

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 (SF and FAR)
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>	<p>Check if requesting additional density through the Bethesda Overlay Zone (BOZ) If yes, indicate the amount of density (SF and FAR):</p>		



Exceptional Design Public Benefit Points Requested and Brief Justification	
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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: physical model or 3D massing model that can be viewed from different perspectives in real time at the panel meeting, property location (aerial photo or line drawing), illustrative site plan, typical floor plans, sections, elevations, perspective views, precedent images and drawings that show the proposal in relationship to context buildings and any planning board approved abutting buildings in as much detail as possible. **Provide a 3-D diagram or series of 3-D diagrams that illustrate side-by-side strict conformance with the design guidelines massing and the proposed project massing. The diagrams should note where the proposal does not conform with the guidelines and how the alternative treatments are meeting the intent of the guidelines.**



7000 Wisconsin Avenue
Sketch Plan No. 320190090 (the “Sketch Plan” or “Project”)
Supplemental Narrative for May 22nd Design Advisory Panel Submission

I. Introduction and Existing Conditions

Starr Capital LLC and Woodfield Development Company (collectively, the “Applicant”) are the developers of the property identified as 6936 through 7000 Wisconsin Avenue (the “Property”), located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Woodmont Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue, in the Wisconsin Avenue Corridor of Downtown Bethesda. The Property is located in close proximity to a number of retail, residential, and employment uses. The Property is located within a quarter mile of the southern entrance to the Bethesda Metro Station as well as the new Purple Line Station that are both currently under construction.

The Property is currently improved with a single story retail building of approximately 25,000 square feet of leasable area as well as a surface parking lot with 15 parking spaces, with current tenants including Mattress Firm, Orvis, and a martial arts studio. Vehicular access to the Property is currently provided through a curb-cut on Wisconsin Avenue as well as through a 20-foot public alley located to the rear of the Property with connections to Woodmont Avenue and Bradley Boulevard. The Property is located to the south of a single-story FedEx store and the recently developed Bethesda Solaire project (multifamily units above True Food Kitchen) that is located across Woodmont Avenue. Immediately to the south of the Property are a number of retail buildings, including a Verizon store and Sleepy’s Mattress store, and further to the south is the Adagio Apartments closer to the intersection of Bradley Boulevard and Wisconsin Avenue. The Strathmore garden-style apartments are located immediately to the west of the Property across the public alley.

II. Proposed Development and Sketch Plan Design Changes

The Sketch Plan proposes a mixed-use development with up to 188 multifamily dwelling units, approximately 8,500 square feet of ground-floor commercial uses, underground parking, public/private open space, and private amenities. The Project will provide greater than 17.5% Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (“MPDUs”) exceeding the required amount at 15% and in accordance with one of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan’s (the “Sector Plan”) primary objectives of increasing affordable housing opportunities in Downtown Bethesda.

While the Property is zoned to allow 120 feet in building height, the Sector Plan states that the height of the Project should be limited to 110 feet unless the redevelopment includes a movie theater. The Sketch Plan no longer includes a theater and is thus limited to a building height of 110 feet before accounting for additional height allowances granted through the provision of additional MPDUs. The Applicant is seeking an additional 12 feet of building height beyond

120 feet (for a total height of 122 feet) through the provision of greater than 17.5% MPDUs as authorized by Section 59-4.9.2.C.3.b of the Zoning Ordinance.¹ The Sketch Plan maintains the proposed 22-foot wide through-block connection to allow for future pedestrian access between Wisconsin Avenue and Strathmore Street. A portion of the through-block connection is covered (approximately 61 feet in length) with a minimum vertical clearance of 25 feet and the remaining portion is open to the sky (approximately 75 feet in length). Based upon the feedback received at the Design Advisory Panel (the “DAP”) meeting on April 24th and comments from M-NCPPC staff, the Applicant has made the following changes to the Sketch Plan:

- (a) **Elimination of the proposed theater;**
- (b) **Reduced the proposed building height from 132 feet to 122 feet;**
- (c) **Reduction in proposed residential and commercial density for the Project;**
- (d) **Substituted residential uses in place of the theater along the rear of the through-block connection and public alley; and**
- (e) **Reduced the height of the building base from 90 feet to 80 feet, with a 5-foot tower step-back above the base.**

This Sketch Plan submittal to the DAP is specifically focused on addressing all three of the DAP recommendations from the April 24th meeting. Each of these recommendations is identified below with a summary of how the Applicant's revised Sketch Plan design addresses each comment as well as an analysis of the Proposed Development’s compliance with the relevant Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines (the “Design Guidelines”).

DAP Recommendation 1. Provide a concept and massing diagrams for the entire block.

Response: While the Applicant has coordinated with the adjacent property owners through the Sector Plan process that took place over the last several years (and continues to communicate relative to redevelopment), these landowners would not grant permission to the Applicant to identify potential massing for their properties as part of this submission to the DAP. Given that there was significant discussion on the redevelopment concept for the entire block through the Sector Plan process, the Applicant is submitting the public realm improvements with illustrative

¹ The average residential floor plate is proposed to measure approximately 15,496 square feet and the average dwelling unit size is proposed to be approximately 820 square feet. The Project is proposed to include 4 additional MPDUs beyond the minimum required at 15%, which amounts to approximately 3,280 square feet of gross floor area. Therefore, the Applicant is seeking approval to increase the allowable building height by one floor (12 feet) to accommodate these additional MPDUs such that up to 122 feet is authorized for this Project.

massing, as reflected in the Sector Plan to illustrate the redevelopment concept for the entire block.

As described in greater detail below (relative to the 3rd DAP recommendation), the revised Sketch Plan does provide a concept for the existing 20-foot wide public alley that is to the west of the Property and runs parallel to Wisconsin Avenue for the entire block. The existing garden style apartments on Strathmore Street include unit entries, stoops and landscaping that activate the west side of the public alley. While the east side of the public alley is presently improved with older commercial buildings and improvements that accommodate loading and servicing, the revised Sketch Plan incorporates residential units along the through-block connection and public alley to enhance the residential character of the public alley. The inclusion of entries to individual units, balconies, and bay windows will help to activate and create a more pleasant experience in the public alley. The revised Sketch Plan also includes a vehicular circulation concept that demonstrates how access and loading operations for the Project will function in the interim and long-term conditions.

DAP Recommendation 2. Address the step-back and tower separation guidelines. If the project is reduced to 120 feet, illustrate the alternative treatments and how they meet the intent of the guidelines.

Response: As noted above, the Applicant has removed the proposed theater from the Project and reduced the maximum building height to 122 feet. The Applicant is seeking to approval to implement alternative treatments to the strict interpretation of the tower step-back and tower separation guidelines with the justification that the proposed massing meets the intent of the Design Guidelines.

A. 2.4.7. Tower: Step-Back

The revised Sketch Plan includes a tower step-back of 5 feet above an 80-foot building base on Wisconsin Avenue as well as several alternative treatments identified in the Design Guidelines. The revised urban design incorporates shifts in massing and changes in façade planes to reduce perceived building bulk as referenced in the “Menu” of Methods to Reduce Bulk. (Design Guidelines, p. 77). The use of a modified tower step-back and alternative treatments is appropriate for the 122-foot building height proposed for the Project for several reasons. First, the Project includes a 22-foot wide public through-block connection (with a vertical clearance of 25 feet) that will allow for pedestrian access from Wisconsin Avenue to the public alley. The public through-block connection provides variation in the base building and creates a pedestrian-scaled building edge along Wisconsin Avenue.

