

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: May 12, 2022

Meeting #62

Project: Nathaniel McFadden Park (North Central Park)

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: Perkins Somerset Old Town (PSO)

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Dana Henson introduced the project providing context for the park within the PSO development and identifying the other parks and recreation spaces in the network. John Neilson continued with the presentation of the proposal beginning with the previous proposal and UDAAP comments from 2019.

Sarah Lytle then presented the elements within the park that would be incorporated into the design including interactive puzzle walls, musical play, dance steps, and education totems. John Neilson continued the presentation with information on creating a multi-generational space that includes areas of seating, fitness, and adult play.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the project team and proceeded with clarifications, questions and comments.

Clarifications:

- Is there a reason it was targeted mainly to kids as opposed to others? *The intent is to make it an intergenerational park – with items that are specifically targeted to adult play. The lawn would be used for multiple age ranges. All the playful spaces are intended to be intergenerational and also to connect caregivers and children.*
- Are there any topographical changes at the great lawn? *There's a natural slope from Somerset to N. Central, and the team has shaped it so that the lawn is slightly elevated around the play area and toward the edges of the lawn.*
- Is the park fenced? How does it work? Are there opportunities to look back out from the park along the edge? *There is not a fence, but will instead use a green edge to create the boundary. Seating is available along the edges at specific locations.*
- How does the park respond to the commercial component opposite Jefferson Street? *At Somerset 4 there will be a grocery store which is why the paved area and pavilion are located opposite Jefferson Street. The hope is that if there is an event at the pavilion there is the opportunity to close Jefferson Street to create more connection to Somerset 4.*

Comments:

- Ordinarily the park might be considered over programmed for the limited space it occupies, however, with the theme of jazz the plethora of activity and programming works.
- With that in mind, there is still concern about the park being over programmed. This will be highly used destination, consider making the theme more subtle. Additionally, be careful with the more prescriptive play elements, make sure they're available as a choice and make sure it's still a park with open-ended leisure available. The park shouldn't be designed with too much visual noise throughout, rather be intentional on where the higher volume and energy locations are and make sure there are places of respite as well.
- One thing that seems to be missing is environmental education; utilize the diverse plant palette to create that education aspect.
- Stormwater management isn't mentioned, but this can be a good way to incorporate the environmental education piece. For example, using the I-spy games to discuss pollinators and plants.
- Doesn't seem to be a lot of seating, this should be dispersed generously around the site and along the edges looking out from the park. Provide and illustrate variety of seating options.
- Interested to see the lighting plan and how that can be connected to the jazz theme.
- As currently drawn, the jazz walk is very linear, are there opportunities to enter or exit midway, to create more access and less prescriptive movement?
- Has a shade study been completed to understand the heat and sun exposure at the swings, this will be especially important in the early years when the trees are still growing.
- How is the edge, specially at Central Avenue being protected?

Next Steps:

Continue addressing the comments above as the park develops.

Attending:

Dana Henson – Henson Development
John Neilson, Trini Rodriguez – Parker Rodriguez
Kristen Gedeon, Amanda Pizza – MK Consulting
Sarah Lytle – Playful Learning

Addison Palmer
Betty Bland Thomas

Ed Gunts - Media

Messrs. Anthony, Bradley and Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Chris Ryer, Matt DeSantis, Ren Southard, Tamara Woods, Caitlin Audette – Planning