

Minutes
Baltimore County Design Review Panel
July 13, 2022
Approved

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Call to order and announcements

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Minutes of the May 11, 2022 meeting

Items for initial or continued discussion

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Agenda
Minutes – May 11, 2022 meeting, as approved

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Baltimore County **Design Review Panel**
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Call to order

Design Review Panel (DRP) Chair Cecily Bedwell, called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Baltimore County DRP to order at 6:00 p.m. The following panel members were:

Present

Ms. Cecily Bedwell
Ms. Hyon Rah
Mr. Raj Sharma
Mr. Matt Renauld
Mr. Donald Kann

Not Present

Mr. Joseph Ucciferro (Recused)
Ms. Julie Soss
Ms. Kelly Ennis
Mr. James Stevens

County staff present: Jenifer Nugent, Marta Kulchytska, Te-Sheng Huang and Brett M. Williams.

Minutes of the May 11, 2022 Meeting

Mr. Donald Kann moved the acceptance of the May 11, 2022 draft minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hyon Rah and passed by acclamation at 6:02 p.m.

The approved minutes are filed as Appendix B.

ITEM 1

PROJECT NAME: 502-506 Baltimore Avenue

DRP PROJECT #: 650

PROJECT TYPE: DT Towson Commercial Review

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The presentation was given by Mr. Adam Baker, of Rosenberg Martin Greenberg, Mr. Brandon Rowe, P.E., Associate of Bohler, Ms. Crissie Baur, Program Manager of Bohler, Mr. David Marcozzi, Associate, and Senior Project Manager of CI Design, Ms. Esra Soytutan, Director of Landscape Architecture at CI Design and Walid Hajj, Owner, WRH Property Holdings.

The project proposes the redevelopment of properties located at 502, 504 and 506 Baltimore Avenue in Towson, Maryland. The properties are zoned BM-DT and are located within the Downtown Towson Design Review Panel Area. The proposed redevelopment consists of one seven-story multi-family apartment building, with a total of 143 units and a parking garage with 161 parking spaces. The lowest level of the building (partially underground) will be used for parking. The second level (at grade) will also consist of parking, along with residential units and amenity/leasing office space near the main building entry. The second level residential units will have dedicated stoops and access to the public realm on Allegheny and Baltimore Avenues. The third level will include residential units and an interior amenity space overflowing into an exterior courtyard. Levels four through seven will be for residential units with a sky lounge amenity on the top level.

SPEAKERS:

Ms. Beth Miller, a representative from Green Towson Alliance, stated that applicants met with the community group multiple times in a collaborative way. Ms. Miller acknowledged how the development project incorporated sustainable features, including LEED certification and an attractive streetscape with a landscape setback. She indicated that the Green Towson Alliance worked closely with the Planning Department and the Council Representative on the Zoning overlay in 2016 to include a sustainability section with regards to mature trees defined by the code. Ms. Miller stated that the code identified mature trees to be preserved as those with a 10-inch diameter at breast height or greater. She indicated that the recommended treatment size states the tree pits should be 6-feet wide and that there is only room on Baltimore Avenue for 4-foot wide tree pits. If this standard is implemented on Baltimore Avenue, it would require removal of four mature red maple trees. Ms. Miller also stated that according to the National Tree Benefit calculator, the four red maple trees absorb over 19,000 gallons of stormwater, conserve 544 kilowatt hours of electricity, and reduce 2,500 pounds of atmospheric carbon per year. In closing, Ms. Miller stated that the development necessitates the removal of one of the last green oases affectionately known by its residents as the “secret garden”. She asked that the Design Review Panel support the proposal to retain the existing red maple trees along Baltimore Avenue.

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS:

Marta Kulchyska read the Department of Planning’s Staff Report dated July 13, 2022.

Ms. Cecily Bedwell opened up the floor to panel members for discussion.

Mr. Matt Renauld inquired if the bio-retention area will be fenced or enclosed and commented that the enclosure might create clutter and impede pedestrian movements. He recommended to provide larger tree pits and green space along the street frontage. He stated that the existing mature trees along the public right-of-way should be preserved. He also recommended street amenities for the public realm, especially at the Allegheny corner. He stated that the proposed paving materials should be clarified and the location of the parking meters to be clearly identified. Mr. Renauld recommended revising the streetscape to provide visual relief and enhance the view of the proposed second level courtyard.

Mr. Raj Sharma had concerns about the proposed traffic circulation and parking. He inquired about the width of the adjacent alley and if a Traffic Impact Study is required. He stated that if vehicles traveling westbound on Allegheny Avenue want to make a left turn into the site, this would be problematic. He recommended that a left turn be prohibited or that a traffic island be installed. Mr. Sharma inquired if any amenities for children would be provided in the courtyard and if the development proposed any emergency exit plans.

Ms. Hyon Rah concurred with the comments in the Department of Planning's Staff report, dated July 13, 2022. She recommended that more detail be provided indicating how the development will be more sustainable meeting LEED and/or NGBS certification. She stated that all efforts should be made to preserve existing mature trees and vegetation.

Mr. Donald Kann concurred with the comments made in the Department of Planning's Staff report, dated July 13, 2022. He recommended that the applicant investigate providing adequate screening for the proposed garage to mitigate visual impacts. He recommended for the applicant to consider the use of warmer colors on the building. He stated that they could simplify the detailing of the building or use more compatible materials to soften the look of the building. He also inquired about the depth of the balconies.

Ms. Cecily Bedwell stated that the proposed 4-ft tree pits are too narrow. She recommended for the applicant to investigate the maintenance and preservation of the existing trees while providing 6-ft of clearance for pedestrians. She echoed Mr. Kann's recommendation to provide warmer and lighter colors to match the context of the surrounding buildings. Ms. Bedwell recommended the use of high quality materials instead of faux materials and suggested bringing the proposed brick material to the ground level. She also recommended to activate the Allegheny corner with more amenities. She indicated that the parking ratio was adequate and inquired if there was a proposal for a Tree Saving Plan and if root trimming is needed to preserve the existing trees.

DISPOSITION:

Mr. Matt Renauld made a motion to approve the project with conditions. The conditions are to be reviewed administratively and are as follows:

1. Address all recommendations identified in the Department of Planning's Staff Report, dated July 13, 2022.
2. Provide 6-ft wide tree pits along Allegheny Avenue and a minimum of 7-foot wide tree pits along Baltimore Avenue.
3. Provide a Tree Saving Plan for Baltimore Avenue indicating preservation for the red maple trees and show impact to the proposed plan on the basis of the design.

4. Continue with the direction of the building materials and warmer color palette as shown in the renderings during the July 13, 2022 Design Review Panel meeting and in response to the Department of Planning's recommendations in the July 13, 2022 Staff report.
5. Provide seating opportunities at the Allegheny corner and at building entry.
6. Provide detail of the screening of the parking garage and the corner's visibility from Patriot Plaza.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Hyon Rah and approved with conditions by acclamation at 7:13 pm.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Donald Kann and was seconded by Mr. Matt Renauld. The meeting adjourned at 7:13 pm.