

# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

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

**PROJECT:** 8000 Wisconsin Avenue  
Site Plan No. 820190040

**DATE:** November 28, 2018

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*The **8000 Wisconsin Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **November 28, 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)  
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)  
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)  
Matt Folden (Lead Reviewer)  
Rachel Newhouse (Parks Department)  
Hyojung Garland (Parks Department)  
Michael Smith (Montgomery County Office of the County Executive)

Andy Czajkowski (Applicant Team)  
Bob Dalrymple (Applicant Team)  
Carlos Montenegro (Applicant Team)  
Ahmet Aksoylu (Applicant Team)  
Matt Gordon (Applicant Team)  
Chanda Beaufort (Applicant Team)



Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)  
Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)  
John Shul (Member of the Public)

### Discussion Points:

- What is the FAR?
  - *Applicant response: about 10 FAR, includes MPDUs*
- We hear that developers cannot reduce the mass to meet the required FAR. It would be helpful for us to understand why you can't reduce the density for economic reasons.
- I know first-hand that providing MPDUs is a high cost and especially if you are providing 25% MPDUs. I want to commend the applicant for providing 25% but that needs to be balanced with the design excellence points you are requesting.
- But if they reduce the number of units then proportionally they will reduce MPDUs.
  - *Applicant response: If you lose FAR you lose the economic ability to support the MPDUs.*
- There are fixed costs that do not go down proportionally, like the cost of the land.
- If you reduce the building by the purple area you have the same proportion of MPDUs.
  - *Applicant response: You are putting more burden of infrastructure on fewer units. Yes, it is a challenge because we have an internal lot, and we are trying to address the design guidelines that the other two projects did not follow.*
- I think it would have been nice if they provided the separation in the middle of the block. But I think the applicant has responded well to what we have asked them to do. I think responsive to adjacencies and what you are doing along Woodmont, you have achieved what we have asked you to achieve. I don't know that reduction of FAR is in our purview.
- That's an interesting comment because as a pedestrian you will perceive a break between buildings at the through-block connection.
- It is doing a better job in terms of massing than where it was especially on the west side.
- From an urban design and massing standpoint it is doing a good job.
- I think it's subtle, but you can tell the slit.
- *Staff: Something the board has been dealing with is the step back from the base. Can you focus on what the building is doing in terms of step-backs?*
  - *Applicant response: The building comes up 3 levels and sets back 10 feet and sets back more at the corner and then steps back out.*
- *Staff: the wall looks very solid, is the design that you are showing compelling enough to come all the way back out? I would like to hear the DAPs thoughts on this.*
- Capturing the build-to line of the adjacent buildings works because you would expose edges if you set back. I support the massing because they aren't able to have complete separation. I think 7900 is an unfortunate building other than the through-block connection because it is such a long building. I think it leaves your building to solve all of the issues. How it meets the other buildings on either side is very important.
- I don't think setting back is a positive option.



- I want to congratulate the project for reaching 25% MPDUs and the Woodmont side. We do have purview to look at density because the guidelines.
- Balancing the public policy benefit to reach 25% MPDUs makes the density and bulk of the building justifiable.

**Panel Recommendations:**

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Balancing the public policy benefit to reach 25% MPDUs makes the massing, density and bulk of the building justifiable. Moving forward, other projects should explain why they are unable to reduce the density of a project because of feasibility constraints.
2. Public Benefit Points: All the panel members support the requested 10 exceptional design points.
3. Vote: **6** in support



# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

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

**PROJECT:** Metro Tower (7316 Wisconsin Avenue)  
Sketch Plan No. TBD

**DATE:** November 28, 2018

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*The **Metro Tower** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **November 28, 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)  
Paul Mortensen (Panelist, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office)  
Qiaojue Yu (Panelist) *Recused*

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)  
Gwen Wright (Planning Director)  
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)  
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)

Vincent Burke (Applicant Team)  
Daniel Ashley (Applicant Team)  
Willoughby Laycock (Applicant Team)  
John Torti (Applicant Team)  
Chris Ruhlen (Applicant Team)  
Ian P. Duke (Applicant Team)  
Mary Beth Avedesian (Applicant Team)  
Jeremy Sharp (Applicant Team)  
Elliot Rhodeside (Applicant Team)



Robby Brewer (Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)

Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)

John Shul (Member of the Public)

