

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

**Date:** June 1, 2023

**Meeting #78**

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

**Location:** Carroll South Hilton Neighborhood

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Andre Fountain with the Boys and Girls Club began the presentation with an introduction. This project is a major renovation to an existing recreation center and park. The building will receive a major overhaul, including a new gym, updated gathering space and other amenities. The park will have a new football field, courts, and landscaping.

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

**Questions:**

- *Do you have any idea what, if any, development will occur to the southeast of the site?* One portion is owned by the city and the other is owned by Potts and Callahan who own the adjacent quarry. Not much potential for development and is currently a lovely open space.
- *Have you considered environmental education program to make use of the surrounding natural environment?* The Green Street Academy currently has a study path focused on urban agriculture and there will be connection between the Recreation Center and the school.
- *How are you engaging the naturalized surrounding?* We are looking for opportunities to incorporate pollinator corridor's through the site and include panels for passive education that discuss various efforts on the site such as forest conservation and stormwater management.
- *Did you study indoor and outdoor connections at the building? Are you considering blurring those lines?* I think we could, but that would need to be balanced with security

concerns. We've also looked at creating a visual connection where there can't always be a physical connection.

- *Can you walk me through how the bus loop works?* Infrequent buses would enter to the east of parking lot and loop around exiting to the west. These would be for teams competing at the field.
- *Buses would leave down Phelps, not Mt. Olivet, correct?* Likely Phelps, but we are concerned about reducing congestion in the neighborhood.
- *Phelps dead ends to the east of the building?* Yes, that access is used infrequently by the quarry for emergencies only – but needs to be maintained.
- *Are there sidewalks being planned along Phelps, and would there be access to the building near the gym?* Yes, there would be a protected sidewalk along Phelps that would continue the fitness loop, and we are currently reconfiguring the plan to allow for an entry to the gym from Phelps.
- *The gymnasium seems really tall, is there something else occurring in there?* No, it's the required height for a gymnasium.
- *Access to the gym is through the lobby or through the lobby that exits towards the field?* Yes.
- *What is the use of the flexible gathering space?* Is there bike parking? We designed this to be intentionally flexible so that it could be used for outdoor learning or games, but also move the tables to provide space for larger gatherings.
- *Where is the fence for the gathering area?* Planning on a 4' high black chain-link fence on the inside of the walking trail – the flexible gathering area will be connected to the walking loop by several paths.
- *Have you studied having the bleachers closer to the building?* We did, but didn't like that it blocked the view of the field from the building.
- *What is the capacity of the bleachers?* Currently around 200-300 people – still being evaluated.
- *Where would the teams sit?* In front of the bleachers.
- *This will be an important community hub, have you looked at how people will walk to the site?* Yes, the majority of the neighborhood is located to the west and most people will come from Phelps, with those who live down Mount Olivet using that. We will be enhancing the connection to Green Street Academy which will be utilized for parking and those to the northwest.

**Site:**

- What's missing is a very diagrammatic conceptual understanding of what the main intent is – how various groups approach and use the site. Project needs to move to the

next level of iteration where various uses don't simply land on the site but transform to optimize connectivity, visibility, continuity, etc.

- There's a great opportunity to engage the natural surroundings, specifically the forested edge that many urban youth don't have access to. The most important thing is the immersion into nature – which is often more important than signs. Realize that safety and security are necessary, but supervised nature walks could be a great asset to the program.
- Where possible create indoor/outdoor connections and where it's not possible strong visual connections. Anything happening inside should have a corresponding space outside.
- Reconsider the location of the bleachers – with the outdoor space between the field and the building there is a limited view of the field, no view to be maintained, and would be infinitely more convenient for users. Alternatively, if the bleacher location is maintained then there must be wide and clear path that connects the bleachers to the building on both sides of the field.
- The approach to the site centers the parking lot – in the foreground of the building – this needs to be addressed. How can you integrate nature into this to begin the immersion into nature that will exist at the site. Can the entry plaza experience be stretched along Phelps and draw people into the site, creating a gateway experience and a more welcoming street edge.
- The limited parking directly in front of the building should be relocated within the parking lot.
- The approach to the building from Phelps, with a sidewalk going around the parking lot is underwhelming – if this is the experience that the visitors are having, consider how you want people to get to the field or the building and feel welcomed to the site that was designed for this specific user.
- Consider relocating the basketball court which is currently located at the center of the program and will be congested quickly when there is an event or game. This connects to the idea of indoor/outdoor connection.
- The location of the playground is awkward it should be closer to other outdoor programming and away from vehicles and bus drop-off.
- Think of Phelps, east of the building, as a deliberate pathway that will provide access to the gymnasium and provide more deliberate visual cues that draw one deeper into the site.
- Allow the terminus of the path to be something special, art or another focus.

### **Building:**

- Consider elongating the building between the parking lot and the quarry, so that pathway to the gymnasium feels intentional and the fitness loop is more connected.
- Consider angling the gymnasium toward Phelps, so that by extending past the building, it clearly signals the secondary entrance.
- Alternatively, consider reorienting the gym (while keeping it as far east as possible) and locating the restrooms on the shorter edge, closer to the field – but less dominant within the gathering space.
- Within the building consider relocating the common spaces along the corridor shared with the gymnasium to consolidate the user experience and connect the interior and exterior spaces.
- Love the idea of creating height at the corner, however, because the roof line is so long consider bringing the massing up through the roof line, making the corner the focus.
- Struggle a bit with the horizontality of the material against the vertical glass. Need a clear hierarchy for the material and not have different pieces undermining each other.
- Consider switching the lounge and front desk locations, and making clear that both entries along Phelps can have similar expressions.

**Next Steps:**

Address the Panel's comments and return to UDAAP as the design progresses.

**Attending:**

Matt Herbert, PJ Benenanti – Design Collective

Andre Fountain – Boys and Girls Club

Osborne Anthony, Pavlina Illeva and Sharon Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette – Planning