Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee Meeting (PYDAC)

Wednesday, February 8, 2011
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Sister Cities Room 1101, City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Meeting Agenda

I. Approval of PYDAC Meeting Minutes from November 9, 2011

II. Brief Overview of Potomac Yard as part of Orientation for New Members

III. Review and recommendation of Landbay G Block F

IV. Potential Date/Time for Next Meeting:
March 14, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in City Hall (room to be determined)
The Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee (PYDAC)
November 9, 2011
7:00pm to 9:00pm
Sister Cities Conference Room 1101

Committee Members in Attendance:
Maria Wasowski – Chair
Chris Bellanca
Shawn Glerum
Russell Kopp
Jennifer Taylor
Quynn Nguyen

Excused Absences:
Mike Grinnell
Anthony Dale

City Staff:
Gwen Wright, Division Chief, P&Z
Gary Wagner, Principal Planner, P&Z
Pat Escher, Principal Planner, P&Z
Colleen Willger, Urban Planner, P&Z
Jessica McVary, Urban Planner, P&Z

Applicant Representatives:
Rohit Anand, KTGY
John Begert, MRP
Brian Dayhoff, SK&I
Cathy Puskar, Walsh Colucci Lubeley Emrich & Walsh
Todd Jacobus, Woodfield Investments
Adam Cassara, Rust Orling Architecture
John Rust, Rust Orling Architecture

Community:
none

AGENDA ITEMS
1. Approval of PYDAC Meeting Minutes from October 19, 2011
2. Informational update on Potomac Yard Dog Park
3. Introduction to Landbays H and Partial I Multifamily Building
4. Review and recommendation of Landbay G Block F
5. Review and recommendation of Landbay L Multifamily Building Plan
CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began at 7:00 p.m. A quorum for the meeting was established.

DISCUSSION

- Staff presented Maria Wasowski with a gift to acknowledge her ten years of service and active participation in the planning and design efforts of Potomac Yard.

- On a motion made by Ms. Wasowski, seconded by Jennifer Taylor, the October 19, 2011 meeting minutes were approved with the revisions noted by Colleen Willger of changing Mr. Bergert’s name to Mr. Dayhoff in the presentation references.

- Ms. Willger provided a brief update on the dog park. She explained that the park is already approved but is undergoing final engineering and design refinement. Ms. Willger stated that the Committee will not be reviewing the dog park but staff wanted to keep them apprised of the project and informed similarly to the other community groups.

- Due to the applicant for Landbays H and Partial I Multifamily Building not yet being present at the meeting, the agenda was rearranged. Landbay G Block F was discussed first.

Landbay G Block F

- Brian Dayhoff presented the areas of refinement that were made to address the Committee’s previous comments. The main entrance on Seaton Avenue and the Mews; additional views of the rooftop mechanical screening; and breaking up the building along the Main Line Boulevard and Maskell Street were discussed. Mr. Dayhoff also explained that a mezzanine and loft units were added to assist in giving the building more variation in height than previously.

- Shawn Glerum asked how much depth will be between the pier and the wall at the corner of Main Line and Maskell. Mr. Dayhoff responded that there will be a difference of about eight to ten inches of space. Mr. Dayhoff also explained that there will be good shadow lines from the various details articulated on the facades.

- Ms. Taylor asked about the signage shown on the corner tower piece at Main Line and Maskell. Mr. Dayhoff said the signage was shown illustratively in order to indicate to the Committee that a sign or graphic will be located on the building face at the corner. Quynn Nguyen stated that the entrance at Main Line and Maskell seems to appear as a stronger presence when compared to the Seaton Avenue entrance. Ms. Wasowski suggested the signage be relocated to the primary building entrance at Seaton Avenue and the Mews to differentiate the two corners and strengthen the importance of the primary entrance.
Russell Kopp asked about the FAA height limitations and how they impacted the overall building height and massing for the project. Ms. Wright explained that the FAA height limitations impact the majority of Landbay G and a portion of Landbay F.

