

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

Date: April 4, 2019

Meeting #15

Project: Calverton Elementary/Middle School

Phase: Discussion #2

Location: 1100 Whitmore Ave.

PRESENTATION:

John Srygley from JRS Architects provided a brief introduction to the existing site conditions. He was followed by Ryan Cosgrove from Mahan Rykiel Associates with an extensive presentation of the landscape design. Mr. Srygley followed with a discussion of adjustments to the building design made since the last presentation. Highlights include:

- The landscape concept is based both on the extension of Riggs Avenue and the city grid through the site as well as a radial pattern and series of concentric circles emanating from the center of the building. The southern extension of the city grid at Mosher Street has been diminished in importance.
- The landscape plan builds on these concepts, creating a powerful new park space. Four distinct landscape spaces have been created which include: a formal lawn with a drop-off at Braddish Avenue; a flexible open lawn on the northwest for the Middle School and potentially connecting to the existing Recreation & Parks facilities; landscaped staff parking area on the northeast, and a park with the Elementary School playground and curvilinear open spaces and paths on the southeast.
- The character of each of the open spaces was presented in precedent photos.
- The building design has been adjusted to eliminate the courtyard on the northeast building leg and introduce a 4 degree” crank” in the building orientation, divorcing it from the orthogonal city grid.
- Building facades to illustrate the primary concepts were presented only in three-dimensional views and included a transparent glass volume at the building entry, along the Riggs Avenue spine, and the use of three different brick colors and two distinct façade motifs to break up the building’s long low volumes.

Panel Comments:

Landscape

The Panel was very responsive to the proposed landscape design, feeling it fulfilled the important site concept of the building in a park. They felt it would be a wonderful contribution to the neighborhood. They had the following minor suggestions:

- o Reduce the un-occupiable landscape area around the children’s playground in the southeast quadrant to create more generous open play areas for the Elementary School children, appropriate to the size of the school population.
- o Restore the concept of the city grid coming through the site at both Riggs Avenue and Mosher Street by enhancing the Moser Street connection. A more distinct entry feature on the east could be articulated, even maintaining the existing wall and stair. The character of the path could be differentiated from others in the park.

- Carry the landscape treatment along Whitmore Ave. to Winchester Street to more clearly demarcate the site boundaries and set it off as a civic domain.
- Introduce lower level plantings along the pathways, especially on the Riggs Avenue path on the east side of the building, to help improve their spatial character and embellish what appear to be large areas of undifferentiated lawn panels in the 3-D images.

Building Design

The Panel felt some of the changes to the building design had not improved it since the last presentation and the façade language needed further exploration. Lack of elevations within the presentation also made it challenging to visualize and comment on the evolution of the elevation design from the previous meeting. They had the following specific suggestions:

- All four panel members felt the building “crank” was gratuitous and detracted from the strength of the original concept of the grid of the city coming through the site. All recommended it be eliminated and the building returned to its previous orthogonal orientation.
- All felt the language of the building as hinted through the perspective views needed further strengthening; the building currently has a more commercial identity and is not sufficiently civic in nature.
- It was suggested that the Middle School building along the Riggs Avenue pathway on the Whitmore Side would be better as a two-story volume. Another suggestion is that the building facades could respond to the landscape design, with the different motifs responding to changes in the landscape elements and on the ground plane. Currently the building façade motifs seem completely disengaged from the landscape/park features.
- The building corner on Whitmore is important to establish the identity of the building as a school. The massing and the façade articulation on this side should also be studied more closely as it has changed significantly with the elimination of the northern courtyard. The two parallel building planes of the previous massing have been replaced with an open court and the facades and the landscape design should more strongly support that concept.
- The current façade motifs, with their A B rhythm create a monotonous pattern. In addition to the above, the suggestion was made to explore a more complex A B C rhythm of façade motifs.
- The 3-D image on Slide 34 of the presentation offers another suggestion – of the grey brick establishing a datum line and the appearance of the building “floating” above the ground plane. If carried consistently around the building, the datum and the “floating” image could be a powerful idea and strong unifying motif.
- The vestibule should be looked at more closely. Its location on the central axis require a transparent volume and currently the program elements that intrude into it on the Braddish Road entry side undermine the spatial idea.
- The panel strongly encouraged further outreach to Recreation & Parks regarding their existing facility. The school siting and adjacent park space create an ideal setting for shared use and a synergistic relationship between the two programs, and all efforts should be made to address the condition of the existing building and realize that concept.

Panel Action:

Discussion only.

Attending:

Mr. Anthony, Ms. Iieva, O’Neill,* Wagner - UDAAP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Chad Hayes, Jennifer Leonard - Planning