

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)

Agenda

Friday June 7, 2019

- I. METRO TOWER PRESENTATION (7316 WISCONSIN AVENUE, SITE PLAN SUBMITTED)
- II. ROUND TABLE ON TRAFFIC AND PARKING IN DOWNTOWN BETHESDA, WITH JOSE THOMMANA, DIVISION CHIEF, PARKING; LT. JOHN D'ALBORA, MCPD; AND JEFF BURTON, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BUP.
- III. NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
- IV. NEXT MEETING – NEXT MEETING JULY 12

<http://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/area-1/bethesda-downtown-plan/bethesda-downtown-implementation-advisory-committee/>

Meeting Notes and Attendees:

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Committee Members: Naomi Spinrad, Anna Fierst, Dedun Ingram, Amanda Farber, Jon Weintraub, Michael Fetchko, Stephen Long, Emily Vaias, Patrick O'Neal, Greg Rooney, Mark Hendrickson.

Mary Beth Avedesian, Vince Burke (BF Saul); Jeremy Sharpe, John Torti (Torti Gallas); Elliot Rhoadside (R&H Landscape); Ian Duke (VIKA, Inc.); Elza Hisel-McCoy (MNCPPC); John D'Albora (MCPD); Jeff Burton (BethesdaUP); Ken Hartman (BCC Regional Service Center); Jose Thommana (Parking); Allan Glass, Terry Long (residents).

Metro Tower Presentation

1. Avedesian began by noting that BF Saul is a legacy developer and listing several of their projects in the region. She then introduced their project at 7316 Wisconsin Avenue, a five-story office building between Hamden Lane and Elm Street,

2. Torti reviewed a map of the area and their Sketch and Site plans, noting the following: the rebuilt plaza on the west side will double its current size, add to the pedestrian walk-through, and have



multiple retail spaces; the property is open on all four sides; is 250' plus mechanicals room; has a five-story base; has an Art Deco façade; has a through north-south lobby; and has a roof-top terrace and pool.

3. Rhodeside described the new plaza and its landscaping: 9200 sq feet; grade change from north to south; intended as north-south 'gateway' entrances; provide a walkway to Purple Line entrance; will retain the same ArtDeco design; have seating at tables for first floor restaurant; be planted with several Crepe Myrtles; will be well-lit for nighttime use; and include a central water feature.

4. IAC members had the following questions, comments (Responses follow):

- Will the building to West be redeveloped? (Likely not. It is 150 -175' and contains condominium residences on one side and a bank and a travel agency as retail on its first floor.)
- What new trees are planned for Elm Street? (None. The utility lines run too close to the surface on that side.) Can larger trees be planted instead of crepe myrtles to provide more shade? (No, a garage under the plaza limits the planting spaces. The plaza may be shaded by surrounding buildings.)
- Will the plaza close during construction? (No, we can't close the whole area, but may cordon sections off as necessary. Carr will keep ownership of plaza area while Saul will maintain it.)
- How/when will construction be staged? (Staging will be on Hampden Lane, with expected demolition by first quarter 2020 and a 36-month construction period.)
- What are the stepbacks? (Podium to tower has an average of 10' stepbacks, per discussion with Planning Board staff. Design has two story base in a five story podium, 14 story lower tower, and approximately five story upper tower.)
- Will pedestrian access on Wisconsin Avenue be maintained during construction? (Yes, DPS says a pedestrian area must be maintained, and will be under a covered path in parking lane.)

Traffic and Parking Discussion (with Thommana, D'Albora, Burton, moderated by Hartman)

1. Hartman opened the discussion by noting two significant issues: Construction traffic and deliveries/drop-offs for existing buildings/businesses.

2. Burton described a pilot program to be started on Norfolk Avenue where areas will be limited at certain times – likely in the morning - for loading only.

3. Thommana described a separate delivery process where a vehicle is allowed to park for a limited time with flashers on in the 15 feet off an intersection, even one with a crosswalk. He also noted additional issues: Deliveries/loading happening during rush hour; people must be educated about what is allowed; enforcement is difficult because it can't happen everywhere at all times.

4 Hartman and Thommana acknowledged that blocked bike lanes are another delivery/loading problem. If a dedicated bike lane is completed on Woodmont Avenue, it will be signed as a No Standing area at all times. However, this could be a problem for businesses such as The Blue House.

5. Hartman noted that work is ongoing to prevent Harris Teeter deliveries from blocking Woodmont traffic.



6. A similar issue occurs with trucks blocking both Woodmont Avenue and the sidewalk when deliveries are made next to the Silver restaurant but trucks do not pull completely into the loading bays. Is the problem poor design of the bays (not deep or wide enough?) or poor enforcement when streets and sidewalks are blocked? Hisel-McCoy confirms that bay size is always part of the design review, but if much larger truck than planned for does deliveries, the problem will still exist. (Hartman thanked Farber for her documenting of these problems.)

7. Burton acknowledges need for consistent enforcement to prevent trucks/deliveries from blocking streets and sidewalks, but will that adversely affect the needs of businesses? There must be a balance so that Bethesda is both business- and pedestrian-friendly.

8. Thommana reiterates that businesses on a block must be educated to coordinate sharing the delivery spaces available during the Norfolk Avenue pilot program. Unfortunately, a survey sent to businesses about the program had a very low response rate, and a new follow-up approach must be considered.

9. Other problem areas were noted: Extend southbound Wisconsin Avenue rush hour to 8pm? Revisit some No Turn On Red intersections. Bradley Boulevard is often a rush hour problem.

New Business / Announcements

1. Hisel-McCoy asked for all IAC comments and questions about the amenity fund, said the proposal for 7340 Wisconsin Avenue has been postponed, and noted that an updated Farm Women's Market plan, a Lutheran Church at 8011 Old Georgetown Road plan, and a rehabilitation plan of the plaza by the Original Pancake House are upcoming.

2. Spinrad noted that the FWM plan is expected to be on the IAC July agenda.

3. A discussion of park fund priorities was requested. Hisel-McCoy said that a discussion is welcome, but decisions may not be affected by any recommendations.

4. The next IAC meeting is on Friday, July 12, 2019, due to the 4th of July holiday.

