The Claiborne received Sketch, Preliminary, and Site Plan approvals for the original three parcels (the Auburn Avenue addresses) in 2016/2017, for a mixed-use project with ground-floor non-residential uses (up to 2,800 square feet) and multi-family units above (up to 58 residential units, including 15% MPDUs), at 110 feet in height. The zoning in effect for the original three parcels was the CR Zone, but the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan and Bethesda Overlay Zone had not yet been adopted and thus were not yet in effect. The Applicant is now proposing to add three parcels to the assemblage (the Norfolk Avenue addresses), whose maximum building height under the new Bethesda Overlay Zone and Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan is 90 feet. The project is still proposed to have ground-floor non-residential uses with multi-family residential units above (up to 5,000 square feet of non-residential uses and up to 84 residential units); the maximum building height on the northern portion of the project (three Auburn Avenue parcels) is 110 feet, and the maximum building height on the southern end is 90 feet. In order to add the three parcels to the assemblage, the Sketch, Preliminary, and Site Plan approvals will need to be amended.

The Applicant presented the project to the Bethesda Design Advisory Panel (DAP) on July 25, 2018, prior to submitting the amendments to the prior approvals to M-NCPPC, in order to obtain initial feedback from the DAP. The DAP favorably received the project, but requested that the Applicant return to the DAP to present some additional requested information. Specifically, the DAP requested that all building elevations, including the east side adjacent to the Gallery Bethesda apartments, be included, and that the building cross-section also be included to reflect the adjacent Gallery Bethesda apartments. This additional information has been included in the attached materials. Since presenting to the DAP in July, the Applicant has also submitted the amendment applications to M-NCPPC for review, which review is currently underway. The Applicant looks forward to giving a brief presentation/update to the DAP on October 24, 2018.
The Project’s design is informed by conditions that are intrinsic to the site, its location, and orientation. Norfolk Avenue has a distinct street section, where consistent building heights on each side of the street are the preamble of greater heights beyond, creating a datum line for the observer. The building raises from the ground with a strong character responsive to the need for compatibility with existing nearby development. The resulting four-story base, predominantly solid in nature, interacts at a pedestrian level through richly textured masonry walls, metal and glass canopies, balconies, and awnings. Glass features purposely located along Norfolk Avenue offer transparency for the public functions of the building. On Auburn Avenue, a section of the massing is called down to integrate the existing building to the north east into the street’s overall composition. From the fifth floor up the building steps back while disengaging from the vernacular of the base.

The tectonic of the building changes along with the ratio between glass and solid areas. Much lighter materials and new architectural elements define this body of the volume. As the building rises, it creates the perception of a loss in mass, reducing the visual impact on pedestrians. The façade radiates in different directions but is contained in a controlling frame.

On Norfolk Avenue, a set frame highlights the faceted, weaving articulation of the glazing, and acts as a “Brise Soleil” or shading device in the summer time. The set frame detaches at the intersection of Norfolk and Auburn Avenues creating the opportunity for the insertion of stacked balconies. These balconies with their glass railings and cantilever slabs define a vertical corner element.

As the building turns toward the northwest, the set frame caps the faceted façade on Norfolk Avenue and allows for the ratio of glass to solid to decrease, thus diminishing heat loss in the colder months. To unify the entire composition, the Auburn Avenue façade relates to the Norfolk Avenue side by integrating the faceted feature at the far end of the composition. As a result, all the approaches to the building offer the same level of interest and dynamism.

Continued on pages 3-4…
Exceptional design. The building is shaped by its immediate context and the need to foster compatibility with neighboring buildings, particularly on small sites such as this one. On the Auburn Avenue side, the eastern edge of the building reaches the Property line at a similar height as the existing building next door and then sets back, similar to the neighboring building. With the introduction of jagged shapes that are unique in the Woodmont Triangle area, the Project will bring a fresh, unique, and innovative architectural solution to the residential realm. The main purpose of these shapes is to promote a connection with the outdoors in high-rise living. The nature of the site requires a compact design, where all the uses are close and bleed into one another. The building is designed to maximize sun exposure and natural light. Also the use of the “big frame” and alternating jagged shapes creates shadowing on the glassy areas reducing heat gain in the interior while maximizing the natural light on the south side during summer. The Applicant anticipates achieving 10 points in this public benefit category. The manner in which the Project satisfies the specific guideline criteria for exceptional design public benefit points is as follows:

Provides innovative solutions in response to the immediate context: The building is shaped by its immediate context. In infill projects, being a good neighbor is a necessary ingredient to avoid an adverse outcome. On Auburn Avenue, the building reaches the Property line with a similar height as the existing building next door and sets back, responding the same way as its immediate counterpart. As for Norfolk Avenue, the building sets the new standard for the neighboring parcel as they develop in the future by providing a stepback above the fourth floor.

Creates a sense of place and serves as a landmark: At the top section of the building, the Project features a frame element that bends to turn the corner in an unusual way. The set frame seems to float in the air, which effect can be seen from afar. In the evenings, this effect will be more dramatic as the lights of the residential units glow through the frame, serving as a “beacon” and a landmark point of reference for pedestrians.

Enhances the public realm in a distinct and original manner: The frame and its floating effect will animate and enhance the pedestrian experience, as they move from Battery Lane Park and funnel into Norfolk Avenue. The Project will also create a connection with the recently constructed project at the corner of Norfolk and Fairmont Avenues, as two bookends defining the stretch on Norfolk from beginning to end.

Introduces materials, forms, or building methods unique to the immediate vicinity or applied in a unique way: The introduction of faceted shapes, a novel/etc concept to the Woodmont Triangle, brings a fresh, unique, and innovative architectural solution to the residential realm. The main purpose of these shapes is to exploit to the maximum the connection with the outdoors in high-rise living, while at the same time creating multiple angle views of the surroundings.

Uses design solutions to make compact, infill development living, working, and shopping environments more pleasurable and desirable on a problematic site: The nature of the site requires a compact design, where all the uses are close and bleed one into the other, making pedestrians more aware and involved as they experience the building. The integration of architecture and landscape enhances the pedestrian experience. The introduction of jagged lines in the sidewalk treatment at the corner draws a direct connection with the building and at the same time generates a focal point at a pedestrian level and scale.

Integrates low-impact development methods into the overall design of the site and building, beyond green building or site requirements: The building is designed to maximize the sun
exposure and natural light. The south-facing façade treatment has higher percentage of glass than the north-facing one. The ratio of glass versus solid on each façade is adjusted according to its exposure. Also, the use of the frame element and alternating faceted shapes creates shadowing on the glassy areas, reducing heat gain in the interior while maximizing the natural light on the south side during summer. During the winter when sunlight is more horizontal, the south-facing façade takes full advantage of sunlight and heat gain. The opposite happens on the north, where openings are much smaller, retaining heat inside in winter time. This will provide interior comfort while reducing energy consumption and carbon footprint of the building. The building also features a trash sorting chute, community composting, and cooking oil recycling, as well as on-site paper shredding, to encourage residents to increase their recycling.
Note: plans, sections, elevations and perspectives are for illustrative purpose only.
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Material Legend:
1. Brick #1
2. Brick #2
3. Metal panel #1
4. Metal panel #2
5. Metal panel #3
6. Aluminum/glass railing
7. Aluminum window system
8. Metal and glass canopy
9. Louver
10. Storefront
11. Accent color
12. Garage door

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