BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: April 11, 2024 **Meeting #90**

Project: JHU Data Science and Artificial Intelligence (DSAI) **Phase:** Schematic Design

Location: 200 and 3100 Wyman Park Drive (Homewood Campus)

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Lee Coyle introduced the project, which is a new building for Johns Hopkins University, Whiting School of Engineering. The new building will serve a Data Science and Artificial Intelligence program. The 500,000 GSF institute will house instructional spaces, faculty offices, collaboration spaces, predominantly dry and computational research labs (some wet lab space), and amenities including a campus dining component. Program will be divided into two (2) buildings, DSTI North and DSTI South. The buildings will be located on either side of Wyman Park Drive and are planned to be connected via an elevated bridge as well as an underground service + utility tunnel that span above/below the public right of way.

Vladimir Pajkic, the design lead for ZGF, continued the presentation with an introduction of the context, noting the location of the site within the neighborhood and campus. The location for this building was selected for the adjacency to the Whiting School of Engineering.
Anneliza Kaufer, OLIN Landscape Architects, continued the presentation with an explanation of the landscape. The location of the site is at the edge of an important ecological corridor.

The team organized the building with the idea that the program can be broken up into “neighborhoods” and respond to more of the adjacent context. The proposed building is also being studied in section – the team is striving to make sure the building addresses the ground plane and urban edge. Despite being two buildings, it reads more as a single complex. This approach allows for the north building to be a bit smaller and not fill up the entire site. Building is intended to encourage integrated workflows through collaborative workspaces. Traditional practice is to separate the wet and dry labs, but the interdisciplinary aspects of the program will help these two types of programs become more integrated.

The presentation continued with explanations of each of the floor plans, and sections through the site. Finally, the presentation concluded with photos of the physical model, a discussion about the approach to materials, and rendered views of the proposed building.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel opened the session by reminding attendees that the proper channel for input is through the Planning Department. Following the presentation from the design team, the Panel thanked the team and began the discussion with questions before continuing with comments.

Clarifications:

- *How big is the building program?* Research program is 500,000 square feet, and there is parking below ground. About 80% of the program is dedicated to research (wet and dry lab) and the other 20% is dedicated to classrooms and a café.
- *Is there a unique difference between the north and south buildings?* The program was intentionally placed in both buildings to encourage people to cross Wyman Park Drive. The program layout is.
- *Where does the project extend end and the Agora building extents begin?* OLIN is the designer for both projects and is working to develop a synergy between the two buildings. The landscape is meant to be complimentary between the buildings.
- *The site is full of topographic challenges; what is the accessible route?* The main central plazas are relatively flat, and the accessible entrance is on Wyman Park Drive. From the Remington Avenue side, there is also and entry.
- *Is the parking fully underground, and what is achievable from a landscape perspective?* Yes, it is fully below ground, and the team is using the landscape to its advantage. There will be landscaped berms that help to shield. Soil will be added to the parking deck, and the volume and depth will be enough to host native and regional vegetation. There will be a well-developed canopy, but the trees will never be as tall if they were natural woodland in terra firma.
- *Is there a bridge over Wyman Park Drive?* Yes, the bridge will connect the two buildings.
- *How are you defining the gateway, and what is the public realm approach along Remington Avenue?* There will be a combination of terracing and slope, and will try to

Site:

- The team set out with aspirational goals, but it is not clear how the goals are intended to be achieved. The proposed project does not seem to address the goals the team provide, which included:

    - Encouraging interdisciplinary work by integrating different labs (wet and dry) and avoiding segregation of different types of research to separate sides of the building.
    - Maximize the presence of the park view on the north side of the building.
- Site diagrams are needed to describe rationale and decision-making process. The team referenced the different edges, but the landscape strategy is not represented clearly with the graphics. It is not appropriate to pour the landscape onto the site as a base for the building, as if green sauce poured on a plate with the entre on top. All exterior space must be carefully planned with respect to the urban or campus context.
- Presentation and schematic design level of development can benefit from applying more rigor and intentionality to the various design moves.
- Neighborhood context and urban design:
    - Berm and windows on the ground plane do not really address the site or the neighborhood across the street.
    - The building should create meaningful edges not just on the student side, and but also focus on how to design a nice building for the neighborhood side. It is critical to address the Remington side of the project.
    - The Remington side has a different character and should be looked at within the context of the neighborhood.
    - Design from the inside out is logical first step, but now it is time to design from the outside in. Studying the building within the context is a necessary step of the iterative design process. The team must look at the neighborhood and think about how the continuity of the urban landscape and forest landscape can inform or reinforce the building design.
    - Use references – what has the team learned from large institutional buildings on the edge of a smaller rowhouse neighborhood? There are a series of studies needed.
    - There needs to be more exploration about the pedestrian experience – more sections and perspectives along Remington Avenue, the courtyard between the buildings, etc.
    - Study the relationship between the existing building and the proposed building. Sections are critical to understanding the spaces between the buildings.
    - The team mentioned an aspiration to bring natural systems to the site, but the one opportunity to bring the forested corridor exists along the northeast corner and does not appear to have been studied as part of the design.
- Site layout:
    - The site seems to be so stifled and crowded. The building is crowding the site – understanding that the building program needs to be 500,000 square feet, but the layout of the buildings and the in-side-out design approach results in blocks that are too heterogenous, which means that the building is modulated and multiplied.

- Give more attention to the courtyard spaces and make them feel intentional and designed instead of left-over irregularly shaped bits of landscape.
- Think of the organic way campuses develop, typically around a quad – the buildings are subservient to the land. The space is critical to the development of campus. The team needs to address this development as an opportunity to look at the quad space and respond to it as part of the design process.

Building:

- Maximizing the height would be preferable – building height is not an issue in urban areas, and the team should study how the building could occupy a smaller footprint with a taller building.
- Program could be articulated in a different way. The program distribution and how it interacts with the site is a design opportunity that seems to have been missed.
- Rotation of the massing:
  - The Panel is very concerned about the arbitrary angles and massing moves of the building.
  - Cranking the modules is working against the overall composition and leads to a more disjointed outcome. The relationships between the masses and the site are critical; the form of the current building presents a series of random and arbitrary rotations that appear jarring from all angles.
  - The building appears larger and lacks proportion from any viewpoint as a result from all of the rotations.
  - There are too many arbitrary moves that are very noticeable. The team noted their intent was to be playful, but these are big moves and are very visible in the massing. The rotations do not feel playful; they feel heavy and chaotic.
  - The team mentioned the shift of the Agora building – the Agora building was studied with a lot of rigor before deciding on the single rotation. The DSAI complex has not been studied with the same level of investigation.
  - The rotation must be as a response to something readable.
  - Edit the building back – consider which rotations are the most critical, ask what they are responding to and what they are offering to the project.
  - The residual spaces are open on paper, but what is the real quality of the spaces when you are standing in them?
- The building feels like it is backing up to Remington.
- Team must ask what is playful about the building – the materiality and the berm make it feel heavy and, more enclosed.

- Materiality does not bear a relationship with the campus. The team must present rationale for their material selection.

Next Steps:

Continue the project by addressing the comments above and meet with Planning staff before returning to UDAAP.

Attending:

Jennifer Mielke, Lee Coyle – Johns Hopkins University
Vladimir Pajkic – ZGF Architects
Anneliza Kaufer, Patrick Playdon – Olin Studio

Jessica Hudson, Juan Porta, Maryam Katouziam, Matt Hooke, Michael Zhao, Mona Addison, Patric Amorosa, Arpita Mitra, Cedric Al kazzi, Chi Yan, Ed Gunts, Elizabeth Clifford, Rick Shelley, Ruochen Wang, Sarah Levine, Amanda Talbot, Brian Baska, Carrie Baniszewski, Eduardo Frontera – Attendees

Pavlina Ilieva*, Osbourne Anthony, Sharon Bradly, Kevin Storm – UDAAP Panel

Ren Southard**, Chris Ryer, Caitlin Audette, Antoine Heath, Nick Chupein, Marie McSweeney, Imani Jasper, Matt DeSantis – Planning

* UDAAP Chairperson
** Assigned Planning Staff