

**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**

**URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** April 20, 2023

**Meeting #76**

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**Project:** 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools – Commodore John Rogers Elem. / Middle School      **Phase:** Schematic II

**Location:** 100 N Chester St, Baltimore, MD 21231

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**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

Todd Vukmanic of Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates Architects began the presentation with a reminder of the program and site located in Butchers Hill, which includes a challenging topography and existing building to be demolished.

The design team appreciated the panels previous comments and investigated a number of site plans in response. These prioritized creating an urban edge and decentering the parking and service area.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Panel thanked the team for their clear presentation and congratulated the team for their iterative work responding thoughtfully to the comments. The Panel began the discussion with clarifying questions before continuing with the general discussion and comments.

**Questions / Clarifications:**

- *In terms of the vehicular circulation around the site, it's a clockwise path? Correct.*
- *The parent pick-up and drop-off is on Fairmount? Correct.*
- *Is the parking around the site all the back-in parking? Yes.*
- *What is the process for students entering the site? Students walking to school generally come from the northeast and will utilize the stairs to the play area where they will congregate prior to the school opening.*
- *Where will the stained glass be integrated into the site? Intending for it to be at the front of the building at the media center.*
- *The stair at the NE corner is shown differently in different plans, which is correct? We're currently working through restraints from BGE, but would like to maintain the diagonal datum.*

- *It seems that there's a fence around the field, is that correct?* No, it would be open.
- *Does the younger student play area meet requirements for square footage?* Yes, but we will double check to verify.
- *Is there a proposed use for the outdoor space located along Fairmount? Could this be used for outdoor classrooms or other uses?* We are looking into various options, with either access from the gym or classrooms.
- *Is there an opportunity for outdoor space at the roof of the gymnasium?* There is an opportunity, but city schools generally dislikes occupation of rooftops by students.

#### **Site:**

- You've successfully solved some of the biggest site constraints and adapted them to the needs of the program. Great to see the evolution through your process.
- Encouraged by the thoughtful redesign, specifically the relocation of the gymnasium, it's a great improvement that is much more intentional.
- Appreciate that the building is working with the topography.
- The organization of bus parking in one area and parent parking in another makes a lot of sense.
- The diagonal datum through the site doesn't need to be inserted into the landscape.
- If the entry plaza is a node of arrival, then create a similar space within the courtyard where there is a corresponding space that welcomes the students to school.
- Reconsider the size of the entrance plaza at Washington and Fairmount, it seems overly large for the needs of the location. Additionally, consider integrating the steps into the destination space to create a unified composition. By making this space more urban and pushing the edge of the building toward Washington Street you can gain additional space within the building to create breakout spaces and breathing room within the long classroom hallways. This would also further protect the Headstart playground from the entry plaza.
- Given the compressed site, find ways to maximize every single square foot of the interior and exterior space. For example, find a way to utilize the green space along Fairmount, this could be a great nature space for students and use the rooftop of the gym for outdoor education that would enhance the whole design.
- Create sense of openness by not securing the separate play areas, and instead securing the site edge.
- The Headstart outdoor space is so much nicer with the elevated space and the tree canopy.

#### **Building:**

- Appreciate the massing of the building, where the recess along Fairmount provides another layer of separation from the sidewalk for the classrooms, while the admin and gym extend closer to the property line.
- Study brining the west end of the primary volume closer to Washington street in favor of student break-out space along the main hallway, which can then help articulate the massing and long facades.

- Study the use of vertical windows adjacent to the location of the stained glass to call back to the existing condition. This arrangement can be used at special spaces throughout the building to differentiate the use in the architectural language (classrooms vs. other spaces).
- As the design moves forward encourage the use of a simple material palette that reinforces the main massing logic of the building. Explore the relationship of the ‘floating’ volume and the base of the building with the elegant restraint of the established design approach.

**Next Steps:**

Continue to move the project forward addressing the comments above.

**Attending:**

Todd Vukmanic, Charles Ravenna - CRA

Kay Morin, Peter Soprano - Site Resources

Osbourne Anthony, Sharon Bradley and Pavlina Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette, Chris Ryer, Imani Jasper - Planning