER, one of the development partners, described the year-long planning process for the site, which began in May 2007 with a community planning charrette and has continued with over 20 public meetings.

Matt D'Amico, of Design Collective, then went through a presentation that included an overview of the project's context and history, a review of the issues and opportunities identified by the design team through the public planning process, including improving traffic conditions and pedestrian connections, creating a diversity of housing, maximizing transit-oriented development opportunities, and protecting the character and value of adjacent neighborhoods. He also described the urban design goals established in partnership with the Planning Department.

Matt then presented the master plan, which included the following:

- Keeping the existing 301 Preston Building (but re-cladding it), the Herbert O'Connor Building (with modifications), and the Armory.
- Creating a new green space at the center of the site on Preston Street, with a market building that incorporated the existing Metro stop.
- Introducing a mix of housing, office, and retail.
- Creating a hierarchy of streets by extending the boulevard nature of Eutaw to MLK and making Preston Street the primary retail / shopping street.
- Create positive edges and connections along MLK and Howard Street, especially to the Light Rail stop.
- Introduce mid-block parking garages that would be wrapped by housing, office, and commercial.
- Building massing that was highest along MLK, Howard, and the center of the site, and stepping down to the north and west (adjacent to McCulloh Homes and Bolton Hill).

In addition to the master plan as shown previous options were shared.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel was generally very favorable to the project as presented and complimented the design team on their thorough presentation. The Panel offered the following comments and concerns:

Building Massing

Increased density and height was seen as favorable by the Panel; however, the location of the higher building heights was questioned. Panel members felt that the tallest buildings on the site should be toward the center of the site, such as north of the Preston open space, and/or at the corner of MLK and Howard. Also, it was felt that the stepping down of height along the west and north edges needed to be more generous to the neighborhood scale – especially at the corners of Madison and Preston and Eutaw and Dolphin. Also, as presented the building heights across the site are relatively the same; some greater diversity of heights could be studied. Finally, since 301 Preston was being renovated the question came up of it being lowered.

Public Spaces / Streets

While the hierarchy of streets and public spaces was a good organizing strategy, specifics about some of these spaces were questioned. Specifically, it was felt that the central green on Preston needed to better connect to adjacent streets – it seemed too hidden. Also, the plaza along MLK near Howard Street seemed ragged and may be considered in a different location or configuration. Finally, the street section along Madison needs further study in order to help mediate between the existing scale of the McCulloh Homes and the proposed new housing.

Parking Garages

The Panel encourages the design team and developer to maintain the strategy of wrapping the parking garages with uses that activate the street both at the ground floor and stories above.

Miscellaneous

The parcels adjoining the Armory, while satisfying current needs, seem under-developed in the longer view of the master plan. Additional thought should be given these sites for the future.

At the next presentation the Panel would also like to see street sections as well as a conceptual landscape plan and lighting plan. Additionally, other perspective views would help in further describing the character and intentions of the project, especially along the edges of the site that interface with adjoining neighborhoods, such as Madison Street, Dolphin Street, and MLK.

Several community representatives were in attendance and one community member from McCulloh Homes posed questions regarding the project's scale, character, and use along Madison Street (see Panel's recommendation above).

PANEL ACTION:

Introduction - No Action needed.

Attending:

Michael Gaines, George Gilliam, Scott C. Walchak, - Maryland DGS

Jim Peiffer, Chris Patusky – MDOT

Caroline Moore, Omari Patterson – SBER

Sharon Grinnell, Charles Penny – Doracon

Matt D'Amico, Paul Jester, Michael Stover -- Design Collective

Susan Williams, Tony Corteaal – STV

Alex Hoffman – AB Associates

Sasha Atkinson – MBS

Jon Laria – Ballard Spahr

June Johnson, Arlene McCain – McCulloh Homes

John E. Kyle – Mount Royal Improvement Association

Ed Gunts – Sunpapers

Andrew Cannarsa – Baltimore Examiner

Mark Brown – BCDOT

Paul Clary – BDC

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg, Schack, Britt and Cameron – Panel

Gary Cole, Seema Iyer, Carmen Morosan, Natasha Poole, Brigitte Fessenden, Peter Conrad,

Martin French, Bob Quilter - Planning