

July 12, 2021

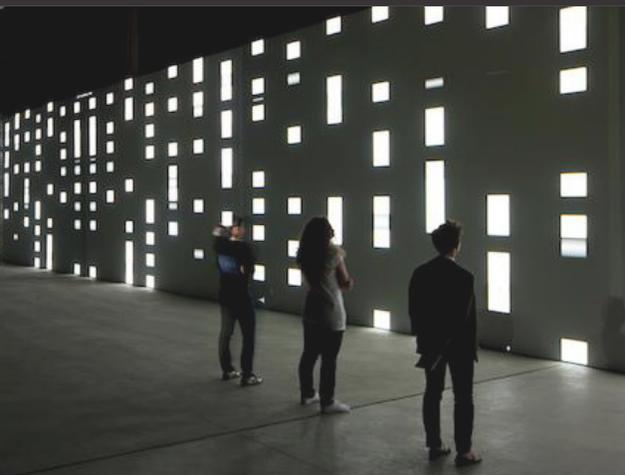
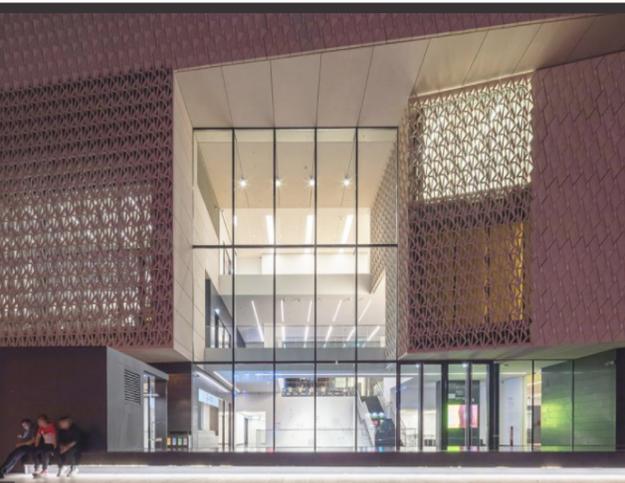
Design Input Workshop The Bronx

NYC Borough-Based Jails Program
A DESIGN-BUILD PROGRAM

NYC Criminal Justice



NYC Department of Design and Construction
DDC



Report Delivered
on July 27, 2021 by
AECOM-Hill JV

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Bronx Design Input Workshop took place on July 12, 2021 from 5:00-7:00 PM via Zoom Webinar. Representatives from the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, Department of Design and Construction, Department of Correction, Department of City Planning, and AECOM-Hill JV convened a workshop to gather community input on the facility design guidelines and principles in advance of the procurement phase of the Bronx facility as part of the Borough-Based Jails (BBJ) program. Queen Strategy Partners, a consulting firm with expertise in designing and facilitating workshops, strategizing, planning event logistics, and reporting feedback, facilitated the workshop experience. Below is a summary of the key areas of the workshop and information regarding the BBJ Program.

The primary goal is to close Riker’s Island and reduce the existing eleven active jails to four to create a smaller, safer, fairer system. The vast majority of the space will be utilized for dedicated program services for those in custody and support staff.

Workshop Objectives

The objectives of the workshop are the following: engaging with the community by providing updates on the design guidelines input process and timelines, sharing the community-driven points of agreement and giving them the opportunity for input on the facility design, permissible uses of the community space and other features such as security, lighting and public space experience.

The workshop provided an opportunity for attendees to engage with City agency staff, designers, architects and the session’s facilitators. This report documents the input and feedback provided by community stakeholders who engaged in the three activities that occurred during the Bronx workshop session.

Workshop Details

The workshop presentation included project updates, responses to community questions, and clarification on facility details. During the facilitated discussion, an architect from the AECOM-Hill JV team provided additional details on each design image shared during the workshop exercise. This enabled the attendees to have greater context for the images as well as insights into the design strategies employed by the design team.

THE BRONX VISION STATEMENT

The Bronx Facility completes the east side of Concord Avenue with affordable housing, creates a continuous community space that wraps 141st Street, and steps height and bulk away from the residential neighborhoods and toward the Bruckner Expressway.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workshop Approach, Experience, and Agenda

Due to the pandemic, the workshop was convened online via the Zoom platform. Workshop participants were able to participate on their computers and phones. The workshop engaged participants in facilitator-led interactive activities. The attendees were provided instructions on the use of the polling feature to choose and submit the image they liked and disliked the most. They also utilized the chat function to provide comments to explain choices.