### Discussion Points:

- Are there any waivers or requests or are you all compliant with the design guidelines?
  - *Applicant Response:* I think we are compliant, we have met with staff. The 10ft step-back was difficult because of the narrowness of the site, so we do an average 10ft step-back.
- Why no landscape plan?
  - *Applicant Response:* The plaza is a very sensitive area. It is still in infancy and many parties need to sign off before we go public with it.
- There is a major development happening across elm street. What is the relationship with what is happening at that building?
  - *Applicant Response:* The south entrance is directly across from the 7272 Wisconsin plaza. The best part of the relationship is that the walkway steps relate to the plaza. What we are most excited about is the connection to the future Capital Crescent Civic Green and Carr will be improving the stair connection on their site.
- How do you see people moving along these streets and crosswalks?
  - *Applicant Response:* We have thoughts, but we will work with staff to make sure these work. There will be special nodes at the ends of the plaza and the most special place in the center. Maybe an amphitheater because of the slope. There can be beautiful steps making the transition. It is an interesting thing happening at Hampden and Elm. Adding a crosswalk at the knuckle is not a bad idea. This is an important piece to consider.
- The crosswalk is a good thought and we should consider it.
- I think the building is coming along nicely. I like your Connecticut Avenue building.
- The proportions are very elegant, particularly the aspect ratio along Wisconsin Avenue.
- I like it, I think you meet the design guidelines, and you are on the right path with the concept for the plaza.
- This is the first building on Wisconsin where we didn't have to question the setback. This plaza is going to be a very important piece to reach the 30 points, I think the connection diagram is really important. The activation of the first floor on all four sides is great. It is coming along well.
- You are asking for 30 design points, there are a lot of aspirational pieces. In order for us to concur with the aspirations we will have to see it.
- If they respond to all of the elements then they could achieve the necessary points.
- There are no serious objections to the project.
- Elm Street in the past has been a very quiet street but with the PL station and development it will not be a quiet street.



- *Applicant Response:* This is an opportunity for Bethesda to be a midtown, to glue together in a way that it hasn't been before.
- Now with all these developments, Wisconsin will become a city street and not a highway through Bethesda.
- The way that you deal with the grade change in the plaza will be very important.
  - *Applicant Response:* There is a garage under the plaza. It allows a building to plaza relationship that is barrier-free, and we will have high-ceiling retail facing onto the plaza.
- Kudos to Saul company for purchasing the smaller building and creating a wider plaza. This is well worth the points.
- Excellent job.
- I recommend that you not show the spotlight going up into the air in the rendering because of the dark sky initiative.
- What the materiality will the building will be?
  - *Applicant Response:* Masonry, possibly limestone for the base. The tower elements will be masonry with pre-cast elements.

**Panel Recommendations:**

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Close attention to the plaza design and grade change will be critical at Site Plan to achieve the 30 exceptional design points.
2. Work with county staff to provide a mid-block crosswalk across Elm Street.
3. Public Benefit Points: The project concepts were well-received by the panel and is on track to achieve at least the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone.
4. Straw vote: **5** in support, **1** recused



# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

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

**PROJECT:** 7800 Wisconsin Avenue  
Sketch Plan No. TBD

**DATE:** November 28, 2018

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*The **7800 Wisconsin Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **November 28, 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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Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)  
Gwen Wright (Planning Director)  
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)  
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)

David Goldberg (Applicant Team)  
Jad Donohoe (Applicant Team)  
George Hughes (Applicant Team)  
Marius Radulescu (Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)  
Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)  
John Shul (Member of the Public)  
Leslye Howerton (Member of the Public)  
Eddie Benaim (Member of the Public)



## Discussion Points:

- The important question is tower separation. That was one of the objections to the adjacent building, that they were not providing enough separation.
- What are the other options to achieve the Veterans Park alternatives? It is an important part of the Master Plan. When you see all the development happening in the area it opens your eyes to how important it is to see open space happen here.
  - *Applicant Response:* This occupies half of one of one of the four locations identified for the park. the building to the North occupies two of the potential locations for a park. Conversations will have to happen with Park and Planning to work with staff to see if any of the property owners on the block can work collectively to get the Park. We understand from the County Council that there is not a priority on any of the park options.
  - *Staff:* This is a very small block. It's hard to imagine closing down the option that provides the connection between Woodmont and Wisconsin. The block needs to communicate with each other to achieve the best option. When the project to the north came in there were discussions to see what the public could do perhaps with PIP acquisition money.
- Have you talked with the other property owners?
  - *Applicant Response:* Yes, for four years, it is a challenging block there are five properties and they all have different timelines and leasehold issues.
- It seems like a bigger broader discussion not just about the individual projects, but the whole block.
- But that is not what is before us.
- What is the status of 7820 Wisconsin?
  - *Staff:* Has been in intake for a year, has not been officially accepted.
- We assumed the park would be there from the previous project.
- The preferred option is for this to be the park.
- It is difficult to evaluate this building knowing the other building is on the table because there are many issues such as tower separation issues.
  - *Applicant Response:* One of the things we need to figure out is tower separation preferred here or can the buildings build out to a party wall which is called out in the design guidelines for small sites, which this is.
- Your FAR is 15 or 16, the mapped FAR is what 3?
  - *Applicant Response:* We have made the decision to do below grade parking which allows more height to be usable space and a higher FAR.
- There is no way we could support this project without the separation.
- You could approve both the projects and allow the park Option 3, to expand the park on the block of Veterans Park.
  - *Staff:* In the Sector Plan there are many amenities that everyone gets excited about but the problem is they are implemented piecemeal and we don't want to preclude





