

# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

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

**PROJECT:** ZOM Bethesda  
Site Plan No. 820180120

**DATE:** April 25, 2018

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*The **ZOM Bethesda** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 25, 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)  
Paul Mortensen (Panelist, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office)

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)  
Leslye Howerton (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Grace Bogdan (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Stephanie Dickel (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)

Heather Dhopolsky (Attorney, Applicant Team)  
Andy Czajkowski (Architect, Applicant Team)  
Trini Rodriguez (Landscape Applicant Team)  
Chris Love (Applicant Team)  
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Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)  
Patricia Kolesar (Member of the Public)

### Discussion Points:

- Public Comments:
  - Are the courtyards raised and open to the public?
    - *Applicant response:* The courtyards are slightly raised and no they are not open to public.
  - How wide is the sidewalk clear pathway?
    - *Applicant response:* 6ft.
  - Many people would not find this sidewalk interesting to walk along, because it is only residential, no retail and only a 6ft sidewalk with no activation. The sidewalk along the back of the building seems more interesting.
    - *Applicant response* Your comments are well taken but this always was intended to be a residential edge of the Downtown. A 6ft clear pathway is actually wider than other adjacent sidewalks. Locations for art are proposed along the street and the idea for the pieces is to activate the sidewalk and engage the public, for example kids will be able to interact with the artwork. We are working with the Art Review Panel.
- Are those seating areas in the courtyards?
  - *Applicant response:* The courtyards are private common space and a visual amenity. They help with the building cadence along the street.
- Are there stoops along the street and in back?
  - *Applicant response:* We will be removing stoops because they cannot be in the ROW. Stoops can remain on back. The ROW extends to building line.
- Where are the wood trellises located?
  - *Applicant response:* Over the seating areas.
- What is the spacing of the trees?
  - *Applicant response:* 30ft on center.
- It seems like a sidewalk that goes from nowhere to nowhere? Especially because we have lost the stoops.
- Disagree, I walk this to go to Woodmont triangle, or farmers market, and the library



- *Applicant response:* This will be a good sidewalk alternative to the sidewalk across the street.
- Stoops would have activated the street, disappointed that has gone away. Stoops and entries are critical for the site's urban design.
- What are some of the public space improvements?
  - *Applicant response:* We will provide a 10% offsite contribution for public open space.
- I think this building will make a substantial improvement, if you make the sidewalk wider it will take away landscaping and the landscaping makes sidewalk nice. It seems like there is a price point difference between the northern and southern side of the building. It feels like they are cheated on the southern side. The south feels undeveloped compared to the rest of the building. It is very heavy. I think you had a better design at sketch plan.
  - *Applicant response:* The rendering needs to be refined.
- It is a completely different building on the back side and the landscaping is lacking.
  - *Applicant response:* There are trees and bioretention areas along the rear that are not showing in the SketchUp renderings.
- Talk about your stormwater management.
  - *Applicant response:* Depressing the garage to great landscaping and trees in bioretention areas
- Is there enough depth for trees?
  - *Applicant response:* Yes, we provide 5ft depressions for additional soil.
- What is the elevation of the courtyard on the street?
  - *Applicant response:* 1-2ft on the first courtyard and 3ft on second courtyard.
- When the two buildings transition, what is the lower level solid wall? Is this 8-9ft, is this too high for pedestrians? It may overwhelm the pedestrian scale because solid.
  - *Applicant response:* There will be a patio there, and then the solid wall should be about 5 ft. We can look at dropping the windows sill.
- The north part of the building is terrific. On the southern portion, the solidity of the corners and recesses between bays could be softened with more glass. The corner that you see as you drive north along Arlington could be better.
- There should be 2 buildings on the site, or 2 or 3. But you say that you can't make a passage or two separate buildings because of economics. Maybe consider a more



sympathetic style between buildings. There should be porosity here, there should have been a through block connection recommended in the design guidelines on this site. Is this a conversation that came up at planning board?

