

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: March 23, 2023

Meeting #75

Project: SOM Entry Plaza

Phase: Schematic Design

Location: Middle East/ Johns Hopkins Hospital Campus

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Sally MacConnell with the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine introduced the team from Hopkins Medicine and the Design team from Olin - Susan Weiler, Sarah Leaskey, and Chris Maurer. Ms. Weiler described the existing conditions and design considerations. The proposed design includes larger planting areas that create gathering spaces and shade pavilions. One goal is to create a biodiverse habitat that creates more interest visually and textually. The retaining wall along Monument Street will be reduced as much as possible and where it is still necessary, visually enhanced with planters and seating. The project is restricted by the structural elements supporting the below ground structures.

DISCUSSION:

The panel thanked the team for the presentation and expressed excitement that the plaza will be enhanced as discussed in previous meetings for adjacent buildings. The panel proceed with questions and comments.

Clarifications

- *Is there ADA access to the raised platforms?* Yes, it's a relatively minor curb that will be accessible.
- *What is the collection technique as storm water management facilities?* This will be mitigated both through the soil type and the use of a fairly sophisticated drainage and filtering system below the planters. There are existing slab drains that the system will connect to. The team is trying to hold and store the water as much as possible with the depth and soil mixture.
- *Are the planters opened up to received runoff from the plaza?* We're still developing our paver system, but that is the intent –it hasn't been figured out yet.
- *How much shade and sunlight is experienced in the plaza?* We did significant study on the sun and shade patterns, which dictated where plantings are. The buildings along the plaza have glazing at the ground level, so less planters were located along building elevations. Additionally, we didn't want to impact the buildings for both constructability and maintenance sake.

- *Is there a walkway along the Miller Research Building?* Yes, the path shown is a walkway for egress and connection. It is a fairly steep pathway.
- *Is there a retaining structure along the lawn south of the Miller Research Building?* Yes, the landscape is currently lifted, this will be modified to allow at grade access to the upper portion, but the retaining wall will be utilized further west.
- *What are the elements along Rutland?* Those are the structural members supporting the Ross Building.
- *How does the stop bar work at the cross walk?* The idea is that the lights would be timed so that the light at the new light along Monument will turn red first and traffic will clear Rutland, this will be timed with the intersection at Wolfe and Monument.

Site

- Incredibly exciting that this space has been opened up for both circulation and visual connection. The project is successful in creating spaces without obstructing the circulation – peeling back the edges of the planters to create gathering spaces. Additionally, the introduction of topography of the plants which help to shape the views is successful.
- Appreciate the dynamic crosswalk that creates more focus on the pedestrian and creates an interesting visual.
- Appreciate the attention to the local biohabitats – very regionally contextual. However, make sure that the plantings are appropriate for the densely urban condition here that will create unique conditions.
- Be aware of the plantings during the winter months. What’s happening in February? How can you bring life to the landscape in mid-winter?
- The edges are nicely treated to take advantage of the design using seating to tie the plaza to the public realm.
- Would have liked to see the edge along Rutland handled in a slightly different way, consider how this area, which isn’t very large will be utilized.
- Really appreciate how you repurposed the lawn into a coastal area. Becomes a focal point both as you walk along it, and use the plaza above it.
- The space feels purposeful and intentional that will permeate through the campus for years to come.
- Really appreciate the shading devices to help break up the scale of the tall buildings that surround the plaza.
- What are the key entry points, and building access points?
- The centrally located guard booth in the middle of the plaza becomes the focus and main feature. Consider a slightly different location that maintains sight lines, perhaps closer to Rutland near the structural column connected to the southeastern most planter.
- Information center and security booth are two different functions that can coexist. If you strip aside the security – how else can you address the service center? Can it be an electronic kiosk or something else? Consider other ways to take the pressure off the service center, and instead focus on security.

Next Steps:

Continue addressing the comments above as each building develops and work with Planning staff to complete the review.

Attending:

Sally MacConnell, Kirsten Waltz, Jennifer Mielke, Michael Preston – Johns Hopkins Medicine
Susan Weiler, Sarah Leaskey, Chris Maurer – The Olin Studio

Anthony Osbourne, Sharon Bradley and Pavlina Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Matt DeSantis, Eric Tiso, Imani Jasper – Planning