**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**

**URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** March 20, 2020 **Meeting** #31

**Project:** 21st Century Schools Initiative – Montebello **Phase:** Discussion #1

**Location:** 2040 E 32nd St, Baltimore, MD 21218

**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Todd introduced the project team and moved into an in-depth description of site context and the existing facility. It’s a pre-k through 8th grade school in a historic building, on an 8-acre site. Renovation project, with an addition 8,400 SF currently will increase to 9,400 (about 6oo students). Classrooms will contain collaborative learning areas. Gymnasium, cafeteria will act as a community space. School is situated near Lake Montebello, which is used widely by community. Site has significant slope dropping from the southeast to the northwest corner nearest the lake, and the original design does not have any entrances to the building at grade (entrances are intermediate level). Existing building is a 4-story classroom building, original construction in 1921, with regular renovations occurring every 20 year or so. Some priorities of the project were:

* Update and add play areas
* Make entrances accessible and improve main entry
* Renovate building and bring it back to its original Neoclassical glory (Architect Clyde Fritz) since this will be 100th year
* New addition to complement architectural style of the exiting building and blend seamlessly

Richard LeBlanc gave a detailed description of the historic elements of the building, which include the friezes, columns, windows, etc. – new windows will be double hung to match the original windows.

Additional parking lot at the front will allow for student drop off at the southwest corner and entrance promenade. New addition will be gymnasium / kitchen and a protected outdoor learning area. Alignment of addition rotated to open up the outdoor play areas.

Questions from the community were not addressed by panelists, but have been included here:

* What will residents living on 32nd Street see from their homes?
* Will they be looking into a parking lot and bus drop off?
* Will we be creating a U-Turn access traffic issue from Harford Road?

**DISCUSSION:**

The Panel asked the team to time the next presentation, then asked clarifying questions about what is existing and remaining, and which items are added and altered. Clarification of ground floor levels (basement level is at grade at rear of building, main entrance is at the second level). Parking lot at the rear is utilized mostly by staff and community – left as is.

Additional clarifications from project team:

* Grade changes will be addressed with 1’ – 2’ walls, regrading as necessary
* South alcove will be the kindergarten play area (fenced and secure)
* New means of vertical circulation – knuckle piece only extends to the 3rd level – an existing elevator serves the 4th level for the higher grade levels
* New proposed classroom building been studied in a configuration parallel to the existing building – massing was chosen for greater access to light for remaining classrooms

**Site:**

* Is there a way to contain the front vehicular circulation to Harford Road?
* Spatial relationships – how is the team resolving the spaces between the buildings; how do these relate to the circulation, to the building and to each other?
* Nook to the south of the proposed addition is a bit of a hidden space – needs to be addressed, clarify whether there is an entrance
* Although parking lot layout was selected due to the grade change on Harford Road and Curran Drive, team needs to look at this piece again
* With regard to the 3 entrances on the lakeside, can this be combined? (Team has not been instructed to change any of the rear area of the site)
* The balance and symmetry of the building should be reflected in the site with deliberate and elegant gestures. In the current design the vehicular circulation is dictating the site design in the front of the building. The grand gesture of the promenade collides awkwardly with the parking entrance, and there's a missed opportunity to connect the main entrance and the gym building with a plaza that ties the two buildings together and makes them the focus
* Rear (lake side) parking could be cleaned up
* Resolution of the grade changes should be deliberate and create usable space
* Wedge condition on the back and placement of buildings and landscape elements should resolve the geometries
* Historical photos with the curvilinear grassy space could reconcile the geometry – existing promenade seems too dominant; use the front area of the building and the landscape to embellishing the front area and organize – this wants to be radial in order to complement the organization of buildings on site.

**Building:**

* Rear entrance feels pinched; should be treated more like the main entrance (opened up)
* Placement of the proposed building in the rear has similar issues, play space feels residual / left over due to the collision. Does the new volume need to be rectilinear; does it need to mimic the existing building? A contrast will set the existing building off more beautifully – make a statement about the fact that this is a 21st Century school and compliment the old building
* Important to resolve the knuckle – shift the bar away toward the service area and open up the outdoor space (the building could become narrower)
* Space should drive the geometry, not the other way around
* Shift the buildings to make better spaces – the large mass blocks the sunlight from the kindergarten playground area; consider shifting the playground further away from the building at the current location of the two trees at the rear parking lot)
* Consider treating the addition more like a pavilion – should be an accent rather than a derivative

**Next Steps:**

Continue design addressing comments above.

**Attending:**

Todd Vukmanic, Lori Walls, Richard LeBlanc – Crabtree

Claire Fishman – Carroll Engineering

Joseph Mayzck, Justin Wood – Maryland Stadium Authority

Michael McBride – City Schools

Judith Carroll, Al Barry, Tyson Woodby, Bob Northfield, Mark Washington – Attendees

Mr. Anthony, Mses. O’Neill, Ilieva, Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Laurie Feinberg\*, Ren Southard, Tamara Woods, Jen Leonard, Carmen Morosan, Chris Ryer, Eric Tiso, Marshella Wallace – Planning