B. 2.4.6. *Tower: Separation Distance*

In addition to meeting the intent of the tower step-back guideline, the revised Sketch Plan is consistent with the tower separation guideline because it allows for access to light and air. More specifically, the Sketch Plan accommodates tower separation for a significant portion of the northern and southern facades of the Project. The Sketch Plan proposes a party-wall condition for the covered portion of the through-block connection on the northern façade, with approximately 19 feet of tower separation for open-air portion of the through-block connection (approximately 55% of the entire length of this façade). As a result, the party-wall condition is proposed for approximately 61 feet of the façade, while the balance of the façade (approximately 75 feet) allows for tower separation distance of 19 feet on account of the Project's setback and the existence of a private alley easement on the neighboring property to the north (this private alley easement ensures perpetual tower separation distance through redevelopment). The Sketch Plan also proposes a party-wall condition for a portion of the southern façade (approximately 76 feet in length) with significant tower separation of approximately 53 feet for the remaining portion of the façade (approximately 50 feet in length). The tower separation along the southern façade of the Project is created through the implementation of a courtyard at the southwest corner of the Property, which will provide access to light and air for both the Project and neighboring properties. Both the north and south façades will incorporate texture and/or patterning changes on the party walls to meet the intent of the Design Guidelines. With a maximum building height of 122 feet, the proposed alternative treatments for tower separation will adequately meet the intent of the Design Guidelines by increasing the perception of tower separation and allowing access to light and air.

DAP Recommendation 3. Illustrate how the alley will become an attractive place while also being uses for servicing access.

Response: The revised Sketch Plan is designed to enhance the character and functionality of the public alley. The Sketch Plan includes an interim conditions exhibit to illustrate how vehicles and service trucks can safely and efficiently maneuver through the public alley to access the Project. The Applicant's intent is to make the public alley a more attractive place through the incorporation of residential units that will wrap the through-block connection and public alley. As illustrated by the precedent images included with the revised Sketch Plan, the adjacent garden style apartments have entrances, stoops, and landscaping features along the western portion of the alley. The Sketch Plan builds upon and enhances the residential character of the public alley through the inclusion of entries to individual units, balconies and bay windows that will activate the public alley. Additionally, redevelopment of the Property will allow for several existing dumpsters to be removed from the alley and the undergrounding of some utility poles and street lights that are currently in the public alley. The creation of the through-block connection will provide a more friendly and inviting area of refuge for pedestrians and bicyclists that desire to

circulate through the public alley. The long-term condition of the public alley will allow for removal of additional dumpsters and utilities in the alley, and will further enliven the alley with activating uses implemented in accordance with the Sector Plan vision for the block.

III. Requested Public Benefit Points for Exceptional Design

The Applicant is seeking a minimum of 20 public benefit points in the category of exceptional design due to the fact that the Project satisfies the criteria identified in the CR Zone Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines. The Applicant's justification for 20 public benefit points is as follows:

1. Providing innovative solutions in response to the immediate context.

The Project includes a 2-story covered open space which will allow for public access through the Property and establish the initial phase of a through-block connection for the entire block. The ground floor and lower level floors along the 20-foot public alley to the rear will be animated with retail and residential uses. A courtyard is proposed above the ground-floor retail uses (starting at the 2nd floor) which is located at the southwest corner of the Property thereby providing the best access to light and air for both the Project and neighboring properties.

2. Creating a sense of place and serves as a landmark.

The Project includes both multifamily residential and commercial uses. The addition of multifamily dwellings units with entries and balconies on the through-block connection will allow for greater connectivity between Wisconsin Avenue and public alley to the rear. In this respect, the Project will enhance wayfinding for the entire block.

3. Enhancing the public realm in a distinct and original manner.

The Project will provide a dedication of additional right-of-way on Wisconsin Avenue that will enhance the streetscape with a wide, free and clear pedestrian through-zone that is lined with street trees and landscaping. The retail uses and lobby along Wisconsin Avenue include a 2-story articulation that will turn into a 2-story covered open space perpendicular to Wisconsin Avenue. The retail uses will enhance the public street, wrap internal to the Property and activate the public open space and streetscape.

4. Introducing materials, forms or building methods unique to the immediate vicinity or applied in a unique way.

The Project, while a mid-block building, includes a base, middle and top. The Sketch Plan incorporates a unique 2-story glassy and highly articulated base, then a middle 6-story frame

which relates to the existing neighboring buildings and sets a datum line at the 8th floor, and finally the top 3-stories will be highly articulated with a 5-foot step-back that allows for a human-scaled building edge. The articulation and materials will transition around the building creating connectivity and a compatible relationship between the Wisconsin Avenue streetscape and rear of the Project that fronts on the 20-foot public alley.

5. Designing compact, infill development so living, working and shopping environments are more pleasurable and desirable on a site.

The Project will provide a variety of uses, unit types, and minimize on-site parking. The Project will enhance the ground planes both at the Wisconsin Avenue streetscape and alley level to provide a porosity within the block and allow for further interaction of the residential uses above and the neighboring existing residential uses to access the ground planes from multiple directions and points of entry.

6. Integrating low-impact development methods into the overall design of the site and building beyond green building or site requirements.

The Project will remove the existing curb-cut on Wisconsin Avenue and provide all vehicular and loading access from the 20-foot public alley to the rear of the Property, which is consistent with Section 2.3.3 (Servicing, Access and Parking) of the Design Guidelines. The arrangement of the typical floors will provide a courtyard at the southwest corner of the Property, thereby providing access to light and air for both the Project and neighboring properties.

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**7000 Wisconsin Ave
Bethesda, MD**

