

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Submission Form

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name	
File Number(s)	
Project Address	

Plan Type

Concept Plan

Sketch Plan

Site Plan

APPLICANT TEAM

	Name	Phone	Email
Primary Contact			
Architect			
Landscape Architect			

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

	Zone	Proposed Height	Proposed Density
Project Data			
Proposed Land Uses			
Brief Project Description and Design Concept <i>(If the project was previously presented to the Design Advisory Panel, describe how the latest design incorporates the Panel's comments)</i>			



Exceptional Design Public Benefit Points Requested and Brief Justification	
---	--

DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL SUBMISSION PROCESS

1. Schedule a Design Advisory Panel review date with the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.
Laura Shipman, Design Advisory Panel Liaison, laura.shipman@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4558
2. A minimum of two weeks prior to the scheduled Design Advisory Panel meeting, provide the completed Submission Form and supplemental drawings for review in PDF format to the Design Advisory Panel Liaison via email.
3. Supplemental drawings should include the following at Site Plan and as many as available at Concept and Sketch Plan:
 - Property Location (aerial photo or line drawing)
 - Illustrative Site Plan
 - 3D Massing Models
 - Typical Floor Plans
 - Sections
 - Elevations
 - Perspective Views
 - Precedent Images



2017-1129

7820 Wisconsin/7815 Woodmont

Narrative for “Exceptional Design Public Benefit Points Justification”

The design of 7820 Wisconsin Avenue (the “Project”) embraces and advances the core principles of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan and Design Guidelines by promoting a sustainable downtown that enhances community identity, equity, habitation and health, access and mobility, environmental conservation and energy efficiency. The Project’s inclusion of 25% moderately priced dwelling units combined with the integration of design excellence will promote social inclusivity while creating a benchmark for sustainability, ensuring compatibility with neighboring communities, and enhancing downtown Bethesda’s success as a dynamic neighborhood to live, work, shop, and play.

To achieve 10 Exceptional Design Public Benefit Points, the following criteria have been used to guide the design process:

1. Providing innovative solutions in response to the immediate context;
2. Creating a sense of place and serves as a landmark;
3. Enhancing the public realm in a distinct and original manner;
4. Introducing materials, forms or building methods unique to the immediate vicinity or applied in a unique way;
5. Designing compact, infill development so living, working and shopping environments are more pleasurable and desirable on a problematic site; and
6. Integrating low-impact development methods into the overall design of the site and building, beyond green building or site requirements.

Providing Innovative Solutions in Response to the Immediate Context

The Project’s massing and character are specifically designed to respond to and enhance the surrounding context. In recognition of the site’s uniquely small footprint, allowable building height, and vision for the Wisconsin Avenue Corridor District, the Project’s design utilizes the following strategies to ensure the scale of the building responds simultaneously to its visual impact when experienced up-close, while also conveying its iconic nature and 30-story height when viewed from afar:

- The scale of the massing is broken down into a distinct base, tower, and top.
- The proposed building’s 6 story base forms a continuous street wall to frame the sidewalk and encourage pedestrian movement and activated frontages.
- Retail primarily fronts Woodmont Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue as natural continuations of dedicated retail nodes, while the residential lobby is purposefully located on the quieter Fairmont Avenue.
- Fully glazed continuous retail frontage is to be designed flexibly, with frequent swing doors and roll-up doors to maximize engagement with the sidewalk environment.
- Textured materials including retail canopies, signage, plantings, and outdoor seating create moments of stasis for social interaction.
- Levels 2 through 6 include French balconies oriented towards the street to engage the public realm and provide eyes on the street.
- Variation and plane changes at the base allow for a distinct 6-story read, while the tower above purposefully comes down to grade at the primary corners only, as key signifiers of retail nodes at

the pedestrian scale, and to give the massing an iconographic strong sense of permanence when viewed in its entirety from afar.

