

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

Date: January 19, 2012

Meeting No.: 142

Project: Waverly Library Renovations

Phase: Continued Schematic

Location: 33rd and Barclay Streets

PRESENTATION:

Katie-Rose Imbiano, Baltimore City Planning District Planner, introduced the development process to date as well as the neighborhood context for the project. Margaret Martin, Baltimore City DGS, shared with the panel that the plans and drawings were presented to the community two days prior. Stephanie Schaefer, architect with Buchart Horn, presented revised drawings and explained what changes were made and what changes were not made in relation to the Panel's previous comments. Specifically, she explained that it would be very costly to have the interior space of the curved roof addition be expressed as a tall space on the inside, due to the roof structure of the existing building.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel was disappointed with the continued design of the project, in particular that the curved roof addition was not reflected spatially on the interior of the building, as well as the treatment of the west facing façade along Barclay Street. Specific recommendations included:

New addition (w/ curved roof). The opportunity to renovate and improve a library such as this one does not come along often (it has been 40 years since the building was built). The Panel felt that the City and the Enoch Pratt Library need to reconsider the treatment of the addition along 33rd and Barclay and provide a space on the interior that matches the addition height and importance expressed on the exterior. The curved roof shape was viewed as a good gesture, especially given height and importance to the corner. However, Panel members were uncomfortable with the false façade treatment above the canopy, as well as the limited extension at the roof. It is the Panel's recommendation that the interior space be a grander reading room; taller, lighter, and more uplifting.

Having said that, if it is decided that this is not possible given cost or structural integrity, then the relationship of the canopy at the corner, its height and whether it wraps the corner, needs to be reconsidered. Further, the glass below the canopy line needs to be clear, while the material above the canopy line should not be tinted glass spandrels but could be another material or a fritted glass to relate to the clear glass below, providing a better design intention between the upper and lower portions of the addition.

Finally, in either case the Panel recommends that the new addition wrap further north along the Barclay edge so as to hide or eliminate the two remaining “brutalist” windows. This would better unify the building and reduce the impression of a small piece stuck on the front of the building.

Canopy and signage. In addition to the recommendations above regarding the canopy at the corner of the new addition, the relationship between the three canopy pieces needs additional study. Currently the relationship is awkward and might benefit from combining canopies into one form. Also, the Panel felt that the signage at the entrance should be below the canopy and relate to the pedestrian.

Streetscape / Public space. Although possible changes were shown for the intersection at Barclay and 33rd Street, the Panel recommends that new street trees be planted along 33rd and Barclay with spacing no more than 25’.

As to the exterior space outside of the Community Room, the design team should view this space as a ‘public plaza’ and create a space as a prelude to an important public entrance to the building rather than a side door. With this consideration, new trees and shrubs should be incorporated that frame this space and provide defined locations for planting beds that could be cultivated in partnership with the community. In doing this, reducing the amount of paving, as well as opportunities for storm water management, should be pursued. A more developed landscape plan that also incorporates public features like bike racks is needed.

Speaking on behalf the community were Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke, whose district includes the library, and Regina Boyce from the Waverly Improvement Council. Both said that the community was disappointed with the design, especially the west facing façade which they view as the true front (and most visible) elevation. They both were against the use of tinted windows and said that in previous charrettes the community had wanted the community space enlarged with windows added.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic approval withheld.

Attending:

John Richardson, Patricia Costello, Kathleen Sweeney, Vanessa Francis– Pratt/Advisory Council
Margaret Martin, Dennis Chojnowski – DGS
Stephanie Schaefer – Buchart Horn
Mary Pat Clarke – Baltimore City Council
Regina T. Boyce – City Council President’s Office
Alexandra Wilding – Bmore Media

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Ramberg, Bowden, Britt and Cameron – Panel
Tom Stosur, Gary Cole, Wolde Ararsa, Katie-Rose Imbriano – Planning