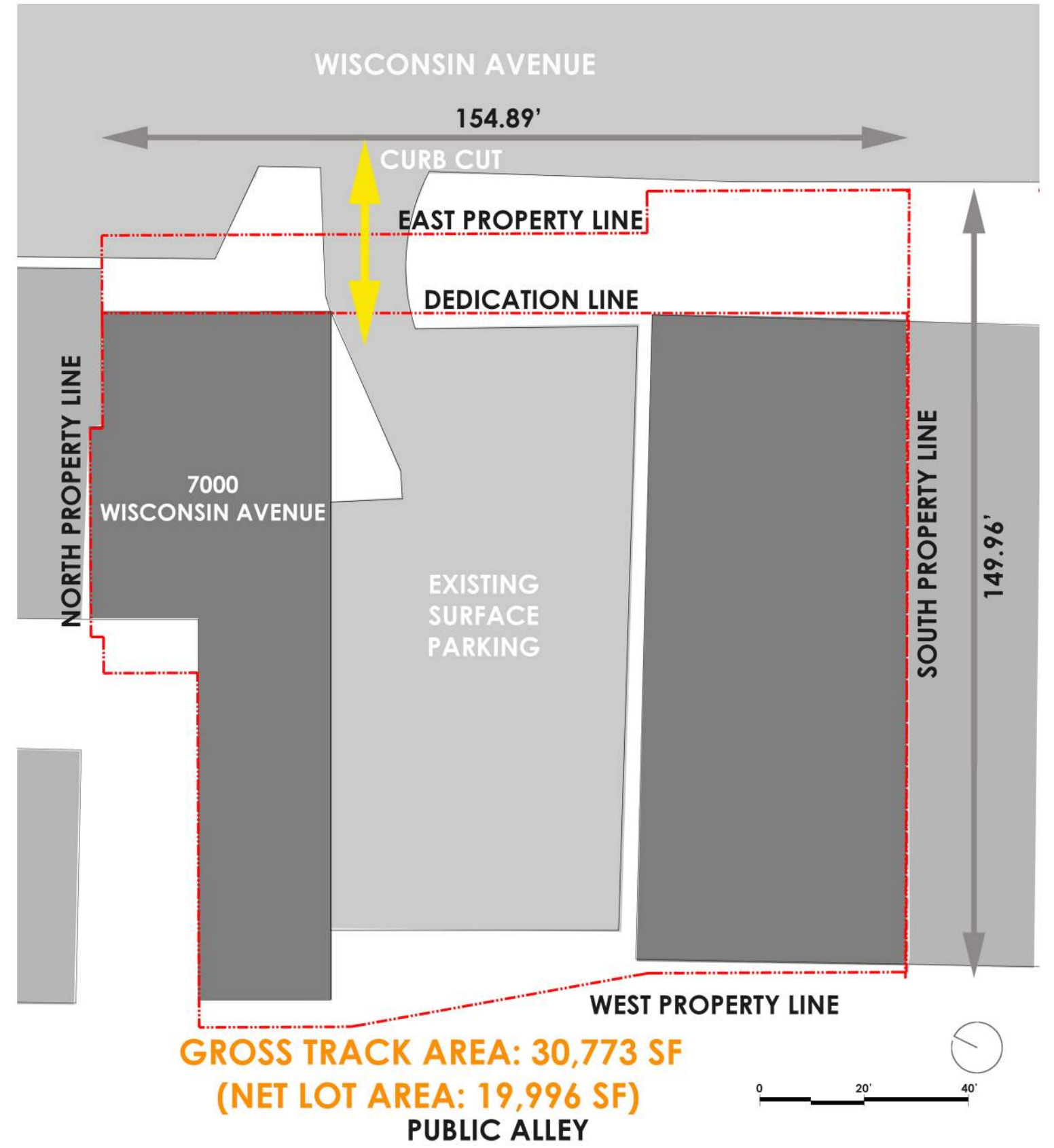
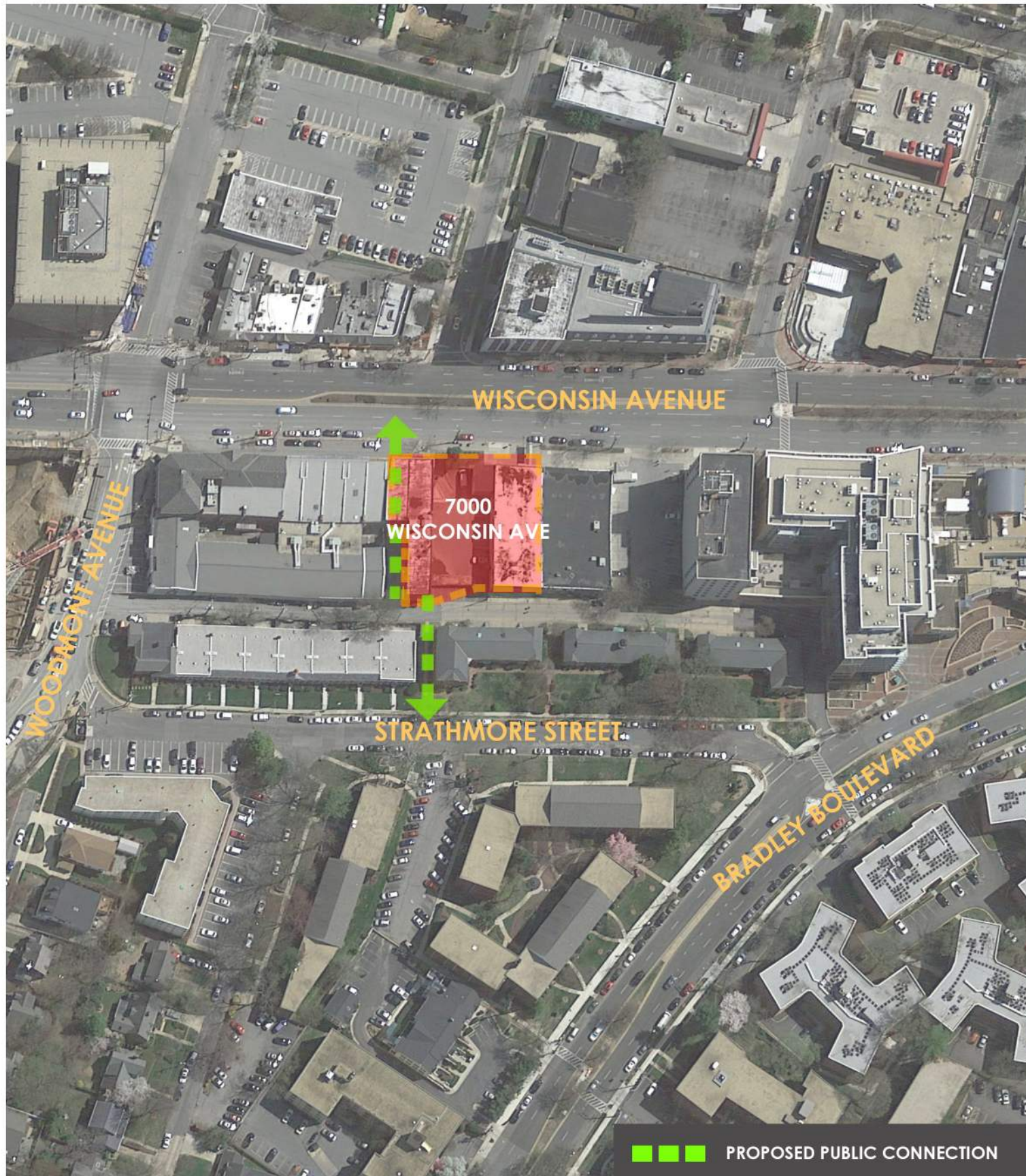
May 10th, 2019

SK+I ARCHITECTURE

Design Advisory Panel - Sketch Plan

**Woodfield Development and
Starr Capital**







W

AERIAL CONTEXT PHOTO



1 WISCONSIN AVE NORTH



3 ACROSS FROM SITE ON WISCONSIN AVE



5 PROPERTIES ON STRATHMORE



2 WISCONSIN AVE SOUTH



4 NEIGHBORING RETAIL AND LAY-BY STREET PARKING



6 ALLEY AT REAR LOOKING SOUTH

2.1.2 Urban Boulevard

Urban Boulevards typically carry a significant amount of pedestrian, bus and vehicular traffic, and connect to major transit nodes. These streets are predominantly lined by high-rise buildings with a mix of commercial and residential uses. Examples of Urban Boulevards include Wisconsin Avenue and Old Georgetown Road.

Intent: Building and sidewalk design along Urban Boulevards should ensure both efficient pedestrian flow and comfort despite the prominence of large-scale buildings and streets.