- Above Level 6, the tower floorplate is reduced, providing setback massing that allows slender and elegant proportions to rise to the proposed building's proposed top, unique to the sector.
- The strong continuous corners that rise from base to top are consistently flanked by full depth balconies, providing a rhythmic play of light and shade, ensuring the façade has a humane residential scale, and not an impersonal office aesthetic.
- Above all street frontages, the 7th level setback allows for 3 limited intensive green roofs acting as linear sky gardens with tall vertical plantings highly visible from the public realm below.

Creating a Sense of Place Serving as a Landmark

As currently the tallest proposed building for Bethesda to date, the Project's site demands a striking form from afar that serves as a signifier of downtown. The existing context immediately north of the subject property is 10 stories tall, with heights diminishing further north along Wisconsin Avenue and Woodmont Avenue. This allows for a highly visible north facade when approaching Bethesda from the Capital Beltway. The proposed Marriott Headquarters project to the south of the subject property is of comparable height to the Project, with existing downtown structures of varied lower heights.

Working with the Urban Design Guidelines' emphasis on tower tops for adding visual interest from afar, the residential communal amenity space is strategically located at the top floor. Fully glazed on 4 sides, this "sky lounge" is lit 24/7 to provide a glowing beacon from all areas of Bethesda that welcomes both residents, businesses, and visitors. At the pinnacle of the roof form is the skyline garden: a rooftop outdoor room with an urban window to the north and south. The superstructure creates a striking form, while sculpting the building to ensure a more slender mass meets the sky with reduced bulk. This grand structure houses a pool deck with 270-degree visibility, while a linear terrace along the south frontage allows long-distance views towards Washington, D.C.'s skyline. The mechanical penthouse and elevator overruns reside atop the amenity space, and are screened by backlit frosted glazing that continues the evening glow from the amenity rooms below. "Dark sky" techniques are used to eliminate upward facing light fixtures while enhancing the tower's glowing presence from below and afar.

Enhancing the Public Realm in a Distinct and Original Manner

In compliance with the Design Guidelines' street type classifications, the proposed building envelope provides for the planned right-of-ways with appropriate setbacks on all street frontages as it relates to sidewalks, building placement, and building form. These design elements achieve significant private outdoor space for the betterment of the public realm and promoting street level activity. As the site has a very compact buildable footprint, this reduction in square footage is considerable when multiplied across all floors of a building this tall.

This design seeks to enhance the public realm in a distinct and original manner as follows:

- Planting/furnishing zones, pedestrian through zones, and frontage zone dimensions will meet or exceed those recommended in the Design Guidelines.
- Due to the small building footprint, with limited roof area available for green cover, a generous street tree and planter strategy will be used on all street frontages to increase canopy cover, reduce the heat island effect, improve air quality, and improve biodiversity.
- Per the Design Guidelines' recommendation to create linkages between Woodmont Triangle and the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, plantings along Fairmont Avenue are inspired by canopy corridor

recommendations to encourage pedestrian and bicycle connections. Fairmont Avenue is the first east west street immediately south of the Bus Rapid Transit Station on the block north of the site, and therefore heavier pedestrian usage is expected in this area.

- The Design Guidelines recommend Veteran's Park Civic Green be located immediately south of the Project. While the timing and dedication of this green is not within Applicants' control, the proposed building's ground floor has been designed to accommodate continuous retail frontage across the potential park facade. All building services are strategically internalized within the parcel to ensure there is no "back" fronting this planned park area. The 2nd Level's fitness center location will remain flexible during the design process, with the possibility of this amenity area being located along the south façade to overlook the anticipated green, providing multi-level activity and 24/7 vibrancy when viewed from the public realm.

