

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 3, 2015

Meeting No.: 217

Project: Pimlico Elementary & Middle School

Phase: Discussion #1

Location: 4849 Pimlico Road, between Oakland and Thorndale Avenues, Baltimore, MD

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Michael Glaros, building architect of Design Collective began the presentation with a review of the site and the three building phases that make up the current configuration of buildings. The first building was constructed in 1910, the second set of two buildings with arcades in 1924 – both period constructs are of distinct architectural character, though not registered as historical – and the third in 1972, which unifies the two 1924 buildings, is built in a more brutalist manner, with limited glazing penetration to the volume. They sit on a 2-acre site along with a fourth building, the Aquatic Center.

Michael reviewed the surrounding context of the neighborhood, a mix of row homes and single-family dwellings.

Several iterations were presented as part of the studio’s exploration in the re-design of the property. Design Collective’s approach is to separate the Lower School (to be situated in the 1910 building) from the Middle School via a series of courtyards and new wings, stitching the new additions into the historic buildings using “light and airy” connectors. A significant portion of the 1972 building is to remain as there is perceived value in the auditorium already incorporated in the structure (the current program does not afford a newly-built auditorium).

Mr. Brian Reetz, landscape architect from Design Collective, presented the site plan and the strategic moves that would support the project goals. These include the relocation of a parking lot to the back of the property, a drop-off in the front of the central historic building at the fore of a “great lawn” with opportunities for sculpture, the addition of stormwater catchments along Pimlico, two playgrounds – one with a basketball court, an outdoor classroom, UIO-scale soccer area at the back of the property, and a realignment of the aquatic center’s driveway with added parking to the north.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

Through discussion, several concerns were raised by the Panel which hinged upon the need for greater clarity in the diagram of the campus, particularly as this is a multi-use/multi-age campus. In this case, greater order and symmetry to the site and to the interior corridors and programming would ease in reading and understanding the site. The design team should create a better

armature within which a variety of programming might take place. This armature would allow for “rooms” (both internal and external) to read as individual spaces of a variety of character and expressions.

- A great deal of attention was paid to the orientation and position of the 3-story “Collaboration” space and the 3-story classroom building positioned behind it. The Panel would like Design Collective to study scenarios where the classroom building forms the northern edge of the central space behind the main building, so that the handsome rear façade of the 1924 building is fully exposed. In addition, explore an option where the Collaboration building might be a part of a central spine configuration, with the classroom building again oriented east/west but removed from the adjacent Aquatic Center. In its present configuration, the hallway system that connects new and old buildings is not organized to support clarity or a “light and airy connection.”
- The design team was asked to generate sun/shadow studies to aid in the determination of how outdoor spaces might be best utilized. Presently, the play area for the youngest children will be in perpetual shade given the position of the play area and the height of the adjacent structure.
- The Panel suggested exploration into an additional building for the youngest pre-K children would be worthy of study. Perhaps it would be better to use the northwest corner of the property to segregate this youngest population and offer them age appropriate outdoor spaces and a separate drop-off and pick-up.
- There was a request to fully integrate the Aquatic Center into the campus, creating a comprehensive design for the entire block.
- The design of the campus landscape should not be considered as secondary to the design of the school as a whole. As this project is in development by a firm that encompasses both building and landscape architecture, the team should be working integrally for a comprehensive composition. Presently, the landscape seems to be generated in a manner secondary to the placement of buildings and program.
- As mentioned above, the landscape of the campus should be developed as an armature to increase the clarity and use of the school and the programming it supports. This exercise in organization might also include how the stormwater areas are better integrated into the composition, or inform where the front drop-off is located (as opposed to centrally on the “great lawn”).

PANEL ACTION: Discussion only.

Attending:

Charlie Ravenna – CSP

Michael Glaros, Brian Reetz, Meredith Sullivan – DCI

Amy McCarthy – Samaha

Michael McBride – BCPS

Joe Corson – Blue Book

Messrs. Bowden, Rubin*, Haresign, Burns, and Ms. Ilieva - UDARP Panel

Tom Stosur, Christina Hartsfield, Laurie Feinberg, Wolde Ararsa, May Colleen Buettner, Reni Lewal - Planning