Mr. Kopp requested clarification on the location and detailing of the proposed fin at the primary entrance. Mr. Dayhoff explained that the entrance is intended to respond to the curvature of the building next to it and the sidewalk at the street level. The fin and awning that returns to the west of the building, act as another visual queue to denote the entrance. Ms. Willger suggested the canopy not return along the building face and be restudied to reinforce the curve by swooping out into an overhang. Mr. Dayhoff responded that the canopy and fin could be flipped so the overhang will occur in the Mews. Mr. Dayhoff said that his team will study the comments.

Ms. Wasowski noted that it seemed like the Committee was having a hard time visualizing the buildings because the drawings were showing views from above the building and looking down. She stated that people will never perceive the building this way. Ms. Wasowski also commented that the material palette seemed dark. Mr. Dayhoff responded that the views of the building provided were to address the previous comments about the mechanical screening. Ms. Wright suggested the applicant bring a digital model at the next meeting. Ms. Wright also recommended a materials board be presented to help communicate the proposed palette.

The Committee decided to review the project one more time. The areas of refinement included the following:

- Refine the main entrance to be more prominent
- Relocate the signage from Main Line and Maskell to Seaton Avenue and the Mews
- Restudy the awning and relocation of the fin
- Bring a digital model for the Committee to understand street views and perspectives
- Bring a materials board to the next meeting to show proposed colors, finishes, and overall palette for the building

Landbays H and Partial I Multifamily Building

Cathy Puskar introduced the proposal. Ms. Puskar explained that the building will read as two different structures but are actually one. There will be two levels of underground parking and some surface parking for the approximately 4,000 sq. ft. retail space. The project is currently proposed to be rental apartments.

John Rust presented the conceptual building program. Mr. Rust explained that this building is a transition piece along the Route 1 corridor with traditional townhouses and urban lofts at the southern end of the Yard and taller, bigger, contemporary buildings in North Potomac Yard. Mr. Rust stated that the building is a “double
Ms. Wasowski voiced concerns about the tunnel under the blade of units in the center of the site. She believes the pedestrian environment will need to be sensitively treated for safety. Ms. Nguyen also voiced concerns about the pedestrian throughway. Ms. Puskar explained that pedestrians will have a designated path on the side that will not interfere with the cars using the parking garage ramp. Mr. Rust also elaborated that they recognize the space will need to be treated with great care and emphasis on safety and creating a welcoming environment.

Pat Escher provided a brief overview of the review process and staff’s initial analysis of the proposal. Ms. Escher stated that the applicant is pursuing a parking reduction and staff is analyzing whether the parking ratios will be acceptable for this area. She also explained that the amount of retail proposed is lower than what is possible for the landbay; however staff is studying whether the square footage amount is viable for this location.

Ms. Nguyen asked why there was an increase in height on Bluemont Avenue. Mr. Rust explained that a goal was to have varying height and roof forms. Ms. Puskar and Ms. Wright also clarified that the height map for this block encourages a step down along Route 1.

Ms. Taylor stated that she believes the retail space is unattractive due to the parking location and accessibility. She also believes the architectural styles transition too fast from one to another. Ms. Wasowski commented that she believes differentiation in cityscapes is organic and interesting. Mr. Rust stated that the building next to the Station at Potomac Yard is very contemporary, while the Station is civic and somewhat traditional. Mr. Kopp commented that the retail is meant to be neighborhood serving so parking should be less of an issue. Ms. Escher clarified that there is street parking, which will also help the retail.

Mr. Bellanca suggested that lighting the tunnel, or pedestrian through block connection, would help with safety and aesthetic concerns. Mr. Kopp suggested using skylights along the deck. Ms. Wasowski stated that the blocks are large and being able to walk through them is a good feature.

Ms. Wasowski commented that there may be opportunities for public art at the pedestrian entrance between the two building breaks. Ms. Wright said that staff and the applicant are working to provide some type of decorative feature that invites pedestrians to the entrance and screens the cars using the drive aisle, while still being porous enough not to close off the opening.