Introducing Materials, Forms or Building Methods Unique to the Immediate Vicinity or Applied in a Unique Way

With socially inclusivity as an important development objective, the Project is designed and programmed to be an icon for inclusionary housing. The prominence of the Project makes it ideal to showcase the county's goals for and benefits of inclusionary housing at an urban scale. An ambitious 25% of the residential units permitted and built are proposed to be moderately priced dwelling units ("MPDUs"). These MPDUs will represent a range of unit sizes from studios through multi-bedroom for families, and square footages, unit layouts, and balconies will be commensurate with similar market rate units. The building's exterior is holistically designed with a modern high-quality aesthetic and materiality that masks the socio-economic diversity housed within, ensuring MPDU residents are not expressed uniquely on the building's exterior.

Designing Compact, Infill Development, so Living, Working and Shopping Environments are more Pleasurable and Desirable on a Problematic Site

The site's small footprint, lack of service alley, and dimensionally limited east and west street-front exposures create unique design challenges for successful urban infill development. Therefore, the Project's layout at the ground and below grade levels must be driven by an intention to ensure necessary building services have a compact street-front exposure to maximize retail visibility, street level vibrancy, and economic sustainability. To achieve this mandate, several tactics are used:

- Locating the entire parking garage below grade, thereby minimizing street-front overhead doors, curb cuts, and possibly unsightly above-grade garage facades. The cost premium to build below grade parking is outweighed by the communal benefits and streetscape enhancements along the public realm of locating residential units and balconies at Levels 2-6, rather than attempting to mask a "dead" garage façade.
- On Wisconsin Avenue, eliminating the existing curb-cut to allow for continuous retail frontage that turns the corner onto Fairmont Avenue.
- On Fairmont Avenue, eliminating one existing curb by combining the garage and loading to a single curb-cut nearly aligned with one of the two existing curb-cuts across the street.
- Minimizing the loading bay width to the minimum per the Design Guidelines.
- Internalizing the shared trash room, with no direct exterior exposure. Trash will be serviced through the loading bay.
- Locating the grand 2-story residential lobby on quieter Fairmont Avenue, complementing 4801 Fairmont's lobby entry.

- Designing the northeast and northwest building corners with re-entrant corners to maximize retail corner frontage while break down the building's scale with plane changes.
- Strategically tucking away the fire command center at the re-entrant northeast corner to minimize its visual impact on the street.

Integrating Low-Impact Development Methods into the Overall Design of the Site and Building, Beyond Green Building or Site Requirements

While a strong base, tower, and top massing is achieved through significant setbacks, the overall building aesthetic is comprised of clean simple volumes and skin. The proposed building's design is articulated with subtle plane changes that manipulate the massing into purposeful elegant proportions. Taking a holistic approach to façade materials, the base, tower, and top are comprised primarily of glazing and metal wall panel, with mullion fins that are used innovatively for a residential tower. This approach integrates low-impact development methods by maximizing solar orientation to mitigate heat gain. The 30 story masses facing east and west have vertical fins that simultaneously provide solar shading from the harsh morning and late afternoon sun, while enhancing the proportions of the tallest mass of the building. These vertical fins continue over the top of the pool deck, providing a signature architecture at the roof that doubles as a shading trellis above a portion of the amenity areas. Conversely, the south glazed facades have strong horizontal fins, shading units from the high mid-day summer sun, while providing welcome solar gain from the low winter sun. The juxtaposition between horizontal and vertical fins strategically reinforce the massing and allow the building to be heavily glazed without the façade feeling monolithic and monotonous. This solution allows for a high-performance skin that is generously glazed, allowing the building to glow in the evening. Contrasting the some of the nearby empty office buildings after 5pm, this transparent residential tower will come to life with light and vibrancy, helping to energize downtown Bethesda at night.

Other sustainable design strategies being studied include:

- Exceeding energy-efficient standards for the building type by 17.5%
- Providing on-site energy generation of up to 2.5% of project demand
- Solar and/or wind turbines at rooftop urban window
- Locating indoor rainwater harvesting tanks in garage corners for on-site use or for future Civic Green landscape irrigation.