- *Applicant response:* No, the Board was very supportive of the design.
- Treat the southern portion of the building more similarly to what you showed at sketch plan. A more engaging corner. We are advocating for openness that is more similar to north building. It does not need to be a similar color. The north portion has projecting glass, create the opposite reading on the southern portion of the building and make the setback areas glassier.
- The massing is excellent. The form is simple, and the articulation is complex. I think the subtlety and materiality will work really well. Very happy with Arlington road pedestrian experience.
- Need to continue to work on the stoops and entry issue. The panel fully supports stoops and entries.
  - *Staff response:* We will work with the applicant and other county agencies to see what is possible.
- There is a disconnect between the rear elevation and the Arlington road elevation. The rear elevation should be attended to in the same way as Arlington road. Should not be a back. Create more recessed bays, or an expression of modulation through material change.

### **Panel Recommendations:**

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Treat the southern portion of the building more similarly to the renderings shown at sketch plan. Create a more engaging southwest corner and more glazing. The northern portion of the building has projecting glass, create the opposite reading on the southern portion of the building and make the setback areas glassier.
2. Resolve the disconnect between the rear elevation and the Arlington road elevation. The rear elevation should be attended to in the same way as Arlington road. It should not be a back. Create more recessed bays, or an expression of modulation through material change.
3. Work with county agencies on the stoops and entry issue along Arlington Road. Stoops and entries are critical for the site's urban design. The panel fully supports stoops and entries.



# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

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

**PROJECT:** 4 Bethesda Metro Center  
Sketch Plan No. 320180110

**DATE:** April 25, 2018

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*The **4 Bethesda Metro Center** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 25, 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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Leslye Howerton (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Matt Folden (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Grace Bogdan (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)  
Margaret Rifkin (Director's Office)  
Mike Smith (Development Ombudsman, Montgomery County Executive's Office)

Bob Harris (Attorney, Applicant Team)  
Simon Carney (Applicant Team)  
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Peter Glasson (Architect, Applicant Team)  
Richard Fernicola (Applicant Team)  
Scott Phillips (Architect, Applicant Team)  
Andy Jones (Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)  
Patricia Kolesar (Member of the Public)  
Reggie Oldak (Member of the Public)  
Richard Hoye (Member of the Public)

### Discussion Points:

- Public Comments:
  - The Bethesda bus bay should be welcoming, currently the metro station is a negative and poor entryway. Focus not on what is above but on the station level, and the perspectives for others looking at the site from afar as a pedestrian from blocks around. Happy to see the development to make it a more welcoming place. How does this site speak to a broad cross-section of people?
  - The residents would prefer a corner park, we have sent emails to protect the Bethesda open space. The central lawn is not central, it is hidden and you cannot see it.
  - Like this plan a lot, reminds me of small streets and squares in European cities. It is a respite from the urban area. The angled building allows some of an open space. I personally would not want to hang out at the corner. Programming is very important and getting in the right retail.
  - As a pedestrian, it is critical to have massing of buildings to make the intersection feel more comfortable. Having too much space at the corner is uncomfortable like at the Chevy Chase bank building which is a failure.
- The space has diverse programming and includes active and passive uses. The lawn space seems secluded. With all of the buildings around and shade will the lawn grow?
  - *Applicant response:* We have done several shade studies and are confident the lawn will grow.
- Will parking and circulation/loading affect public space?
  - *Applicant response:* There is no additional parking proposed. We are using the existing garage, may utilize existing loading, or work with WMATA to add loading. These will not affect the public space.



- I'm a proponent of maximum transit use, but we will be losing a public garage to Marriott, and many find that the garages are too full. MCDOT did a detailed parking study, the team may want to look at the study.
- Assume that you have analyzed all the problems today with this plaza. There are probably 20 different levels. The great spaces are great because they are linked to everything around them. One of your precedents was Bethesda Lane, having a street at each end makes it successful and active. But you don't have that, when you look at the grand stair it is clearly not used, there is no connection to Woodmont from the plaza. There are several new residential buildings on that side, so how do you get up and over from Woodmont onto this plaza. The lack of these links kills the plaza space. There used to be a lot of retail, but if you put new retail here, it may be highly used for a year or so but what will sustain it. The plaza can't just be programmed, there has to be something else. The entrance to 3 Bethesda seems to be secondary and the Woodmont Ave building has a secondary entrance. In order for all of this to work, there has to be a coordinated effort including changing lobbies and reorienting retail. The location of the stair is very poor.
  - *Applicant response:* You are right and it is a challenging space in every respect. It is not going to be a perfect space but more retail and development will help. We will talk to Chevy Chase Land Company about incorporating their space into the design.
- Need a prominent visual to bring you up into this space, there is no porosity to bring and draw people up into the space.
- Show more drawings to show the plan of bus bay and perspectives of the views coming from that level.
  - *Applicant response:* We are working closely with WMATA on the design of that level.
- How are you going to establish a new ground plane?
  - *Applicant response:* There is enough run to do an ADA compliant slope, with an almost imperceptible slope.
- I come from a firm that does a great deal of retail, and we do predictive heat mapping to see where pedestrians go in the space. Try heat mapping to see what that gets you. Is there a way of making the Chevy Chase Land space an active participant rather than boundary?
- The back stairway down is so miserable.
- The problem we are having is we don't know what the building is right now, its program. Suggest half of the building should be raised up at least 30 feet in the air. Anchor the