Table 2.01: Urban Boulevard

Sidewalk Zones	
A. Planting/Furnishing Zone:	6- 10 ft.
B. Pedestrian Through Zone:	10- 20 ft.
C. Frontage Zone**:	0- 10 ft.
Building Placement	
D. Build-to Line:	25-30 ft. from street curb
Building Form	
E. Base Height:	3-6 stories (35-70 ft.)
F. Step-back:	10-15 ft.**

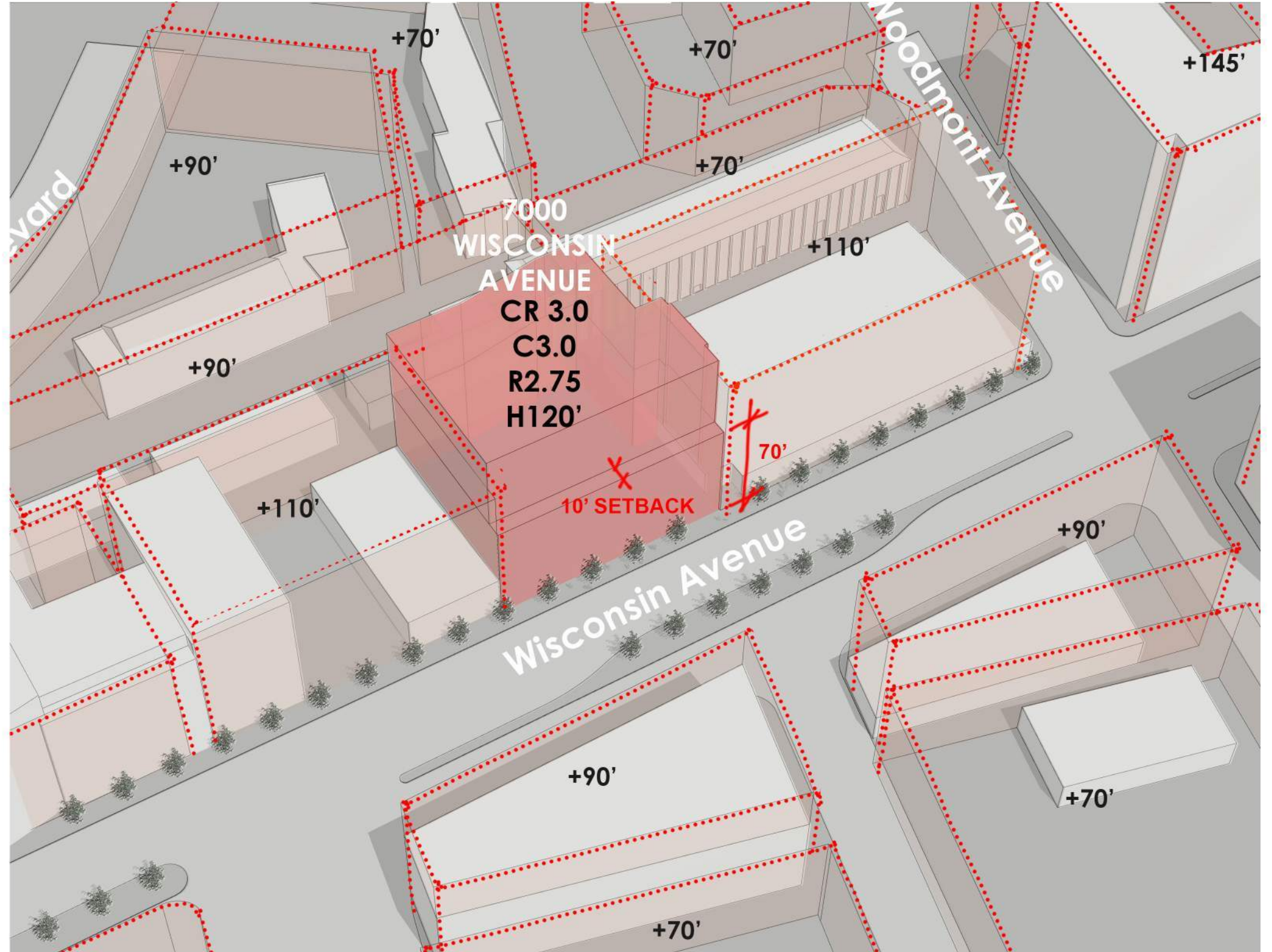
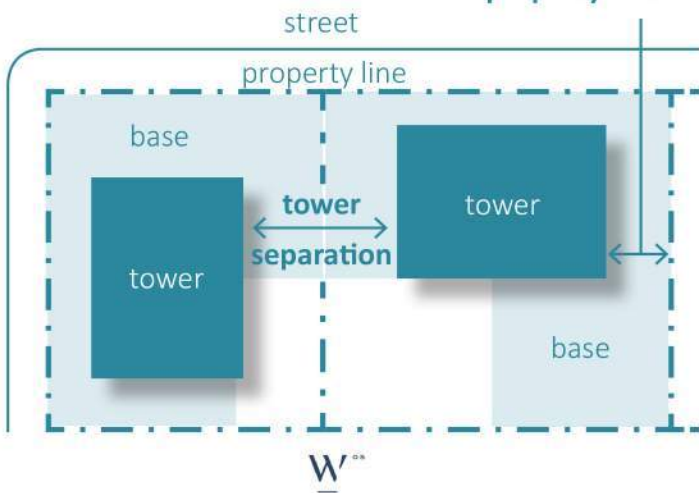
Alternative Treatments
 ** On this street type, buildings under 120 ft. may consider alternative methods to reduce tower bulk other than step-backs. These are outlined in Section 2.4.8 Tower: "Menu" of Methods to Reduce Bulk.



*The Frontage Zone can be minimized or eliminated particularly near transit stations to provide a wider Pedestrian Through Zone.

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separation from the side and rear property line



2.4.8 Tower: “Menu” of Methods to Reduce Bulk

Intent: Downtown Bethesda is an important location in Montgomery County for increased building heights to accommodate future growth. However, collectively, buildings at taller heights can be an imposing presence on the public realm by casting large shadows, limiting sky views and creating an uncomfortable scale for pedestrians.

A. Limit Tower Floor Plate

Reduced tower floor plates limit shadows on the public realm and allow access to sky view while also improving the quality of the building’s indoor environment.



B. Use Unique Geometry

Varied geometry adds visual interest and helps to reduce the perceived bulk of a building’s upper floors. Angled and curved facades allow a building to be viewed dynamically from different vantage points. They can enhance privacy between towers in close proximity by directing views away from nearby windows.



C. Vary Tower Heights

Whether creating a large development with several towers, or an infill development between multiple existing towers, variation in building height can reduce the imposing massing of several large structures built adjacent to each other.



There are several ways to reduce the actual bulk of a building’s upper floors or to creatively reduce the perceived bulk of the building. Below is a menu of design techniques that can be used to sculpt building towers and achieve a varied skyline responsive to human scale. Every project is not required to apply every method; however, several should be used in combination to best meet the guideline intent.

D. Modulate and Articulate Facades

Techniques to break up large facades and reduce perceived building bulk include shifts in massing to allow for upper floor terraces, green roofs and balconies; changes in facade planes; and varied fins, frames and mullions to add depth to glass facades.



