

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Rules of Procedure

July 27, 2017

PURPOSE

The Design Advisory Panel is an integral part of the Bethesda Overlay Zone. The primary goal of the Design Advisory Panel is to provide advice and recommendations that will heighten design excellence and improve the quality of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture in Downtown Bethesda. The Advisory Panel will be guided by the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan and the related Design Guidelines. To remain competitive within the greater Washington, DC region and to attract the best and brightest to the Bethesda community, it is essential to design great places in which people of all ages, ethnic and economic backgrounds will want to live, work and play. The Design Advisory Panel will help to achieve this outcome.

RELATIONSHIP TO CR ZONES

The Commercial/Residential Zones (CR Zones) were created and adopted with an emphasis on creating great mixed-use, walkable places. Development proposals under the CR Zones are required to provide public amenities and need to focus on design intent to make sure quality is paramount to the applications and that an attractive public realm will be the outcome.

The Bethesda Overlay Zone creates a system for density allocation above and beyond CR Zone density mapped in the 1994 Bethesda CBD Sector Plan. The requirements for getting additional density from the Bethesda Overlay Zone pool of density include review by the Design Advisory Panel. The additional “BOZ” density should only be allocated if a high degree of design excellence is achieved and the Design Advisory Panel will advise the staff and the Planning Board on this issue.

PANEL COMPOSITION AND TERM

The Design Advisory Panel will have five members. According to the Bethesda Overlay Zone it will be: “composed of relevant independent professionals including at least one resident of the Bethesda community.”

Nominations for members will be solicited from the community and from organizations including but not limited to: CBAR, NAIOP, the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, AIA, and ULI.

The five-member Panel should, at a minimum, have the following expertise:

1. One registered architect representing academia and/or other jurisdictions in the region with a design review panel.
2. One registered architect from the greater Montgomery County community.
3. One member of the development community. This person may be a developer, real estate professional or involved in real estate investment.
4. One Bethesda community member who has a professional interest in urban design, architecture, and/or landscape architecture.



It is expected that selected members of the Design Advisory Panel will act in a professional manner, providing comments to staff and/or the Planning Board, and will be mindful of any conflicts of interest from associations with development teams, property owners or associations. If conflicts of interest arise, the specific panel members will recuse themselves of the discussion and recommendations.

It would be beneficial for the Design Advisory Panel to include the senior urban designer as an ex-officio member and a planning staff member as a liaison to the Panel.

Members must be approved by the Planning Board and will serve three-year staggered terms. At initial appointment, two members will serve for two years, two members will serve for three years, and one member will serve for four years. The terms of membership will be staggered from this point onward.

ROLE OF THE DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL IN THE REGULATORY PROCESS

The Design Advisory Panel will review:

- **All Optional Method Development Projects** – All optional method will be presented to the Design Advisory Panel. Although the optional method typically begins with Sketch Plan submission, applicants will be strongly encouraged to go through the Concept Plan process and meet with the Design Advisory Panel at this Concept Plan stage. If the applicant does not wish to file a Concept Plan, they will be required to meet with the Design Advisory Panel to review their project early in the Sketch Plan process.
- **Projects Seeking Additional Density through the BOZ, Bonus Points through the CR Amenity Guidelines, and/or Height as a MPDU Bonus** – In order for projects to be considered for additional density or height, the applicant will need to meet with the Design Advisory Panel early on to review point allocations and to assess urban and architectural design implications.

The Design Advisory Panel will be guided by the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan, the Bethesda Downtown Design Guidelines, the Bethesda Overlay Zone and the CR Zone criteria for granting density incentives for exceptional design.

The Design Advisory Panel will meet regularly once a month and more often as development applications are submitted and in need of review. This is a significant time commitment and panel members will need to respond within the timelines set forth by our zoning ordinance and development application schedules. The Design Advisory Panel will receive all the review drawings and/or access to the drawings, one (1) week in advance of the review meeting. There will be assigned staff liaisons to support the work of the Design Advisory Panel.

Written comments from the panel will be provided to staff at Concept, Sketch and Site Plan stages. The assigned staff liaison will assist with the comments as needed.