The workshop experience began with an overview of the project summary, highlighting that the new detention facility located in Mott Haven will contain 886 beds, 295 accessory parking spaces below grade for Department of Correction staff, and 40,000 sqft. of community and retail space will be provided facing 141st Street.

The community's input will be included in the design guidelines, especially in the areas related to the enhancement of the public space. This workshop report, which documents community feedback, preferences, and comments, will be included as a reference document in the Bronx facility RFP to provide critical insight and contributions to the facility design-build team.

Workshop guests engaged in 3 activities that included:

Activity 1: What do you like best about this community?

Activity 2: Community Input on Design Goals

- **Ground Floor Activation**
 - Facility Entry Identity
 - Community Space
 - Public Lobby
- **Public Space and Streetscape**
 - Seating Experience
 - Sidewalk Safety
 - Lighting Experience
- **Outdoor Building Material & Façade**
 - Façade

Activity 3: What can be the best use of the community space?

GUEST BREAKDOWN

Workshop Participants	8
Facilitators and PMC	7
City Agency Representatives	10
Total Count	25

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Takeaways & Main Findings

Activity 1: What do you like best about this community?

The first session activity asked attendees an open-ended question, “What do you like best about this community?” The question was designed to elicit feedback about how the participants perceived their community to ensure the civic assets complement surrounding neighborhoods, including residents and visitors connected to the community.

“The diverse cultural identities and familial energy represented in the community” embodied the overall feeling of how community stakeholders perceive their community.

Activity 2: Community Input on Design Goals

During this activity, respondents were asked to provide preferences and community perceptions by viewing different images in the key areas, Ground Floor Activation, Public Space and Streetscape, Outdoor Building Material and Facade. The next section shares the specific findings and results based on feedback provided by participants.

Overall, the images viewed reflected open space with natural light, soft light, and bright lighting, easy to clean surfaces, organic, comfortable, colorful, and flexible seating arrangements as well as specific designed space including colors and textures in seating, floor, and ceiling.

Activity 3: What can be the best use of the community space?

Community Stakeholders were asked an open-ended question, “What programming options would you like to see in the community space?” The community space could be utilized to serve educational needs and provide recreational, health and essential services as permitted. Some examples of viable options for the community space are recreational center, grocery stores, day care centers, libraries, museums, and health care facilities.

Some options that were suggested by community stakeholders were:

- Youth recreation centers
- Healthy grocery stores
- Community centers
- Performance spaces
- Professional school

The most popular options were a Youth recreation center, a Community center, and an affordable grocery store.



**COMMUNITY
INPUT ON DESIGN
GOALS**

SUMMARY & RESULTS

This workshop was designed to enable community input on the design of the facility, especially in those areas related to the enhancement of the public realm. The way that input is included is through the guidelines and principles, and incorporation into other sections of the RFP. The following are the areas where community input related to this workshop will be included in the design guidelines:

- Complement Surrounding Neighborhoods
- Promote Safety and Security
- Enhance the Pedestrian Experience
- Establish a Civic Presence
- Cultivate Welcoming and Prominent Public Access

The concepts of Ground Floor Activation, Public Space & Streetscape, and Outdoor Building Materials and Facade frame the design activities.

For **Ground Floor Activation**, this activity allows for reflection on the building perspective from distance, and the personal / pedestrian approach to the facility, community space, and public lobby.

For **Public Space and Streetscape**, this activity allows the participants to reflect on the quality of the pedestrian experience, including seating experience, sidewalk safety, and impact of lighting.

For **Outdoor Building Material and Facade**, this activity allows the participants to reflect on different building materials and strategies on how to make the building be perceived smaller.

The following public realm areas were specifically discussed during the activities and the feedback is included herein:

1. Facility Entry Identity
2. Community Space
3. Public Lobby
4. Seating Experience
5. Sidewalk Safety
6. Lighting Experience
7. Outdoor Building Materials & Facade

The next section outlines the findings from the poll results and comments gathered in the Zoom chat feature for each theme.

1. FACILITY ENTRY IDENTITY

The participants were asked: “How do you imagine the approach to the entry of the new building?”

