

MEETING MINUTES

PROJECT NAME: William Schmidt S. Outdoor Environmental Education Center
 CLIENT: Prince Georges County Public Schools (PGCPS)
 QEA PROJECT NO.: 41802570
 MEETING NO.: Stakeholder Group Workshop 02, Meeting #05
 MEETING DATE: 02.08.2019



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ATTENDEES:

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DISCUSSION NOTES:

NO	ITEM
5.1	<p>Big Idea / Why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - QEA described a process of design thinking that searches for a “big idea” through an iterative evaluation of the project program, specific site, and craft of building. A creative spark that synthesizes these three elements into a framework for making holistic and quality design decisions. - How do we get to the “Why”? QEA asked an elemental question for stakeholders to consider and reflect on. What should be the timeless takeaway from an outdoor environmental education experience at Schmidt? - One answer that was discussed, is that a participant would leave their experience at Schmidt with an understanding that they are part of a larger natural system, and that they have some responsibility to the stewardship of that system. It was also discussed how natural systems are comprised of interdependent cycles such as the carbon, water,

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	<p>oxygen processes as well as seasonal, lunar and solar movements and rhythms. When human activity disrupts these natural cycles, overall health and well-being are compromised and the natural environment declines.</p> <p>-James Roberson mentioned that the takeaway from Schmidt should be to create a learning experience that makes students comfortable in nature and having fun, so that they would enjoy seeking out other outdoor adventures. Schmidt should plant the seed for environmental sensitivity and awareness so that youth make better decisions through their lives.</p> <p>Just in the brief discussion, there was a rich and varied response by the stakeholders, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That there is always discovery in experiencing nature, part of a learning continuum that is lifelong. -Students grasping that they have the power of change. - Opportunities and career paths in environmental fields abound. -Developing an appreciation for the natural environment; being comfortable in the outdoors. -Bringing the experience back home. -Forming a strong relationship with schools so that the lessons learned at Schmidt continue in the classrooms. This ensures that the lessons learned at Schmidt are not isolated concepts but part of a larger environmental education endeavor. <p>Stakeholders should continue to reflect and clarify the ultimate purpose and takeaway of the Schmidt experience and how it impacts participants.</p>
<p>5.2</p>	<p>Schmidt Program Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Schmidt staff clarified different programs + staff requirements at campus: -5th grade program (Range: 12-150 students at a time; average: 50-60 students coming from one school) broken down into groups of 10-15 students. -1st grade program (Ranges from 60-120 students) <p>By design, program delivery relies on visiting schools' teachers, chaperones and Schmidt staff:</p> <p>Teachers: Schmidt specialists will assign activities for visiting teachers of each school. Typically, each teacher only instructs one single activity to the students. Because teachers are not part of Schmidt staff, they have to undergo training before their school's visit. Training includes watching an instructional video and providing an instructional binder. Ideally, teachers remain at their assigned activity station for the duration of the day while the student groups rotate these stations with chaperones. Teachers do not walk students to their activities.</p> <p>Chaperones: Their main role is to accompany and monitor a student group throughout activities. They also spend the night at Schmidt. They do not instruct the activities. Chaperones can be parents or school staff.</p> <p>Schmidt Staff: Two Schmidt Staff members accompany each fifth grade group. One will stay overnight with the group in the camp center. They oversee, manage and coordinate the programs. The only activity that is instructed by Schmidt staff is the Stream Ecology lesson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Other programs include: First Grade Day Program, Middle + High School Team Building, environmental science and professional development for teachers, and special events like Envirothon.



