

Design Review Committee (DRC)

Meeting Minutes

June 13, 2024

Meeting Location and Time:

ZOOM Meeting

12:00 – 3:00 PM PST

Committee Members:

Susannah Scott, Co-Chair - Senate Chair

Renée Bahl, Co-Chair - Associate Vice Chancellor

Alice Kimm, Architect - Design Consultant

Derrick Eichelberger, Landscape Architect - Design Consultant

Julie Eizenberg, Architect - Design Consultant

Julie Hendricks, Campus Architect, Staff Representative - Design & Construction Services

Lisa Jacobson - Senate Appointed Faculty Representative

Matthew Begley - Senate Appointed Faculty Representative

Richard Wittman - Senate Appointed Faculty Representative

Silvia Perea - University Art Museum

Victor Soto - AS Student Representative

Vacant - GSA Student Representative

Staff Support – Ed Schmittgen, Design & Construction Services

Welcome: Co-Chair, Renée Bahl

Ed Schmittgen – conducted roll call, those below were in attendance.

1. Susannah Scott (SS)
2. Renee Bahl (RB)
3. Alice Kimm (AK)
4. Silvia Perea (SP)
5. Derrick Eichelberger (DE)
6. Julie Eizenberg (JE)
7. Julie Hendricks (JH)
8. Lisa Jacobson (LJ)
- ~~9. Mathew Begley (MB)~~
10. Richard Whitman (RW)
- ~~11. Victor Soto (VS)~~

General Business:

Meeting Minutes from the DRC Meeting of May 21, 2024 were approved.

Co-Chair Bahl gave an overview of the charge of the DRC:

In summary, the Design Review Committee is a recommending body focusing primarily on the exterior features and aesthetics; siting and contextual relationship with adjacent buildings; circulation including pedestrians, bikes and vehicles; landscape design, and other environmental matters.

The DRC is comprised of faculty, students and staff. The Committee makes a recommendation to the Chancellor and the Campus Planning Committee.

Engagement with the DRC:

- Projects From \$1,000,000 to \$10,000,000 are presented to the DRC 2 times;
 - Conceptual Site and Massing Design (this goes to CPC)
 - 95 % Schematic Design (this goes to CPC)
- Projects over \$10,000,000 are presented to the DRC 3 times;
 - Conceptual Site and Massing Design (this goes to CPC)
 - 50% Schematic Design
 - 95 % Schematic Design (for this project we are sending 50% SD's to the CPC in lieu of 95%)

On July 11, 2024 the DRC will once again convene to review the Site Design and Massing for the Student Housing Phase 2 project.

Action Items:

San Benito Student Housing – 95% Schematic Design Review

Project Proponents:

Willie Brown, Associate Vice Chancellor for HDAE
Gene Lucas, Professor Emeritus

Architect:

Skidmore Owings and Merrill – Mithun (SOM-M)

Julie Hendricks, Campus Architect, introduced the project and shared the scope of the project will add housing per the 2010 long-range development plan (LRDP). The goal is to add 3,500 new beds by 2029 and will be accomplished in two phases. The focus of today's meeting will be Phase 1: San Benito. Located at the site of the former Facilities Management site in the northwest corner of the main campus, San Benito will provide approximately 2,100 beds in apartment-style units. Phase 2 will be located on a site within the East Campus Channel Islands 5 existing residence halls and will be presented at a later meeting.

Ms. Hendricks noted that the San Benito project is coming off of a very large value engineering effort in order to manage the project cost.

SOM-Mithun

Ms. Hendricks introduced the design team's presenters:

- Tannar Whitney, SOM Project Manager
- Olin McKenzie, SOM Design Principal
- Sade Borghei, Mithun Design Principal
- Tom Leader, Landscape Architect

Collectively they outlined the prominent developments that were a direct result from DRC comments in January and May 2024 meetings as well as general project development.

Mr. Whitney mentioned that since the prior meeting was just weeks ago, focus for this meeting will be specific areas of design development. They shared an 'areas of focus' diagram highlighting the development.