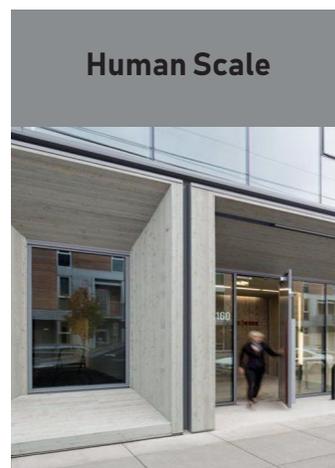
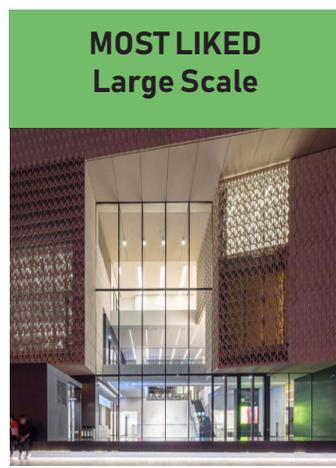
The scale of the entry and level of transparency was discussed to reflect on the building perspective from a distance and the personal/pedestrian approach to the facility and public lobby located in 142nd Street and Southern Boulevard.

A set of images showing different strategies to approach the facility entry and public lobby were presented to motivate the conversation and prompt the discussion. The range of images presented permitted the participants to discuss the scale perception and relationship to the street level through different concepts:

1. Large Scale: Recognizable from a distance, it could create a covered or semi-covered public space
2. Clear Entrance: Transparent and easy to access from the street
3. Human Scale: Entrance is scaled to make it feels like access to a smaller building
4. Green Entrance: Includes open covered space and vegetation

The most liked choices were Green Entrance and Large Scale. The majority of participants felt most comfortable having the ability to recognize the structure from a distance. The participants desired a building that was “classic with classy architecture”, with an entrance that “added an environmental component that speaks to sustainability and a warmer space.” Consistent with the theme of being environmentally conscious, a building that has covered and semi-covered space as well as an open covered space and a space for vegetation was appreciated.

The most disliked choice was the image for Clear Entrance. A design that was “typical of courthouses and government buildings located in the Bronx” did not resonate with the participants. The community wanted to veer away from that typical structure style. Overall, a structure that felt accessible and had a softer facade was most desired.



2. COMMUNITY SPACE

The participants were asked: “How do you imagine the approach to community space?” Participants discussed the perspective from a distance and the personal/pedestrian approach to the community space offered by the project along 141st Street.

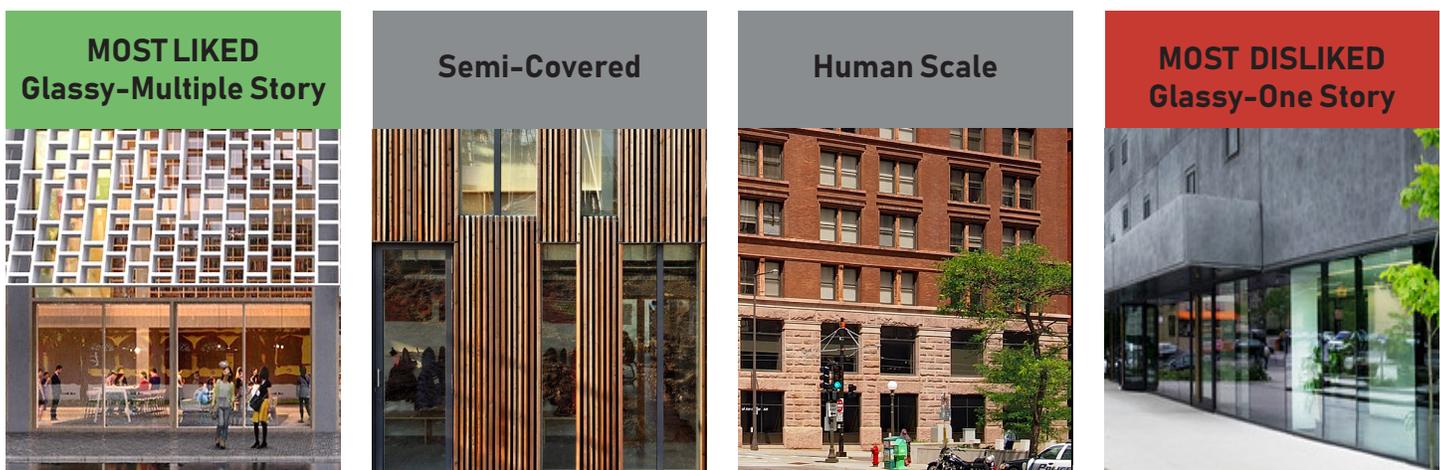
The Architect assisting the workshop discussed a set of images, and concepts during the workshop exercise for participants to provide feedback and motivate a discussion:

