

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

Date: September 19, 2019

Meeting #24

Project: SNF Agora Inst. At JHU

Phase: Schematic

Location: 3100 Wyman Park Drive

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Lee Coyle with JHU introduced the project for the SNF Agora Inst. at JHU being designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop. The focus is on openness, inclusion, and transparency which speaks to the mission of the Institute and the direction of the architecture.

Stephen Wright with ASG presented the existing site conditions at the edge of the Homewood Campus of JHU at the former Marine Hospital Site at about 1.5 acres. Existing site photographs were reviewed to show the connection and context of the existing site. There is a 20-foot elevation drop across the site that the building intends to take advantage of. Urban Design Goals for the project were also reviewed with the Panel. A schematic site diagram began to show the connections and paths being investigated for the project. The proposed building is open and porous with the entry sequence centered on the Wyman Park forecourt. The building lifts the program off the ground to allow for multiple outdoor spaces for interaction/activity. A loading dock tucks into the hill to go beneath the building. The landscape plan is still being developed but the goal is that the site becomes a more-lush site that recalls Wyman Park and the campus overall.

Site sections were reviewed to show the dynamic zones proposed within the building. The main building includes the working spaces of the institute (the 'Factory') program elements with flexible floors expressed on the exterior with glazing that allows views in and out. The secondary volume is the community space where the 'product is tested' (the 'showroom'). The center 'Circulation Spider' is focused on the connection and movement between the two volumes. The skin of the building is all glass with tight vertical frame elements. The circulation element is more translucent in contrast the main volumes with a sculptural open stair on the parking lot side of the building. Alternate design concepts were reviewed to show the evolution of the project.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel applauded the philosophical approach to the project's concept development and asked questions relating to the space below the community showroom, the level of

transparency in the glazing skin, connection to the UD Goal of establishing a NW entrance to the JHU campus, major source of traffic to the site (pedestrian from campus v. cars from parking lot), the importance of the node being created between this building and the Wyman Park Building, position of the loading dock on the site.

Site:

- Continue developing the site plan to strengthen the building's physical connection to the broader campus and edge. The connections to the existing parking is stronger than the connections to the main entry. The approach from the south across the loading dock presents a problem with the connection to the broader neighborhood. Investigate opportunities for the site approach on the Wyman Park Drive to wrap around to engage to the south.
- Continue evaluating the broader campus patterns of development and the residual spaces that engage the formal quads. Find opportunities to rationalize the irrational pathways to connect to the Homewood Campus proper and Decker Quad.
- The new node between Wyman Park Building and the Agora will be a critical component to both and the Panel looks forward to its continued development. Investigate the spatial procession between the two buildings
- Continue to investigate the views towards and from the building with respect to providing a true sense of openness and interactivity, visual and physical. The design wants to be sensitive to the community space not feeling oppressive with the mass of trees and the space under the elevated cube. Finding ways that the landscape can become more porous to begin to break down the formal lines of interaction and integrate more seamlessly with the exterior spaces of the building and the sidewalk approach from the surrounding edges.

Building:

- The Panel had questions related to the visual presence of the project with its current design broken into 3 parts. As the project continues forward, it will be important to see how the program reconciliations results in the external view of the project. Finding ways for the volumes to relate strongly to one another will be important to contrast the fragmentation of the program pieces.

Next Steps:

Continue the schematic design of the project addressing the comments above.

Attending:

Joel Fidler, Stephen Wright, Susan Sullivan – Ayers Saint Gross

Dan Loveless – WRA

Stacey Ko, Lee Coyle, Catherine Pierre, Jennifer Mielke, Amy Argasinski – JHU

Ed Gunts – BF

Mr. Anthony, Mses. Ilieva and Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Anthony Cataldo*, Laurie Feinberg, Jeff LaNoue, Reni Lawal, Ren Southard, Lauren Schiszik –
Planning