

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: 8280 Wisconsin Avenue
Sketch Plan No. 320180150

DATE: May 23, 2018

*The **8280 Wisconsin Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **May 23, 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.*

Attendance:

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

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)
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)
Hyojung Garland (Parks Department)

Douglas M. Firstenberg (Applicant Team)
Evan Weisman (Applicant Team)
Chris Bruch (Applicant Team)
Jad Donohoe (Applicant Team)
Matt Gordon (Applicant Team)
Steve McDaniel (Applicant Team)
Jared Loos (Applicant Team)
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Steve McDaniel (Applicant Team)
Michael Goodman (Applicant Team)

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

Discussion Points:

- Was there a reason why you chose 36ft on lobby and 24ft beyond?
 - *Applicant Response:* We like the variety it gave and wanted to call out the entrance.
- Having a lab building here will enrich Wisconsin Avenue. Like the material.
- Not meeting the intent of the design guidelines relative to the step-backs. Show us a literal interpretation of the guidelines, doesn't mean that the tower can't come to the street.
- Would be helpful to show what a strict interpretation of the guidelines would bring and why are you proposing departure. In this case I like the project so it may be ok.
 - *Applicant Response:* Inside we need the floor plate for this tenant type. There is a question of guidelines and what they mean. There is a big gap between a 120 ft building v 290 ft building as a tall building. We will try to show what the guidelines would bring and why we did something different. The design moves draw your eye down to the entrance.
- It is a small building in footprint. The materiality is going to work well. I like the setback at the lobby and the alignment with Rosedale Ave. There may be extenuating circumstances for this site: it is office which is needed, and we need to be sympathetic that a 15,000 sf footprint is limited. Achieved very positive results here. It would be helpful to show the guidelines departures. The merits of the design as presented is very strong. Deviating to a dogmatic setback may not be positive here.
- I agree with that set of comments. I have a problem with the step-backs, I can't imagine a whole street of step-backs you need soldier buildings.
- Concerned with how schizophrenic the building is with many different kinds of readings.
- I like the "techy-ness" of it.
- That's what I like about this building, it has a diversity of glass. It all pulls together in a charming building.



- I still would like to see a diagram on how this is meeting guidelines.
 - *Applicant Response:* We should do that, start with the guidelines and show step by step how we got to where we are.
- In terms of tenant selection and their needs, I am concerned about you creating great architecture and a poor lab building (like Louis Kahn's Medical Towers at University of Pennsylvania).
 - *Applicant Response:* We have done a test fit for a tenant. The combination of different glassy areas worked well because of the diversity of the glass and the changing nature.
- Battery lane is a Canopy Corridor, so you need to ensure you have sufficient canopy there.
- It is great to be able to look in on the lab spaces from the street. It will provide activation.
- I think the scientists will be excited to be in Downtown Bethesda.

Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Provide a landscaping plan showing the design of the public realm and the enhanced tree canopy along Battery Lane, a canopy corridor.
2. Provide a diagram that illustrates what a strict interpretation of the guidelines would bring and why the applicant is proposing departure. Particularly from the step-back guidelines.
3. Public Benefit Points: The project is on track to achieve at least the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone.
4. Straw vote: 4 in support, 1 in support but with conditions to meet the design guidelines.



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: 7121/7126 Wisconsin Avenue
Concept Plan No. TBD/520180200

DATE: May 23, 2018

*The **7121/7126 Wisconsin Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **May 23, 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.*

Attendance:

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

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)
Stephanie Dickel (Lead Reviewer)
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)

Heather Dhopolsky (Applicant Team)
Joseph Pikiwicz (Applicant Team)
Chuck Hathway (Applicant Team)
Brigg Bunker (Applicant Team)
Dick Knapp (Applicant Team)
Kofi More (Applicant Team)
Feras Quenseya (Applicant Team)
Chris Ruhlen (Applicant Team)
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Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)
Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)
Richard Hoyer (Member of the Public)
Jad Donahoe (Member of the Public)
Joan Filson (Member of the Public)

Discussion Points:

General Comments:

- If you go to 10,000 ft and look down on this area of Bethesda, you see something beginning to happen, where there is this great pedestrian street along Bethesda Avenue. Your project will play a role in this. You have to believe this civic green is going to work and will be a signature piece for Bethesda.

7121 Wisconsin Avenue

- I do have concerns about the architecture and massing. If you look at the south elevation, imagine turning the building 180 degrees, the slot would complement the FWM. You would get a lot more corners and balconies.
 - *Applicant response:* We did consider this in an earlier massing. The concern would be all of the units facing the sheer wall of the building to the south.
- What is the separation between buildings?
 - *Applicant response:* The adjacent building is 20ft from the property line and this building is 6ft from the property line so a total of 26ft.
- I have concerns about meeting the design guidelines. Show a zoning diagram in full compliance with the guidelines and show where the design departs from the guidelines. The vignette in the guidelines of this site is more successful.
 - *Applicant response:* The fire department requires front doors facing street curbs and so we weren't able to do the entries facing the market site.
- I think the step-back is lacking, when I look at the building it seems massive. But the site seems small. I would like to see the floor plans to see if the step-back is infeasible.
 - *Applicant response:* There is a balance to the amount of floor area we are trying to achieve and respect for the context.
- Do you need the street off of Wisconsin or can you use the access from Willow?
 - *Applicant response:* There is an existing curb cut on Wisconsin, and we found this is the best circulation design.



- Could you narrow the road down and capture some of the space in the base?
 - *Applicant response:* The circulation is 2-way, so you need the width. Also, if the units in the base are too deep there is an issue of light penetrating into the unit.
- Need to have the step-back massing as the standard. We are seeing cantilevers throughout.
- What is the materiality of the South Façade if it is 6 ft from the property line?
 - *Applicant response:* The wall will have spandrel glazing and patterns/materials.
- The perception of the North façade is going to be a monolithic long façade that doesn't respond to the market.
- Move the building closer to the FWM and create a better relationship to the market like the notch on the south.
- How far is the building from property line on the north side?
 - *Applicant response:* 15ft and additional inflection points
- How long is the façade? Could carve and create more corners. Right now, it is very oppressive as viewed from the north.
 - *Applicant response:* 175 ft
- Are you stepping back on Wisconsin?
 - *Applicant response:* We are setting the building back to provide the 25 ft sidewalk. The proportion of the vertical element is better along Wisconsin without a step-back.
- If the whole downtown is a series of projections, it could get boring. Though you handle it well.
- The guidelines are there for a reason. We keep allowing exceptions to the guidelines.
- The value of the cantilever is to have units with good views?
 - *Applicant response:* It's more of an architectural gesture at a special place.
- Let's talk about gateways. Some buildings need to play a supporting role because there are 2 signature buildings in close proximity (7359 and Apex bldg.)
- The vertical should come down and meet the ground. The projected point and the inset of the balcony should meet the ground.



- Do both buildings need to do the projection gesture?
 - *Applicant response:* They are done in very different ways.
- If the parking lot does become a park how does the façade relate to the future park?
 - *Applicant response:* There are things we could do with texture and material.

7126 Wisconsin Avenue:

- I like the subtle articulation and the building playing a supporting role.
- We don't see the step-backs we see the cantilever. The issue is the overall mass.
- The other concern is the base. It needs work.
 - *Applicant response:* We need to add texture and scale in future stages.
- It is more than that. It is a grid which we like above, we would like the base to be more substantial and not so glassy.
 - *Applicant response:* We see this as an opportunity to introduce transparency and lightness that isn't imposing.
- I'm not as opposed to the transparency on the base but would like to see the step-backs.
 - *Applicant response:* We are creating larger setbacks as a gesture to make a truly better pedestrian space. I think the cantilevers serve a role, if the vertical came all the way down it is imposing. The cantilever almost serves like a tree canopy. 8ft is the largest dimension, and steps back at 8ft.
- If you could shift the core you may be able to address the step-back comments.
 - *Applicant response:* We are balancing the needed FAR and the economics of being able to build the FWM. An important practical requirement is the parking below grade, and the core connecting from the parking through the whole building is an issue.
- From the base up if you ignore the step-back issue, it is nice, just concerned about bulk of the building. I did wonder about the higher element on Bethesda, but you did it for solar orientation.

FWM Site:

- Guessing that the shingles were originally slate. You should explore trying to get these back to the original material.



- Ultimately the parking lot will become a park. There is a grade change. It seems like the stair could be a stronger connection in the future or flexible.
- The sycamore trees should be looked at by an arborist.
- My concern is with the hardscape, it seems like quite a lot of hardscape, seems strange that one or both of the access points couldn't be narrower. Could it be a one-way loop instead of a 2-way road?
- Did you talk about the material of the shared use street?
 - *Applicant response:* Special pavers and not just asphalt. This is really an opportunity, it could be a special addition.
- You should get a ramp to connect to the parking lot for ADA.

Panel Recommendations:

1. For both 7121 and 7126 show a zoning diagram in full compliance with the guidelines and show where and why the design departs from the guidelines with particular attention to step-backs.
2. Provide a solar study to visualize the impact of the building shadows on the FWM civic green.
3. Create a better relationship from 7121 to the scale of the FWM. Suggestions include: creating a slot similar to the south façade that would complement the FWM, narrowing the shared street and extruding the base to step down to the market.
4. Break up the north façade of 7121 facing the FWM. Right now, it is very long and oppressive as viewed from the north.
5. Consider other circulation alternatives to access 7121. Possibly remove the street off of Wisconsin and use the access from Willow or make the circulation one-way and narrow the hardscape areas.
6. Provide more landscape and less hardscape on the FWM site.
7. Ensure that 7121 and the FWM site relate to the recommended future park/public open space on pkg lot 24.
8. Reconsider the projection gesture/cantilevers on both 7121 and 7126.
9. Consider shifting the core of 7126 to be able to provide step-backs.
10. Design the base of 7126 to be more substantial and not so glassy.

