

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: 7000 Wisconsin Avenue
Sketch Plan No. 320190090

DATE: April 24, 2019

*The **7000 Wisconsin Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 24, 2019**. 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)
Qiaojue Yu (Panelist)
Paul Mortensen (Panelist, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)
Gwen Wright (Planning Director)
Robert Kronenberg (Deputy Director)
Stephanie Dickel (Lead Reviewer)
Matt Folden (Planner Coordinator, Area 1)
Kendra Hyson (Director's Office)

Todd Jacobus (Applicant Team)
Marius Radulescu (Applicant Team)
Dennis Connors (Applicant Team)
Tim Eden (Applicant Team)
Meredith Byer (Applicant Team)
Matt Gordon (Applicant Team)
Bob Dalrymple (Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)



Discussion Points:

- What is the floor to floor height of the theater? Is this feasible, because 10 feet is not enough. If you are going to be doing a theater you need to show the space for the theater, and you would have to transfer the load of all the columns which would reduce the height further.
 - *Applicant Response: It is 14-16 feet high.*
- The height was added, but what you have here is a token element, not a legitimate black box theater. It seems like a ploy to get the additional height.
 - *Applicant Response: The black box in silver spring is 25 feet, we don't have the scale to do that. But there are successful examples at 15 feet. We can create a high-quality space for film and performance. We are working with the Arts and Entertainment District to see if this meets their needs. The area is only 500sf lower than what was requested by them and is within the height limits they requested.*
- This doesn't sound like a legitimate request without a committed venue.
 - *Applicant Response: We are early in the process and it will time to get commitments. But we see this as the signature element of the site.*
- Can you talk about the overall plan for the block? The stairway is an interesting concept but right now it's the back of the building, tucked away.
 - *Applicant Response: There is not an immediate timetable for the adjacent property, but in theory they will mirror and add additional 22 feet between Wisconsin and Strathmore. There is an easement for the alley and leverages off the existing passageway. With their sketch plan they would do a complimentary use off that alleyway. With the development of all these blocks the alley becomes something different than what it is today. Rather than a back of house, it becomes a pedestrian-friendly environment with residential lining the alley.*
- Yes, if it could become something like that it would be great, but it requires a leap of faith.
 - *Applicant Response: There is potential for the adjacent property to come in for sketch plan this year.*
- Do you have a plan that shows the ultimate buildout of the properties, and how you fit into that plan?
 - *Applicant Response: It is difficult because we don't own that property. During the sector plan we tried to site down together and look at what the ultimate urban flavor would be.*
- What is that adjacent tall building?
 - *Applicant Response: Office with post office on ground floor*
- There is a requirement for tower separation. This project should be providing at least half of one of them. The passageway is about the width of half the separation, why not continue this all the way up?



- If you recall with 8000 Wisconsin the owner noted they could not provide separation because the previous project had party walls.
 - *Applicant Response: The trade off here is the pedestrian connection and the strong street wall presence along Wisconsin Avenue.*
- Staff: Maybe we should talk about the midblock connection and what the experience is like going under that. 7900 has similarly done a tunnel but it is very wide and tall. How do you make the tunnel inviting?
 - *Applicant Response: Through lighting textures, landscaping and outdoor seating we can design it to feel like it is supposed to be a tunnel. The tunnel condition is only halfway and then it opens up. 22ft wide 40ft high. We could dress the columns up, it is only 4 columns they could be made to feel like part of the space.*
- Staff: what would happen if you did not have the tunnel? You could have access from the alleyway, what would happen?
 - *Applicant Response: We did not study that.*
- There is a portion of Cady's Alley that is a tunnel. That might be a better precedent. I like the idea of the passage, but this has to be a legitimate theater. However, this is another example without tower separation.
- You can envision the alley being something. That's why I think you have a vision for the whole block and you could sell that vision to the adjacent properties. It is critical to making the stair work and to activate the alley. The residential is crucial along the alley. I would like to see a mini master plan, because you would be helping the adjacent property owners to envision it.
 - *Applicant Response: We are hoping to bring the property to the north into the project and it will help get everyone to believe in it. We are fighting for an extra floor because we do need that additional floor for project feasibility.*
- The separation and base podium and step-back all need to be discussed. If its not the full 10-15 feet it needs to be addressed. Right now, it doesn't look like a base it looks like a building.
 - *Applicant Response: We recommend 4 feet step back at top floors above 90 feet. We are aligning with the datum of the adagio.*
- The precedents are very good, but the issue is the size of the setback and where it is located.
- Potentially the base is too tall and there should be a consideration of separation
 - *Applicant Response: We have a lot of design left to do.*
- The alley is an issue, with the truck and servicing traffic and how this can become a place where people will want to be.

Panel Recommendations:

The project will return to the panel prior to Planning Board review of the Sketch Plan. The following are initial recommendations.



1. Provide a concept and massing diagrams for the entire block.
2. Address the step-back and tower separation guidelines. If the project is reduced to 120 feet, illustrate alternative treatments and how they meet the intent of the guidelines.
3. Illustrate how the alley will become an attractive place while also being used for servicing access.



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: 4915 Auburn Avenue
Site Plan No. TBD

DATE: April 24, 2019

*The **4915 Auburn Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 24, 2019**. 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)
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)
Matt Folden (Lead Reviewer)
Kendra Hyson (Director's Office)
Hyojung Garland (Parks Department)
Rachel Newhouse (Parks Department)

Robert Sponseller (Applicant Team)
Jeff Paralle (Applicant Team)
Brian Gelfan (Applicant Team)
Stacy Silber (Applicant Team)
Filipa Powell (Applicant Team)
Liz Rogers (Applicant Team)
Charles Conslip (Applicant Team)



Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)
Aldon Thomas (Member of the Public)
Paige Nerenberg (Member of the Public)

Discussion Points:

- How do you get to the upper floors of the Norfolk piece?
 - *Applicant Response: it might be an elevator or stair to the mezzanine level.*
- Very nice project. I particularly like the triangular piece.
- What is the building you're wrapping around on Norfolk?
 - *Applicant Response: 2-story retail.*
- Fantastic job.
- Staff: Is the back landscape portion open to the public? It is a great added feature to add to the connection to the trail.
 - *Applicant Response: Yes, it is part of the project's public open space to connect to Battery Lane.*
- I do have one concern with a through-block connection with a relatively low ceiling. We are fortunate that the lighting has improved. Sometimes something in that space could create something exciting. Right now, it is a flat ceiling and floor and the focal point is a hundred feet away. Could the ceiling and lighting design help animate the space? The ones that are most successful create a secondary level of interest.
 - *Applicant response: you walk around cities and there are beautiful covered areas and in between spaces and they are simple. The retail on both sides can help to animate it. With the windows and light coming from both sides it will help.*
 - *Staff: in NOMA there is a beautiful lighting treatment under the train tracks.*
- I like the landscape treatment, there are a lot of amenities. Try to take a big picture cohesive view in addition to the details.
- Is there a plan for how long the project will be open, will it be 24/7?
 - *Applicant response: This is an important concern of the owner and they will be paying a lot of attention to safety moving through the passageway.*
- You have done a good job of distinguishing the zones for pedestrians and bicycles vs vehicular traffic.
 - *Applicant response: Most of the time the traffic will be so low that these spaces will also be shared.*
- I like that this access from Norfolk is totally open and its very clear that there is a public connection.



Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Consider additional treatment to the ceiling of the covered through-block connection such as lighting to make the space more inviting and exciting.
2. Ensure that the landscape treatment is cohesive.
3. Public Benefit Points: The applicant requests 20 Exceptional Design Points; however, the panel recommends 30 Exceptional Design Points.
4. vote: **5** in support



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: 4702 West Virginia Avenue
Sketch Plan No. 320190060

DATE: April 24, 2019

*The **4702 West Virginia Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 24, 2019**. 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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Paul Mortensen (Panelist, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)
Grace Bogdan (Lead Reviewer)
Matt Folden (Planner Coordinator, Area 1)
Hyojung Garland (Parks Department)
Rachel Newhouse (Parks Department)

Matt Gordon (Applicant Team)
Bob Dalrymple (Applicant Team)
Shane Crowly (Applicant Team)
Jason Einstein (Applicant Team)
Dennis Connors (Applicant Team)

Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)
Aldon Thomas (Member of the Public)
Paige Nerenberg (Member of the Public)



Discussion Points:

- So, if you did provide the greenway, could you go to a higher height?
 - Staff Response: Yes, potentially. The height is equal to the amount of greenway provided up to 70 feet. Because no greenway is provided with this project the height is limited to 35 ft.
- Where is the property line in the rendering?
 - *Applicant Response: Right where the stairs are. It may have a different edge depending on future scenarios.*
- So, the stairs would not be built until the greenway is provided?
 - Applicant Response: Right there would be a knockout panel
- So, are the living spaces elevated?
 - *Applicant Response: Yes, Lot 31 is a similar condition.*
- There is no external space for the units. It's a very taugth building.
 - *Applicant Response: There are roof terraces.*
- I like the idea of replacing a single-family home with 8-10 townhomes, but you need to show the project with the existing single-family homes and not the park.
 - *Applicant Response: We could show two options. This design is planning for a future greenway. We want to activate the frontages in case the future greenway is built to make sure the design is oriented to that condition.*
- What is the status of the parking lot on the other side.
 - Staff: the county would like to see both parking lots be part of a project.
- The sector plan shows parks on both sides. Could there be a land swap?
- You talk about an alternative plan, can I derive that this approval process is really a wedge and not a real project?
 - *Applicant Response: No this is a real project, and we are looking for sites in Downtown Bethesda to differentiate ourselves from larger developments with townhouse-style condominiums. We want to target sites like this.*
- How large are the units?
 - *Applicant Response: 3,000 sf*
- The concept, I have no problem with, but what is misleading is that we need to see a rendering with existing home.
 - *Applicant Response: We will show the differences if it is a greenway today and if not a greenway. If you look at the section we have enough setback to provide landscape screening and not be intrusive to the adjacent home.*
- Staff: Have you offered to swap lot?
 - *Applicant Response: We need multiple agencies and private owners to cooperate in or der for this to happen. We would like to have a larger assemblage, but in the meantime with this site alone needs to work and we need to demonstrate conformance.*
- So, the back of units and back of building are on the potential future park on the west side.



- The building is so taught and narrow based on the property width, and there are not windows. More building width would give more flexibility. Need more intermediate space between the project and adjacent parks.
- West elevation should be designed and articulated, no blank panels. Balconies, windows and no blank walls.
- For the portion facing chase avenue urban park the plantings are on the paper alley and the project should consider a larger setback for a transition to the park and an improved entry.
 - *Applicant Response: They might be pavers and potted plants. We might be able to achieve what you are discussing in the alley.*
- If it has to remain as a lawn or paving you need to have a front, a semi-public front.
- The elevation seems very flat, need to add depth to the grey elements.
- At site plan would like to see something more detailed and articulated.
- Consider small projections and balconies on rear.

Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Provide more depth to all the elevations. In particular, design the west elevation with more articulation and no blank panels. Incorporate elements such as balconies and windows.
2. Improve the building entry and planted transition to Chase Avenue Park.
3. Show the interim scenario without the adjacent new parks and the long-term scenario with adjacent new parks.
4. Public Benefit Points: The project is on track to achieve at least the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone if the above recommendations are addressed.
5. Straw vote: **5** in support but with conditions to address the above recommendations



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: Metro Tower
Site Plan No. 820190110

DATE: April 24, 2019

*The **Metro Tower** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 24, 2019**. 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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Marco Fuster (Lead Reviewer)
Hyojung Garland (Parks Department)
Rachel Newhouse (Parks Department)

Mary Beth Avedesian (Applicant Team)
Elliot Rhodeside (Applicant Team)
Jeremy Sharp (Applicant Team)
John Torti (Applicant Team)
Christopher Ruhlen (Applicant Team)
Robby Brewer (Applicant Team)
Ian P. Duke (Applicant Team)

Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)
Aldon Thomas (Member of the Public)
Paige Nerenberg (Member of the Public)



Discussion Points:

- Is it all parking underneath the plaza?
 - *Applicant response: yes.*
- What are the materials in the plaza
 - *Applicant response: Granite and concrete paving.*
- What is the structural grid of the parking below? Could you add additional trees and planter
 - *Applicant response: The weight on the existing structure is the issue. Could put a potted planter. And potentially something above a column.*
- Are you not planning to keep the sculptures?
 - *Applicant response: They do not work with the new design and building.*
- Are you meeting the green requirements?
 - *Applicant response: We are low on that. We thought we were going to get to the requirement. We are putting a lot of mechanical on the roof. Because staff says this a guideline might still meet approval. The plaza is outside that calculation.*
- How about stormwater management? On sidewalks?
 - *Applicant response: Everything is through the roof, not on sidewalks.*
- What about the midblock crossing?
 - *Applicant response: MCDOT is evaluating if it is feasible. The applicant is willing to provide if allowed by MCDOT.*
- Architecturally the project has only gotten better since sketch plan.
- I like what you have done on the roof, the split on top is intriguing
- Can you add additional planter boxes to the plaza?
 - *Applicant response: There are 2 trees that are not showing on the rendering.*
- If it turns out like this than it is so much better than it is now.
- If you have restaurants and cafes it will make this active
 - *Applicant response: There was a request from staff to consider a “ceiling” through elements such as catenary lighting. We are working with a professional office building and we do not want to get too playful*
- It is a good idea, but the project has a lighting strategy and does not need it.
- The two adjacent land uses are key. Stores have to activate the plaza.

Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Consider adding additional planter boxes to the plaza to increase green.
2. Public Benefit Points: *30 Exceptional Design Points are recommended.*
3. Vote: **3** in support

