

*Minutes*  
Baltimore County Design Review Panel  
January 12, 2011

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*Appendices*

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*Minutes*  
Baltimore County **Design Review Panel**  
January 12, 2011

**Call to order**

Chair, William Monk, called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Baltimore County **Design Review Panel** to order at 6:11 p.m. The following panel members were:

**Present**

Mr. Scott Rykiel  
Mr. Donald Kann  
Ms. Magda Westerhout  
Mr. William Monk

**Not Present**

Ms. Betsy Boykin  
Mr. John DiMenna  
Mr. Thomas Repsher  
Mr. Christopher Parts  
Mr. Derrick Burnett

County staff present included:  
Jenifer Nugent, Krystle Patchak

**Minutes of the November 10, 2010 meeting**

Mr. Kann moved the acceptance of the draft minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Ms. Westerhout and passed by acclamation at 6:12 p.m.

The approved minutes are filed as Appendix B.

**ITEM 1****PROJECT NAME:** Essex Gateway Center**DRP PROJECT #:** 521**PROJECT TYPE:** Commercial, Essex**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Property owner, Tony Akaras along with Dave Billingsley and Architect Charles George presented the project to the panel. The proposed Essex Gateway Center project contains approximately 2.06 acres of land located on the southeast side of Eastern Boulevard between Virginia Avenue and Marie Avenue.

The property is presently improved with the Essex Diner, a 15,400 SF abandoned building most recently utilized as a bingo hall, an abandoned building most recently used as a service garage, and an abandoned storage building.

The project calls for razing the two smaller buildings and rehabilitating the abandoned bingo hall building to create 15,400 SF of mixed-use retail. Resolution 10-210, which was approved by the County Council authorized the issuance and sale of bonds pursuant to the Maryland Economic Development Revenue Bond Act to renovate the existing building and construct a new building and other improvements on the site. Also included is the construction of approximately 6,000 SF of mixed-use commercial addition adjacent to the southwest side of the abandoned bingo hall. The Essex Diner will remain, as it exists. Off-street parking is proposed to accommodate 101 vehicles.

The intent of the project is to create a plaza type effect, with a red brick façade and brick piers with stucco at the top portion and porcelain ceramic plaques. A parapet will be added around the top of the building to accommodate signage and canopies. A tower feature is included in the design which will serve as a clock tower and give the development a gateway feel.

A variance was requested by the applicant to permit 97 spaces in lieu of the required 154 spaces, to permit parking with a 5 foot setback in lieu of the required 10 to a public right-of-way (Marie Avenue) and to permit 2 free standing joint identifications in lieu of the permitted 1 freestanding joint identification sign. The motion was granted by the Zoning Commissioner with some conditions to add landscape and screening from the residential areas to the rear of the property. On October 21, 2010 People's Counsel for Baltimore County filed a motion for reconsideration to have the record kept open for the requested variances until the Design Review Panel had concluded its review of the development in order to incorporate the recommendations of the DRP into the Hearing Officers Order, as is required by law. The motion was granted and a fifth condition was added which reads as follows, "recommendations of the DRP are hereby incorporated into this Order as a condition of the relief granted as if fully set forth herein."

A landscape plan was prepared for the project by Human & Rohde, who is working together with the county and SHA on landscaping and streetscape issues relative to Eastern Boulevard, a state road.

**DESIGN REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS:**

Mrs. Nugent, of the Office of Planning, presented the main issues addressed in the staff report to those in attendance at the meeting. The main concerns included the request for additional details

on the building elevations as well as site layout and landscaping/streetscape. The office also inquired about signage and lighting details. A copy of the Office of Planning staff report on the project is filed as Appendix C.

Mr. Kann questioned the applicant on how the existing bingo hall would be subdivided to accommodate multiple tenants. Mr. Akaras stated that some tenants are already lined up for the project and they will make adjustments based on individual needs. Their goal was to break up the building into 18ft bays and have larger tenants along the front and smaller ones along the back. The applicant also stated that they are working with BGE regarding power and plan on adding a transformer at the rear of the site. Mr. Kann also commented on the materials on the rear of the building. The applicant stated that they will renovate the rear of the bingo hall building and repaint and repair it and will also create a block rear wall on the addition. Pedestrian circulation was another issue addressed by Mr. Kann. He suggested adding more access from the perimeter of the site wherever possible. He also suggested adding more variety to the architecture of the building by simplifying the design.

