

MEETING MINUTES

Project	Mercer Int'l Middle School	Project No	2002
Subject	SDAT Meeting #6	Meeting Date	6/8/2021
From	Bassetti Architects	Date	6/21/2021

Attending

+ Attended in person

* Attended by Phone

x Did not Attend

* Brad Tong Managing Director	Shiels Oblatz Johnson	* Cheri Hendricks Design Manager	Broadview Associates
* Justine Kim Project Manager	Shiels Oblatz Johnson	* Lorne McConachie Educational Planner	Bassetti Architects
* Paige McGehee Program Coordinator	Shiels Oblatz Johnson	x Caroline Lemay Principal in Charge	Bassetti Architects
* Jerome Hunter Founder of Seattle School for Boys	Partnered with SOJ	* Michael Davis Design Principal	Bassetti Architects
* Vince Gonzales Senior Project Manager	Seattle Public School	* Amanda Hoehn Project Manager	Bassetti Architects
x Deborah Northern Equity and Engagement Manager	Seattle Public School	* Edward Arreola Project Designer	Bassetti Architects
* Sarah Pritchett Executive Director	Seattle Public School	* Cindy Watters Mercer Principal	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Sherrie Encarnacion Mercer Assist. Principal	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Katie Humphreys SpEd Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Aaron Hennings Music Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Sue Monroe Librarian	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Janet Bautista Science and STEM Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Emily Elasky Science and STEM Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Matt Kochevar Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Virginia Andrews School Counselor	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Katie Badillo Wright Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Tracy Kolner Attendance Specialist	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Azi Brannock Student	Mercer Int'l Middle School	x Logan Neil Student	Mercer Int'l Middle School

* Rumi Takahashi Parent	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Erin Okuno Parent	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Grace Floyd Parent	Mercer Int'l Middle School		

Notes

This was the sixth SDAT (School Design Advisory Team) Meeting for the Mercer Int'l Middle School Project. Statewide restrictions to “stay home” in an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19 had us use videoconferencing to conduct this meeting. These notes do not substitute for the contents of the presentation; rather they supplement it by capturing context and comments made during the meeting, so please reference page numbers within the presentation.

1. WELCOME AND AGENDA

- + Amanda welcomed the group to SDAT #6. She gave an overview of today's agenda and reiterated that this meeting was a safe space for all. (page 1-2)

2. SDAT #5 DESIGN RECAP

- + Amanda reviewed comments from our previous SDAT for the pros and cons of each scheme.
 - o Option 1: The Academic Crown Jewel: (page 4)
 - 3-story scheme is easier to layout grade levels.
 - Nice entry plaza.
 - Great solar orientation and daylighting.
 - Seems limited on outdoor space.
 - Would like a rooftop outdoor area on the 3rd level so those students have a better connection to nature.
 - Good sightlines in the corridors.
 - Good for accessibility from the parking lot to the building.
 - This option seems favorable.
 - o Option 2: Community Connections (page 5)
 - 3-story scheme is easier to layout grade levels.
 - Would like rooftop outdoor area on the 3rd level.
 - Good direct connection to outdoor learning areas.
 - Easy site supervision.
 - Building feels stretched out and it would be a long walk from end to end.
 - Good variety of sizes for outdoor spaces.
 - Classrooms feel too close to the busy arterial.
 - Daylighting seems compromised in some of the classrooms with SW exposure.
 - Doesn't seem to capture the good views.
 - o Option 3: String of Pearls (page 6)
 - Larger field size seems more usable.
 - Worried the outdoor space between the wings would be distracting and not used.
 - The outdoor space between wings would good hiding spots.
 - Some members felt this option had the best classroom groupings and other felt like the groups were too isolated.
 - Good entry plaza.
 - Bus loop around the back is not safe for students walking from Jefferson Park.
 - o Option 4: Connection to Nature (page 7)

- Do not like the library on the main level.
- It feels like this option has a lot of entry points.
- Good access to the outdoors.
- Concerned breakout spaces could be disruptive to the classrooms.
- Good daylighting for the classroom areas.
- Good sightlines in the corridors.
- This option seems favorable.