the amenities from happening. This is a one building block, it wants a building and a park. Maybe we wait a bit before we close off options.

- *Applicant Response:* You have two projects that would like to potentially move forward and neither have entitlements, if you feel that this project can't move forward then the other project shouldn't move forward either. If you are willing to weigh in on the design decisions on this property we would like to hear your comments.
- At Bethesda Market there is a joint venture to provide the park. Could that happen here?
  - *Applicant Response:* On that site additional height was offered through the Bethesda Plan to two adjacent properties to provide the park. Height was not offered on this site to provide the park.
  - *Staff:* The north property was offered height to provide 25% affordable housing.
- Is there value in coming in with a joint Sketch Plan, for the separate properties on the block and then work collaboratively on the site with separate Preliminary and Site Plans?
- There is so much development coming down the pipeline these open spaces are really important to the success of the Bethesda Plan.
- It is a bigger picture than what can be solved in this room. Is Park and Planning willing to purchase the site for a park?
- Maybe as a mitigating method to provide separation you lose some setback along Wisconsin. You do need to recognize that with the design of the building to the north what we criticized was tower separation.
  - *Applicant Response:* This block is only 200 feet so separation may not be needed.
- Separation of towers on this block may not be good urban design because of the small site. It doesn't matter if it is 2 buildings or one, 200 ft is an appropriate length along Wisconsin Avenue.
- The public sector needs to step up and determine where the park should go. It can't be in limbo and pushed aside for each project that comes up.
  - *Staff:* Our parks acquisition team has reached out to the property owners about acquiring the property. We were serious about looking at all the options here and connecting east to west. We can work with parks and the owners of the properties on this block to get the best option.
- You've been given the right to develop a larger building without the mechanism to give the park and having to earn it.
  - *Staff:* how much density will you receive from the BOZ pool of density?
  - *Applicant Response:* Approx. 100,000 sf
  - *Staff:* In this Bethesda Overlay Zone process there is no guarantee that you get to fill the entire height. In order to be allocated density through the pool you have to meet the design guidelines. It is a qualitative review. As the public we have been working hard to acquire two of the major parks in the plan area, and now that this project has come in we do need to work with the team and have all parties in the room to figure out the solution.



- *Staff:* Another option was to expand the park on the existing site rather than have the park jump a street. What are the thoughts on this option because we want to make sure if we work to acquire the land we acquire the right land?
  - There would be a big building facing the park and not small retailers.
  - I think the larger single park is a far better option.
  - I think the connection to Wisconsin avenue along Norfolk Avenue is important to connect to the neighborhoods and glue the area together.
  - Which option is most costly? I think streets are the thing that connect parcels. I'm not seeing a huge advantage to a park along Norfolk.
  - What is lacking in this area is a larger space. That is why the expansion of the triangle is preferred.
  - Should be a promenade wide sidewalk to connect from Veterans Park to Cheltenham Park instead of a park.
- The party wall is not acceptable because it creates a wall along Wisconsin and does not meet tower separation guidelines.
  - *Staff:* Tower Separation is an important part of the vision for Wisconsin Avenue. What makes it hard is multiple property owners.
- Four favor option 4 along Norfolk Avenue from Woodmont to Wisconsin because if you are just expanding the triangle it isn't enough. It is good to provide frontage on both Wisconsin and Woodmont.
- I wouldn't preclude any options that could be discussed.

**Panel Recommendations:**

*The project will return to the panel for review once the applicant submits a Sketch Plan Application and after the property owners on the block and the Parks and Planning Departments meet to discuss the best options for future development and the location of the park. None of the properties should proceed without these discussions. The primary issues of concern are tower separation and the location of the park.*