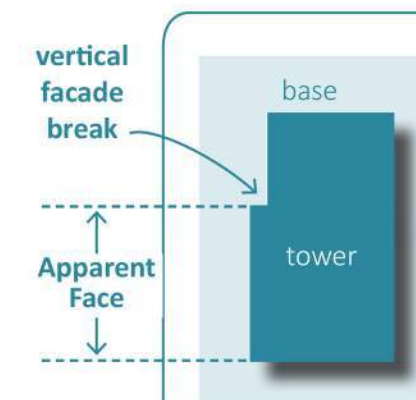
E. Vary Tower Placement and Orientation

Similar to variation in tower height, variation in tower placement and orientation can increase perceived separation between towers, reduce the perceived imposing massing of several adjacent towers and increase privacy by orienting views in different directions.



F. Limit Apparent Face

The apparent face is the length of a facade plane that is unbroken by vertical changes in depth. Limiting this length reduces the perceived bulk of a long building facade.



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Design Guideline: Reducing Bulk

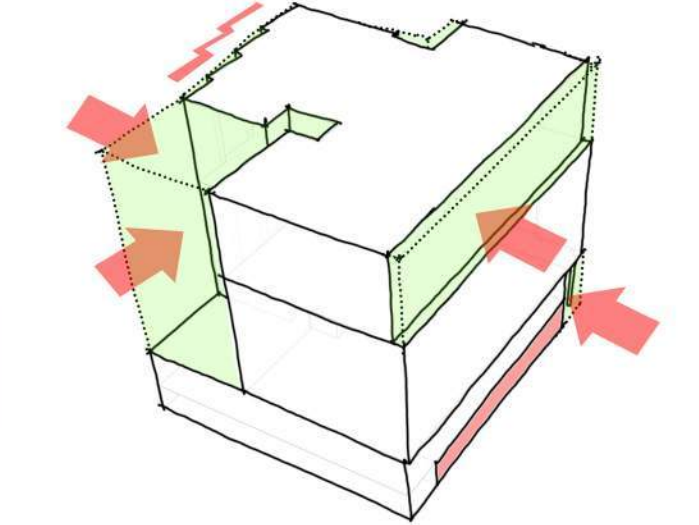
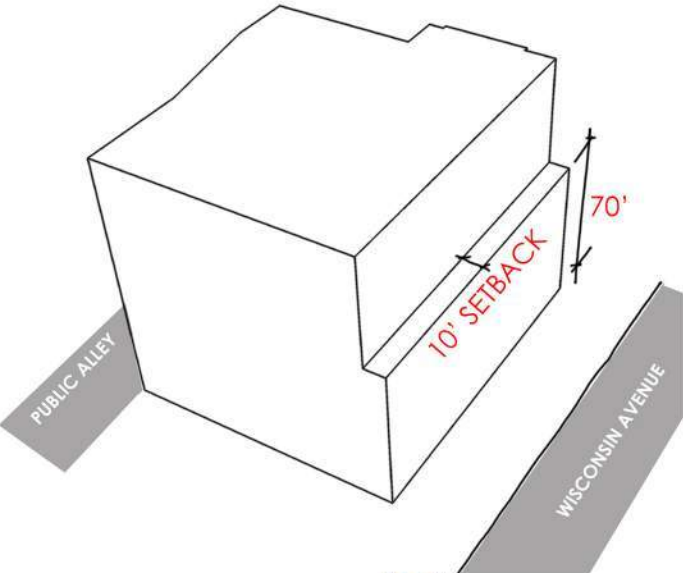
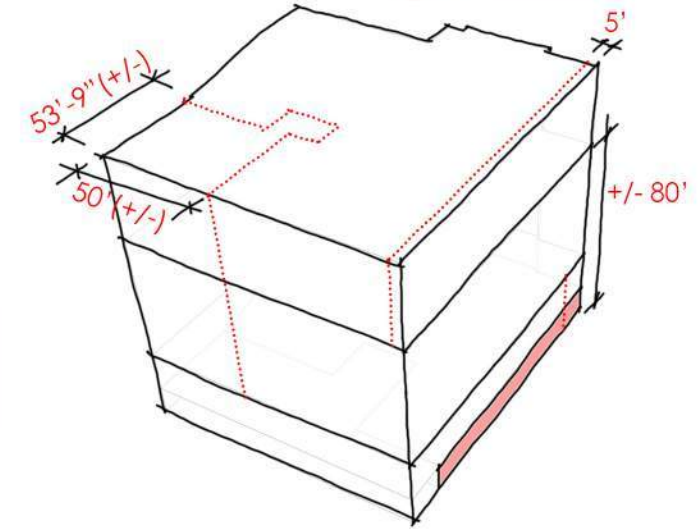
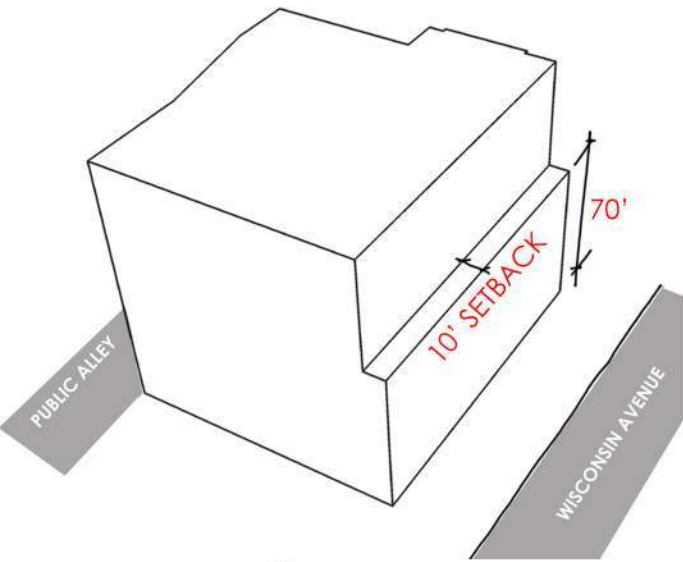
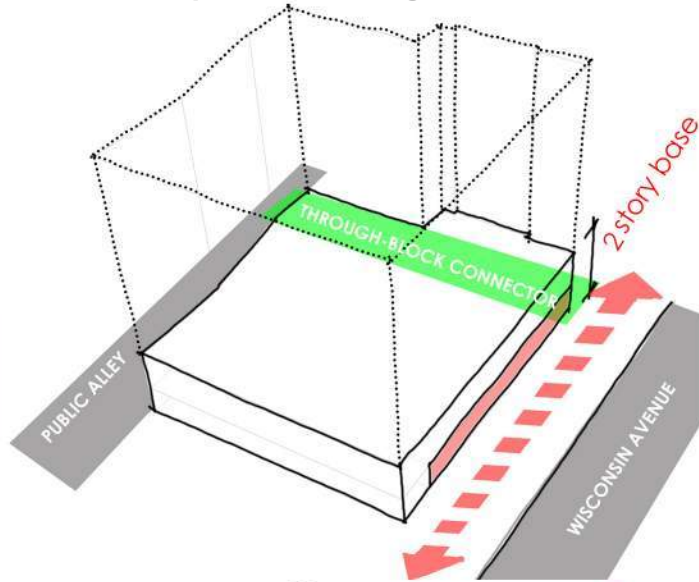
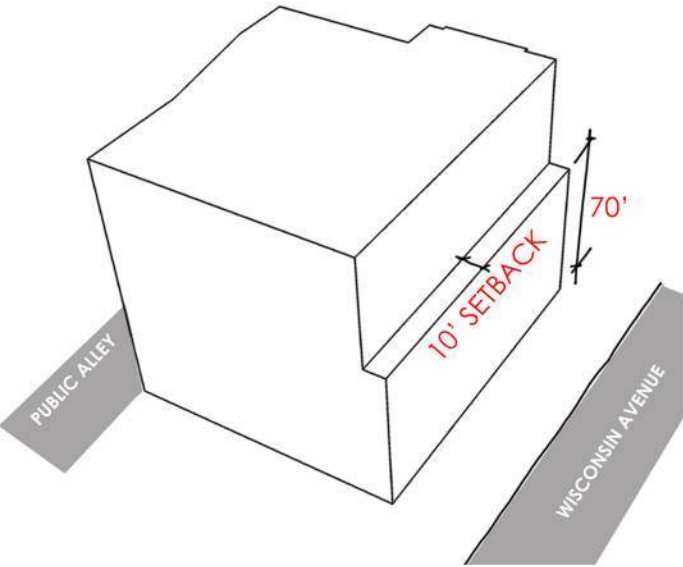
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05