1. Human Scale: The material transition in the façade makes it feel like trying to access to a smaller building
2. Semi-Covered: Allows for controlled transparency, and some linear materials in one direction that add an aesthetic and modern appearance
3. Glassy-Multiple Story: Transparent, perceived multiple story space from outside, night lighting expected
4. Glassy-One Story: Transparent, access to interior spaces though open semi-covered public space

The most liked image, Glassy-Multiple Story, included an appreciation for a space that was transparent with a textured pattern, and conveyed openness, contemporary stylings, and a welcoming feeling. The Glassy-One Story illustrative image looked the same as other community spaces in new building construction and it was not desired. A respondent stated she wanted something different.

A question was raised about the impact some of the structures may have on air conditioning and heating costs. It was noted the new building structure would be constructed with the highest standards of environmental sustainability and efficiencies.

A retail and community space that felt inviting by its transparency was most welcomed.



3. PUBLIC LOBBY

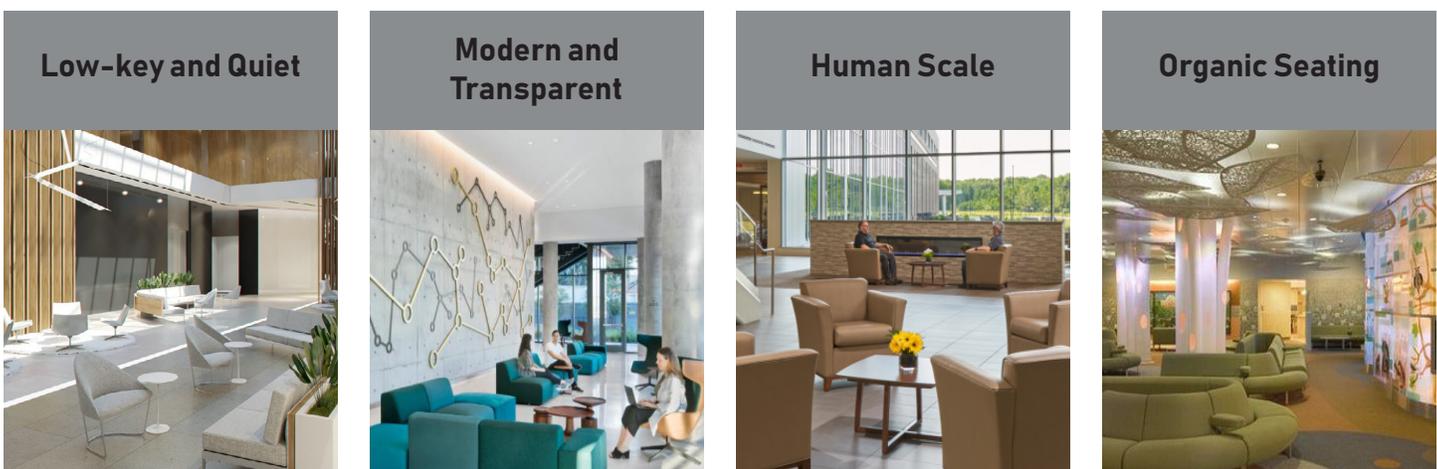
The participants were asked: “How do you imagine utilizing the experience at the public lobby of this facility?” They were asked to reflect on the experience of the approach to the public lobby, which is a public interfacing space, and there may be services eventually that the community could use like Wi-Fi, public restrooms, baby changing stations, ADA accessible water fountain and others.

