



June 30, 2008

**WOODROW WILSON HIGH SCHOOL
WMC CONCEPT MEETING**

Grimm and Parker Job No. 20749/075

Held on 06/25/08 at 8:30 AM at Woodrow Wilson High School

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MEETING PURPOSE:

1. Review/discussion of concept approaches to entry sequence and Main Avenue location.

PRESENTATION:

1. Project Review

G+P provided a summary of meetings held and completed work effort on the project to date.

At the meeting of 05/12/2008 held with the WMC it was the Board's recommendation that of the three concepts presented that Option 2 had the most merit and should be developed further. The concept options presented at this are based on Option 2 and incorporate other comments received at the 5/12/08 meeting. The discussion focused on location and approaches to the main building entry and location of the Main pedestrian avenue within the building. Concepts presented represent works in progress and evaluation tools and are not reflective of a final design solution. Major items of discussion were as presented following.

2. Site Analysis- buildable area.

A diagram was presented showing the available buildable site space for the school. In determining the areas of the site available for new construction the following assumptions were made:

- i. The core academic and aquatic center building will remain.
- ii. The existing Gymnasium, Media center, and Auditorium buildings can be replaced.
- iii. The track/field will remain located on the Eastern side of the site.
- iv. The buildable area cannot extend beyond the current property line.
- v. No construction is allowed in the designated wetlands area on the southern portion of the site.

Applying the above constraints yields a buildable area for the site that comprises the following:

- i. On the south side of the academic building an area north of the aquatic center that includes the existing auditorium and rose garden
- ii. To the NW the buildable area includes the plaza in front of the building, the vehicular drop off zone across this portion of the site and the portion of the triangular section of land bounded by Fort Drive, Chesapeake Street and the drop off zone that falls within the property line. Major additions are not recommended in the NW zone identified above since this will limit the opportunity for the development of a significant plaza and entry sequence to the academic building. A 3 story or more structure will also obscure views of the façade of the original building.
- iii. NE of the academic building the area including the existing parking lot, media building, gymnasium building and the unbuilt portion of the site down to Nebraska Avenue.

In summary the available surface area for new/expanded/ renovated structures comprises under 50 % of the site and significantly limits the viable building configurations, especially when combined with the desire to retain the central academic building as the focal point of the campus.

3. Parking structures:

Parking options have not been modified from the last presentation and were recapped.

- i. DCPS parking optimal parking requirements for a 1500 student high school is approximately 475. Zoning requirements would be approximately 180.
- ii. Analysis of the site access, topography and building programmatic requirements suggests three possible locations for parking underground that may be accomplished cost effectively. The options locate parking below grade, or partially below grade, maintaining the site surface for building program, green space and pedestrian elements.
- iii. Under new construction: 140-150 spaces. Parking entry for buildings aligned along Chesapeake Street. Entrance would be from Chesapeake Street. Parking at this location takes advantage of the natural gradient of the site where the grade drop off will allow insertion of parking below building program elements without the need for extensive excavation for a below grade parking deck. This option provided easy access to building elements directly above
- iv. Under a raised courtyard in the main building: 40-50 spaces entered from current loading access driveway. This option takes advantage of the current service entry point for the building. The existing courtyard in the center of the main academic building is raised to the level of the first floor. Parking would occur below this area with the adjacent building space utilized for non academic support functions i.e. Mechanical storage and custodial spaces. Whilst limited parking is available in this option, it is centrally located, provides easy access to the classroom wing of the building is equidistant from the other building components and may provide one of several loading areas, with elevator access, needed for the building.
- v. Under the athletic fields: 240-260 spaces. Entry would be on Nebraska Avenue aligned with Brandywine Street or from Chesapeake Street under the building. The athletic field sits approximately 9' above the level of Nebraska Avenue this height differential will allow easy access to Nebraska Ave. without extensive ramping; however extensive excavation and the removal of the recently installed field would be required. This option presents the opportunity for providing building entry points to the building campus and aquatic center on both wings of the campus. However it requires the greatest amount of site disturbance making it the most costly of the parking options.

Various combinations of the parking described above are utilized in the development of the concept plan options.

4. Academy Organization

One possible arrangement for the organization of core academic spaces within the building was presented. The scheme assumes an academy based model for the school, but also illustrates the flexibility that will allow for a department based model if that direction taken in the future. The scheme provides for area on each floor, illustrated in yellow in the diagram, to serve as academy offices and faculty planning areas. These areas could be converted to teacher planning spaces in a departmental model. 9th and 10th grade academies are located adjacent to, but separate from, the rest of the academic spaces. AAA academy is located adjacent to the PE wing of the campus. Science classrooms are grouped on two floors and are stacked. They are located adjacent to the 9th and 10th grade academies for easy access from these spaces and are fully integrated into the SiMaTech Academy. Stacking of the science classrooms is economical since it minimizes horizontal plumbing runs.