Strict Conformance to Design Guidelines

Proposed Massing



1



ESTABLISH THE STREET

2



BREAK DOWN THE MASS

3



SHAPE THE TOWER

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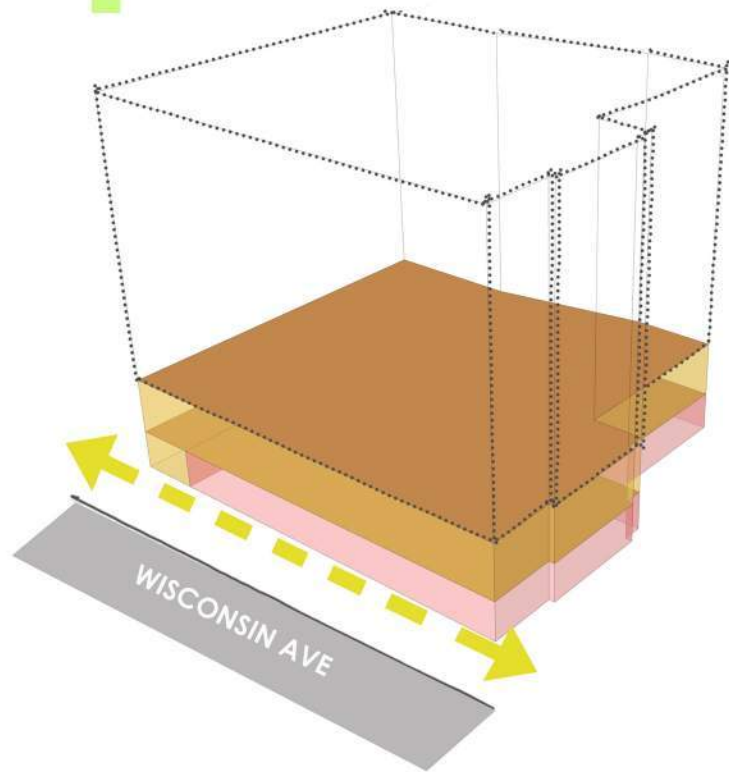
Massing Concept

