

# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

**FROM:** Laura Shipman  
*Design Advisory Panel Liaison*

**PROJECT:** St Elmo Apartments  
Sketch Plan No. 32015004A

**DATE:** April 4, 2018

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*The **St Elmo Apartments** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 4, 2018**. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, and recommendations regarding design excellence and the exceptional design public benefits points. The Panel's recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report and strongly considered by Staff prior to the certification of the Site Plan. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

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## **Attendance:**

Karl Du Puy (Panelist)  
George Dove (Panelist)  
Damon Orobona (Panelist)  
Rod Henderer (Panelist)  
Qiaojue Yu (Panelist, recused)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)  
Gwen Wright (Planning Department Director)  
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)  
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)  
Michael Brown (Area 1 Master Plan Supervisor)  
Leslye Howerton (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Matt Folden (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Grace Bogdan (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Stephanie Dickel (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Atul Sharma (Area 2 Planner Coordinator)

Bill Landfair (Engineer/Planner, Applicant Team)  
Elliot Rhodeside (Landscape Architect, Applicant Team)  
Craig Williams (Architect, Applicant Team)  
David Schwarz (Architect, Applicant Team)  
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Steve Robbins (Attorney, Applicant Team)  
Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)  
Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)

### Discussion Points:

- Public Comments:
  - Thank you for the physical model.
  - The promenade and cantilever feel like a tunnel.
    - *Applicant response:* There are 20 feet before the cantilever, so it is high enough and provides spatial definition and there are no columns. We don't have spaces like this in Montgomery County because we have not built cities. You come from a wider street into compression and intimacy, like in Chicago or New York. Once a building is 10 stories it doesn't matter how tall the building is because eyes don't perceive it.
  - West side what happens when the next building comes up next door?
    - *Applicant response:* The windows on the courtyard are sufficient. The next project will have to assemble and will then be able to provide enough separation.
  - Love the sculpture, is there lighting around?
    - *Applicant response:* As the sun moves the facets are lit, at night there are stationary lights that provide a glow. Catenary lights above provide lighting and human scale.
- Terrific presentation, it helped us understand the thought process.
- The scale of the straight wall on the promenade is an issue, would suggest stepping back upper floors, but understand it would reduce units.
  - *Applicant response:* The site is quite constrained and wouldn't make the height worthwhile economically. Bringing building down to the street and anchoring building is a creative way of doing building for richer design. Do not want to make it feel like the building is sideways to the street.
- Remarkable presentation, great precedents. Don't have problem with architecture and massing, but separation between buildings is tight. Design guidelines call for 45-60ft.
- Did you consider pulling in long arm of courtyard on other side 10 feet to allow more separation on Bainbridge side?



- *Applicant response:* Did look at sliding the bar, but by eroding corners it allowed views. No question that the center of Bainbridge will be impacted. Need to have corners where they are to get the FAR and make the building economically viable. We looked at views from Bainbridge units, and in each case there is a wider angle of view than the previous approved scheme. Looked at solar angles, no question that there is impact, but it is a wash. Net result is that the new design is better at morning and afternoon, not as good during the day when most aren't home. Sliding the building 5ft makes minimal difference on impact to Bainbridge. Given this site and guidelines this is the most responsible design we can come up with. Most important issue is impact on units, and impact is better than the existing approved building, which is closer.
- Balconies add mass, without some of them do you have better building? Particularly on the promenade façade because they add bulk to the parts of the façade. They project and are distracting. Would it help to make projections less bulky with less balconies, many on upper floors may not use the balconies so much.
  - *Applicant response:* You would have a less articulate building. Don't care as much about center unit balconies, but many of these are MPDUs and would make these units less nice which is a philosophical problem. Could make balcony edges rails to be more transparent.
- The presentation was extraordinary, but the only weak point is the separation. The suspended light between the buildings, peaks of sun and quality of materials and general shade and comfort make the promenade work much better than what you see. Tight space even if you pull the building back. Losing the balconies probably won't impact the tight space, rails may work but may not make much impact.
  - *Applicant response:* If you have greater glass area need something to mitigate the large sheer wall. That is the role of the balconies.
- Concern about cantilever and how that makes the pedestrian feel? How can you minimize the area of it popping out?
- The tower wants to have its own integrity, concern about the reading of what is tower. Find it disturbing that plane doesn't come down to the ground along the promenade.
- Different opinions on separation but otherwise very supportive of the building.



