

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

Date: July 29, 2021

Meeting #49

Project: 21st Century Schools- Cross Country

Phase: Design Development

Location: 6100 Cross Country Blvd, Baltimore MD 21215

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

Priya Iyer introduced the project with a brief overview of the program (pre-K through 8th grades, serving 725 students) and the site challenges, which include a 500-year flood plain.

Priya then presented the project goals – demolition is scheduled for September 2021, with construction starting in spring of 2022, and occupancy at the start of the 2023 school year. The team has completed SPRC and two community meetings. Design Team was asked to look at circulation, specifically entry at exit at Pinkney Road and bus loop. Re-look at the main street Parti Diagram

Key Changes

- Continue to use the main street parti diagram as the organizing element that creates three distinct masses; academic mass, main street, and gymnasium
- The volume steps down as it moves away from Taney and Pinkney streets, with the three story massing emphasized along Cross Country.
- The team has refined the material palette with the use of Norman brick, they are investigating several options of contrasting bricks. The contrasting brick will be used to add interest in specific areas to help break up the plane, especially along the gymnasium and back of house elevations where there is limited fenestration.
- Use the vertical reading of the fenestration to balance the heavy horizontality of the building.
- Main entry pulled out, play with hierarchy. Brick detailing to define stairways and entry.
- Introduction of entry court at building entrance
- Connection of playgrounds with pathway to address community concerns.

DISCUSSION:

The Panel thanked the presentation team and began with clarifying questions before continuing with the general discussion and comments.

Site:

- At the courtyards how are different sized classes being accounted for? What features are being included to accommodate classes?
- Use plantings or murals to enliven the blank walls facing the courtyard.
- Main entry circulation and paving appear too limited and constricted to allow for the variety of movement taking place in that area.

- Include a portion of the open lawn next to the pre-k playground in the fenced area to allow for free play.
- Study how students approach the school and how the site connects to the community. The crosswalks at the intersection of Taney and Winner don't lead to an obvious path to the building, create a more deliberate connection from the perimeter sidewalk to the center of the site.
- The gym volume could serve the site better if it was rotated differently to address Winner more directly.
- The division of the playgrounds limits the interaction between students of different grades, one value of a pre-k through 8th grade school.
- Need to consider the everyday experience of the building users (children, teachers, parents, and community members) from the ground level and integrate the building with landscape experience accordingly.
- Western side of the building feels underserved. Create a buffer between the service area and drop off and more direct access for those arriving from the west of campus.
- Review the project from the ground level approach from all sides to create a welcoming building.
- The courtyards provide a great opportunity to create fun spaces. The pixelated paver plan is the most successful as it differentiates path from gathering spaces more effectively. Enhance this with the use of vegetation and site furnishings to bring the scale of the surrounding volumes down and create layers for a sense of intimacy.

Building:

- The main street concept is diluted, consider making it more prominent and penetrating both volumes.
- Articulation of the volumes is fragmented, look into more horizontal and banded fenestration.
- The materials do not serve the parti, rather they identify programing. Consider reinforcing the massing identities with materials instead.
- Unify the fenestration across the front façade to provide one common statement.
- Return to the parti statement and subdue the need to articulate the program.
- By trying to balance horizontality and verticality, neither is successful, choose to emphasize the horizontal, which fits with the surrounding low-scale context.
- The two-story reading at the fenestration of the academic massing is out of scale for children. Revisit the façade articulation to refine proportions.
- Use the textural material at the ground level to help create intimate spaces rather than emphasizing formal verticality.
- Rotate the classroom in the lower corner of the academic massing so that the three-story volume sits proud of the two-story element, adding dimensionality. This could coincide with a material change and will create a clear connection between the flanking two story volumes. Alternatively, keep materials the same and allow suggested massing articulation to bring definition to the volumes.
- Recess the entries along the courtyard and pair with landscape to create intimate moments.

Next Steps:

Continue design addressing the comments above and complete Design Review with Department of Planning staff.

Attending:

Kristen Gedeon – MK Consulting Engineers

Priya Iyer, Heather Bakhsh – ATI, Inc.

Kate Acker – MSA

Michael McBride – 21st Century Schools

Eli Dunbar, Andrew Jinks – Colimore Architects

Messr. Anthony, Mses. Bradly, Ilieva and O’Neill - UDAAP Panel

Tamara Woods, Caitlin Audette, Ren Southard, Eric Tiso, Chris Ryer, Matt Desantis - Planning

Alexander Cook, Anthony Dye, Anthony J Cortea Jr., Catherine Acker, Isabela Gondim, JP, Julia Williamson, Liam Kraus, Marianne Compton, Ash Belgi - Attendees