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06



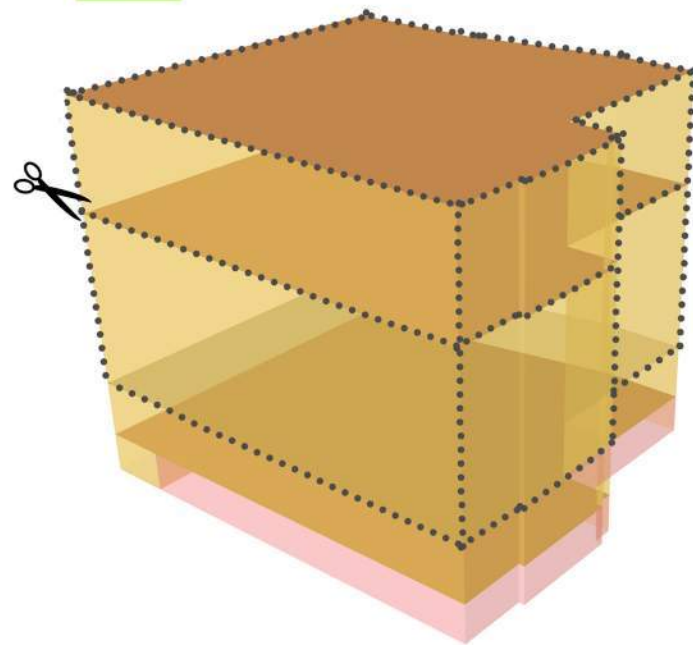
1



BASE: ESTABLISH THE STREET

BUILDING BASE DEFINES STREET SCALE
ESTABLISH RETAIL & RESIDENTIAL FRONTAGE
CONNECT BLOCKS WITH PUBLIC PATH

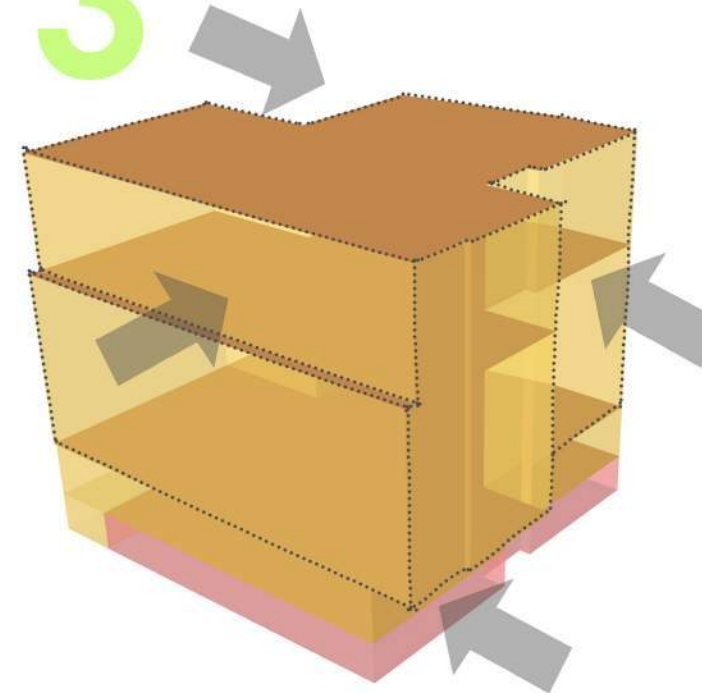
2



TOWER: BREAK DOWN THE MASS

DEFINE TOWER MASS & SPLIT IT TO MINIMIZE BULK

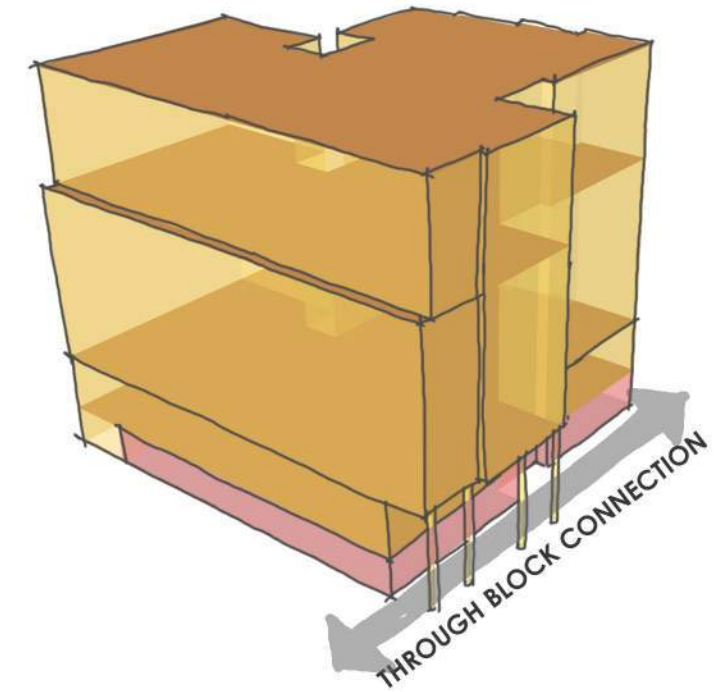
3



SHAPE THE TOWER

ALTICULATE TOWER MASS TO CREATE SETBACKS

4



INFLECT THE TOWER

PUSH/PULL EDGE TO SCULPT THE VOLUME



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Form Development Diagram

May 10th, 2019

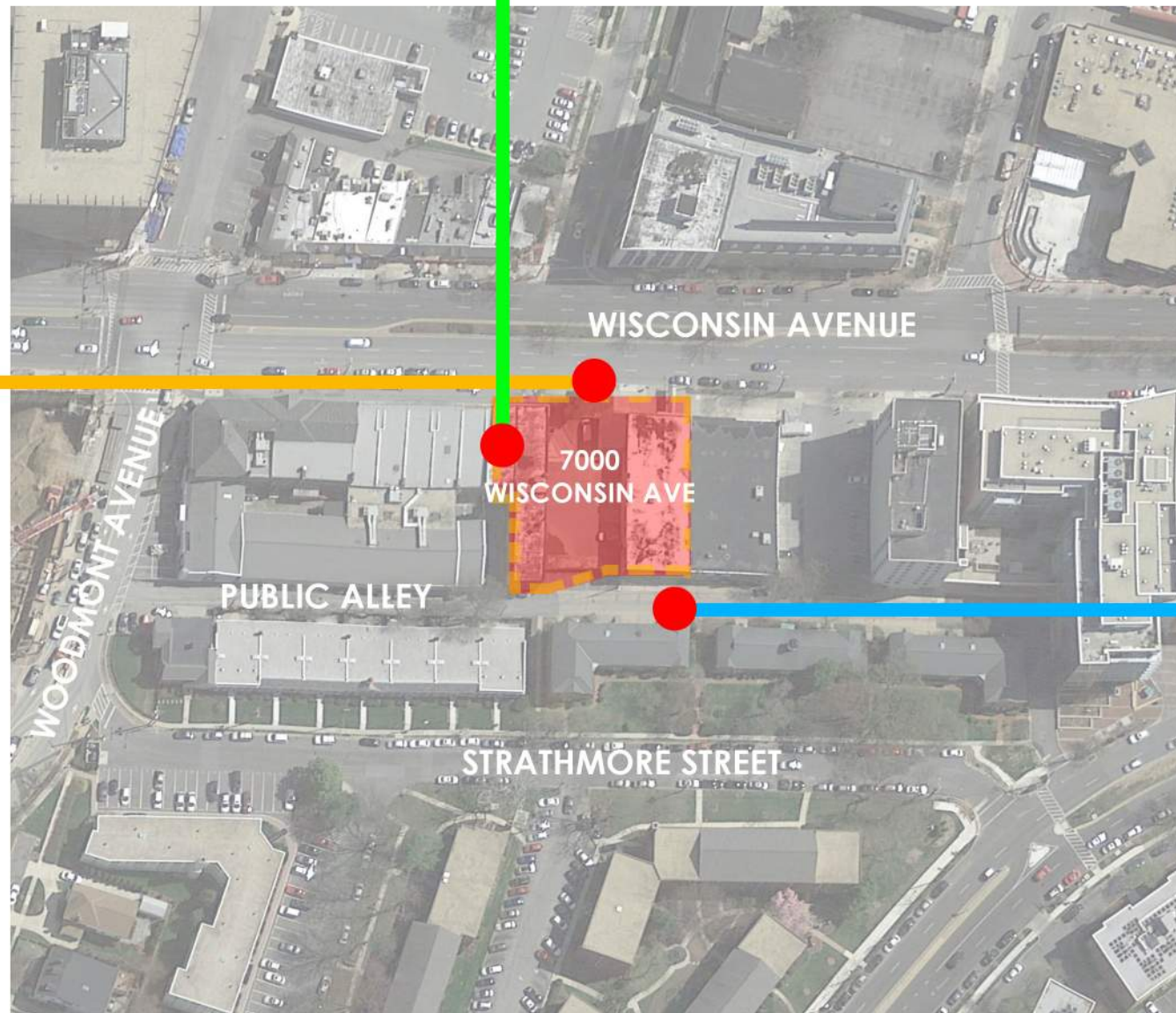
07



STARR CAPITAL



Through-Block Connection



Wisconsin Ave



Public Alley with Residential Entries



The Interim Condition



Cady's Alley, Washington DC



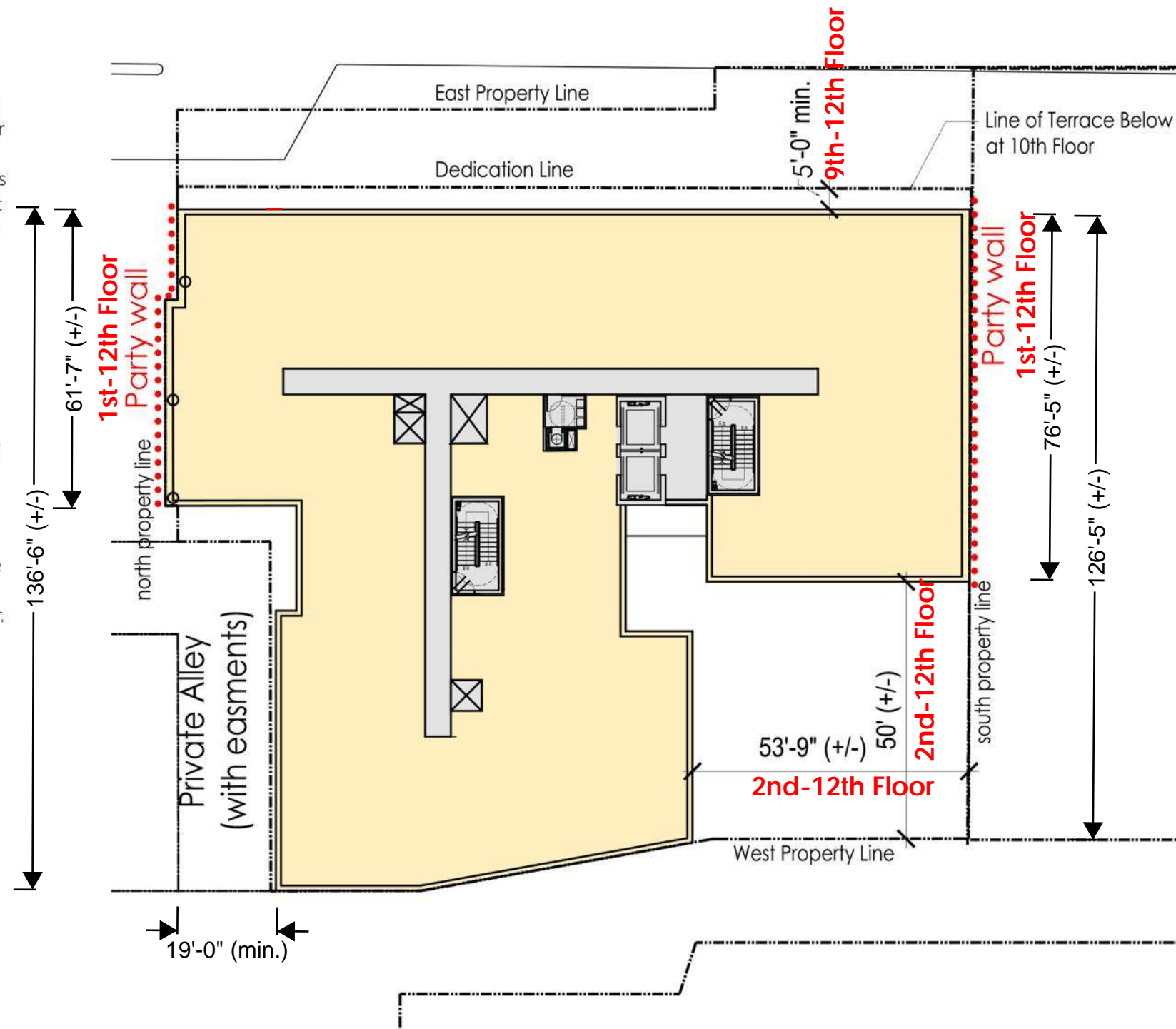
Existing Eastside of Public Alley

Alternative Treatments:

Buildings below 120 feet or with limited property size/width/depth may reduce tower separation or consider party walls. If party walls are necessary, mitigate their visual impact with elements such as public art, lighting, texture and/or patterning that provide visual interest and are appropriate to the context and architecture of the building.