3. BUILDING AND SITE CHARACTER

- + Amanda then reviewed the feedback we have received so far on building and site character and confirmed these were still accurate with the SDAT committee.
 - The students provided images with the following characteristics: (Slide 9)
 - Modern aesthetic
 - Clear and welcoming entry
 - Strong indoor / outdoor connections
 - Bring the natural environment into the interiors through the use of natural elements.
 - The SDAT committee has mentioned the following characteristics in previous meetings: (page 10)
 - Transparency: Provide bright and open indoor / outdoor places as well as provide connections to green spaces from the inside.
 - Colors: Use cheerful colors to brighten experiences and soften spaces.
 - Texture and Color: Provide stimulating, multi-sensory environments.
 - Bold Shapes, Natural Materials, Muted Colors: Provide some areas that are vibrant/dynamic and others that are muted/calming with an emphasis on natural materials.
 - Showcasing a Sustainable Feature: Use displays that demonstrate the environmental impacts of activities / choices.
 - The SDAT confirmed these were still good characteristics. Amanda asked if we were missing anything? (page 11)
 - Benches and green space?
 - Large open areas?
 - Strong entry feature?
 - Easy drop off?
 - Covered space?
 - Features that support student performance?

4. PERFORMANCE COMMONS

- + Lorne discussed performance commons and the criteria to ensure a functioning space. (page 13)
 - The District Educational Specifications call for the use of a performance common. We have seen both highly successful ones and some that we have learned don't function as well, like the old "cafetorium" model.
 - There are 6 characteristics of a successful performance commons which include:
 - Closable room vs a room that is open to the rest of the school: An enclosable room allows for controllable acoustics and lighting.
 - An open room creates challenges with distractions from students and visitors using adjacent hallways.

- Stage or a platform: Some spaces work better with a fixed, closeable stage and other spaces work better with a flexible platform that can adapt and change.
- Acoustic Attenuation: What is the right amount of volume and sound layering? Often an orchestra shell can help with pushing sound out to the audience
 - What kind of acoustical absorption is right for the space? Different types of performances require different types of absorption.
 - We need to balance the sound of the voice/speaker, full orchestra, and the cacophony of daily lunch.
- Lighting: Controlling the lighting can make a huge impact. Theater lighting is highly flexible and controllable, mood lighting can be used for testing or dances, and daylighting provides access to the exterior but may add the need for room darkening.
- Seating: Convertible seating can be used for both lunch time and performances, and provides the best flexibility.
- Performance Support Spaces: What kind of spaces are needed at your school as support spaces for a stage?
 - Backstage area?
 - A cyclorama which allows backstage circulation?
 - Control booth for sound/lighting?
 - Storage for props, equipment, and chair?
 - Or maybe the stage needs to be adjacent to the music rooms and loading area.
- Lorne walked through some recent examples of performance commons including feedback from the principals at those schools.
 - Madison Middle School: Partially closed room with a balcony. (page 14)
 - This stage had an orchestra shell, wings, and a cyclorama.
 - The acoustics were designed for the volume of the space and with layered edges.
 - Utilized variable stage lighting and room darkening.
 - Seating was fold-out theater seating and chairs.
 - This site had a backstage area.
 - Principal Feedback: "Acoustics are good for both class meetings and musical performances. We hold assemblies in our gym. No other problems or issues"
 - Robert Eagle Staff: Open to school hallways and a balcony. (page 15)
 - Stage was elevated by about 3 feet.
 - Acoustics to support a 2-story volume.
 - Performance lighting was used along with room darkening.
 - Seating is convertible dining tables.
 - Principal Feedback: "The design of the balcony overlooking the commons is brilliant as it allows students who can get sensory overload to be present, while a bit removed, for assemblies and performances. The openness of the commons is challenging because there are distractions from people who circulate along the main hallway during a performance."
 - Meany Middle School: Modernization of an existing space, it is an enclosed room. (page 16)
 - Stage was elevated by about 3 feet, there is no orchestra shell.

