DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Cambridge Public Library

Main Library Expansion Project Phase 2
MEETING #7

3/3/04

Morse School, Cambridge, MA

DAC Members present: Co-Chairs Rich Rossi, Alan Burne, Ruth Butler, and Elizabeth Gibb; Janet Axelrod, Roger Boothe, Ted Carpenter, Fred Fantini, Arlyne Jackson, Emily Norris, Hugh Russell, Charles Sullivan, Victoria Solomon. Also participating in the process was CRLS Assistant Principal, Caroline Hunter.

Introduction *by Alan Burne*

- The meeting will focus on the Landscape design, the treatment of the historic entry to the Library, and the facades of the building.

Design Presentation *by Laura Solano*

The presentation will focus on the portions of landscape design on which the design team received comments after the last presentation at DAC meeting on 7/29/03

Modifications to the design were presented in the garage ramp area, a bermed area at the location of the existing '67 wing, and at the High School main entry. The design included the addition of two pathways with a minimum width of 18', requested by the fire department, for emergency vehicle access.

At the request of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission, the tot lot was shown on "Site B" adjacent to the tennis court. Per previous DAC comments, the tot lot entry was moved closer to the Library entrance.

The design showed an increase in bike racks from 26 to 66.

It was proposed that height of the back of the amphitheater be reduced and a planter added to provide a green front to the school. A further refinement included planting trees between the Library and the School. This created a new handicapped accessible exterior courtyard, which could be used by the High School

Design Presentation *by Pamela Hawkes*

Brownstone seating on the existing steps was proposed to allow the arches to remain visually undisturbed, while at the same time making it clear that this is not an entry point of the building. This reading was further clarified by moving the park's walkway further from the old entry point. This solution meets the prerequisite of being reversible for the purposes of historic restoration. It was proposed that the porch area be enclosed in glass, so that the beautiful historic detailing may be enjoyed year round, while not presenting any "fake historic" detailing.

Design Presentation *by Cliff Gayley*

A large-scale model was presented in order to clearly show the scale relationship to the school, and more fully define the architectural composition, the facades, and the amphitheater area design. A revised site model was also presented to more accurately depict the building and access ramp in the landscape.

- The architectural goals were reviewed.

- **Architectural Goals:**

1. A Populist library in a very democratic place.
    - A place of opportunity
    - Celebrate an egalitarian culture
    - Capture Cambridge history of welcoming an ever-changing population
2. Library in the Park.
    - Building and landscape should be mutually supportive, with each enhancing the other.
    - Building should provide an appropriate edge to the park
    - Provide interior experience of being connected to park
3. A Library.
    - It should be immediately clear that this is a Library, not a community center
    - You should see books at the entry, and be welcomed to the process of reading.
4. Belief in natural light
    - Critical addition to the quality of life inside space
    - Day lighting provides necessary contribution to ecological sustainability
    - Welcome in New England winter
5. Openness and Accessibility – very important values (refers back to point #1)
    - Welcoming, warm, friendly, embracing
    - Not intimidating, not elitist
    - Easy to orient oneself, easy to understand
    - Transparent: view into building – view thru building
    - Not incidentally – critical for staffing of library
6. Connection between new and old
    - Very vibrant in both. Equal strength or activity
    - Appropriate balance between seamless program and discrete connection (protecting architectural integrity of old building)
    - Creating set of spaces that do not exist in old building
        a) At grade-connect to park
        b) Normal light and views out
        c) Large open spaces rather than smaller defined space

- The South facing double-skin curtain wall was presented, along with a recap of the benefits including:
    a) sun shading
    b) thermal efficiency
    c) daylighting deep into the Library
    d) a transparent connection to the park, and
    e) thermal comfort on cold days.

- The main facades were reviewed, with the primary materials of the addition as follows:
  - Zone 1 – Glass
  - Zone 2 – Stone to match the historic building
  - Zone 3 – Glass
  - Zone 4 – Metal panels.
- Photomontages of model photographs were shown to give an idea of how the facades might look and feel.

- The North facing exterior courtyard was enlarged by moving bar 3 back 5 feet and bar 4 back by 10'. Although this reduces the building's square footage, it significantly increases the transparency of the connector between the buildings, reduces the apparent scale of the addition in relation to the historic building, and improves the relationship between the East and West sides of the addition.
- William Rawn and key members of the design team have visited 12 double skin buildings in an effort to confirm that this system is appropriate for this application, and can be easily maintained. Most of these buildings were in Germany and London, as European energy codes are more restrictive. As a result of these site visits, the architects are confident that the double skin curtain wall is the best design approach for the South Elevation.
- Based on what was learned in the site visits of double skinned buildings, the design team is leaning toward lightweight, adjustable metal fins instead of the terra cotta previously considered because of its appearance, ability to stow away for glass cleaning, and cost.