**Panel Recommendations:**

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Public Benefit Points: The project is on track to achieve at least the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone.
2. Explore how to further improve the pedestrian experience along the promenade and reduce the bulk and imposing feeling of the cantilever, balconies and large sheer wall. While some panel members suggested tower step-backs and increased tower separation may help, others stated that these small moves may not have a large impact.



# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

**FROM:** Laura Shipman  
*Design Advisory Panel Liaison*

**PROJECT:** 7607 Old Georgetown Road  
Sketch Plan No. TBD

**DATE:** April 4, 2018

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*The **7607 Old Georgetown Road** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 4, 2018**. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, and recommendations regarding design excellence and the exceptional design public benefits points. The Panel's recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report and strongly considered by Staff prior to the certification of the Site Plan. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

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## **Attendance:**

Karl Du Puy (Panelist)  
George Dove (Panelist)  
Damon Orobona (Panelist)  
Rod Henderer (Panelist)  
Qiaojue Yu (Panelist)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)  
Gwen Wright (Planning Department Director)  
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)  
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)  
Michael Brown (Area 1 Master Plan Supervisor)  
Leslye Howerton (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Matt Folden (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Grace Bogdan (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Stephanie Dickel (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Atul Sharma (Area 2 Planner Coordinator)

Bob Dalrymple (Attorney, Applicant Team)  
Kevin Johnson (Applicant Team)  
Janel Kausner (Applicant Team)  
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Matt Gordon (Attorney, Applicant Team)  
Daryl South (Applicant Team)  
Robert Sponseller (Architect, Applicant Team)  
Laura Croce (Architect, Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)  
Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)

### Discussion Points:

- Public Comments:
  - Really like the massing but have a few functional design concerns. The entrance to Bethesda Place is very narrow, how will the new entrance compare to that? Right now, Bethesda Place Plaza is a failed space, are you coordinating with the owners?
    - *Applicant response:* Yes, we are coordinating with the owners, and are looking at how to access Bethesda place
  - Loading on commerce, when loading is difficult or on a narrow street, they will likely just block the street and block traffic.
- Great precedent of how to do it right on an initial submission, really like it on conceptual level.
- Commerce Lane can't be a canopy street because of all the loading and curb cuts.
- Would like to see more detail on the interplay with Bethesda Place Plaza and what can be done to improve the visual impact of the loading areas.
- No public realm on your project particularly because of the size of the site.
- Moving the curb cut helps a lot and improves Old Georgetown Road for pedestrians.
- For the impossible site you are giving an excellent resolution.
- The angle of loading docks might serve better if further south and change the angle.
  - *Applicant response:* We will explore this.
- What is the elevation of Bethesda place compared to the building? What is the publicness of the connection to the Bethesda Place Plaza?
  - *Applicant response:* 17 feet above the building roughly on the second floor, probably a hallway connection for residents.



**Panel Recommendations:**

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Public Benefit Points: The project is on track to achieve at least the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone. It is an example of an excellent submission particularly on a small infill site.
2. Provide more detail on the interplay between the building and Bethesda Place Plaza.
3. Reduce the visual impact of the loading and access areas along Commerce Lane.



# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

**FROM:** Laura Shipman  
*Design Advisory Panel Liaison*

**PROJECT:** 8000 Wisconsin Avenue (Artena Bethesda)  
Sketch Plan No 320180120

**DATE:** April 4, 2018

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*The **8000 Wisconsin Avenue (Artena Bethesda)** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 4, 2018** after an initial review on February 28, 2018 (notes attached). The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, and recommendations regarding design excellence and the exceptional design public benefits points. The Panel's recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report and strongly considered by Staff prior to the certification of the Site Plan. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

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## **Attendance:**

Karl Du Puy (Panelist)  
George Dove (Panelist)  
Damon Orobona (Panelist)  
Qiaojue Yu (Panelist)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)  
Matt Folden (Lead Reviewer)  
Gwen Wright (Planning Department Director)  
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)  
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)  
Michael Brown (Area 1 Master Plan Supervisor)  
Leslye Howerton (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Grace Bogdan (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Stephanie Dickel (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Atul Sharma (Area 2 Planner Coordinator)

Andrew Czajkowski (Architect, Applicant Team)  
Sami Kirkdill (Architect, Applicant Team)  
Chanda Beaufort (Applicant Team)  
Robert Dalrymple (Attorney, Applicant Team)





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Matthew Gordon (Attorney, Applicant Team)

Carlos Montenegro (Attorney-Manager, Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)

Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)

### **Discussion Points:**

- Public Comments:
  - The residents are going to be looking at a massive block.
  - Woodmont Avenue presents a lot better than Wisconsin. Over 1000 units, presents as a Wisconsin wall. With 1000 units how will deliveries happen and where will vehicles pull over?
  - If the public could feel like the Veterans Park expansion is going to happen it would help to assure us that this much density is ok here, but we don't have a guarantee.
  
- Rod Henderer comments in absentia:
  - First thank you for coming back with revisions to the design and keeping it very conceptual. Below you will find my concerns and observations.
  - **Lack of Separation** - My primary concern is there has not been any attempt to create a separation between building that that both the master plan and guidelines call for and we as a panel requested. While I do not have the benefit of hearing the verbal presentation, I interpret the presentation to imply the blank walls of the adjacent properties need to be covered up. While little is known what of the wall on 8008 and there certainly is evidence 7900 has a wall that may not have a lot of glass in it, but it is well articulated and could easily stand on its own.

I do appreciate the example you suggested in Spain in the previous presentation and do agree there are many great precedents for continuous street walls not only in Spain, but in many cities around the world. But the missing point here is that both master plan and design guidelines have been deliberate in articulating the need for light and air between towers in downtown Bethesda. No doubt this master plan is implemented over the years a new topology will for the town will emerge. While it is not a great example you get a glimpse of this in looking at your drawing labeled "future existing conditions "and seeing the gap between 7900 Wisconsin and its neighbor to the south.



The lack separation between towers is not only evident on Wisconsin, but in the view looking north on St. Elmo and again seeing the relationship between 8000 and 7900. It looks very crowded.

As not only an architect, but also as a Bethesda area representative I am aware the community bought into the new master plan when they were assured that the combination of guidelines and height limitation would become the controlling mechanisms for approval, not the more conventional planning constraints such as FAR. The following paragraph on page 4 – section 1.2 is particularly pertinent.

*“Given the availability of density from a variety of sources in Downtown Bethesda, it is ultimately the combination of building height limits and the design guidelines that is expected to be a more predictable tool than Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to control the shape of future buildings and public spaces. Guidelines may, therefore, serve to limit the amount of density that can be built on a site. However, because of their importance in achieving the planning goals of Downtown Bethesda, these guidelines should be met even where it may not be possible for a site to be developed to its maximum theoretical density.”*

This implies that the volume of the building may need to be reduced to achieve what is being asked for in the guidelines.

- **Image/Elevations** - I see a great deal of effort in conceptually relating your project with the two adjacent buildings. If in fact you do create a separation between adjacent properties, you may not need to work so hard to meld the properties together. In fact, it may give you more freedom to appear as free-standing tower on Wisconsin as you are attempting to do on Woodmont.
- **Building Base** – I find the lack of alignment between in the building base between 7900 Wisconsin and 8000 Wisconsin a bit strange. From my perspective they should be either aligned or offset further.
- At this time, I cannot recommend any exceptional design points be awarded to the project.
- What is different from the last time we saw the proposal?
  - *Applicant response:* We gathered more information, carved the mass, exposing adjacent balconies, trying not to reveal too much blank wall and created a composition to complete the block.
- You are keeping the plane of 7900 to expose balconies which is good.



