

Design Review Committee (DRC)

Meeting Minutes

May 21, 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

Vacant - GSA Student Representative

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

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 January 18, 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)
 - 100 % 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%)

Action Items:

San Benito Student Housing – 50% 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 3500 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 2100 beds in apartment-style units. Phase 2 will be located on a site TBD within the East Campus Channel Island 5 existing residence halls and will be addressed at a later meeting.

Julie emphasized that the project has evolved significantly and believes the DRC's comments from January were thoughtfully incorporated. She mentioned that while LEED Gold is the minimum, we have set a goal to be LEED Platinum. Finally, she highlighted the fast pace of the project with construction scheduled to start in approximately 1 year; May 2025.

SOM-Mithun

Tannar Whitney, SOM Project Manager, Olin Mckenzie, SOM Design Partner, and Sade Borghei, Mithun Design Principal, outlined the prominent developments that were a direct result from DRC comments in January 2024 as well as general project development.

Façade and Massing Development:

- By moving the ESHA north of Mesa Road they were able to increase the space between the buildings so that there is at least 45 feet of separation at the narrowest points. This has multiple benefits. It decreases the perceived density, and allows more sunlight and air movement into the courtyards between the buildings, which in turn promotes plant life for the landscaping features.
- Facades have been developed by the addition of articulation and texture. The rectilinear buildings maintain a bend in the middle, but texture has been added by a variation of GFRC panels that subtly pop in and out, 'alligator scales'. The variation, along with the building form creates a variable light condition that changes during the time of day or time of year depending on the location of the sun.
- Horizontality has been predominantly emphasized, with contrasting vertical elements that denote the stair towers/vertical circulation. These stair towers are veiled with an aluminum mesh that subtly screens a colored wall plane that identifies a building (green, yellow, blue and so on). Vertical pedestrian movement will be visible through the veils and animate the stair towers.

The Connector:

- The Connector is an iconic element for the project. Effectively it is an elevated plaza that serves as a central spine and cleverly steps down to accommodate the entry points of each building, subtly accommodating ADA access, and providing opportunity for vistas at strategic locations.
- The Connector starts at the southwest corner 'arrival square' and playfully connects the campus to the project via a series of bridges and 'stepping stones' that act as both social areas and access points to various activity spaces, study lounges and retail components. The idea of a light-footed crossing of the ESHA is reminiscent of carefully crossing a stream via stepping stones on a hiking trail.
- Vistas off of the Connector are themed based on their focal point. La Cumbra Vista, Court Vista, etc.
- The level change is never more than ~18" and terminates at the Northern edge 1 level above Mesa Road.

Mesa Road and Stadium Road:

- The project abuts two current roadways: Mesa Road and Stadium Road and both have been approached very differently. Mesa Road has been separated through careful planning to discourage pedestrian activity.
- Conversely, Stadium Road has been designed to encourage pedestrian activity. The campus plans to close the road to daily traffic to encourage pedestrian movement to the stadium and campus to the south.

DRC Q & A:

The DRC members were generally appreciative of the architectural development but had some feedback to enhance the design.

DRC:

- *Why not put pedestrians on Mesa, why is this discouraged?*
- *Regarding eliminating vehicular traffic on Stadium Road, this is a common thoroughfare. Have you done a Traffic Study?*

SOM-M

- Mesa Road has a number of challenges that prohibited development for safe travel. Most importantly, due to the ESHA restriction, we were unable to widen it to provide safe and effective bikeways and sidewalks. This, along with fairly high speeds and high traffic, is not conducive to using it as a pedestrian accessway. The greater plan does provide for two optional bike path extensions one to the south and one to the west.
- There was a traffic study performed. Stadium Road was reported as being under-utilized and actually compromises the efficiency and effectiveness of Mesa Road.

DRC:

- *Is there an opportunity for solar panels? Or at least PV ready?*
- *Is there an opportunity for BBQ areas?*
- *How does the Connector accommodate furniture?*

SOM-M

- The design team will look into solar and PV ready capabilities.
- We can consider BBQ areas. Some thoughts about noise and smoke, etc. should be taken into consideration.
- The Connector – furniture is being developed. The Connector and the subsidiary spaces are considered important to the design concept. Based on feedback from student and client interface, areas such as quiet space to make a phone call, study, and outdoor lounge spaces all will be developed to emphasize the amazing climate and environmental setting in Santa Barbara.

DRC:

- *Have you considered the rooftops as potentially landscaped green roofs, accessible by residents as enhanced panoramic vista points?*
- *How do we protect the landscaping from elimination due to budget constraints?*

SOM-M

- The landscape architect is not present at this 50% SD meeting but will be in attendance with a full presentation of the landscape elements, plant types, wet zone, biofiltration areas, etc.
- While the rooftops certainly offer amazing view, there is a balance between cost and safety that is acceptable to UCSB. So, it is open for discussion but this is primarily a stakeholder decision.

- There is some opportunity on the Connector for plantings to soften it as well as potential for openings that could lighten the Connector and promote more sunlight below.
- Agree, the landscape is a critical part of the project, we need to ensure an exceptional amount of green in the project. Consideration will be given to Day 1 appearance as well as years later.

DRC:

- *Is there an opportunity for more idiosyncratic features, added whimsy? Urban variation, that gives small cities richness? For example: variation in the stair towers (more than just different colors)? Or perhaps variations in the guardrails? Including an amphitheater?*
- *Are there opportunities for Public Art, specifically mentioned was the triangular space off of the arrival plaza to the south.*
- *The project is homogeneous, i.e. despite the façade development the buildings are all the 'same'. Is there an opportunity for vertical landscape features, green walls?*

SOM-M

- The idea of developing the stairs to 'misbehave', a little, was embraced. The team would like the design to emphasize the experience (movement through space, varied forms and perspectives) rather than facade painting (superficial) gestures. The stairs themselves were recognized as quite an important experience, movement from the Connector to the garden. There is some work to do for the design team to develop visually dynamic forms within the context of the overall design philosophy.
- Regarding the vertical landscaping. This will be considered. The general landscaping concept is a lush carpet that is an extension of the existing ecology. The Connector level could offer opportunity for vertical landscape features in the form of a trellis.

Julie H.

- Public art can be considered but there is a process to that and that would be outside of the design process and immediate goal of construction in May 2025.

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 January 30, 2024.

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

The designers were encouraged to add opportunities for variety and interest, and strategically locate playful elements. Ideas discussed included more whimsical expression of a stair tower (or two), incorporating public art and expressing the interplay of "indoor/outdoor" special use and amenity space on the exterior.

Additional suggestions DRC provided for consideration:

- Softening the Connector with plantings and openings for daylighting below

- Encouraging opportunities of community expression
- Inclusion of an amphitheater, vertical landscaping elements (trellises) and roof terraces
- Further development of the stair tower-to-grade connections
- Incorporating seating or plantings at the railings
- Adding photovoltaic (PV) panels or making the project PV-ready

Next DRC meeting will be at 95% Schematic Design.