The architect provided the following context on the images discussed during the workshop exercise:

1. **Modern and Transparent:** Open space with natural light and bright lighting, including easy to clean surfaces and comfortable furniture
2. **Low Key and Quiet:** Open space allows for different seating arrangements, including soft light and mixed organic materials
3. **Human Scale:** Open spaces including exterior views to the exterior and comfortable traditional grouped seating areas
4. **Organic Seating:** Specifically designed space including colors and textures in seating, floor, and ceiling

There was equal representation of like and dislike for those spaces that included views to the exterior and comfortable grouped seating areas as well as a specifically designed space including colors and textures in seating, floor, and ceiling. Some of the features the participants liked about the spaces were the lighting and the seating design that allowed for conversation. One of the features not preferred in the space was “seating that was too close together and didn’t fully allow for front facing conversation.”

Overall, the contributors desired a space that maximized engagement and dialogue.



4. SEATING EXPERIENCE

*Seating that offers
a variety of spaces
and configurations*

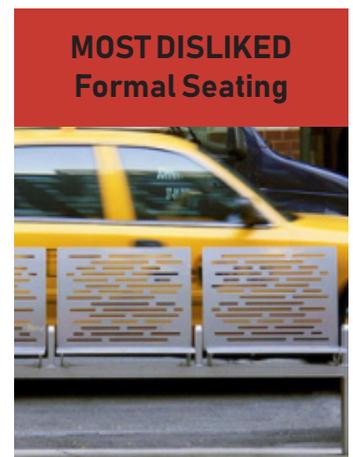
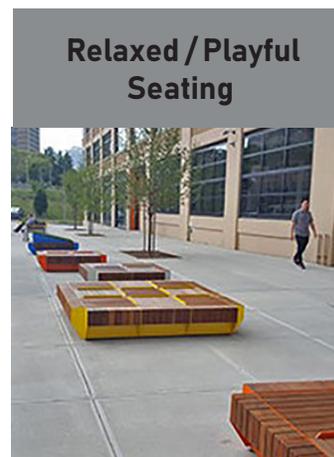
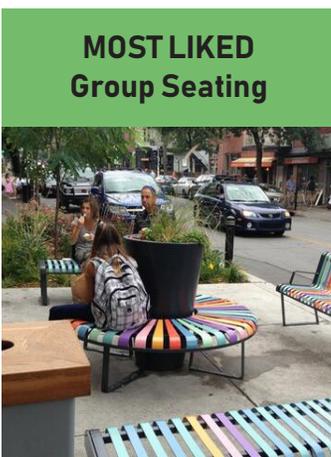
The participants were asked: “How do you imagine utilizing the seating and surrounding areas of the future facilities?” They were asked to reflect on the importance of seating options, collective or individual seating, formal and informal, integrated, or standalone elements, and the different ways in which public space can be used.

The architect provided the following context on the images discussed during the workshop exercise:

1. Formal Seating: Traditional urban furniture arranged in a line
2. Relaxed / Playful Seating: Urban furniture arranged in groups or non-traditional forms
3. Integrated Seating: Integrated means seating is a part of the landscape and combined with planters
4. Group Seating: Seating arrangement that allows for groups to gather or face each other

There was a preference for a seating arrangement that allows for groups to gather or face each other instead of traditional urban furniture arranged in a line. Participants felt “integrated seating offered a variety of spaces and configurations.” The formal seating seemed to be “like all seating in the city.” In addition, it did not offer a lot of space to sit.

The overarching theme for the seating experience was that people both individually and collectively wanted adequate space that offered flexibility.



