

**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, KTG Y

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

donut” with a blade of units in the middle and two central areas, one of which is ground level open space.

- 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 through-way. 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 Bluemont 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.