5.3	<p>Site</p> <p>-Overview and discussion about existing conditions on site, opportunities and constraints from natural elements to man-made interventions currently on the campus. These include, but not limited to: topography, streams, wetlands, forest stands, fields, trails, bridges, roads, and buildings.</p> <p>-It was noted that an original masterplan called for a dam to create a lake on site.</p>
5.4	<p>Challenges and Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limiting permeability of buses and other vehicles into the site both for safety of students and to improve the quality of the natural experience. - An ADA activity circuit should be well integrated into the program and might act as a spine to the existing trails and pathways. - The need for significant landscape and architectural improvements at the Orme Building site to integrate the building and activity to the rest of the camp. - Accessibility and inclusive design throughout the camp is critical to Schmidt's mission. - There is a need to maintain/improve emergency vehicular access as much as possible throughout the site. - Opportunity to connect the buildings with nature – location, openings, indoor – outdoor blurred, views, natural light, and materials. - Interior wood finishes in village sleeping units are discouraged to avoid any potential bed bug problems. - Green infrastructure should be incorporated into the site and buildings for best practices but more importantly for lessons on sustainability for the students. Designing as much as possible with passive systems: operability of windows, doors, light intake. Design team to take into consideration potential weather unpreparedness of participants. - QEA team observed on their field visits how limited staff and resources are leveraged in the successful delivery of multiple active programming occurring simultaneously; incredible organization. - Program at Schmidt is approximately 50+ years old. - School teachers coming to Schmidt to instruct was by design. - It is common for students, teachers and parents to be nervous or scared of the outdoor experience. One stakeholder referred to it as "Green Shock". The Schmidt Center should offer a unique experience, but it should not be too jarring for visitors new to the outdoors. Some elements should feel closer to home, but perhaps with an environmentally conscious twist. - Village cabins should be simple since they are only used by students at night to sleep. More investment should go into public areas such as the Dining Hall and ERC. However, the villages might still offer important learning opportunities that can help teach students about sustainable living. - Current drop off areas -especially the Orme Building- are not ideal as the highway proximity and typical 1960's school building aesthetic do not reinforce



a natural, calm setting.

- Students (and visiting teachers and parents) could better transition from the urban/sub-urban context to nature by arriving to a “portal”. The portal can be a physical space/structure/threshold/gathering point, but also a mental construct that participants pass through to be open to what the program and property has to offer.
- There are opportunities to enrich the entry sequence into the camp, such as allowing visitors to walk up to their cabins, or take tractor ride. The logistics of this would be difficult without increases in staff. Program timing is also an important aspect to determining entry sequence; if buses are late there is little time to drop off students at villages, eat lunch, and be ready for programming at 12:00.
- Historically, students would hike into camp with their luggage from the west side of the site Horsehead Road access, but this proved to be a hassle in poor weather conditions. Any re-imagined entry sequence should be sensitive to the limited staff, time, and energy available.
- Camp Centers can help act as a “portal” into the program. The classroom spaces programmed into the cabins might relocate to the camp centers to concentrate this activity in a more flexible space. Classrooms were originally structured into the cabins to accommodate funding requirements for the buildings.
- The 1st grade program time and instructional area overlaps other programs at Schmidt; middle and high school programs.
- Activity centers are located throughout the campus as funding and program ideas were incrementally created. In this way the layout of Schmidt grew organically over time from the original building and road placements to the current activities.
- Orme was never intended to be part of the Schmidt property or program; a thoughtful renovation should address this and integrate the building, and activities into the camp.
- There is concern that students are not used to walking distances anymore; a balance between convenience and experiencing the natural site is required in locating the activities and buildings.
- QEA asked what the proper relationship between Schmidt staff and programming. Staff should have separation, but ideally, also be in close proximity to programming they coordinate. Staff also needs to be close to student groups in case of emergencies.
- Ideally, different program groups such as the fifth grade program and high school groups should not cross paths. Visitors should feel as if they have the camp to themselves.
- ERC could house a shared staff office to provide an area to prepare for programming; meeting with other staff, teachers, etc.
- Visiting schools are always in a full, busy schedule, no real down time. It is therefore dependent on the individual instructors to slow the tenor of their instruction at the various activity areas to allow participants to focus and



	<p>concentrate, and allow the natural experience to have a positive effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- There is a need for indoor instructional spaces as Schmidt operates 12 months a year and the weather is not always cooperative.- There is a need for collaborative spaces (nooks, corridors, casual moments in architecture for expanded learning opportunities).
5.5	<p>Program</p> <p>-QEA continues to share ongoing program analysis for all buildings. Square foot analysis, life safety code, ideal groupings and adjacencies of program elements, are being evaluated and continue to shape our understanding of the program.</p>
5.6	<p>Precedents</p> <p>-The design team shared programmatic, typological, character, and inspirational precedents from different projects that may have relevance to the Schmidt project for discussion with the group. Representative projects were designed by various designers and architects, some included were designed by QEA, R&H and Biohabitats. These precedents exemplify program and building typologies, spatial configuration/design, materiality, environmental design, systems and other considerations that may be useful in thinking about as we embark on the design of the project together.</p>

END OF MINUTES

Recorded by Alfredo Davalos, Gabrielle Rashleigh, and Jules Krinsky

Reviewed and edited by Joe Cellucci

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