5. SIDEWALK SAFETY

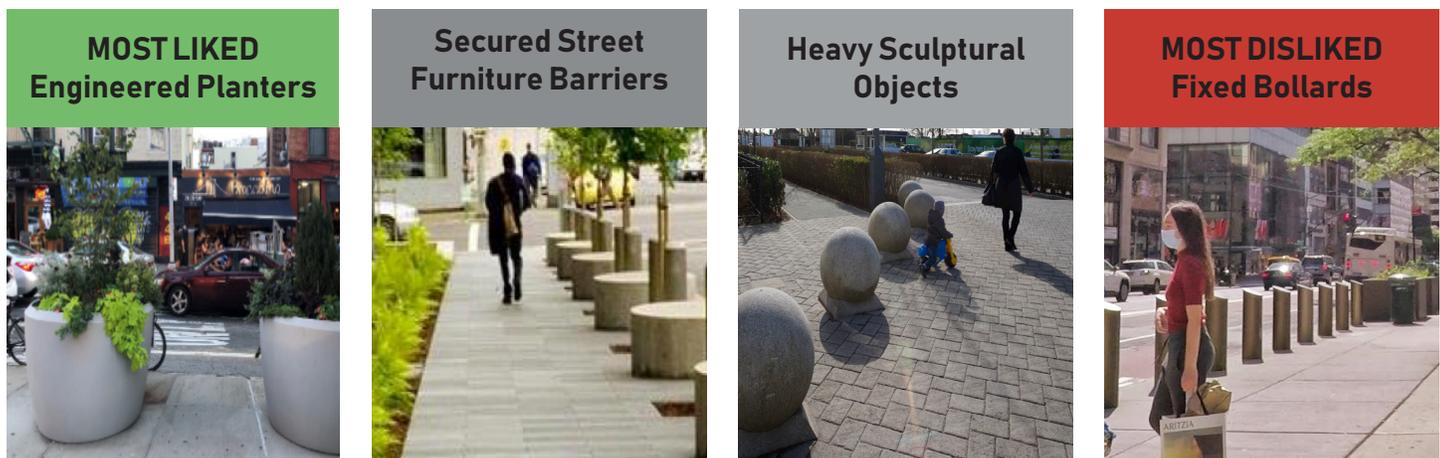
The participants were asked: “What would give you a sense of security while using the seating area or walking down the street?” and “How apparent do you want the sidewalk security condition to be?” They were asked to reflect on the range of designs to discuss perceived edge security conditions from visible strategies to others that are unnoticed. These might be needed at some pedestrian or vehicular entrances. It is not expected to be required around the whole perimeter of the building.

The architect provided the following context on the images discussed during the workshop exercise:

1. Secured Street Furniture barriers: It is not easy to notice the bollards and structures that secure the space because the design uses planting and urban furniture to hide security elements
2. Engineered Planters: Planting is used to build a secure area
3. Heavy Sculptural Objects: Like fixed bollards, other forms can be used, such as spheres or cubes, that could be more pleasant or incite small gatherings
4. Fixed Bollards: A sequence of bollards is in place securing the access of a building

The most liked choice was the Engineered Planters concept due to their prettiness and ability to fade into nature. There was a clear dislike for the institutional look of the Fixed Bollards alternative. They preferred the image of the planters and indicated that the other options were “ugly”, “confining”, and “atypical”.

Overall, the participants wanted the sidewalk security condition to not be so apparent. Participants did not feel the need to have a recognizable element as a security feature to feel secure and lessen anxiety.



6. LIGHTING EXPERIENCE

The participants were asked: “How do you envision the street lighting to be around the new facility?” They were asked to reflect on nighttime options of public spaces, and examples of a range of how to provide lighting to exterior spaces.

The Architect discussed the importance of lighting, security, daytime, and nighttime use of public space for the community. Strategies of lighting and level of activity were presented using the following images descriptions provided during the workshop, considering moderate, and highly illuminated spaces:

1. Ground Lighting: Generates more intimate atmosphere, and it could allow for low levels of lighting
2. Lighting Installation: Expressive lighting that can be playful, artistic, and bold
3. Pathway Lighting: Mid-high lighting and bollard lighting
4. Column Lighting: Evenness of light coming from the building and style of pole lighting

The community preference is to include more lighting, illuminated spaces that are artistic, expressive, and playful. Participants felt that the Ground Lighting concept would not offer enough light, and low levels of lighting would not maximize awareness of surroundings.

A recurring theme in the feedback received was the need for adequate light around the new facility.

A solution that maximizes the amount of lighting, which is often not enough of in many places in The Bronx



7. FAÇADE

The participants were asked: “How do you envision what the new facility looks like from the exterior?” They were asked to reflect on how to make this building be perceived as smaller. Among the strategies are: changing the colors and the materials, including breaks or cuts that make it look like smaller pieces, using materials as layers, and bringing another vertical shape to keep the building from looking as one dominant mass, but as multiple smaller ones.