Mr. Glerum and Mr. Kopp voiced concerns with the building hyphen. Mr. Glerum believes the hyphen needs to completely recess into the background and be very
quiet. Mr. Kopp suggested looking at Rockville Square, where he believes the hyphen is successful in engaging the street.

- Mr. Glerum and Ms. Nguyen thought the mercantile portion of the building at the Blumont elevation needed to be restudied. They both commented that the massing was neither asymmetrical, nor symmetrical which seemed to create a disconnection.

**Landbay L Multifamily Building**

- Mr. Anand presented the project refinements the Committee requested at the previous meeting. Mr. Anand stated that the applicant and staff worked on the following items:
  - Resolve whether or not stoops should be utilized along Main Line Boulevard to activate the street. It was decided that the building design was more successful without using stoops.
  - Explore changing the brick colors and the relationship between the masonry and hardiboard. The use of different brick colors created a busy composition. Instead, the one brick color will be used on that side.
  - Utilize as much glass as possible. Larger windows and openings were explored but the wood construction limits the amount of glass one can use for structural purposes.
  - Contain the loading areas within the same building bay for a logical rhythm.
  - Revise the corner to have a double bay instead of one to match the other corner.

- Ms. Wasowski voiced concerns about the amount of residential development being built and submitted. Ms. Wright stated that there should be office and commercial development coming forward soon, particularly at Landbay G.

- Ms. Nguyen stated that this project was a successful example of a building design with multiple architectural styles.

- Mr. Kopp made a motion that PYDAC will support the application and circulate a letter of recommendation before final signature. The Committee voted to support the project.

**NEXT STEPS**

- The Committee discussed replacing Ms. Wasowski as chair since she has resigned and her term ends November 14, 2011. Mr. Kopp volunteered to chair.

- Ms. Willger stated that the next PYDAC meeting would be on December 14. The following would be discussed:
  - Landbay G Block F – Review of project
  - Potentially and update on the EIS for the Metro Station
• Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

DATE: February 1, 2012
TO: Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee
FROM: Planning Staff
SUBJECT: Landbay G, Block F Application

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SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

As noted in the October 2011 memo to PYDAC (see attached), the applicant, MRP Realty, is requesting approval of an amendment to the previously approved development special use permit with site plan for Landbay G. The applicant requests approval to reprogram Landbay G, Block F from a two-story retail building to a five-story multi-family residential building pursuant to the zoning and master plan amendments approved by City Council in November 2010. The applicant has submitted a preliminary application and is currently scheduled for the March Planning Commission and City Council hearings.

Although the application remains largely consistent with the project description provided in the October 2011 memo, the proposal has increased from 111 to 112 units and the building height has increased to approximately 67 feet. While the main roof line remains at a height of approximately 59 feet, a mezzanine level and a tower feature were introduced at the northeast and southwest corners of the proposed building to provide variation in the roof line.

REFINEMENTS TO BUILDING DESIGN

During the October and November 2011 PYDAC meetings, the following items related to the Block F building design were discussed:

- The relationship between the proposed building and the Station at Potomac Yard;
- A need for greater articulation of the building façade;
- A need for greater variation in roof line;
- Further defining the main building entrance on Seaton Avenue by introducing a more prominent entry; and
- Further study of the proposed materials and palette.

The applicant has worked with staff to address many of the aforementioned items. To enhance the articulation of the building façade, the applicant has proposed both modular and structural brick on the masonry frame, which will result in projections of approximately 10 inches from the primary building façade. The projected balconies and the change in color...
between the primary building façade and the masonry frame provide further articulation in the façade.

To provide greater variation in the roof line, the applicant has incorporated a mezzanine level at the main building entrance on Seaton Avenue, which results in a height of approximately 67 feet at this location. In addition, the applicant has also refined the tower element at the southwestern corner of the building and increased the height of this tower feature to approximately 63 feet. Staff believes that these revisions successfully achieve a varied roof line.

The mezzanine level proposed on Seaton Avenue also serves as an architectural element to define this location as the primary building entrance. In addition to the mezzanine level, the applicant has also introduced a vertical red metal fin, which contrasts with the dark palette of the primary building façade and engages the building with the pedestrian scale.

The applicant has provided a materials board which identifies the materials and palette proposed. The proposed building is contemporary in nature and incorporates charcoal brick on the primary building façade, a more traditional rust colored brick on the masonry frame, glass and metal accents. Staff believes that the proposed palette, while a departure from the traditional colors used in the fire station and the residential townhomes, offers a transition to the more contemporary architecture anticipated elsewhere in Landbay G and North Potomac Yard.

**CONSISTENCY WITH DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The application is largely consistent with the general intent and the specific streetscape, open space and building criteria identified in the Potomac Yard Design Guidelines. The following summaries provide a brief overview of how the proposed project is consistent with the aforementioned criteria:

- **Streetscape:** The Block F proposal continues the streetscape approved and constructed elsewhere in the Yard, with unobstructed sidewalks, street trees and pedestrian-scale lighting. The mid-block publicly accessible pedestrian connection, which extends from Howell Avenue to East Glebe Road, is provided east of the site to offer an alternative pedestrian connection between Main Line Boulevard and Potomac Avenue.
- **Open Space:** The pedestrian connection is envisioned as a pedestrian mews and includes a variety of hardscape materials and landscaping. The pedestrian mews offers a transition between the more narrow connection provided in Landbays I and J to the pedestrian galleria envisioned in the Town Center of Landbay G. In addition to the pedestrian mews, the applicant also proposes a private courtyard which integrates special paving features, landscaping and seating.
- **Building:** The proposed building engages Main Line Boulevard, Seaton Avenue and Maskell Street and forms a street wall on each frontage. Balconies, stoops and functional ground-level entrances provide activity on the street and articulate the
building façade. The façade is further articulated through changes in building color and material.

While the application is consistent with the majority of the Guidelines, staff notes that the proposal varies from the following Guidelines:

- The main entrance to the building shall be at the front façade and articulated as a public entrance.

As previously mentioned, the proposed building has frontage on three public streets; a framework street and two residential streets. Staff typically considers the façade with frontage on the framework street to be the front façade and the façade with frontage on the residential streets to be secondary facades. In the proposal, the main entrance is located on Seaton Avenue at the pedestrian mews, rather than Main Line Boulevard.

The applicant proposed this location for the main building entrance to relate to the primary entrance of the residential building (Block C) located on the eastern side of the pedestrian mews. These entrances are intended to frame and activate the mews and extend the Town Center Galleria envisioned within Block E, north of the site. The entrance is articulated as a public entrance through the increased height provided by the mezzanine, the chamfered building façade and the boldly colored fin and canopy which create a relationship between the building and the entrance to the public mews. Although the proposed entrance varies from the location identified in the Guidelines, staff believes that the main building entrance successfully relates to the Block C residential building as well as engages the pedestrian mews.

- Typical residential streets shall be developed with sidewalks located immediately adjacent to back of curb and street trees shall be planted in tree pits with ground cover.

During the conceptual review phase of Landbay G, staff directed the applicant to revise the streetscape to provide a 4-foot landscape strip adjacent to the curb, a 6-foot sidewalk adjacent to the landscape strip and foundation plantings adjacent to the building soften the streetscape and introduce additional plantings on the residential streets. While the proposed streetscape does not comply with the Guidelines, it is in compliance with the previously approved development special use permit, as requested by staff.

- East – west street planting must be uniform throughout the entire length of the street.

Staff is continuing to work with the applicant to ensure that the plantings proposed on Seaton Avenue and Maskell Street within Block F are consistent with the plantings approved during the final site plan review of Block C. The street trees proposed on Main Line Boulevard, Red Maple, are consistent with the street trees approved and installed elsewhere on the street.
NEXT STEPS

As previously discussed, the Block F application is currently scheduled for the March Planning Commission and City Council public hearings. It is the opinion of staff that the project is in substantial conformance with the Potomac Yard Design Guidelines and the variations, discussed above, are acceptable. Staff is prepared to provide PYDAC with a letter of recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council for your review and signature on February 8, 2012.
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