- promenade and increase visibility from Wisconsin and visibility to the back space similar to 7359 Wisconsin. Could be an architectural space at the human scale.
- *Staff response:* If you go with this approach you just have to ensure that this is a fully designed gathering space rather than just a walking area.
- Explain Wisconsin intersection and pedestrian crossing at Wisconsin.
    - *Applicant response:* Pedestrians cross from the pedestrian refuge. We think the tunnel has been successful with the artwork.
  - *Staff:* What is below the central lawn. Could you eliminate the central lawn and make it more about connecting from Woodmont and the bus bay?
  - Could be a glassed in pavilion? So that it is a destination in winter and summer. Maybe more secondary to the primary building.
  - *Staff:* Green up the entry plaza, make it greener like the central plaza. Make a central glassy element at the escalator in the middle of the lawn. If they need ventilation do it at the back where the central lawn is.
    - *Applicant response:* We are talking with WMATA about a unique canopy rather than typical canopy.
  - Would help on ground floor plan to show land uses around with true plan of uses around.
  - We looked at the spaces just to compare this to plazas we know, the central green is the size of Rockville town center, entry plaza is size of Bethesda Lane. Might help to compare with similar sized spaces that people know.
  - *Staff:* The panel has not looked closely at the building. Would prefer that the project come to talk about building massing before sketch plan review at the Planning Board.
  - Would like to see 3d models, physical models. Very clear presentation about the massing. See 7607 Old Georgetown Road's submission to the Design Advisory Panel.
  - Is this the only place where the building could be?
    - *Applicant response:* Could be a little closer to Wisconsin based on the structure but we tried to balance thoughts from members of the community to have some space at the front of the building.
  - Public Comments (cont.):
    - Would like to echo comments to provide more green at the front of the building.





- How does the plan bring folks together? Like the idea of raising the building for the community and travelers, like union station. And to map what are the routes that people would use. Honor the back-door experience. Create a 24-hour walkway to and from bus bay area.
  - *Applicant response:* From the entrance to the bus bay we are working with e-bikes and have met and working on a way to bring folks up to the 3 Bethesda Metro area. We are inheriting a desert in the bus bay but who would know that Dunkin Donuts would be the beacon, we want to create other beacons there.

**Panel Recommendations:**

The project will return to the panel prior to Planning Board review and will focus on building placement, massing and the relationship to the Metro Station and Bus Bay below. The following are initial recommendations.

1. Ensure that there are clear links between the plaza and the destinations around it, particularly to the residential areas west of Woodmont Avenue where the connection is poor.
2. Work with Chevy Chase Land Company to incorporate their space into the design.
3. Show more drawings to show the plan of bus bay and perspectives of the views coming from that level.
4. Do predictive heat mapping to see where pedestrians go in the space.
5. Consider raising half of the building at least 30 feet in the air. Anchor the promenade and increase visibility from Wisconsin and visibility to the back space similar to 7359 Wisconsin, as long as the space is a major gathering space and not just a walkway.
6. Provide 3d models and physical models if possible. Create a very clear presentation about the massing. See 7607 Old Georgetown Road's submission to the Design Advisory Panel as an example.
7. Explore making the central lawn area more about connecting from Woodmont and the bus bay. Could possibly be a glassed in pavilion so that it is a destination in winter and summer. Maybe more secondary to the primary building.
8. Green up the entry plaza, make it greener like the central plaza. Make a central glassy element at the escalator in the middle of the lawn. If they need ventilation do it at the back where the central lawn is.