5. Concept Diagrams

Four concept diagrams were presented. Several themes as listed below are common to the concepts:

- i. Site areas NE and SW of the core academic building are used as the primary zone for program space as outlined in the buildable area analysis presented above.
- ii. The concepts take the approach of organizing the campus buildings as a series of pavilions with the core academic building being the most prominent.
- iii. The main entry to the building is considered to be on the street “flag pole” side of the building, responding to the predominant pedestrian and vehicular approaches.
- iv. In keeping with the concept approach shown at the previous meeting, the PE department is located adjacent to the Aquatic center to reinforce the relationship between the two programs for school and community use.
- v. Performing and Visual Arts is located on the prominent corner of Chesapeake Street and Nebraska Ave.
- vi. The concepts explore different ways of addressing the location and approach to the main entry and the location and connection of the Main Avenue.
- vii. The section of Fort Drive at the NW corner of the site is developed as a public plaza and also used to accommodate visitor parking for the school.

A. Scheme A – Main entry centralized on Core Academic building

Highlights of scheme A are:

- Main entrance centered on the Core academic Building.
- Main Avenue connecting campus on inside edge “field side”.

Opportunities

- Clear axial relationship between Entry Plaza, Main Entry and Interior Courtyard.
- Bridge at main entry eliminates need for stairs and ramps
- Main Avenue on Field side allows views across campus increasing sense of community.
- Media center is located near main entry for easy public access.
- PE located adjacent to Aquatic center.
- Separate 9th Grade entry.

Challenges

- Circulation access from Main entry to the Avenue is not direct.

B. Scheme B. – Main Entry on side of Core Academic building

Highlights of scheme B are:

- Several direct corridor connections to Main “avenue”
- Main “avenue” connecting campus at inside edge
- Key secondary public lobbies

Opportunities

- Main Entry clearly visible to pedestrians approaching from the Metro.
- Direct link between Main Entry and the Avenue.
- Main Avenue on Field side allows views across campus increasing sense of community.
- Easy public access to Media center.
- PE located adjacent to Aquatic center.
- Separate entry for 9th grade academy.

Challenges

- No direct connection between main entry and Academic core interior courtyard.
- Unclear hierarchy of Entries

C. Scheme C- Main Avenue on Street side

Highlights of scheme C are:

- Centered, new main entrance
- Distinct academy entrance
- Main “avenue” connecting campus along outside edge, facing street
- Key secondary public lobbies

Opportunities

- Opportunity to allow pedestrians on street to experience activity in the school along the Avenue.
- Clear axial relationship between Entry Plaza, Main Entry and Interior Courtyard.
- Clear link between Main entry and the Avenue.
- Direct link between the Avenue and the Academic core interior courtyard.
- Easy public access to Media center.
- PE located adjacent to Aquatic center.
- Separate entry for 9th grade.

Challenges

- Length of the Avenue is greater than for the field side Avenue.
- Avenue is outward focused- cannot experience views of the campus.

D. Scheme D – PE located buried below field

Highlights of scheme D are:

- Program elements placed below field
- Centered, new main entrance
- Distinct academy entrance
- Main “avenue” connecting campus along outside edge, facing street
- Key secondary public lobbies

Opportunities

- Performing Arts and PE are close to Metro access
- Controlled exterior access to the field from Fort Drive.
- Regulation size track may be possible if bleachers are removed.
- Greater open space on corner of Chesapeake St. and Nebraska Ave.

Challenges

- Extensive amount of dirt will need to be removed from site

- Unforeseen subsurface site conditions.
- Limited natural light opportunities.
- Extensive ongoing maintenance costs.
- Premium costs for below grade work.
- Replacement cost of recently installed field.
- Regulation track requires regrading of hill requiring a retaining wall.
- Gain of open space is at premium increase in cost of project of 10% to 20%

6. Green Space

It is envisioned that the school will be bounded on all sides by green space areas of landscaping and gardens. Major components would be emphasis of the section of Fort Circle Park that runs parallel to Fort Drive. Creation of a plaza/ garden at the triangular section in the NW corner of the site, incorporating the sections of Fort Drive and NPS property at this location. Creation of a sculptural garden for student work along Chesapeake street and an Entry plaza at the intersection of Nebraska Ave and Chesapeake street for Performing Arts.