- Acoustics included some wall treatment; it is a simple volume and lacks acoustic layering which is desirable for voice/speaker.
- Lighting included stage lighting.
- Seating is convertible dining tables.
- Principal Feedback: "The Commons has acoustical treatments and performed well when students used it to produce a musical."
- Meadowdale HS, Todd Beamer HS, and Edmonds Woodway HS examples were also shown (page 17). Lorne focused on Edmonds Woodway:
 - Enclosed room that was modeled after London Philharmonic which was an old medieval malt barn with great acoustics.
 - The goal was to design a great performance space that is also a good place to eat lunch.
 - The volume was a two-story space with multi-layered edges to provide rich acoustics.
 - They utilized a moveable platform which allowed flexibility for musical performance.
 - Lighting was quite robust for theater lighting and room darkening.
 - Provided fold out theater seats for about 500 and additional seating with about 200 chairs.

5. LEARNING COMMONS

- + Amanda discussed key characteristics of a successful learning commons. (page 19) These include:
 - Good sightlines from at least two (and preferably more) adjacent classrooms.
 - She noted the image of Rose Hill MS and how multiple classrooms opened up onto the learning commons
 - Proportions that allow at least two small groups to work independently, as well as one larger group to convene.
 - She noted the image of Klahowya MS and how there were different seating areas with different furniture, but they could all be grouped together for a larger gathering.
 - Destination rather than pass-thru space to minimize distractions.
 - Natural light to encourage use.
 - She noted all the images on the slides had very good natural light and were very inviting.
 - Outdoor Access when feasible.
- + The Arbor Heights Model: (page 20)
 - This learning commons is very glassy allowing for unobstructed views from multiple directions.
 - The space is open for larger gathering, but furniture allows multiple small groups as well.
 - These are destination learning commons, located at the end of the hallway.
 - There is outdoor access from every floor level.
 - Exterior windows and large amounts of transparency through spaces allows for a lot of daylight.
- + The Meadowdale Model:(page 21)
 - The classrooms for this learning commons have large windows giving good visibility to supervise the space.
 - The space has a variety of seating areas including a genius bar and open areas with a variety of furniture.

- A partial height wall separates this learning commons from the corridor. While it's not a true destination cluster it does create space that is well defined from the corridor.
- This space does not have direct access to exterior windows, so there's little daylighting.
- There is no direct access to the exteriors.

6. UPDATED DESIGN OPTIONS

- + Mike touched briefly on the site plan reminding the group of some of the key site features such as views, sun angles, and prevailing winds. (page 23)
- + Option 1: Capture the Sun (page 24-25)
 - Mike walked through the site and plan for this 3-story option. The site focuses on creating a connection to the street level with a large welcoming entry plaza. Parent dropoff is onsite with access from Columbian Ave while bus dropoff is located along 16th Ave. S. These are kept separate for safety.
 - The rest of the site is dedicated to outdoor learning space. A large area between the two wings of the building offers a commons plaza with a stage and an art/CTE plaza. A small playfield and basketball courts offer space for activities near the plaza and gym areas. On the east and west of the classroom wings there are large outdoor classroom spaces.
 - The building is defined by two main wings. The south wing houses the resource spaces such as gym, commons, band, and choir. The north wing houses the majority of the classrooms, science, and CTE spaces.
 - The connecting corridor between the two wings has the administration area at the corner where they can supervise in both directions. Directly north is a community partner space, a suite for Special Ed Intensive services, health, world language, and art. Connecting to the upper level at the heart of the school is a learning stair with strong visual connections to the outdoor plaza.
 - The second floor is a continuation of the classroom wings and learning commons spaces, but this floor also includes two world language classrooms and a library. The library is located to capture views to the north, west, and south.
 - The third floor matches the classroom wing layout with the addition of an outdoor learning area that has good southern sunlight and offers a way for the 3rd floor to have a better connection with the outdoors.
 - Mike presented a rendering showing an example of what the outdoor plaza could look like. This is very high level and much more design work needs to be done. (page 26)
 - Mike also showed a massing study of how the building fits on the site and compares to other buildings in the neighborhood. (page 27)
 - Mike also discussed the shadow studies for the site because there was concern about the VA hospital parking garage shading a large portion of the site. What we discovered is our building is just barely in shadow at the locker rooms and mechanical/electrical rooms most of the year. The longest shadows would be in December in the morning. (page 28)
- + Option 2: Meaningful Outdoor Connections (page 29-30)
 - Mike walked through the site and plan for this 2-story option. The site focuses on creating a connection to the street level with a large welcoming entry plaza similar to the other option. Parent dropoff is onsite with access from Columbian Ave while bus dropoff is located along 16th Ave. S. The bus dropoff doesn't come as far into the site as option 1. Due to the building orientation and bus dropoff location, we get a bit more site area for landscaping.
 - The layout of this building has the resource wing rotated so it runs in a north-south direction. The administration area is located directly off the entry giving good sightlines down the corridor. The gym is located directly across from the admin and

