

**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**

**URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** April 21, 2022

**Meeting #61**

**Project:** Armistead Gardens Elementary School

**Phase:** Schematic

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**Location:** 5001 E Eager Street, Baltimore MD 21205

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Scott McGovern, the project architect with Design Collective presented the project. This project is a phased occupied renovation and addition to the PK-8 school surrounded by a residential neighborhood. The existing school was largely built in 1991 but includes the original 1951 gym and a 1988 community center addition. City Schools had a feasibility study completed several years ago which provided a jumping off point for the proposal. The proposal maintains and expands the parking to create a functional drop off zone, bus loop, and separate play areas. Alterations to the site include a cleaner path from the main pedestrian arrival site to the east side of the site. At the existing site the building will have a new skin and the windows will be expanded to allow more light into the building.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Panel thanked the presentation team and began with clarifying questions before continuing with the general discussion and comments.

**Clarification:**

- *Does the courtyard open to the sky?* Yes, it does.
- *How do the students walking to school from Harper Way make their way to the main entrance?* They would walk on the sidewalk, around the retaining wall, and along the parking area to enter at the southern entrance. The street parking will be removed to create a wider sidewalk from Harper to the parking lot.
- *It seems that less attention was given to how the masses relate to the surrounding context, and instead the focus was on the topography and phased occupied approach, is that correct?* The retention of the building was the main driving force.
- *What is the function or purpose of the amphitheater area?* The amphitheater addresses the steep grade at that location and its adjacency to the art rooms can allow for use of exterior space for various classes.

### **Site & Circulation:**

- Encourage the team to create a hierarchy for the site design. For example, the main entrance and approach needs to be a priority and announce itself on the site. This should be a celebrated sequence leading to the front door. Similarly, other entry nodes need to be announced.
- Where Harper Way ends at the site push the design further and create a larger landing that leads to a large stair that brings students directly to the entry. Again, this creates a more celebratory and welcoming entry to the site.
- The visitor parking isn't sited well and needs a stronger relationship to the site. Consider turning the parking lot 90 degrees to feel more deliberate and allow for celebration of the main entrance. Have that parking be more deliberate.
- Allow circulation to create natural restorative and education or playful experiences for students. How can circulation be more than moving people?
- Use the exterior and plantings to create more naturalized experience, especially trees which are low maintenance.
- More attention should be paid to the south edge of the site to consider how the site abuts the clusters of building there and to create a clean separation.
- Visitor parking seems foreign to that location, dilutes the importance of that entry and reduces the effectiveness of the main entry by closing off the area.
- Carefully consider the design and siting of the amphitheater, there need to be layers to disconnect the space from the parking.
- The entrance plaza doesn't have a strong concept and is focused on vehicular access which creates spaces that no one wants to occupy and left-over space. Reimagine the space by first creating an identity for the space and then work the vehicular programming around it.
- The bus drop-off for four buses feels very deep, does that much real estate need to be given to this space? Explore solutions where the buses park in a recessed portion of the street where the sidewalk stays along the edge. Need to transform to a people centric space rather than a vehicular centric space.
- Think about how people will actually move through the space and provide pathways at these points.
- Develop sense of identity at the entrance plaza that is different than the one to the south. There are opportunities to design something that feels special and more community based.
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### **Integration of Site & Building:**

- Within each quadrant of the cruciform there are exterior spaces that are only available in those quadrants. Consider how you create a way for people to circulate through the site to access these unique spaces and improve the connectivity between the four quadrants. Use the courtyard to open up to the building's four quadrants to create more porosity from one side to the next.
- Elements of the building become really long, and the team needs to decide how to manage that. Do you highlight the horizontality or break it up? How does the western massing cascade down to the rest of the building?

- Concern about the length of the masses and the relentlessness of the skin. As currently proposed the “institutional palette” isn’t working for the site. Encourage you to create a strong material and massing identity that reflects and supports the users and the program of the building.

**Next Steps:**

Continue the project by addressing the comments above before returning to UDAAP.

**Attending:**

Scott McGovern, Anna Dennis – Design Collective

Maurice Gaskins, Cyndi Smith – City Schools

Andrew Persons, Brandon Brooks, Robyn Toth, Ashley Dunkwu- Attendees

Osbourne Anthony, Sharon Bradly, Pavlina Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Tamara Woods, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette- Planning