

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

Date: January 22, 2015

Meeting No.: 198

Project: Fort Washington K-8 School

Phase: Discussion

Location: 2701 East Oliver Street, Baltimore, MD

PRESENTATION:

Following Mr. Miller's introduction of the project, Mr. Bradshaw, representing Grimm and Parker Architects, reviewed the program for the proposed school. The present K-5 school will be demolished, and other local schools will be consolidated into this refurbished site which will be designed for approximately 696 K-8 students. The site context of the school was reviewed with the Panel, as well as the possible movement of students from neighborhood to the school – largely a walking condition. There is significant topographic change across the site, with corners of the site meeting street elevations that range from +152 - +134. Presently, the site is occupied by structure or paved surface.

The goals include a school that nurtures, engages and empowers; to link and enhance community and learning; establish a school that is a scholarly place, among others.

The proposed plan reorients the building so that its main entrance is on East Hoffman, facing south, and according to the architects, a majority of homes of the future attendees. This also places the main structure at the highest elevation of the site, with fields and play stepping down toward East Oliver Street. The new diagram for the school separates “public” from “private,” with the gymnasium, dining, community rooms, and admin and support on the public side; the educational wing comprises the private side. Mr. Bradshaw described the parti of the school and the distribution of functions within the proposed building.

Mr. Steve Lauria (Sherrill + Partners Architects) described the site elements that make up programming outside of the architectural structure. The site elements to the north are comprised of a bio retention area, an amphitheater that steps down to the field, and to the west a hard play area, parking, and a service alley along the western property line. The bio retention area is set closer to the building to avoid excessive piping and to make this piece of infrastructure a learning opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

There was a general consensus that both the building and the associated site are developing nicely. In particular, it was reassuring to see the site treated with value and invention as an educational environment equal to the building and its interior elements. However, the Panel

believes there are some fundamental moves to the layout of the school and its associated programming that will improve the design effort. Key recommendations from the Panel are summarized below:

Site and Building:

- The Main Entrance at East Hoffman Street should be more gracious and accommodating to the gathering of students and families. Please consider extending a canopy to embrace those arriving.
- The entrance might be a more significant organizing principle. Perhaps it should be more centrally focused on North Kenwood Avenue. This gesture will strengthen the original diagram separating “public” from “private.” With this revised entry, now the hall that separates the interior elements can run straight through the building, informing the legibility of the plan positively, including the division of the site elements on the north side of the site.
- It would benefit the project if the architects would revisit the plan with an eye toward designing from the outside in - a gesture to engaging the community more fully. What are the contextual influences that can inform the building? Place less focus on the central core and establish greater connection with the community and the learning environment.
- As the project develops, please give careful thought to how windows are added to the structure, beyond the larger glazing gestures.
- Please consider how the massing of the structure can be broken down further.
- Although there is significant benefit to having the bio retention area observable from the building, putting the bio retention area closer to East Oliver Street brings the amphitheater closer as an “outdoor classroom,” as well as the field. The bio retention area might serve the site more strongly if it were placed as the element that separates the school from the street. In that way, both community and school can appreciate it.

PANEL ACTION:

Discussion only; no Panel action.

Attending:

Paul Bradshaw, Melissa Wilfong, Ricardo Seijo – Grimm + Parker

Brent Miller – MD Stadium Authority

Steve Lauria – SP Arch

Tracey Estep, Kate Brower, Robert Wall – Baltimore City Rec. + Parks

Evan Richardson – Morgan State University

Ryan Patterson – BOPA

Mary Stevenson, Tony Cortea – STV

Charlie Ravenna, Greg Ramirez, Tom Henderson, Kate Acker, Avon Wilson – CSP

Cyndi Smith, Larry Flynn – City Schools

J. Hewson - Berea

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

Director Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Kate Edwards, Sara Paraniham, Katie-Rose Imbriano,
Reni Lawal, Aaron Bond –Planning Dept