



Meeting Summary
February 26, 2014

Attendance

Panel Members: Phyllis Cook, Chair
Hank Alinger
Rob Hollis
Don Taylor
Peggy White

DPZ Staff: Dace Blaumanis, Randy Clay, Bill Mackey, Mary Smith

Merriweather Park, Merriweather-Symphony Woods Neighborhood #14-02

Owner: Columbia Association

Architects: nArchitects
THEVERYMANY

Landscape Architects: Martha Schwartz Partners
Mahan Rykiel Associates

Public Art: Cochran Studios

Engineers: Arup
Gutschick, Little & Weber, P.A.

Developer: Inner Arbor Trust, Inc.

1. Call to Order – DAP Chair Phyllis Cook opened the meeting at 7:07 pm, calling for introductions of the Panel, staff, and project team.

2. Review of Merriweather Park, Merriweather-Symphony Woods Neighborhood #14-02 (SDP) – Michael McCall, President/CEO of Inner Arbor Trust, provided a history of the FDP process. This site development plan is intended to be the first phase (16 acres) of a new kind of arts, cultural, and civic park for the Merriweather-Symphony Woods Neighborhood. Mr. McCall outlined how the design focuses on building greater synergy between the Merriweather Post Pavilion and Symphony Woods Park (which together are being branded as a single unit and thus called *Merriweather Park*) and providing a sense of escape by evoking wonder, enriching the senses, reestablishing the public green, and inspiring imagination through the composition of forms.

Martha Schwartz, Martha Swartz Partners (MSP), noted a key objective for the design team is to reenergize and enhance the identity of Merriweather Park by creating different pieces that belong together aesthetically and programmatically. Ms. Schwartz described three design elements: the 800 foot-long *Caterpillar* that will function as a semi-permeable object that serves as the art of boundary, the 300-foot by 25-foot-wide, elevated *Picnic Bench* that serves as the Park's community seat and the *Merriground*, which is a children's play space. Nigel Koch, MSP, presented details on the design, use, and maintenance of each design element.

Mimi Hoang, nArchitects, presented the design of the *Butterfly*, a cultural-arts and guest services building with two restaurants, a small art gallery, public restrooms, an outdoor terrace, and an accessible roof allowing views to the surrounding elements and the Merriweather Post Pavilion. The *Butterfly's* design is intended to amplify the beauty of the surrounding trees and allow access to their heights to enhance the experience of nature.

Marc Fornes, THEVERYMANY, and Ed Arenius, Arup, presented the *Chrysalis*, including both structural and theatrical design aspects. The design of the *Chrysalis* is intended to create an organic aesthetic to compliment the previously described components of the Park's ensemble while offering great flexibility in function both as a multi-stage amphitheater to stage events at many different scales and as a pavilion for everyday Park activity.

William Cochran, Cochran Studios, described the form of Merriweather Post Pavilion as that of a speaker or an acoustical horn, which drives the sound out into the audience creating a communal experience. Mr. Cochran introduced his design as the art of arrival, celebrating the horn, and developing a design language on the commonalities of other elements for the Park's soundscape. Mr. Cochran presented four horn family types – Skyhorn, Song Cycles, Land Horns, and Tone Reeds – each designed for a gateway entrance to the Park as well as wayfinding installations located throughout the path system. The Soundscape is designed to be non-pervasive and low-volume, and all pieces are designed for audible ranges specific to each installation area.

Scott Rykiel and Steve Kelly, Mahan Rykiel Associates (MRA), noted from their prior presentation to the Panel for this project that with this reiteration the landscape informs the design and all the architectural elements respond to that. The Park's landscape design embodies the principal of lying lightly on the forest, even though Symphony Woods Park is not truly a forested area. There is no understory and it has highly compacted soils, which underscores the MRA team's approach to recover and reestablish its natural health. Functional aspects include the sizing of the Park's pathway system to accommodate both large scale community events such as Wine in the Woods and lower intensity daily use. MRA is currently working with Biohabitats on this initial phase of the project for environmental mitigation measures.

Star Davis, Arup, stated that the lighting master plan is designed to contribute to the entire experience of discovery throughout the Park. Lighting will consist of five layers – pedestrian pathways, vehicular roadways, landscape, art and wayfinding pieces, and element animation. Each will be integrated into the Park's natural structure to create the effect of growing from the earth and being powered from its soil.

By unanimous consent pursuant to each motion duly made and seconded, DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Board.

DAP member Hank Alinger offered the following motion:

1. "That the applicant review the scale of the width of, particularly, the central walkway that comes opposite the Mall bringing folks into Merriweather, to see that it's appropriately sized to accommodate numerous folks that come that way." Seconded by P. Cook.

DAP member Don Taylor offered the following motion:

2. "That the Panel support the design as submitted." Seconded by R. Hollis.

Chair Phyllis Cook adjourned the meeting at 9:45 pm.