

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL

MEETING MINUTES

Date:	October 12, 2017	Meeting No.: 247
Project:	John Ruhrah Elementary/ Middle School	Phase: Discussion #1
Location:	Rappolla Street and Foster Avenue East Baltimore	

PRESENTATION:

Architects Paul Bradshaw and Chang Song, representing Grimm and Parker, introduced the project to the Panel. As described, the project consists of the renovation and expansion of the historic 1930 John Ruhrah School. The building program consists of a new gymnasium, cafeteria, media center and classroom wing; expanding the existing 60,000 square foot historic Greek revival structure to 135,000 total square feet. The proposed expansion of the building will increase student capacity from 419 to 976 students.

The existing historic building is situated on a full urban block within East Baltimore’s Greektown Area and is bounded by Rappolla and Tolina Streets and Foster and Fait Avenues. The existing campus is defined by a 1930 historic three-story masonry school building, a 1936 attached 3-story addition and a 1974 one-story gym addition.

The preferred site development concept promoted by the Design Team envisions a one-story “public wing” along Foster Avenue, containing a gymnasium and a cafeteria; and a three-story “academic wing” along Fait Avenue, requiring the demolition of the 1974 gym addition. Of particular note is the Architect’s desire to install historically sensitive windows that were removed during previous renovations.

COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:

Respecting the historic building:

The Panel expressed support for all efforts to restore the historic 1930 & 1936 building facades, in particular, installing architecturally sensitive windows in original openings that have since been closed by masonry infill. The Panel urged the Design Team to exercise extreme sensitivity locating and designing proposed additions to the historic school building.

Relocate the proposed “Public Wing”:

The Panel questioned the appropriateness of locating the “Public Wing” along Foster Avenue, exposing predominantly back of house functions, including a service yard. Considering much of student foot traffic will be coming from the east and north, the Panel raised concerns about the potential pedestrian and vehicular conflict caused by the location of the service yard, parking lot and bus drop-off area along Foster Avenue. With respect to safety, the Panel questioned the proximity of the proposed parking lot to the existing playground. Additional concern was expressed about the “disconnected” relationship between the proposed location of the “Public Wing” with the gymnasium component and the existing location of the Recreation Center.

Relocate the proposed “Academic Wing”:

The Panel felt that Foster Avenue was an important neighborhood street and that locating the “Academic Wing” along this street would perceptually “extend” the front face of the school. The Panel urged the Design Team to rethink the location of the parking lot and service area so that a stronger linear landscape zone along Foster Avenue could be established similar to that along Rappolla Street.

PANEL ACTION:

Discussion only.

Attending:

Michael McBride – 21st Century Schools

Dawn Sanders – MSA

Chang Song, Paul Bradshaw – Grimm + Parker Architects

Yoshihiko Kubota, Bel St John Day – Bradley Site Design

Marianne Crampton – MK Consulting Engineers

Greg Overkamp, Michael Zaskowski – Stantec

Bob Wall – Recreation and Parks

Philip Taylor

Messrs. Bowden and Burns* and Ms. Ilieva and O’Neill - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Tom Stosur, Mary Colleen Buettner, Carmen Morosan,
Lauren Schiszik - Planning