The Connector:

- The Connector has been developed by reducing the width of the elements into a series of "stepping stones" connected by bridges. This was done in order to save cost but importantly to add variety and playfulness. The stepping stones create vista points that are strategically located to emphasize views.
- There has been an introduction of landscape courtyards along the Connector.

Material Color and Natural Expression:

- Olin Mckenzie reviewed a pixelated photograph of the surrounding landscape and demonstrated that the preferred color palette was derived from the local surroundings. The palette is neutral with warm grays as a base with color highlights of green, blue, terra cotta, to reflect the ocean, sky and natural landscape.
- Concrete colors were reviewed. The color and aggregate will vary depending on the location, darker pre-cast concrete at the base and lighter concrete for the towers.
- Benches are wood.
- Screening at the stair towers to be a natural metal color.

Breezeways:

- 'Breezeways' were introduced as a design feature, adding dimension and interest to the courtyard level. Breezeways are passages that cross the main circulation path and go under the buildings at grade.

Stairways:

- Based on DRC advice from the May meeting, the stair surrounds have been varied using a 'kit of parts' method. This allows variation using the same elements (stairs and elevators, screens) and materiality (metal, concrete, use of color). When arranged in different orientations, this would result in architectural consistency and individuality concurrently.

DRC Q & A:

Architecture

DRC:

- *Can you reconsider the Terra Cotta as a color? Can you utilize colorful highlights?*
 - **SOM-M:** We can consider inserting a completely different color as a counterpoint, derived from the local fauna, possibly bright yellow, pink, etc.

- *How can you add personality to the ends of these buildings, especially facing Stadium Road, perhaps as an alternate entry point?*
 - SOM-M: We need to focus on this more. There are exit stairs on the ends of the buildings, they would have the same kind of gauzy language or colors introduced as a kind of counterpoint to the more neutral language of the buildings.
 - We studied balcony moments every couple of floors and, cost permitting, they would have the same vocabulary as the stairs that we showed you that are on the Connector.

- *Have you reviewed the fire truck access with authorities?*
 - SOM-M: Yes, we have had multiple meetings with the Campus Fire Marshal and the local County Fire Department.

- *Can openings be incorporated from the student lounge areas into the breezeways?*
 - SOM-M: There are two-hour fire-rated separations on both sides so this limits what can be done. We will look into adding tables outside the lobby areas.

- *Noted progress on differentiating the stairs. Can something happen at the base of the stairs to make them a social destination, a place to go and be, perhaps an amphitheater?*
 - SOM-M: Yes, we have a desire to explore landscaping and seating arrangements that make it a stopping place, like an outdoor lobby.

- *Can the bridges be narrowed? Not as VE but as an architectural thing. Or vary the width; maybe make one super-narrow?*
 - SOM-M: Good comment. We can look into this. Some of the widths are derived from code required exit widths.

- *On the stair towers, what can happen at the base to create scale to the space?*
 - SOM-M: Good comment. We will investigate ways of creating scale and interest at the base of the stairs, a continuation of the outdoor lobby idea.

- *Can you diminish the landscape on the Connector, so that the Connector is like a bridge over a river of green? This may be an opportunity to save on cost and architecturally differentiate the connector from the garden level.*
 - SOM-M: Like the analogy of a bridge over a river of green. We felt we needed to pump up the vegetation on the Connector to give it a strong relationship to the garden level. But it might be more appropriate to have a light touch, while still having a sense that you're in one space and then you moving through a green zone and you emerge at another open space and so on.

Landscaping

DRC:

- *Can community gardens be incorporated?*
 - SOM-M: Yes, absolutely, good suggesting. There are many opportunities for programable garden areas.

- *Describe the idea of 'lushness' as it relates to native landscapes, which is not typically described as lush.*
 - SOM-M: The idea is to provide native plantings, that stay healthy, look happy. A strong presence of landscaping can be there if we use the right species. There may be an opportunity to provide plantings that prefer more water such as the south area near the ESHA.

