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MEETING MINUTES

PROJECT WILSON SCHOOL – 1601 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA
PROJECT # LAD # 056-10002-001; BIG # 14520 WILS
MEETING DATE 14 May 2015
MEETING TIME 6:00pm – 8:00pm
LOCATION 1601 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA
SUBJECT PFRC #1

ATTENDEES		
APS DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION	DCS	Ben Burgin, Jennifer Xu
PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE	PFRC	Stephen Sockwell, Nancy Iocomini, Arlova Vohnm, Dennis Sellin, Todd McCracken, Terri Prell, Steve Cole, Elizabeth Gearin
OTHER ATTENDEES	OTH	Stuart Stein, Joan Lawrence, Christine Ng, Katie Elmore,
LEO A DALY	LAD	Pierre Gendreau
BJARKE INGELS GROUP	BIG	Sean Franklin

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Chairman Sockwell offered introductory remarks, and explained the charge of the PFRC committee, noting that the group would meet on average once every month, and would primarily be interested in the exterior design of the project, planning and transportation issues, and the application of the County’s principles of civic design.

2. Arlington Public Schools Presentation

- 2.1. Mr. Burgin provided a summary description of APS’s goal to provide 1,300 new secondary school seats by 2019, within a maximum budget of \$126,000,000, and of the feasibility study exercise that was conducted in the fall of 2014 to determine the best allocation of seats vs. sites options.
- 2.2. Mr. Burgin summarized the School Board’s decision following the feasibility study recommendations review to relocate the existing H-B Woodlawn secondary school program and the special needs Stratford School program to the existing Wilson School site, supplementing the 705 seats of the existing programs by 70 new seats, all with a projected construction budget of \$80,200,000.
- 2.3. Mr. Burgin deferred to discuss project baseline transportation analysis results until the following PFRC meeting, citing that the transportation survey phase was complete, but the parking and other factors were still being assessed.
- 2.4. Mr. Burgin introduced the Wilson School’s architectural project team, led by the Washington, DC firm of Leo A Daly as Executive Architect, with the New York City firm of Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) as primary Design Architect.
- 2.5. Mr. Franklin of BIG provided a brief description of the project and site parameters that contributed to the resulting design option presented in the initial feasibility study, and explained that the new design charge to accommodate the relocated H-B / Stratford programs provided new design constraints and challenges that would result in a new design solution.
- 2.6. Mr. Franklin summarized the BLPC process status to date, noting that the design team had initiated a series of stakeholder interviews over the last several months to better understand the programmatic needs of the H-B and Stratford academic programs, as well as a series of transportation and site analysis studies to better appreciate site conditions.
- 2.7. Mr. Franklin thereupon provided a brief overview of the presentation shared at the previous evening’s BLPC #2 meeting, as follows:
 - 2.7.1. Key design objectives that would be of interest to the PFRC include:
 - 2.7.1.1. Promoting shared user experiences between the two academic programs;

- 2.7.1.2. The H-B / Stratford program structure indicates a larger at grade building footprint than that derived during the feasibility study design;
- 2.7.1.3. The project seeks to create a sense of community between the academic programs and the local neighborhood;
- 2.7.1.4. The project seeks to identify and make best use of exterior field space for both school and public use; and
- 2.7.1.5. The project aims to create a variety of outdoor spaces and experiences for both school users and the public.
- 2.7.2. Five building massing concepts were presented as option ideas only:
 - 2.7.2.1. "Fanning Bars", a series of five radiating building arms of varying lengths and heights, and a building mass that could be oriented to Wilson Blvd., Quinn Street, or 18th Street;
 - 2.7.2.2. "Terraced Courtyards", a series of radiating triangles of varying lengths and heights offering interior courtyards and atria into the building mass;
 - 2.7.2.3. "Stepped Terraces", a ziggurat style, multi-story mass with terraces on each stepping level;
 - 2.7.2.4. "Shifting Courtyards", a spiraling series of square floor plates offset from the ones above and below, but providing a central atria of varying dimension throughout its height; and
 - 2.7.2.5. "Stacked Bars", a Jenga style series of stacked floor plates, each serving a specific program function within its volume.
- 2.7.3. Mr. Franklin went on to note that all five concept ideas were roughly sized to represent the program area needed for the new school facility, but that the design onus was on creating a series of volumetric shapes that responded to the various design criteria of building siting, solar exposure, natural daylighting opportunities, creation of active exterior areas, and building approach as perceived by the users and the public. The option concepts presented were selected from dozens of forms, with the goal of distilling and applying review commentary to select one or two of these forms for more robust design and program development.
- 2.7.4. Mr. Franklin further noted the various constraints that the design team has to consider while siting the building, including open space, field space, entrances and vehicular circulation.

3. Arlington County

- 3.1. Mr. Cole, as Chairman of the WRAPS study group, noted that final WRAPS recommendations would be issued within days, and asked if future site planning presentations to the PFRC could include the full context area of the WRAPS charge, so that the Wilson School could be appraised in relation to the APAH housing site and the proposed Penzance mixed use development.
- 3.2. It was noted that the use permit process typically begins after Schematic Design approval by the School Board.