Where existing neighboring building towers are built to or close to the property line, new development should aim to achieve the total tower separation where possible. However, at a minimum, the new building tower levels should provide the separation distance indicated in *Guideline 2.4.6 A* from the side and rear property lines, except where building to the lot line could better address an existing blank wall condition.

Varied geometry in a building's upper floors, and facade modulation between buildings can also be used as methods to increase the perception of tower separation and allow access to light and air.



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Alternative Treatments Tower: Separation Distance

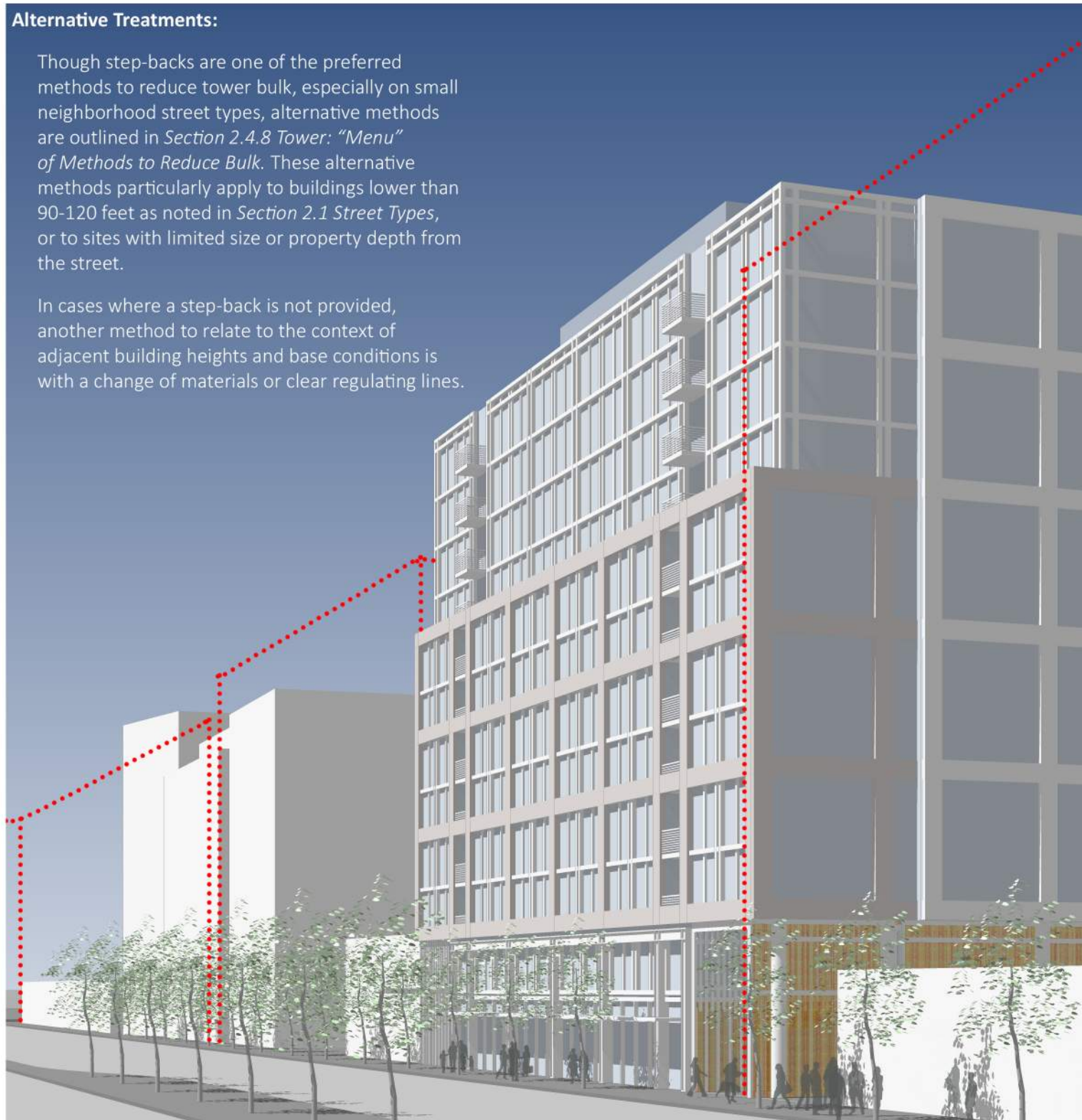


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Alternative Treatments:

Though step-backs are one of the preferred methods to reduce tower bulk, especially on small neighborhood street types, alternative methods are outlined in *Section 2.4.8 Tower: "Menu" of Methods to Reduce Bulk*. These alternative methods particularly apply to buildings lower than 90-120 feet as noted in *Section 2.1 Street Types*, or to sites with limited size or property depth from the street.

In cases where a step-back is not provided, another method to relate to the context of adjacent building heights and base conditions is with a change of materials or clear regulating lines.



80-foot base(proposed)



70-foot base



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Alternative Treatments Tower:Step-Back

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