is easily accessible for after-hours activities. The stage and commons are north of the gym with the commons opening onto a plaza space. This plaza is smaller than option one, but includes a larger multi-purpose field.

- Community partners area is anchored at the entry corner for easy access.
 - Band and choir are along the west side of the main spine of the building and directly adjacent to a learning stair up to the second floor and library.
 - The SpEd Intensive services suite is more of an eddy off the corridor than a suite like in option 1.
 - The west classroom wings use a model similar to the Meadowdale Learning Commons, but with direct connections to exterior windows. The west learning commons is a destination learning commons.
 - The second floor is largely similar with the classroom wing layout. Similar to option 1 we have the library in a place of prominence to capture the surrounding views to the north, west, and south.
- Mike showed a rendering of the commons plaza and the glassy connections to the building. (page 31)
 - Mike showed this two-story scheme massing study and how it relates to the nearby buildings. (page 32)
 - Similar to option 1 the shadow study shows our building not too effected by the VA hospital parking garage shadow except for early mornings in December. (page 33)

7. CONCEPT DESIGN EVALUTIONS

+ Capture the Sun Feedback:

- Entry Plaza: Can this be a better hangout space? It feels a little bit like a funnel. The current school brings students further into the site.
 - Maybe the Commons and Commons Plaza is the new hangout area and we encourage them to come into the building.
 - The entry area feels like an adult space so moving the students into the commons and plaza could change that.
 - Because so many students walk to school through Jefferson Park does it make sense to have a second entry on the north classroom wing. This could also be glassy and get more light into the academic area.
 - If the whole site is fenced or has landscape buffers we will need an access point for students.
- Learning Commons: This scheme has the better learning commons, but how does it work vertically?
 - The non-intensive SpEd spaces are integrated into the Learning Commons? Correct.
- For SpEd this option for intensive services seems the best. It is key that we do not stigmatize or make SpEd students feel like an exhibit. This location is good for its proximity to the Admin area. It also gives them the ability to interact with other programs (health and art) while still providing a level of privacy. They will need easy access to the elevator.
 - The SpEd teacher liked that this grouping had its own community space.
 - There was concern that it was a little bit too far from the academic wing.
- Commons: Does this want to be closer to the front or further back in the site for safety?
 - If used as an event space, closer to the entry and admin is better and easier to secure the rest of the school.

- The front door of the entry plaza is bookmarked on the east by a pretty dark, not inviting choir room. What sort of message does that send to the public? Maybe a more inviting use at this important corner.
- Love the idea of an outdoor stage!
 - Several SDAT members agreed this was a good feature, but it was mentioned that being under the flight path is very noisy and may have some negative impacts to outdoor performances.
- This option seems to allow for much of the school to be closed off while after-hours access is used for the commons.
- **This is the preferred option by the SDAT committee**
- + Meaningful Outdoor Connections Feedback:
 - This option seems harder to supervise, there seems to be more little nooks along the exterior.
 - Similar comment that the program located right at the front entry is too adult focused.
 - Would like to see further studies on how to make the corner of the gym welcoming when you first walk in.
 - More space by the loading appears to create an area that will be hard to supervise.
 - Similar question previously asked about student access from Jefferson Park.
 - Sarah Pritchett stated one main entrance is preferred. The students could cut through the field and commons plaza in the mornings, but they would need a dedicated pathway.
 - The scale of the outdoor space feels about right on this option. Option one felt vast and undefined.

8. NEXT STEPS

- + Next SDAT #7 will be August 18th. (page 37)
- + Bassetti will provide meeting minutes to the group.
- + See attached documents from meeting: (Presentation slide show)

END OF MEETING MINUTES