

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

**Date:** November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Meeting #39**

**Project:** JHU Student Center

**Phase:** Schematic

**Location:** Charles Street at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Lee Coyle of Johns Hopkins University introduced the project and gave a brief overview. The goal of the project is to transform the intersection from a barrier to the campus to a gateway entrance to the campus.

Leon Rost of Bjark Engles Group continued the presentation by describing the context and current challenges to the site. Thousands of students pass through this point every day – accessibility issues created by berm and existing building have driven the team to look at solutions that connect to all sides facing inward toward the campus and outward toward Charles Village.

Project goals:

- Create a welcoming connection point and organize student flow through the site.
- Both an access point and a place to draw people – social gathering point.
- Create an “all weather” quad for the students; a “campus living room”.
- Programmatically and conceptually – bring activities together to create synergies
- Tie the red brick paths into the building; paths are the
- Use the building to cascade along the site and respond to topography; each of the four levels will be accessible from the outdoors at grade.
- Landscape used to connect and invite, focused on ADA and accessibility.
- Existing trees will be preserved where possible, but the site will be regraded to be more level and welcoming at the Charles Street (east) edge.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Panel thanked the team for their concise presentation and continued with clarifying questions with regard to grade, loading, connection to the sculpture garden, approach, sustainability and design concept methodology before delivering comments.

### **Site:**

- The plaza located on Charles Street is intended to be an active space – food trucks and operable facades for the food vendors within the building to provide grab-and-go options that students can then enjoy in the plaza.
- Interesting and challenging project – Charles and 33<sup>rd</sup> are both important, but the campus circulation is also a challenge; the radial arrangement of the program drives the building's form and concept, but geometry may undermine campus circulation (patrons, visitors, students, staff and employees all need consideration).
- Building footprint creates a cramped condition on the site; entry plaza at 33<sup>rd</sup> and Charles is a fundamental as is moving through the site without having to enter the building.
- Topography is deftly employed in relation to the building, but positive and negative spatial relationships are not responding as well yet – node is completely filled by building, forcing foot traffic around the building. Opportunity to reinforce the street and open up a way for pedestrians to move past the building without forcing them through.
- Primary challenges of the site can lead to primary opportunities to resolve the building – clearly the building form is organized and driven by the interior program.
- Western edge of the campus has a lot of large trees that filter the light; mood of the building should be considered as the team works through the hierarchy. Mood can be expressed through light, which will be brought in through the clerestories. A variety of moods will help the center define spaces for quiet study, socializing, movement, etc.

### **Building:**

- Hierarchy of spaces is not yet resolved in the reading on the exterior; reorganizing the building will give some relief to the adjacencies and allow for the clusters to read more clearly. Radial pattern suggests centralization, but the building is at the edge of the campus.
- Building facades and form are not yet recognizing or responding to the very different conditions of the site. The team stated a main project goal of the building is to create a welcoming gateway for the campus; each of the sides addresses this through having each a primary and secondary entrance evenly distributed. The facades are visually and physically porous, but do not differentiate from side to side.
- Rotating the building disengages it from Charles Street and from the rest of the campus, and results in challenging residual spaces. The building has been conceived in terms of internal programming; now consider it from the outside in – change a one-way conversation to two-way.
- Building is still very diagrammatic – spaces can be formed to respond to the variety of conditions around the edges. Forget the program for a moment and look at how the

building can contribute to its immediate surroundings; opportunity for it to become a true connection and derive meaning from the site in a much more powerful way.

- Village idea, diversity of spaces, etc. are very strong diagrammatic ideas but have not yet been resolved in the building form as designed.
- Building massing and landscape spaces seem autonomous – they feel disconnected. Revisit how the building and site are interacting with each other and with the larger site. Attempt to create a mass which grows from the ground, rather than a mass that appears to have landed on it. It would be worth exploring the stairs cutting through the landscape, rather than through the building.
- With regard to the ideas about diversity and excitement comes an opportunity to diversify the form and differentiate between volumes. Volume reads as one language, but there is complexity and spatial diversity which can be expressed as a gestalt if more carefully considered.
- Take idea as porosity further than glass door or glass façade – base level of interaction. Porosity is created by spaces that invite; loggia or covered areas welcome people in a more meaningful way. Looking from the outside in can help inform how it connects to place.

### **Next Steps:**

Continue design addressing the comments above.

### **Attending:**

Lee Coyle – Johns Hopkins University

Leon Rost, Lisa Egan – BIG Architects

Matthew Urbanski - Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.

Ed Gunts, Caroline Hecker, Milad Alemo, Matthew Gifford, Jennifer Mielke, Rob Klinedinst, Dan Loverless, Hallie Miller, Elizabeth McDonald, Melody Simmons, Jason Wu, John Stratton, Klaus Philipsen, Nishiel Patel, Addison Palmer, Frederick Read – Attendees

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

Laurie Feinberg\*, Ren Southard, Matt DeSantis, Martin French, Tamara Woods, Chris Ryer – Planning