

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

Date: May 14, 2015 **Meeting No.:** 204

Project: John Eager Howard Elementary School **Phase:** Discussion

Location: Linden Avenue and Lennox Street

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Mark Nook and Mr. Joe Cellucci, architects with Cho Benn Holback and Associates, introduced the project to the Panel. As described, the project consists of the renovation of approximately 32,000 square feet of the existing school building along Brookfield Avenue and a new 58,000 square feet two story addition placed parallel to Linden Avenue. The Architects noted that the new addition purposefully forms the northern and eastern edge of a “town square” located at the prominent corner of Linden Avenue and Lennox Street. The town square, which accommodates parking, school bus service and access to the main entry; is envisioned as a potential community open space asset during non-school hours.

Other unique site features, identified by the Design Team, included an outdoor classroom, playfields, “Pre-K/ K” playground and a community basketball court. It was the stated intent of the architects to utilize on site bio-retention strategies as a “teaching” opportunity.

The exterior materials proposed by the Design Team include glass, masonry, white metal panels and yellow accent panels. These materials are employed to create a vertical expression and rhythm along the street facing facades, reflecting the cadence of surrounding townhomes.

COMMENTS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel was generally pleased with the design direction proposed by the Architects. The two story addition appeared to be placed both appropriately and sensitively along Linden Avenue, forming a strong “street wall”. The modifications and enhancements of the existing facades were consistent with the new facades proposed, creating a seamless integration. Proposed landscape, at this early stage in the design process, appeared thoughtful; particularly the strong and continuous cadence of trees along Linden Avenue and Brookfield Avenue.

SITE AND LANDSCAPE:

1. The notion of a “town square”, particularly with the precedent photographs presented, seemed incongruous with the major role of the open space to accommodate parking and school bus loading. The Panel challenged the Design Team to find more appropriate precedence for inspiration and encouraged them to continue to explore ways to transform a typical parking lot into a meaningful open space and community asset.
2. To better define the “town square” or entry plaza, the Panel suggested a stronger edge is needed along Linden Avenue and Lennox Street. It was suggested an allée of trees could define the edge and enclose the space as a civic outdoor room.
3. The Panel encouraged the Design Team to continue to explore ways to utilize on-site bio- retention and storm infiltration zones as teaching opportunities, consistent with the school’s mission as a “Green School”.
4. Areas of concern, which suggest additional study, include the screening of the service area, the landscape treatment and fencing of the Pre-K playground and the lack of street trees along the eastern portion of Lennox Street.

ARCHITECTURE:

1. The Panel encouraged the Design Team to look at a textured finish for the yellow accent panels in order to differentiate them from the flat white metal panels.
2. The Panel encouraged the Design Team to develop a stronger entry expression as the proposed entry canopy appeared timid and lacking scale and importance in juxtaposition to the adjoining open space.
3. It was noted that the north glass wall containing the play area entry point served an important role in mediating between the two story lobby and vertical circulation zone and the outdoor classroom and playgrounds. The Panel felt this wall could be more dynamic and encouraged additional study.

PANEL ACTION:

Discussion Only

Attending:

Kate Acker, Charlie Ravenna, Cyndi Smith, Tom Henderson – CSP

Brent Miller – MSA

Joe Swanson – Turner

Mark Nook, Joe Cellucci - Cho Benn Holback and Associates

Dr. Meany, Messrs. Bowden and Burns* - UDARP Panel

Director Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Aaron Bond, Mary Clapsaddle, Alex Hoffman –Planning Dept