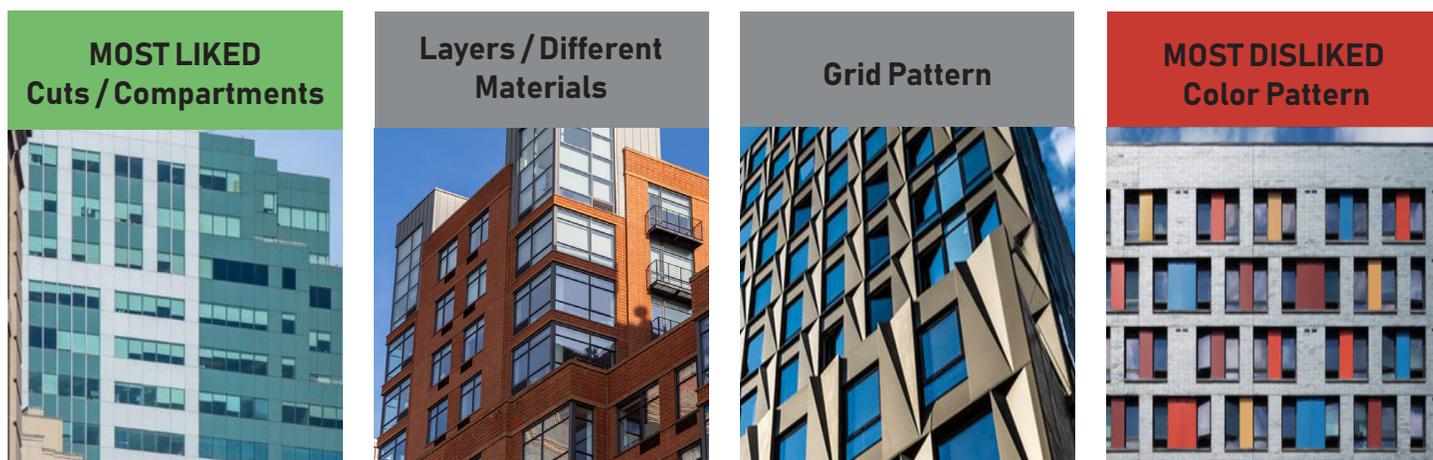
The architect assisting the workshop discussed a set of images, and concepts during the workshop exercise for participants to provide feedback and motivate a discussion:

1. **Color Pattern:** The use of color and windows breaks down the building’s mass and helps perceive the building in smaller pieces.
2. **Cut/Compartments:** Composing a façade, adding cuts and compartments helps break down the mass and perceive texture, depth, and shadows
3. **Layers/Different Materials:** The composition of the façade, including different materials can also break down the mass and provide different textures
4. **Grid Pattern:** A repetition of elements provides a rhythm to the façade, creating a cohesive appearance

The community preference and responses revealed an appreciation for a building design composed of cuts and compartments, including a perceived texture.

The participants agreed that the Color Pattern concept would not enhance the building or compliment the community and did not prefer the use of color and windows to break down the mass. One of the participants stated, that the color pattern concept presented reminded her of Legos.

Overall a design that “has layers and looks like the neighborhood” was desired.





CONCLUSION

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The community input that was gathered during the Bronx Design Input Workshop will be included in the Design Goals and Guidelines. Feedback was requested regarding preference in categories such as public space and streetscape, ground floor activation, and building materials and articulation, particularly in the areas related to the enhancement of the public space.

Although there will be a civic presence in the community, it is important that the building complements the surrounding neighborhood and has a connection to the community. With that objective in mind, the goal is to have the new structure be welcoming in design as well as have a prominent public space. Therefore, the community input was invaluable to ensure the overall pedestrian experience is pleasant while ensuring safety and security.

We were able to capture significant feedback and meaningful insights from the participants in attendance. The underlying themes for Activity 1 and Activity 3 as they relate to the qualitative input provided during the workshop were the importance of understanding the diverse cultural identities and familial energy represented in the community, and the development of a community space focusing on youth, recreation, and services.

Activity 2 provided a more structured framework through its use of images, polling, and comments to obtain essential feedback. The community stakeholders desired the design and public spaces to be environmentally conscious. In addition, a building that was integrated into the community by feeling welcoming and accessible and by not “looking and feeling like a typical civic building” was appreciated. The participants also wanted an open environment that provided flexibility in how individuals could engage with one another. Lastly, adequate lighting around the building was noted as an important design element.

In summary, the community stakeholders successfully provided input to be incorporated in the design guidelines of the RFP. We look forward to a continued engagement with the community stakeholders throughout this process. Their input has been invaluable and instrumental in ensuring that our goal to create a smaller, safer, fairer system is met.

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