- If you wanted to match 8008 and cut back to 7900, why didn't it happen the other way, horizontally to achieve goal of exposing 7900? If it was the other way, it would have a purpose. More similar to what you are doing on Woodmont Avenue.
  - *Applicant response:* We can study that
- Could be a shifting plane and not angled.
- Are you maxed out on height?
  - *Applicant response:* Yes.
- How many square feet?
- If the bar got narrower on Wisconsin Avenue would that move in the right direction?
  - *Applicant response:* We lose about 18% of project if we do that. There is a nice gap there with the adjacent through-block connection. Would not want to put a building facing blank wall.
- Agree with allowing form to deviate by angling back from north to south. We mentioned this previously and we haven't seen that you have tried it. Doesn't need to be a single shift.
  - *Applicant response:* Can look at this deflection.
- Is there any public space on your project? Should relate to 8008 Wisconsin.
  - *Applicant response:* Just streetscape improvements.
- Is this approvable without tower separation from 7900? Or can there be shifting of planes or canting of facades moving forward?
- Needs to be a strong gesture and should be explored as condition of sketch plan. Need to break the visual fatigue of a long façade along Wisconsin Avenue.
- Shouldn't make too many moves, its about subtle plane movements.
- How will the base of the building look in relationship to the street? It should be able to stand alone.
- Bring the project back before site plan with revisions.
- Prefer shifting planes to canting the building.
- Hard to envision the building without materials.



**Panel Recommendations:**

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. **Public Benefit Points:** The applicant should return to the panel prior to Site Plan submission to ensure that the proposal is on track to receive the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone and has incorporated the following recommendations.
2. Break up the long imposing façade along Wisconsin Avenue through increased tower separation and tower step-backs or a meaningful alternative treatment method such as shifted or angled facades.
3. Explore the relationship of the building base to the street and pedestrian scale and ensure that the base is articulated with varied height and not too monolithic or overpowering. Either align the base with the adjacent properties or offset further.
4. Clarify the relationship of the building with the public space on the 7900 Wisconsin site. Show how the building will be viewed and articulated.



# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

**FROM:** Laura Shipman  
*Design Advisory Panel Liaison*

**PROJECT:** 8000 Wisconsin Avenue (Artena Bethesda)  
Sketch Plan No. 320180120

**DATE:** Feb. 28, 2018

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*The **8000 Wisconsin Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **Feb. 28, 2018**. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's initial discussion. The Panel requested that the applicant return to the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel with revised concepts prior to providing recommendations for the Planning Board.*

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## **Attendance:**

Karl Du Puy (Panelist)  
George Dove (Panelist)  
Rod Henderer (Panelist)  
Paul Mortensen (Panelist, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)  
Neil Sullivan (Lead Plan Reviewer)  
Gwen Wright (Planning Department Director)  
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)  
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)  
Michael Brown (Area 1 Master Plan Supervisor)  
Matt Folden (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Margaret Rifkin (Director's Office)

Robert Dalrymple (Attorney, Applicant Team)  
Matthew Gordon (Attorney, Applicant Team)  
Mike Goodman (Engineer, Applicant Team)  
Andrew Czajkowski (Architect, Applicant Team)  
Fedrico Olivera-Sala (Architect, Applicant Team)  
Carlos Montenegro (Attorney-Manager, Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)  
Mary Flynn (Member of the Public, Mayor of the Town of Chevy Chase)



