

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

*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.*

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.

