

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

Date: January 28, 2016

Meeting # 220

Project: National Aquarium Master Plan

Phase: Discussion

Location: National Aquarium, Inner Harbor

PRESENTATION:

Jacqueline Bershad, Vice President of Capital Planning & Facilities at the National Aquarium of Baltimore, introduced the project background and goals for the enhancement of the urban landscape at Inner Harbor Piers 3&4 and the water slip between them through the use of ecological interventions and exhibit design.

Jonathan Ceci, Landscape Architect with Ayers Saint Gross presented key strategies for developing Model Urban Waterfront for the Aquarium's campus that promotes conservation of the natural habitat, provides a civic social space, and serves as an anchor of the Inner Harbor.

The overall vision for the project involves providing a variety of opportunities to experience the waterfront while creating a strong identity for the campus by clarifying the entrance spaces, edges, and circulation throughout the site. The new urban interventions see to expand the ecological community in the area through the introduction of green infrastructure, connect people to water by modifying the existing bulkhead, and promote further interaction by reconfiguring the use of the existing promenade.

The draft campus plan proposes an Urban Wetland area between Piers 3&4 with floating wetlands, pylon reef, tidal barge, and terraced edge at the tip of the pier 3 with potential for kayaking, outdoor teaching amphitheater, outdoor lab, in addition to interactive sculptures, exhibits, public art, light installations, and other immersive experiences.

Comments from the Panel:

The Panel applauded the quality of the presentation and shared excitement about the bold vision and big ideas presented, with a few specific comments:

- Urban interventions – some panelists cautioned the designers to exercise restraint with the use of exterior exhibit and interaction spaces as not to compromise the integrity of the urban waterfront. Others questioned the ‘civic hybrid’ idea and the juxtaposition of Chesapeake Bay habitat and wetlands technology to the harbor’s industrial heritage. The Panel emphasized the need to seek bold interventions that transform the exterior environment to an even greater degree in order to energize the space and achieve the goals of the project.
- Relationship of Landscape to Building Program – the panel questioned the potential use of the buildings on the site and their relationship to the proposed landscape and urged the design team to consider long-term planning and further integration of the two.
- Green/eco technology – the panel questioned the successful implementation of a green wall and varied ecological systems technology to the extent that it ensures the success of the entire proposed design.

- Urban form and edges – some panelists found the design, as illustrated, to promote a picturesque vision that uses a figural landscape composition and encouraged the designers to pursue a direction that responds to all urban edges throughout the site and includes interventions that are site-specific and authentic.

Panel Action:

Discussion only.

Attending:

Jacqueline Bershad, Jenny-Sayve Ramberg, Kate Rowe, Sarah Elfreth, Amanda Fow- National Aquarium

Jonathan Ceci, Joseph Kim, Sarah Rumbaugh - Ayers Saint Gross

Melody Simmons – BBJ

Tom O’Keefe – Wohlsen Construction

Chris Streb – BioHabitats

Ed Gunts

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

Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield - Planning