## Discussion Points:

- *Public Comments:*
  - Concerned with massing overall on this block and the lack of open space on this block. Relying on storefronts to be interesting but there is a lack of open space. This is overpowering as a block of tall buildings.
    - *Planning Staff Response: The triangular piece on 7900 and through-block connection is public space.*
  - We applaud affordable housing, but no Park Impact Payment is required and there is a need for more open space here.
  - Given those comments, we would object to an even larger building if less of BRT setback is required.
- Does the setback for the BRT count as public open space?
  - *Applicant Response: There is no public open space requirement for this site.*
- Need elevations of adjacent properties in drawings to help understand the building relationships and controlling lines, and the relationship to the passageway and adjacent open space. You owe yourself to show these adjacent buildings to sell the building.
- *Public Comments (cont.):*
  - What is the size of the adjacent open space, is it certain to be built?
    - *Planning Staff Response: yes, the building, public space and through block connection are under construction. The Master Plan does not require open space on this block. If there is not a public space requirement and the Master Plan does not require open space on this block it is hard to request that of the applicant.*
- How does the building conform with the design guidelines? The proposed building does not appear to have step-backs that the guidelines call for.
  - *Applicant Response: There is a step-back on the Woodmont side. But on the Wisconsin side there are two approved buildings under the old zoning with no setback required. We could create an adverse impact with blank facades on each side. We are trying to mitigate the design of this building with the adjacent building design and not create an adverse impact.*
- Guidelines call for separation between properties, really you are filling up the entire block and haven't heard any discussion about the fact that you are not providing separation along Wisconsin. Goal is to provide light and air along large blocks, you can achieve continuity along the building edge with the podium.
  - *Applicant Response: On the Wisconsin side the building should be an infill project. Separation will create two blank facades on each side of the building. The guidelines are not mandates they are guidelines.*
- Qiaojue Yu comments (*in absentia*)
  - There is no setback from the adjacent building at the lower levels.
  - The narrative mentioned there will be 35% green coverage, but currently the plan does not seem to have enough green coverage.
    - *Applicant Response: That is a mistake in the drawings.*



- The facade design does not seem to serve as a landmark as stated in the narrative. It lacks character.
- Understanding this project strives to provide 25% MPDU, and it is not the icon building as the Marriott HQ, I think right now it is heading the right direction to achieve 20 points, but it is not there yet.
- Applicant suggested midblock site is difficult. However, urbanistically I would argue this is one of the most fun sites possible on this stretch of roads. There is a missing opportunity to address views from St Elmo and West Virginia because these are important axes and could help solve some of the concerns and help break up facades.
- In terms of massing, the base is the same along the entire width of the building and is too monolithic and overpowering. Maybe create less fragmentation of the top and more at the bottom it would improve the way the building is perceived by the neighborhoods and particularly for pedestrians.
- By flipping the H you could bring more light and air into a larger courtyard and be a better neighbor.
- Want to know what the corners of the neighbors are like and the gap and you could acknowledge gap on your site to bring in light and air. It's not clear what the nature of the corner is along Wisconsin.
- Woodmont Avenue development overall is more successful than Wisconsin.
- Objective of the guidelines is to not create continuous wall that is 200 feet tall.
  - *Applicant response: There are different arguments. Looking at examples in Europe in Spain such as Paseo de la Castellana there are ten continuous blocks, a seamless block should be embraced.*
- However, in Toronto where there are limitations on footprints you get very narrow towers.
  - *Applicant response: I prefer Spain.*
- The proposal is carving away the massing of the building in a way that could be very successful but agree that the Wisconsin base is too continuous.
- Unfortunate that the vertical element on Woodmont terminates in loading, this could be improved if the loading entrance is moved.
- You have to really wrestle with the design guidelines issues including separation and step back along Wisconsin.
- A step-back along Wisconsin could be accommodated by pushing into the courtyard and could relate to the corner of the adjacent building. Could you do what you are doing on Woodmont side and bend the building in plan?
- The building is highly articulated and congratulate that, but the massing isn't quite right. You should quickly develop the massing through studies and bring it back. Could come back in March and wouldn't affect the review schedule.
- The question is what are the elevations of the neighbors and what would affect the result?
- Instead of a straight façade on Wisconsin, there might be options you want to explore there. Could provide some light and air between building to south along Wisconsin.



**Panel Recommendations:**

1. The project will return to the Design Advisory Panel in March for final Sketch Plan recommendations.