- *Describe your approach to trees. Are you limited to native live oaks? What are your ideas about trees on the Connector?*
 - SOM-M: We will consider other types of oaks native to California. We have not completed the plant palette. There will be a fair number of sycamores, perhaps redwoods in the wetter area of the site. Small trees can be provided on the Connector; however, we want to maintain the vistas. The planting beds are limited due to the structure of the Connector.

Value Engineering:

DRC:

- *Suggest getting rid of the rooftop gardens and the horizontal skylights.*
 - SOM-M: Good suggestions, we will consider.

Sustainability:

DRC:

- *The DRC Co-Chair emphasized the importance of sustainability and the UC's decarbonization goals. What is the current plan?*
 - SOM-M: The project is currently designed to have stand-alone hydronic hot water heating. The project team noted that there is not a central utility plant in the current design, however the project is being designed to connect to a future plant (likely a large-scale campus plant).
 - The campus decarbonization program is presumed to have a large scale cold and hot water loop. This project has a bid alternate designed that allows San Benito to connect to that in the future.

General Questions:

DRC:

- *Can the project return to the DRC to review some of the items that were not quite resolved in this SD presentation, perhaps at the DD phase?*
 - Julie H.: Perhaps. We are meeting again in July to review the East Campus Housing Site Design and Massing; however, this is not the standard process. It would be a project update and not an opportunity to accept input from DRC.

- *Who decides what amenity spaces there are and how many?*
 - SOM-M: The Campus Housing team studies this and carefully decides the program space. This is gained through observing students and student outreach.
 - Cost is always weighed and decisions are made that maximize program areas and eliminate some that are not critical. For example, we eliminated a redundant recreation space from the project, since this project happens to be the closest housing facility to the main Campus Recreation Center, a short walk away.
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Adjournment:

Co-Chair Bahl asked Mr. Schmittgen to recap the meeting's major points, for the purpose of incorporating the major points into the CPC Agenda to be held on June 25, 2024.

Ed Schmittgen provided a summary of the meeting which will be forwarded to the CPC as follows:

Value Engineering:

- It was acknowledged that value-engineering was underway. While this is a reality of the project, the DRC and the design team want to ensure that the architectural character and the landscaping concept of lushness are maintained.

Architectural Character:

- The DRC was pleased with the progress the design team made in adding more architectural personality to the design, and requested the team to continue to develop this where appropriate.

Stairs:

- The entrance to the stairs could be emphasized to function like an outdoor lobby.
- How can the first 20 vertical feet on the complex have more character and look less institutional?
- Develop the interface of the stairs facing Harder Stadium so there is more interplay.

Connector:

- Consider varying the width of the bridges to offer variety and interest as well as potential for cost savings.
- Skylights were added to the Connector since the last iteration to offer light to the lower level. A DRC comment suggested some or all of these could be eliminated for cost saving and practical reasons.

Sustainability:

- DRC emphasized the importance of sustainability and the UC's decarbonization goals. The project team noted that there is not a central utility plant in the current design,

however the project is being designed to connect to a future plant (likely a large-scale campus plant).

- The project is currently designed to have stand-alone hydronic hot water heating.

Landscape:

- The DRC encouraged continued discussion about delineation of the Connector, a bridge above the 'river of greenery'. How do areas integrate/differentiate? Where should landscaping be placed on the Connector?
- It was generally agreed that roof gardens are an area that can be removed as a budget concession.
- The DRC considered trees on the Connector level. While vistas are a design emphasis, trees can incorporate scale to the Connector's pedestrian experience as well as help define entries to residences and amenity space.
- Consider introducing various species of Oaks.
- Explore if community gardens situated for student participation can be incorporated.

Breezeways (located at ground level):

- Consider better activating the breezeway, such as incorporating seating to encourage gathering.
- Complete a wind study.

Color:

- The color palette was reviewed. Should colors be bolder? Should an alternative to the Terra Cotta color be considered?

Next DRC meeting will be July 11, 2024 to discuss East Campus Housing (Phase 2) Site Design and Massing.