

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

Date: August 12, 2021

Meeting #50

Project: Park Heights Senior Housing -Phase 1

Phase: Design Development

Location: Park Heights

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

The development team presented on the continuation of the design of the senior multi-family building. The presentation walked through how the design team responded to previous UDAAP comments. Some highlights:

- Consistent streetscape along Park Heights gap at Virginia by the bus stop. Robust planting in street planters some may be bio-retention. Consistent planting along alley from senior building to the multifamily building next door.
- Amenity spaces are off the exterior front plaza. Goal community gateway and adapted for various uses.
- Front plaza is left open and flexible to some degree to programming and curved area is a buffer. Section through the plaza shows small tree area and understory planter. Park Heights entrance has a dedicated zone in front of entrance. Direct access to front with small seating areas to the side. Colorful planters.
- Senior green- focus area evolved to accommodate many uses. Patio space has lawn area and can spill out activities such as exercise, some chat seating, movable elevated planter boxes that residents can use to raise flowers.

Discussion

The Panel thanked the project team and proceeded with clarifications, questions and comments.

Site

- Setback on Park Heights is good and gives sufficient relief from Park Heights Ave. And has ample front yard space for individual front door entries and gives a good personal intimate feel for the residents.
- Improvement in the streetscape have a good neighborhood feel, but make sure to wrap the landscape around the chamfered corner.

- In the rear plaza some of the paving and walkways are unnecessary. Increase the lawn area needs another layer of study and be more efficient. There needs to be a realignment and geometric study, including the parking lot.
- The front plaza is a good feature, but should have more study:
 - Agree with plaza corner feature but could be larger to give a greater sense of separation from the cars. This part of the City is a bit more of a suburban area of the City and should have more planting and less paving.
 - Give thought to when the plaza is not in use for events such as farmer's markets. It should feel vibrant all year- don't rely on container planting.
 - It's a north facing plaza, but no real shading elements. Would be bad if it's just a barren area.
 - Concern about the paving strategy. The intent and organizational purpose of the paving strategy is not clear.
 - The forms on the corner are starting to work, but need another iteration. Should give more clarity to their purpose and how seating and other social interactions would work.
 - Striping and finishing of the plaza is adding up to something a little outdated. Concern is that a good third of the plaza is not very useful with the oval. Puts a lot of pressure on the gateway feature and not on the plaza itself. Needs to be fair to an urban plaza and spaces that make a difference to uplift the experience and not just the "symbols". The plaza is scaled nicely but the usefulness in design needs to be studied. Look at other current corner plazas of this scale.
- Banding and materiality of ground plane doesn't relate to building as much as it should or yet feel like a single composition.
- The alley side of the site could have more screening of the parking lot from the alley. It shouldn't feel like "alley parking". Take into consideration of those residents with less mobility that may be more homebound. They will experience the rear landscaping differently and should be able to look down onto something more lush. Increase vegetation between the two trees, including adding more trees. This will help create a vertical edge and create a more meaningful boundary. The area will be highly used and needs to have more care and attention to the building and the landscape. The back is stark contrast to Park Heights.
- Continue to study the green area in there rear to determine if it is large enough for the named programming activities such as yoga.
- Growing area is a good idea is there water access, storage, etc, so it can be successful and not lie fallow. Four season landscape is critical.
- The sidewalk area between parking and building on the rear façade is very narrow. Make sure there is enough buffer between the at grade windows and the parking lot.
- Main entry beginning to work better. Extend the paving from front door to curb edge to further announce the entry point.

Building

- Program and strategy are good. Allows good progression of individual units around to Woodland.
- And good contrast to the active side along Virginia. Likes how the massing creates and restores the street wall along Park Heights. Mass along Virginia is a good anchor. The mini turret at Woodland is interesting and helps turn the corner at Woodland.
- Agree there is strong commitment to the project. Much needed and important part of town.
- Darker brick on Park Heights speaks to it being important, but as it move to the edge becomes very suburban.
- The bays are good, but are starting to send a message that it's not new Park Heights, but trying to capture the area of other suburban areas. Please bring it to today.
- Rear of the building has a generic suburban look. The beige/white color selection should be reconsidered. The bottom of the elevation has an undifferentiated base and reads like a service side.
- There needs to be a clear hierarchy of where the landscape and ground level articulation are maybe different that the others. They need to speak to each other.
- Brick placement and colors should be studied more:
 - Color choices and placement on both front and rear facades are dated.
 - Park Heights façade- striped brick at bottom base is not of today. Not as much of Baltimore. Needs more brick articulation and not rely on the color graphic interpretation. Reconsider.
- Project has come a long way and is at the last 10% of details.

Next Steps:

Continue design addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Tom Gallas, David Stembel, Allen Cowling – Torti Gallas Architects

Sharon Huber-Plano- STV

Catherine Fennell– NHP Developers

Dan Henson and Dana Henson – Henson development

Mr. Anthony, Mses. Ilieva and Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Tamara Woods, Caitlin Audette – Planning