

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

Date: August 24, 2023

Meeting #81

Project: Baltimore Ravens Boys & Girls Club at Hilton Rec Center **Phase:** Schematic Design II

Location: Carroll South Hilton Neighborhood

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Matt Herbert with Design Collective began the presentation by reorienting the team to the site and the existing condition of the Recreation Center as well as the previous proposal including the site and proposed architecture.

PJ Benenati, a landscape architect with Design Collective, then presented the proposed changes to the site design and how the team responded to the comments received at the previous UDAAP.

Ashley Dunkwu with Design Collective returned to the architecture of the building and the changes made to the building including reducing the strong horizontal lines and brightening the color palette.

DISCUSSION:

The panel thanked the team for the presentation and moved on to questions and comments.

Questions:

- *I see that the play area is still on the other side of the parking lot, can you provide the logic for the location? We've studied it in several locations and prefer it in a more obvious location that will be easier to access for the community.*
- *Is it being designed for a specific age group? 5-12.*
- *What is the square footage? I can't recall at the moment, however, we can provide that.*
- *How many cars are anticipated in the parking lot? The parking will be similar to the current amount, which is roughly 38 spots.*

- *For a parking lot of that size do you need two entry points?* The two entries are mostly to allow for buses to loop the lot.
- *The bulk of the traffic will be coming from where?* We hope that it will be along Mt. Olivet – we’re working with the neighborhood to advocate for street improvements at Mt. Olivet with DOT.
- *Can you explain why the bleachers couldn’t be moved closer to the recreation center?* We tried to do this; however, the field barely fits within the site and if the bleachers shifted closer they would limit the outdoor space adjacent to the rec center. As it is we will be building up the topography where the bleachers are to accommodate them in that area.
- *Can you explain the whole idea behind the entry?* Trying to create something that is still dramatic, without being too overstated and scaled to the community while still dynamic, sheltering but inviting.
- *Is the soffit functional? Is the fascia structural?* Yes,
- *Can you identify the materials along the front elevation?* Terracotta or high-density fiber cement and metal paneling.

Site:

- Appreciate the attention to the site plan, it’s a true improvement.
- Urge you to reconsider the location of the playground, parents watching children here will be separated from the other activities.
- Consider how could you program the playground so that it can be more connected to the recreation center programming.
- Disappointed that the surrounding natural environment couldn’t be incorporated, appreciate that you are utilizing plantings throughout the site.
- Make sure the plantings have interest during all seasons, the palette right now is primarily summer interest.
- It’s ok and appropriate for the plantings to have a theme, think of the end user of the space – embrace the fun and really go with it. All purple plantings could be great – also how can you connect the fun of the environment with the architecture of the building.
- Appreciate the new arrival sequence really feels much more appropriate and provides clarity for users.
- The widening of the connection to the field and gathering space is a great improvement.
- Is the green space along the field (opposite the bathrooms) necessary? Seems like this would be a great location for some additional seating facing the field, providing some seating on this side of the field.
- Consider how the parking lot can be reorganized to allow for only one curbcut? The two entries on either side of the intersection is awkward and will create confusion for those visiting.

Building:

- Appreciate the shift of the bathroom massing along the gym, that really opens the gathering space.
- Reconsider the front entry area, the dropped soffit feels dated, similar to churches from the 1970s and 1980s.
- The entry to the gym facing the field feels more welcoming and celebratory than the current entry.
- Is the heavy overhang necessary? How does it enhance the design?
- The gym is such a heavy mass, how can details be used to break up what can be a very harsh mass.
- The punched windows and doors facing the field feel arbitrary and disconnected from the design. If the views from these spaces into the basketball court are a priority, how can the window placement and design enhance that.
- Recommend your take a step back in the design, bring in some fresh perspectives to see how the entry can be the welcoming space you want to create. As you're looking at the design, focus on looking at it in 3D, not in elevation or plan – need to really think about how the space is going to be perceived. There have been several well-designed recreation centers both locally and nationally that you should review as part of the fresh perspective on the design.
- The materials and general design are overwhelmingly gray currently, consider how you can bring more life to the design – similar to the landscape – this is a building that should be fun and youthful, something to bring excitement to the space and its users. Doesn't feel youthful currently.

Next Steps:

Address the Panel's comments and continue to work with Planning to complete review of the design.

Attending:

Matt Herbert, PJ Benenanti, Ashley Dunkwu, Mindy McKinney – Design Collective
Andre Fountain – Boys and Girls Club

Osborne Anthony, Pavlina Illeva and Sharon Bradley – UDAAP Panel
Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Matt DeSantis, Kyle Leggs – Planning