DISCUSSION:

1. It was noted that the buildable space diagram showed the boiler plant as available space for a new building. The preference, if feasible, is to keep the existing structure and smoke stack for an alternative use in the modernized school.
2. Questions were asked regarding cost differential between the presented schemes. At this time the schemes are not fully developed, but schemes A, B and C share enough in common that cost differentials would be expected to be in the range of 5%. For scheme D there would be premium costs for the expected 40' deep excavation for the PE building. This would add as much as ten to twenty million dollars to the project. In any scheme phasing will have a significant impact on time and costs. A phased construction project would take approximately 4 years and have an additional premium of approximately 10% of construction costs vs a 2 year construction project if 100% of the school is relocated.
3. Cost savings from reuse of the existing structure vs demolition /new construction and relocation of the auditorium were discussed. Several factors influenced the decision to relocate the auditorium. Extensive renovation and reconfiguration would be required to improve the acoustics and provide a space in accordance with today's teaching performance requirements. The seating arrangement in the space is not conducive to small performances. Users have complained that the space is cavernous and not intimate and they would like a space that feels intimate for audiences of 200-400 while still having the flexibility to accommodate an audience of 800. Achievement of this goal requires major reconfiguration of the layout. The close proximity of the property line behind the stage does not allow for expansion behind the stage for needed support spaces. The synergy created for school and community use of the PE spaces and the Aquatic center is an important goal for the school. In general, the cost differential between renovation and new construction may not be as significant as thought in major modernization projects. Beyond cosmetic enhancements to the existing structures other factors that affect the cost of renovation include insulation of existing exterior walls, amount of demolition required for hazardous material abatement and installation of new MEP systems and adequacy of current layout to meet program requirements.
4. The merits of the location and size of parking structures was discussed. The aquatic center does not have any parking. It is possible that as part of a final phase of development of the school site that this issue could be addressed with the installation of parking under the field which would serve both the school and the aquatic center. It was also suggested that there might be the possibility of leasing space in a parking garage under the field to Metro users as a way of generating income for the school system and encouraging metro use. Some feel that adding extensive parking only encourages vehicular use and is antithetical to the environmental goals of the project.

5. Questions were asked regarding the expected lifespan and warranty of the artificial field and the advisability of demolishing it to install underground structures so soon after its installation. According to WMC the field has a 10 year warranty. This is up from the 5 to 8 year warranties previously offered by the manufacturers. There is no clear data on what the expected life span of the field would be beyond that time. It was noted that the \$1.5 million (one and a half million dollar) investment in the field should ultimately be weighed against the needs and benefits of underground construction in this area and its relative percentage of the overall modernization budget.
6. A greenhouse and language labs were not shown in the academy diagram, but are included in the Educational Specifications.
7. Although the library will be directly accessible from the main lobby in most of the schemes, it was on the second floor and concern was expressed about its accessibility in that location.
8. A question was asked regarding the availability of space similar to that proposed for the PA and PE auditorium and gymnasium in other locations near the school. No one at the meeting was aware of any similar space that could be used for Wilson's educational purposes.
9. The academy diagram presented proposes grouping and stacking the science rooms on two floors to take advantage of the cost savings that can be realized in plumbing and gas piping in a stacked scenario. Additionally there has been a variety of opinion amongst the science teachers as to whether science rooms should be integrated labs and classroom space or shared labs with adjacent classrooms. Depending on the science discipline one alternative may be better than the other. Grouping allows the flexibility for both options to be explored in the design stages of the project.
10. Discussion was held regarding the validity of the separate 9th grade academy approach to instruction. The Wilson teaching community is in favor of this approach. This approach has been used by several surrounding jurisdictions for over a decade and continues to be supported by their educational leaders. The general philosophy is that a 9th grade academy provides a smoother transition for students moving from a middle school setting where the teaming philosophy is strong to the more individualized setting of high school. The academy setting also encourages bonding between the 9th graders and there is some evidence that drop out rates decrease.
11. Consider a cafeteria with nearby meeting rooms possibly in a mezzanine level that can be used for community events (e.g. Conferences, workshops etc.)
12. Schemes discussion.
 - i. Group consensus was that schemes A and B had the most merit
 - ii. Agreement was that locating of the entry on the West side of the school was the best approach.
 - iii. Some members of the group preferred the more central approach to the building presented in Scheme A. It was felt that this more recalled the prominence of the original entry on the Nebraska side of the building. Others expressed the opinion that the scheme A entry was focused more on Fort Reno Park, and not the direction of arrival for most pedestrians. The side entry approach shown in scheme B responded better to the pedestrian approach from the metro and could be more welcoming.
 - iv. Scheme A had the Media center on the second floor whereas scheme B showed it on the first floor at entry level. For community access a first floor location is preferred.
 - v. Consensus was that the placement of the gym next to the aquatic center and the possible synergies this location offered for school and community use was important and made sense.

- vi. Members of the group liked the grouping of PA and PE on the Fort drive side of the school as shown in scheme D since it placed both departments as close to the metro as possible. Others of the group felt that locating PA on the Chesapeake/ Nebraska Avenue side where the theater could have a prominent entry and be a cultural landmark was more critical than being closer to the metro. It was noted that the additional travel distance was less than two blocks.

Next Steps

1. G+P to further development of schemes A and B and provide character sketches of the main entry.
2. In scheme A relocate Media center to the first floor.
3. Next meeting of the WMC Board to review the project is scheduled for 8.30am Wednesday July 9, 2008

If your understanding of the items in this meeting is different from the listed above, please do not hesitate to call.