

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE ADVISORY PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date: September 15, 2022

Meeting #67

Project: 21st Century Schools – Annex at Maree G. Farring Elem. School

Phase: Design Development

Location: East Patapsco Ave. at 3rd Street, Baltimore MD

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Rochelle Cusimano of Smolen Emr Ilkovitch began the presentation with a reminder of the current conditions at Maree Garnett Farring Elementary and Middle School where the existing facility is at approximately 250% of its capacity with more than 700 students.

The project team took the panels comments to heart and worked to address them by lowering the entry to be at street level, reducing the height of the hyphen connecting to the church, expanding the courtyard, and carrying architectural elements from the historic church to the new addition.

Emily Anderson presented the landscape updates which include the expanded play courtyard, as well as landscaping around the edge of the building that will help address the changing slope along Cambria.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the team for their clear presentation and the transformation of the project. The panel then began the discussion with clarifying questions before continuing with the general discussion and comments.

- *What is the reasoning for the angle of the entrance along Cambria Street?* This was done to both address the one-way traffic and visually connect to the main entrance which is also angled.
- *What is the reasoning for the angle of the main entrance?* This is done to give hierarchy to the historic church which is further set back than the classroom wing of the new addition.
- *Will students continue to be dropped off along Cambria Street?* No, with the updated design students will be dropped off at the main entrance along Third Street.
- *Where is student drop off? At the center of the block, or along the entire block face?* Drop off will be centered on the block.

- *To access the ramp will students need to go down to the corner of Cambria and Third? Yes, the entrance to the ramp is at the corner.*
- *How often will people need to cross Cambria street to go between the two school buildings? This has changed since the previous UDAAP meeting. Now the school anticipates the entry being utilized infrequently and only by staff. For example, an art or music teacher may utilize it to serve different classrooms.*

Site:

- The courtyard is much improved, verify that it meets the recommend size of 75 sf per student. Additionally, consider relocating the musical instruments into the landscape bar to provide the maximum square footage for student play.
- Consider reducing the size of the retaining wall adjacent to the main entrance and consider utilizing that space for an art installation of some kind.
- Currently the plant palette doesn't include any winter interest, which is the bulk of the school year. Add some plantings that will provide that visual interest in the winter.
- Shift the building so that entry is at grade to remove the need for the ramp and steps.
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Building & Play Courtyard:

- Is there an opportunity to provide more opening to the courtyard from the east? Perhaps by angling the wall there or reducing the height? This will allow more light into the courtyard, though while much improved is still surrounded by large walls.
- In the presentation you clearly show how the team studied the adjacent historic church. Was any similar study completed for the existing school building? This should be completed to help the addition act as a bridge between the church and the school building.
- The angled entry at Cambria Street creates too grand of an entry for what is essentially an alley condition. Consider modifying that entry to act as a hyphen that will connect to the two classroom wings that can be square with the property.
- The analysis of the church and its rhythms is important and it's great to dive that deeply into the process. However, the next level of iteration needs to be one of editing. "Shake" off the unnecessary elements of the building. Examples of this include the removal of the yellow stripe at the front elevation and the window patterning at the ground level.
- At the front elevation the solid to window ratio works, but the details need to be refined.
- The use of primary colors, or primary adjacent colors is too obvious. The red lines connecting to the historic building are successful, but the yellow stripe needs to be reconsidered.
- The red utilized appears as different colors in renderings vs. drawings. Make sure this is more of a terracotta red that can relate back to the surrounding neighborhood and church and not the primary color red that can feel contrived.

- Similarly, the iron spotted brick proposed at the top of the building appears to mimic the solid course cornice at the existing school building. This is a great subtle way to connect the two buildings. If a brick with a blue undertone is used, you can get the color you want without making it feel forced.
- Simplify the Cambria Street elevation to be more in keeping with the simple school building across the street and utilize elements to create a horizontal element. This can be connecting the sunshades at the eastern two windows and modification to the windows themselves.
- One example of editing the literal use of the rhythms found at the church is at the courtyard. On the south wall consider using continuous glazing to open the courtyard to the school and creating more connection.

Next Steps:

Address the comments and work with staff to either return to UDAAP or staff as necessary.

Attending:

Rochelle Cusimano, Ran Ilkovitch – Smolen Emr Ilkovitch
Emily Anderson, Peter Soprano – Site Resources
Maurice Gaskins – City Schools

Brandon Brooks - Attendees

Messrs. Anthony, Mses. Bradly and Ilieva - UDAAP Panel

Tamara Woods*, Ren Southard, Caitlin Audette - Planning