



Meeting Summary
November 24, 2021

Attendance

Panel Members: Fred Marino, Chair (recused from Plan No 21-15)
Robert Gorman, Vice Chair
Ethan Marchant
Larry Quarrick

DPZ Staff: Anthony Cataldo, Nick Haines and Melissa Maloney

1. **Call to Order** – DAP Chair Fred Marino opened the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

2. **Review of Plan No. 21-15, New Cultural Center Garage, Columbia, MD**

Applicants and Presenters:
Owner: Toby's General Partnership
Developer: Orchard Development, Scott Armiger
Engineer: GLW, Dan Sweeney
Architect: Design Collective, Jessica Pagan Aello

Background

Parcel 307 is East of Merriweather Post Pavilion, with access from Symphony Woods Road and South Entrance Road from Route 29. The New Cultural Center is zoned New Town (NT) and was originally reviewed by the DAP under project 17-04 on February 22, 2017. The original design for the garage screening proposed a metal trellis feature with climbing vegetation. The design has been modified with the submission and review of the Site Development Plan (SDP-17-063). A new façade design for the garage is proposed which consists of a metal paneling design shown in the applicants exhibits. The previous layout compared to the new design can be seen in Figure 2. The design differs from the original proposal and DPZ is requesting input from the DAP on the new designs visual impact from the adjacent property and roadway, it's effectiveness in screening the garage, and how it relates to overall building architecture.

Applicant Presentation

The applicant was approved with conditions in 2017 for the New Cultural Center. This is a mixed-use project with 125,000 square feet of cultural use including dinner theaters, galleries and studios. Above the cultural center will be 174 housing units of which half will be affordable housing. The garage which is the focus of this meeting will be in the back. The building will be adjacent to Toby's Dinner Theatre, an office building and the north/south connector to Symphony Woods. The garage is located on a private alley with limited visibility and will be wrapped by the other uses. The palette of the project is made up of a series of high-density fibers and resin with metal, glass and additional brick on the side. Originally the applicant proposed a 30-foot green screen system for the garage. Per DPZ although this is a tertiary road the applicant is required to offer screening for the garage since it is in such a prominent location. There were concerns from the previous DAP and the County about growth and maintenance of the green screen. The applicant is now proposing a perforated, angled, metal panel

system. The perforation is 60% to allow light in and the panels will have a 7-inch projection that will create undulation and shadow. The garage is angled inwards so it will not appear as a continuous wall.

Previous DAP Motions:

DAP Chair Hank Alinger made the following motion:

The applicant pays particular attention to the design of the parking garage façade along the southern portion of the site.

Seconded by DAP member Sujit Mishra.

Staff Presentation

The panel last reviewed this project in June 2017. The applicant is moving through the plan and permit process with DPZ. DPZ staff is reviewing the plans to ensure compatibility with the regulations in the Cultural Center and Crescent neighborhoods. DPZ was concerned about the monolithic expression and verticality aspect of the panels. The new design has a different look and feel from the approved and would like to get DAP's comments and recommendations on the design change since this is an important view that is visible from the neighboring parcel, Route 29 and South Entrance Road. DPZ wants to ensure that the previous DAP concerns about the garage screening have been addressed and the new design compliments the Cultural Center architecture. This project is southern facing and highly visible from the main roadway.

DAP Questions and Comments

Site Design

Overall

DAP commented that this project has the challenge of being a 4-sided building with all 4 sides exposed and there is no clean answer with how to address the backside within a reasonable cost parameter.

DAP inquired if these will be apartments or condominiums.

The applicant advised there will be 170 apartment units. Half will be at market rate and half will be affordable housing. This will hopefully be the first downtown Columbia project with affordable housing.

DAP commented that this project is dynamic and will fit in with the architectural theme of the Merriweather district.

Architecture

Artwork

DAP recommended having the county or Columbia Association engage a mural artist in the future to activate this façade in a different way as there were concerns about activating the facade. It is a dramatic improvement from the 30-foot green screen that was originally proposed. The DAP member concurred with the use of art especially since this is a Cultural Art Center. It can be a monotone, subtle introduction of art and does not need to be brightly colored like the garage on Little Patuxent.

Lighting

DAP is concerned about what the garage will look like at night when the garage is illuminated and how transparent perforated metal will be. LED garage lights can be intense, and DAP questioned if the garage will appear transparent at night and take on a very different, utilitarian look.

Banding

DAP recommended that although the parking floors are not horizontal it would be beneficial if the panels could be arranged so that there are continuous horizontal thin lines, spaced a little wider, to better incorporate with the building. This would match what is going on with the building in terms of horizontal banding that brings the whole building down a bit. It seems a bit at odds with the rest of the complex.

ColorMaterials

DAP inquired if the panels are stainless steel and gray.

The applicant advised that the panels are gray, anodized aluminum metal that are perforated and should have a bit off sheen to them.

DAP commented that they like the vertical panels that take your eye away from the sloping ramps in the garage and the folds or undulating panels that give a sense of motion that joins the two buildings together.

Landscape

Green Screen

DAP was concerned about the previously proposed green screen. DAP commented that likely the proposed landscape elements wouldn't cover the entire of the façade and bare wire mesh would be left in the upper portion. It was noted that the new paneling could provide a better opportunity for screening options.

Street Trees

DAP inquired if there will be an opportunity for planting a series of trees such as Honey Locusts either right against the building in the planting strip or in the foreground that would help to soften the façade and be viewable from Route 29.

The applicant advised that the space is very narrow with a 4' walk and a 3' strip along the edge that would be planted. The intent was originally for it to be planted with the vines, but instead they will have shrubbery against the building. There will also be plantings along the wall adjacent to the office building. Unfortunately, there is no opportunity for street planting.

Shrubs

DAP commented that the green shrub buffer will help, but from a distance it will just be direct view of the panels.

The applicant advised that although the site is near Route 29 there is an existing layer of landscape along with shared use paths and trails that are weaving through the area to provide a buffer. There will only be a small visible portion of the garage from the road and the office building is the same height as the proposed Cultural Center.

DAP Motions for Recommendations

No formal motions were made, only comments for the applicants to consider.

3. Call to Adjourn

DAP Chair Fred Marino adjourned the meeting at 7:48 PM