Mr. Rykiel was concerned with the sidewalk widths along Marie Avenue. He commented on the fact that an overhang from the cars would make the pedestrian area very narrow. Mr. Rykiel suggested making the sidewalk 2 feet wider by taking 2 feet from the 24' access lane. Mr. Rykiel also commented on the plantings proposed along the front of the property (Eastern Boulevard). He suggested alternating the placement of the grasses and crepe myrtle to give them both more vitality. Another idea was proposed to group the crepe myrtles at different areas of the site to create more open space. Mr. Rykiel also suggested screening the utilities at the rear of the building and the applicants stated that they are working on plans for that area. Mr. Rykiel also suggested to the applicant that the tree island that was added in the center of the parking area be removed to provide more visibility to the site. He suggested moving the trees from the islands to the corner of the site and replacing 2 parking spaces with a plaza-like area at the area of the parking lot where the two buildings join. To orient the building more towards the street, the idea was also suggested to push the drive lanes in front of the bingo hall closer to the street and adding an outdoor seating area at the front of the building.

Ms. Westerhout praised the applicant on their attention to detail and the fact that the project is an improvement to the site. She suggested that the applicant study the ADA regulations, due to the grade changes on the site. Ms. Westerhout stated that she would like to see plans for all elevations of the building as well as any lighting plans. She also commented on the arch/eyebrow element on the building elevations and suggested that it be removed.

Mr. Monk also commented on the improvements to the site. He questioned the applicants on the placement of the HVAC units. It was stated that the parapet of the upper portion of the building will screen their location on the rooftop. Mr. Monk also commented on drainage plans for the site as well as the access into the site and the median. It was stated that the applicant is working in cooperation with Michael Bailey of the State Highway Administration to get this issue resolved. Mr. Monk also questioned the applicant on signage plans and suggested that sign details be provided.

All panel members asked that the applicants coordinate and revise all plans to address the correct and most recent information.

### **SPEAKERS COMMENTS:**

Mr. Adam Sanders, speaking on behalf of Ms. Detter of 10 Marie Avenue, was concerned with screening. Their property is located right behind the site and the main concerns included loitering, and lighting glare that may interfere on their property. It was stated by the applicant that evergreens and willow oaks will be provided to screen the property and they will work with the resident at 10 Marie Avenue to work out an agreeable plan for screening the project.

### **DISPOSITION:**

A motion was made by Ms. Westerhout to have the project resubmitted to staff to address the following issues:

1. Revise landscape plan – address screening adjacent to 10 Marie Avenue (Resolve with residents), eliminate the 3 trees in the center islands & reposition at the rear of the site (create plaza area), revise placement of plantings along Eastern Boulevard
2. Show storm water quality facility on all plans
3. Create pedestrian plan for site - extend sidewalk from Diner to Eastern Boulevard, provide access from Marie Avenue to corner of site
4. Widen sidewalks along Marie Avenue storefronts to 9' and reduce drive lane to 22'
5. Provide outdoor seating/open space areas on site
6. Create signage plan
7. Create lighting plan for site
8. Work with SHA to address median/access to site
9. Revise architectural elevations and provide additional elevation details for all sides (show materials, colors) – study variation of awnings, eyebrow element
10. Address issues included in staff report
11. Coordinate all plans

The motion was seconded by Mr. Rykiel and approved by acclamation at 7:40 p.m. All revised plans are to be submitted to the Office of Planning for final review and approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

**Code Statement:** Section 32 – 4 – 203 (i) (2) of the Baltimore County Code states, *The Panel's recommendation is binding on the Hearing Officer, and on the agencies under subsection (1), (Directors of the Office of Planning, the Department of Permits and Development Management and the Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management), unless the Hearing Officer or agencies find that the Panel's actions constitute an abuse of its discretion or are unsupported by the documentation and evidence presented.*

Approved as of 3/9/11