

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

**Date:** November 13, 2014

**Meeting No.:** 196

**Project:** Crossroads School-Classroom Building

**Phase:** Final

**Location:** Living Classrooms Campus, Dock Street between Caroline Street and the proposed Central Avenue Bridge

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**PRESENTATION:**

Living Classrooms Foundation Vice President Bill Cunningham briefly presented the Strategic Academic and Business Plan for the new classroom building. Matthew Poe, Project Architect presented a brief description of the site and revised project, highlighting his presentation with context photographs, noting the handcrafted look of the existing structures and emphasizing the desire to preserve the green open space from the building to the harbors edge while providing sufficient area for recreation activities for the children. The new classroom building intentionally fronts on Dock Street setting up a spatial relationship with the Exelon building. Harbor Point's Campus Landscape Plan acts as a coordinating element of centering the school's entrance at the end of Wells Street.

The architectural design and construction of the classroom building at this site must be cognizant of the major elevation changes along Dock Street from the Central Avenue Bridge to proposed building site. There is a required retaining wall along a major section of Dock Street which challenges the final design. The Dock Street entrance is placed half way up the first floor with steps on either side of the building. The building is designed to capture in a simple but practical design the major grade change from the street level through the building to the open space at the canal side with natural wetlands between the building and the canal.

The building's program and materiality strives for functional efficiency resulting in a neat and clean design statement. The design recognizes the need for as much natural light as possible while also providing classroom privacy along the street edge. The horizontal siding is simple and blends with the earthy connectivity to the open space and waterfront.

The proposed building acts as a Gateway to the School, holding the urban edge on the Site. The building is placed 5' off the property line to provide opportunity for landscaping and foundation plantings. The building embraces sustainable design strategies through green walls and sustainable urban agriculture plantings as part of the BUGS program (Baltimore Urban Gardening with Students). There is a green trellis to screen the mechanical equipment as well as add to the greening of the exterior walls.

**COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:**

The Panel was concerned that the glass window treatments of the proposed design along the Dock Street edge did not provide sufficient day lighting into the corridor spaces. The panel was seeking privacy while suggesting connectivity to the public realm which may be achieved through translucent glass. There were suggestions from several panel members that the entrance at the end of Wells Street strive for a public space gesture with the gated entrance feature set back off the street front to provide adequate security for the student population. It was suggested that the

small space created here could reference the angle of Wills Street through the alignment of the plaza or circulation.

The Dock Street landscape plan should recognize that 4ft. tree pits are likely not supportive of anticipated tree selections. It is critical that the building and landscape plan seek to create a place to connect the campus with the public edges. There was much discussion regarding the setback from the property line allowing for the creation of a plinth or ribbon at the base that would better tie to the precedent images that the building references.

The panel agreed that the architectural design is very simple yet strongly supportive of the programmatic elements needed for the School. The building design is disciplined and presents a strong design statement along both the Dock Street frontage as well as the canal/harbor side of the property. The Panel would also like to see some aspect of decking or overlook brought back to the field side of the building as referenced in the earlier proposal to tie the building to the open space.

Overall the panel found the building design to be strong, contextual and functionally well organized on the site. The stronger modern design approach is a welcome addition to the harbor neighborhood.

**PANEL ACTION:**

Recommend Final Approval w/Comments.

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**Attending:**

Bill Cunningham, Living Classrooms Foundation

Matthew Poe, Project Architect

Adam Bednar – The Daily Record

Dr. Meany\*, Messr. Bowden, Burn, Rubin and Haresign - UDARP Panel

Director Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa –Planning Department