4. Committee Comments / Questions:

- 4.1. Numerous questions were raised regarding the exterior terraces portrayed in all the schemes, namely:
 - 4.1.1. Were the terraces accessible from the interior or the exterior? Response: Potentially both, depending on their floor level;
 - 4.1.2. Could the terrace use be made amenable to shared academic / public use? Response: Possibly, depending on location and prescribed function activities, but this would resolve itself during future design stages.
 - 4.1.3. How would the terraces be secured? Response: to be determined.
 - 4.1.4. Could the lower level terraces be oriented to public sports use, i.e. basketball or tennis? Response: Possibly, depending on location and prescribed function activities, but this would resolve itself during future design stages.
- 4.2. Several questions were raised regarding the Frisbee fields, namely:
 - 4.2.1. Was Ultimate Frisbee field size still possible? Response: The size of endzones and sidelines required for Ultimate Frisbee would overlap the existing Highlands Park, and, as well, they conflict with the planned development of the Penzance site, with the required fencing blocking any desired pedestrian path through the APS / Penzance superblock.
 - 4.2.2. Mr. Cole noted that the International Frisbee Association had recently shortened the endzone requirements for high school fields by 12 meters.
 - 4.2.3. Mr. Cole also noted that the School Board had recently written a letter to the County Board asking if the Ultimate Frisbee field could be extended into the existing County parkland, and that a County response letter was pending.
 - 4.2.4. Ms. Iacomini asked if future presentations might quantify the aggregate areas of hardscape and greenscape, including roof terraces, and describe the activities allotted to each.

- 4.3. Additional questions were raised regarding open space and the site:
 - 4.3.1. It was noted that having parkland adjacent to Wilson Blvd. might separate the school from the community, as pedestrians are seemingly less comfortable walking along narrow open spaces (reference was made to Arlington's growing homeless population).
 - 4.3.2. A question was asked regarding the site's geotechnical and groundwater status. Response: Preliminary studies did not indicate any geotechnical / groundwater issues for the depth of below-grade construction anticipated, but that more detailed studies were pending.
 - 4.3.3. It was noted that the "Fanning Bars" concept offered grade-level triangular courtyards and yards that might be able to serve as school-use spaces and civic spaces.
 - 4.3.4. Design concepts did not illustrate any tree canopy that might minimize the site's heat island effect. Response: The extent of the building footprint and playing fields surface will limit the availability of space for a tree canopy.
 - 4.3.5. A discussion was held as to grass versus artificial turf use for scholastic fields, and whether the Woodlawn Frisbee field would require artificial turf if not used as a competitive field. Artificial turf and night lighting extend the useful life of playing fields and provide for extended use. Do natural turf technologies exist that might replace artificial turf?
 - 4.3.6. It was noted that the service alley portrayed between the APS and Penzance sites does not allow for truck access, as there is a county ordinance against trucks turning into or off of arterial roadways. Also, there is a preference for a green space between the two sites in lieu of a paved roadway.
- 4.4. There were some parking / transportation questions:
 - 4.4.1. A question was raised as to whether the parking garage could be placed under the playing fields. Response: Yes, that was an option being considered by the design team.
 - 4.4.2. Mr. Cole notes that a new Target Express store has been announced to be built within three blocks of the Wilson site, and that the Penzance project is to have an on-site grocery store. Has the Wilson School traffic studies considered the impact of this additional retail presence?
 - 4.4.3. It was asked how bus drop off solutions are handled in other urban school examples.
- 4.5. Several questions addressed the design of the building:
 - 4.5.1. A question was raised as to which school activities would be located below grade in addition to parking. Response: Auditorium, black box theatre, film labs.
 - 4.5.2. Mr. Cole asked if rooftop solar panels were still part of the design objective, since APS had previously noted that some \$5,000,000 in savings could be achieved by not installing solar panels. Response: Net zero design strategies were still being studied, and the possible use of roof areas for solar or PIV generating panels would still be considered by the design team as a possible future design option.
 - 4.5.3. Would an L-shaped building facing Wilson Blvd. and Quinn Street be possible? Response: The presence of the existing 7-11 convenience store prevented the L-shaped building from being site feasible, but the corner 7-11 site did present the opportunity for a parental drop-off and temporary parking area at the south-west corner of the site.
 - 4.5.4. There is a general commentary that a building volume having some movement within its shape, as opposed to a block form, would be preferred for the Wilson School, as the APAH and Penzance projects would be more traditionally block shaped by virtue of their building types. A preference for the "Fanning Bars" and "Stacked Bars" concept options was expressed as a result.
 - 4.5.5. It was requested that future presentations address how the historic school might be somehow made representative within the new design.
 - 4.5.6. It was noted that an articulated building volume oriented to Wilson Boulevard and providing an opportunity for civic and academic use exterior spaces would be preferred.

5. Conclusion.

- 5.1. Next PFRC meeting on June 11,2015

The above represents our understanding of the topics discussed, and the decisions reached. Should any recipient notice significant omissions or errors, please notify Pierre Gendreau at plgendreau@leoadaly.com within seven days of receipt.

Submitted by: Pierre Gendreau
Date: 21 May, 2015