

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

Date: May 21, 2020

Meeting #34

Project: 21st Century Schools Initiative – Montebello

Phase: Discussion #2

Location: 2040 E 32nd St, Baltimore, MD 21218

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Todd Vukmanic of Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates gave a brief review of the project and then moved on to explain how the project team addressed comments from previous UDAAP meeting. Changes addressed include main entrance, circulation and parking lots, orientation of addition and related exterior spaces (outdoor learning area and play area). Next, Claire Fishman of Carroll Engineering gave an overview of the revised site plan. Main changes include:

- Main entrance and corresponding addition have been rotated to maintain the radial position of the original structure
- Outdoor learning and play areas have more openness
- Cleaned up vehicular circulation
- Give new addition its own identity rather than copying the existing building

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the project team for giving an efficient presentation and for responding to the comments. The Panel then asked clarifying questions with regard to:

- The area between the two buildings at the front entrance is existing and will not be removed, however it is low 3' high or so;
- ADA circulation routes – each entrance as its own accessible route from catchment area;
- Student entrance points – choice will be made by school and is unknown at this point, but design allows opportunities for both front and rear queuing and entry;
- Retaining walls – team tried to minimize height and frequency of walls;
- Planted area at front entrance circle drops toward school to navigate grade and will have a low seat wall.

Site:

- Site appears to be vastly improved in terms of how the buildings relate to each other and to the topography – much more cohesive entry sequence.
- Outdoor classroom has appropriate scale and use for topography.

- Play area is much more open and landscape buffer between parking lot acts as a positive buffer now.
- ADA route from older children's play area would benefit from more direct route if possible – panel realizes this might not be able to achieve with existing topography.
- Risers spaced far apart should be revised into groups of at least two at the front to avoid trip hazard.
- Front entrance vs. Curran Drive entrance – is the front acting as a functional catchment or symbolic formal progression? Need to decide which entrance will be the main functional entrance for students to resolve other questions about catchment and path of circulation.
- Opportunity to landscape front edge.
- Formal radial geometry size competes with the drop off area and needs more distance to preserve hierarchy. Visitor parking could be reconfigured to give more space and make it more efficient. Hammerhead configuration competes with the geometry, could become more linear.
- Plaza is feeling a little formal, more like a courthouse. Once the geometry has been established, there is an opportunity to make it less rigid and more scaled to the program of Elementary School.
- Plaza would benefit from change in paving or scoring pattern, shrinking down a bit, and preservation of the circle by moving the curb cut for bus drop-off back to the west.
- Path from the parking lot to the upper level needs more clarity and directness.

Building:

- Prominence and history of site are beginning to be enhanced with new building element, but connection that ties existing building together needs to be thought of as a wedge, gasket or pivot.
- Central circulation needs better integration and more visual connection to front entry promenade.
- Opportunity for enhanced relationship between interior and exterior spaces (play and outdoor learning areas).
- Materiality – language and attitude should reflect the contemporary nature of this new building addition, which will never match the stature or formality of the existing building. To minimize competition, materials should be either same or different not “similar” – attempting to match brick will be a battle. This may work at the main language of the addition, but grey precast on other volume could help them to read as more singular.
- Form – organizationally the building is working better. New taller circulation space is an opportunity to use more glazing and differentiate from the existing building – this is

muddying the clarity of the organization. For this knuckle to act as a differentiation point, need simplification of rooflines, contemporary material, glazing.

- Addressing the knuckle piece also presents an opportunity to enhance prominent facades at the front through differentiation of materials, glazing, roof line, etc. instead of simply turning the corner in brick.

Next Steps:

Continue design addressing comments above.

Attending:

Todd Vukmanic, Richard LeBlanc – Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates

Claire Fishman, Dorothy Hellman – Carroll Engineering

Joseph Mayzck, Justin Wood – Maryland Stadium Authority

Michael McBride – City Schools

Mr. Anthony, Mses. O’Neill, Ilieva, Bradley – UDAAP Panel

Laurie Feinberg*, Ren Southard, Tamara Woods, MC Buettner, Marshella Wallace, Carmen Morosan – Planning