DAC Comments

Ruth Butler: Loves the design. "Luminous". The revision to the connector piece opens up the historic building. Very pleased with the seating solution to the historic entry. Would like confirmation that planting along the North elevation is viable.

Elizabeth Gibb: Agrees with Ruth Butler comments. What phase are we in? [Alan Burne: near the end of Design Development] Amazing model. Very happy with the revised connector. Hope we can move forward.

Ted Carpenter: Really like the new school courtyard; it becomes part of the sweep of one large park experience. Breaking up the massing on both ends of the addition a great idea. "Luminescent container for new library experience."

Hugh Russell: "It's wonderful."

Caroline Hunter: New courtyard a concern. What will gate look like? Would like to be sure a 2' high seating wall enclosing the courtyard will be tall enough. Concerned about idea of the tot lot pushed against the School. What is the Young Adult Room design?

Roger Boothe: Lucid and coherent design.

Arlyne Jackson: Likes everything, especially the lucidity of the design.

Janet Axelrod: Likes everything. Likes seep of the park. Some concern about metal louvers in the curtain wall feeling cold. Likes the horizontality. Feels like a balanced approach.

Victoria Solomon: Agree. Quite beautiful. Gives the High School Students much more space to congregate. Likes tot lot location, and the fact that the tot lot entry has been moved away from Ellery Street.

Charlie Sullivan: Landscape seems natural, comfortable, open, and unforced. Change in massing of connector is brilliant. Would like to see the building from Broadway. Some concern about the height of zones 3 and 4. Architects have maintained the integrity of the design vision.

Fred Fantini: Agrees. Would like to see High School graduation outside on the new beautiful lawn. Design helps to create a campus solution, where different organizations work together. Believes safety concerns can be worked out.

Emily Norris: What is status of path around Northeast corner of building? [Alan Burne: the current design does not show a pass through in this area, per the request of the School Superintendent.]

Public Comment

- A letter was read which had been signed by some of the parents of High school students, which requested that the ramp to the garage be located on Ellery Street, that the safety of the students be taken into consideration in the design of the area North of the addition, that they like the removal of the '68 wing, and that they would like the power to modify the design.
- Can the garage ramp move to Ellery Street?
- How large will the planted trees be?
- Where will the Japanese Garden go?
- Mixed opinions were expressed about where the tot lot should be located.
- It was suggested that the new tot lot should not be larger than the existing one.
- The detailing should prevent the use of skateboards wherever possible.
- Objection to the removal of the diagonal walk behind the Library Addition
- Objection to tot lot scheme B;
- Is the 18' safety vehicle lane was not wide enough?

DAC Comments

Elizabeth Gibb: There are at least four parents of High School students on the DAC, and the decision to locate the ramp was only made after the design team did an incredible amount of work to fully research and describe the safety implications of the ramp location. Suggest that those people who did not attend the meetings at which this information was presented should walk the site, as this is really the best way to understand the condition, as opposed to simply looking at a site plan. [Alan Burne offered to mark out the ramp location again, and walk the site with whomever wished to do so.] An important improvement for the safety of the students will be in the traffic calming project which the City will provide along Broadway, as part of the agreement to place the ramp where it is shown. Crossing Broadway is currently a far more unsafe condition than crossing in front of the ramp, which will have a tiny fraction of the traffic along Broadway, and be crossed by fewer students.

Hugh Russell: Agrees. Thinks it is important to keep in perspective that the ramp will have relatively few cars, and that traffic calming on Broadway, made possible by the ramp in this location, will substantially increase student safety. If the ramp were on Ellery Street, this traffic calming would presumably not be included in the Project, as the project would not be affecting the existing condition. Given the relatively small number of students who are expected to cross in front of the proposed ramp location, it is probably far safer than locating it at Ellery or Trowbridge.

Janet Axelrod: Recognizes that some are not convinced on the safety of the ramp location, but thinks it is safe. Can we open up the question of moving the ramp to Ellery Street? [Rich Rossi: The ramp location has been very carefully reviewed and approved by several groups in well publicized meetings, including the DAC, the Traffic Department, the School Board, and the MCNCDC. The city would therefore like to consider this issue closed, and not revisit Ellery Street as a ramp location.]

Victoria Solomon: Would like High School parents to contribute to the design of the Young Adult area.

Ted Carpenter: The depth of homework on the ramp safety issues by the design team has convinced him that it is safe. Recommends that concerned parents visit the staked out site.