

Birmingham City Commission Special Meeting Minutes - Workshop
February 10, 2025
Municipal Building, 151 Martin
5:30 p.m.
Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/1051017934>

This will be considered a workshop session of the City Commission. No formal actions will be taken. The purpose of this workshop is for the Birmingham Community and Senior Center design team to conduct an Architectural Visual Preference Survey for the property at 400 E. Lincoln.

I. Call to Order

Therese Longe, Mayor

II. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Longe
MPT Baller
Commissioner Emerine
Commissioner Haig
Commissioner Host (arrived 5:32 p.m.)
Commissioner Long

Absent: Commissioner Schafer

Staff: City Manager Ecker; City Clerk Bingham, Assistant City Manager Clemence, Planning Director Dupuis, Assistant City Manager Fairbairn, City Attorney Kucharek, Fire Marshal Scaife, Fire Chief Wells

III. Presentation and Commission Discussion

A. Architectural Visual Preference Survey

CM Ecker introduced the item. Jim Scott of Neumann Smith presented the item and answered informational questions from the Commission.

B. City Commission Discussion and Comment

Commissioners made the following comments during discussion:

- Many of the responses to the survey, such as preferring less exterior illumination, seemed to take the residential context of the building into account.
- The small size of the site necessitated efficiency in the designs.
- The Planning Board's evaluation of the plans would take the residential context into account.
- The longevity of the design, both in terms of aesthetics and materials, was also a factor.
- A smaller-scale entry would be complementary to a residential context.
- Cost for materials, maintenance, and operations will necessarily influence the building style.
- It would be helpful to understand how this exercise would influence the design process. It would be helpful to understand how the weight of the survey participants' opinions and the Commission's might differ.
- Having more discussion about some of the options might be prudent. For instance, while certain designs may have been less popular, the architectural creativity implied by those designs might have more support.
- While each participant weighed in on their overall impression of each design, the process left less room for clarification of which design details may have been more or less popular.
- This process provided some useful beginning information about community preferences.
- There were indications that some very modern, overly traditional, or brick and limestone options were viewed as less appropriate for this context by the community.
- There is no rear to the building so all four sides need to have relatively similar treatments.

IV. Public Comment

The Mayor answered two informational questions from Miriam Werder.

Rackeline Hoff commented that the number of survey participants was a small number compared to the population of Birmingham and that the architects should use their professional judgement to make appropriate recommendations for the design.

David Levinson commented that some of the design choices would be contingent on the building scale and orientation on the site, and that he was disappointed this project would not be exclusively a senior center.

Cynthia Yates commented that light pollution should be avoided.

Harvey Bell commented that sustainability, resilience, maintenance, function, energy use, and budget should be considerations ahead of form and context for this building.

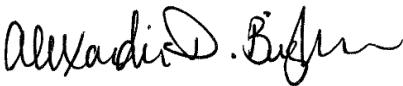
Gordon Davies said the presentation would have been more informative if all of the building examples were more similar in size to what might be on the site.

Mike Clift commented that the revised plans to retain the YMCA while also having a senior center use was appropriate.

Kristy Barrett commented that this project should be discussed earlier in the evening on all agendas, that this project should be approached more methodically, and that looking at the design was premature when questions remained about parking, programming validation, and fair funding options.

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist