

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Submission Form

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name	St. Elmo Apartments
File Number(s)	32015004B, 12015020B and 82017003A (to be filed)
Project Address	4931 and 4925 Fairmont Avenue and 4920, 4922, 4924, 4926, 4928 St. Elmo Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland

Plan Type Concept Plan ☐ Sketch Plan ☐ Site Plan ☒

APPLICANT TEAM

	Name	Phone	Email
Primary Contact	Jonathan Bondi	301-916-4100	bondi@vika.com
Architect	Michael Swartz, David M. Schwarz Architects, 202-862-0777, michael.swartz@dmsas.com		
Landscape Architect	Becky May, Rhodeside-Harwell, 703-683-7447, beckym@rhodeside-harwell.com		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

	Zone	Proposed Height	Proposed Density
Project Data	CR 5.0, C-5.0, R-5.0, H-225'	225'	12.9 FAR
Proposed Land Uses	Multi-family residential and retail		
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>	See attached.		



Exceptional Design Public Benefit Points Requested and Brief Justification	See attached.
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DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL SUBMISSION PROCESS

1. Schedule a Design Advisory Panel review date with the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.
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.**



St. Elmo Apartments

Property Background

The Property is a through-block located between St. Elmo Avenue and Fairmont Avenue, mid-block between Norfolk Avenue and Old Georgetown Road, in the Woodmont Triangle. The Applicant is proposing to redevelop the existing low-rise, commercial buildings with a mixed-use, predominately residential apartment building that is more reflective of the Property's transit-oriented location.

Project History

The Montgomery County Planning Board approved Sketch Plan Amendment (No. 3201500A) and Preliminary Plan Amendment (No. 12015020A) on October 11, 2018 to allow for up to 330,000 square feet of total development, including up to 245 dwelling units and up to 16,000 square feet of commercial space, with a maximum building height of 225 feet (the "Project"). In connection with the prior amendments, the Design Advisory Panel ("DAP") reviewed the Project twice: first on April 4, 2018, and then again on September 26, 2018. Overall, the DAP was supportive of the Project. However, certain DAP members expressed their opinion that, at the time of Site Plan, the Applicant should consider achieving a bit more tower separation, particularly along the through block connection.

The Applicant is now seeking Site Plan Amendment, and for reasons explained below, also is seeking an amendment of its Sketch and Preliminary Plans. The overall density and height approved by the most recent Sketch and Preliminary Plan Amendments will remain the same (*i.e.* up to 330,000 square feet and 225'), however the Applicant is proposing to increase the number of dwelling units to 280 (as opposed to 245), decrease the commercial square footage (from 16,000 square feet to approximately 7,000 square feet) and lower the average floor-to-ceiling height to increase the number of stories from 21 to 22.

The proposed architectural massing and expression of the facades is unchanged from what the DAP has seen before. However, in consulting with Planning Staff, the Applicant has made several substantial changes to the building placement and footprint to increase the tower separation on both sides of the site, in response to the DAP's previous comments. The main building plane at the through block connection has been moved back 2'6" to provide for a setback of 22'6" from the Property boundary. Additionally, the Applicant has pulled the outermost projection of the northeast façade (at levels three through 21), along the through-block connection, back approximately 3' 10". This will result in a minimum tower separation of 36 feet between the Project and the adjacent Bainbridge Apartments (or 17' 6" from the Property boundary) at the upper levels. Furthermore, the Applicant has pulled the outermost point of the southwest façade back an additional six feet. This creates greater separation on this side of the Project. The Applicant has also reconfigured the loading to allow trucks to head-in and head-out. Specifically, trucks will access the loading off of Fairmont Avenue, and drive

through the Project to exit onto St. Elmo Avenue. This will enhance the pedestrian environment by eliminating the need for trucks to back-up into the street.

Brief Project Description and Design Concept

The building will contain up to 280 units (located on levels 2 through 22) and up to 7,000 square feet of ground level retail use. All parking will be provided on-site through four levels of below-grade structure parking (approximately 230 parking spaces). The building will have a maximum gross floor area of approximately 330,000 square feet (or 12.9 FAR).

The building now will be 22 stories tall, and achieve a maximum height of 225 feet, as permitted by the Property's zone (CR 5.0, C-5.0, R-5.0, H225'). An important component of the Project is the mid-block pedestrian connection between St. Elmo Avenue and Fairmont Avenue. The Project provides a 22' 6" expansion of the existing through-block promenade (more than doubling the width of the through-block pedestrian connection currently provided by the adjacent Bainbridge site). The proposed design of the promenade envisions a unified public space that works both for pedestrians passing through and as a destination in itself. Lighting, paving, seating, planting, and public art will be designed as part of an integrated experience.

The building architecture specifically responds to the intent of the *July 2017 Approved and Adopted Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines*. Both Fairmont Avenue and St. Elmo Avenue are classified as Downtown Mixed-Use Street in the Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines. As illustrated and enumerated in the design documents, the building's design complies with those guidelines. It either meets the specific numerical requirements or utilizes permitted Alternative Treatments and exceptions for lots of limited width (given the narrowness of the Property), when strict adherence to those numerical values would be detrimental to the project's design quality, feasibility and/or function.

Architecturally, the building is organized around a central mass (22 stories or 225 feet in height) that runs from St. Elmo to Fairmont. The through-block connection runs along the northeasterly side of this central mass adjacent to the Bainbridge building. Two enclosed minor masses with flanking open balconies cantilever 5'-0" into the expanded promenade beginning at level 3. On the southwesterly side of the central mass, two wings will project toward Old Georgetown Road. The wing closest to St. Elmo will rise to 22 stories in height, while the wing closest to Fairmont will rise to 21 stories. Both of these wings step back six times along their height, and the upper four levels are significantly sculpted. These wings result in the formation of a large courtyard on the 2nd level, providing a significant break in the building's mass facing Old Georgetown Road.

The wings and the promenade projections are each set back from the St. Elmo and Fairmont faces of the central mass (while still remaining close enough to those faces to create a strong street façade that holds the urban streetscape). These elements and the central mass, which will step back from its main face on both streets, will obtain setbacks and/or step-backs for the

majority of each frontage. Uniform building materials of unit masonry with accents of natural stone or cast stone, glazing systems, ornamental metal accents, and projecting, wrap-around balconies on every exterior mass will ensure the entire building has a unified architectural composition. The proposed building has a timeless appearance and will function as a true landmark in Downtown Bethesda.

The Project will provide stormwater management (on a site where there currently is none) and seeks to provide 35% of the roof area as green cover, as set forth in the Design Guidelines.

Exceptional Design Public Benefit Points Requested and Brief Justification

The St. Elmo Apartments Project seeks approval of 15 Public Benefit Points for Exceptional Design. As illustrated above and discussed in greater detail below, the Project satisfies a minimum of four of the Exceptional Design criteria, as specified in the Zoning Ordinance and Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines. These criteria are addressed in turn below.

Providing innovative solutions in response to the immediate context

The building will be setback from both St. Elmo Avenue and Fairmont Avenue, consistent with the adjacent properties and the Design Guidelines. On St. Elmo, the Project continues the building line established by the Bainbridge Bethesda -- the setback from the curb has been setback an additional foot (as compared to the prior Sketch Plan and Preliminary Plan Amendments) to align with the furthest projecting plane of the Bainbridge Bethesda. On Fairmont Avenue, the Project continues the building line established by the adjacent townhome – the setback from the curb of the main building plane substantially aligns with the adjacent, townhouse-scaled building. As a result, the Project creates a continuous building line along these frontages. Step-backs from the main building plane from Level 3 and above give the building a two-story base that relates to the smaller-scaled buildings on both frontages and to plane changes on the adjacent Bainbridge Bethesda building. This base element will be enhanced by a strong horizontal band, changes in materials, and additional architectural detailing.

Creating a sense of place and serves as a landmark

Per the building description above, the central mass of the building, along with its projections and wings – linked to the central mass via projecting open balconies - will create strong, timeless street facades. The St. Elmo façade will read as a story taller with additional architectural embellishment as compared to Fairmont, as is appropriate to its wider right-of-way and status as the front entrance of the building. These facades and the promenade will create a strong sense of place within the immediate vicinity of the building. Moreover, the sculptural nature of the upper 5 levels, penthouse, and architectural embellishments, will give the project an iconic top and landmark status

when viewed from greater distances along Old Georgetown Road and other nearby roads. The Project's significant improvement of the promenade will establish this location as a true place in Bethesda and serve as a landmark for the entire area.

Enhancing the public realm in a distinct and original manner

The building's design concept discussed in relation to the other three exceptional design criteria, also contribute to enhancing the public realm in a distinct and original manner. To our knowledge, it will be unlike any existing building or any other currently proposed design in Bethesda. The proposed building achieves compliance with the setback, step-back, and tower separation recommendations contained in the Design Guidelines in a manner that achieves a strong street presence on both St. Elmo and Fairmont. Downtown Bethesda, in general, and the Woodmont Triangle, more specifically, continues to densify and become increasingly urban in nature. Strong streetscapes, which maximize the advantages of the urban environment, become paramount to the public realm. The design utilizes the recommendations contained in the Design Guidelines to weave a coherent design statement along both street frontages and the equally important side façades. While the northeast and southwest elevations are functionally "sides" of the building, both play vital roles in the overall design. One side façade faces the promenade and will be exposed to a large amount of pedestrian traffic. The other, facing Old Georgetown Road, will be the most prominent façade, perhaps seen by the greatest number of people on a daily basis. As such, it will exhibit the same level of complexity and visual interest as the street facades and end with strong beacon-like vertical massings and detailed elements.

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

The architectural expression of St. Elmo Apartments will be an elegant and timeless design, unique within the Woodmont Triangle. Comprised mostly of unit masonry with stone or cast stone accents, and large areas of architectural glazing systems, further enhanced with ornamental metal detailing, the facades will be neither a specific historic style nor merely a fashionable statement of today's trends. It will address current market demands for large windows, yet also adhere to time tested notions of proportions; an articulate base, shaft and top; appropriate ornamentation to create a human-scale; and a balance of solids and voids. The many building planes – created by the setbacks, projections, wings, step-backs, and upper level sculpting – are all linked by the wrap-around open balconies. These elements, along with strong horizontal elements at the various step-backs and cornices will create a plaid-like balance of horizontals and verticals found in timeless designs over many stylistic periods, which will be distinctive amongst much of the nearby, current, architectural expressions.



ST. ELMO APARTMENTS

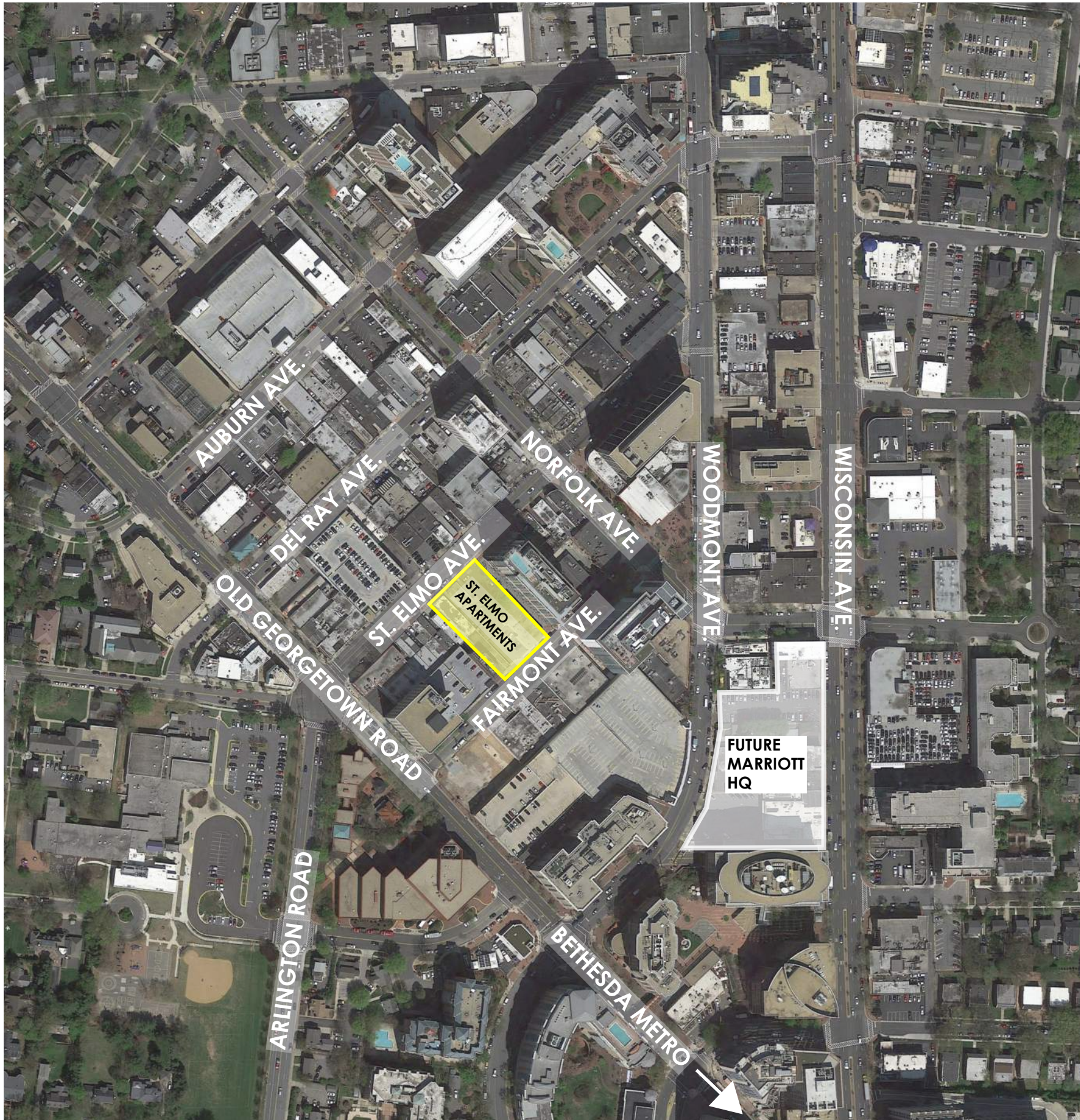
DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL PRESENTATION
OCTOBER 23, 2019



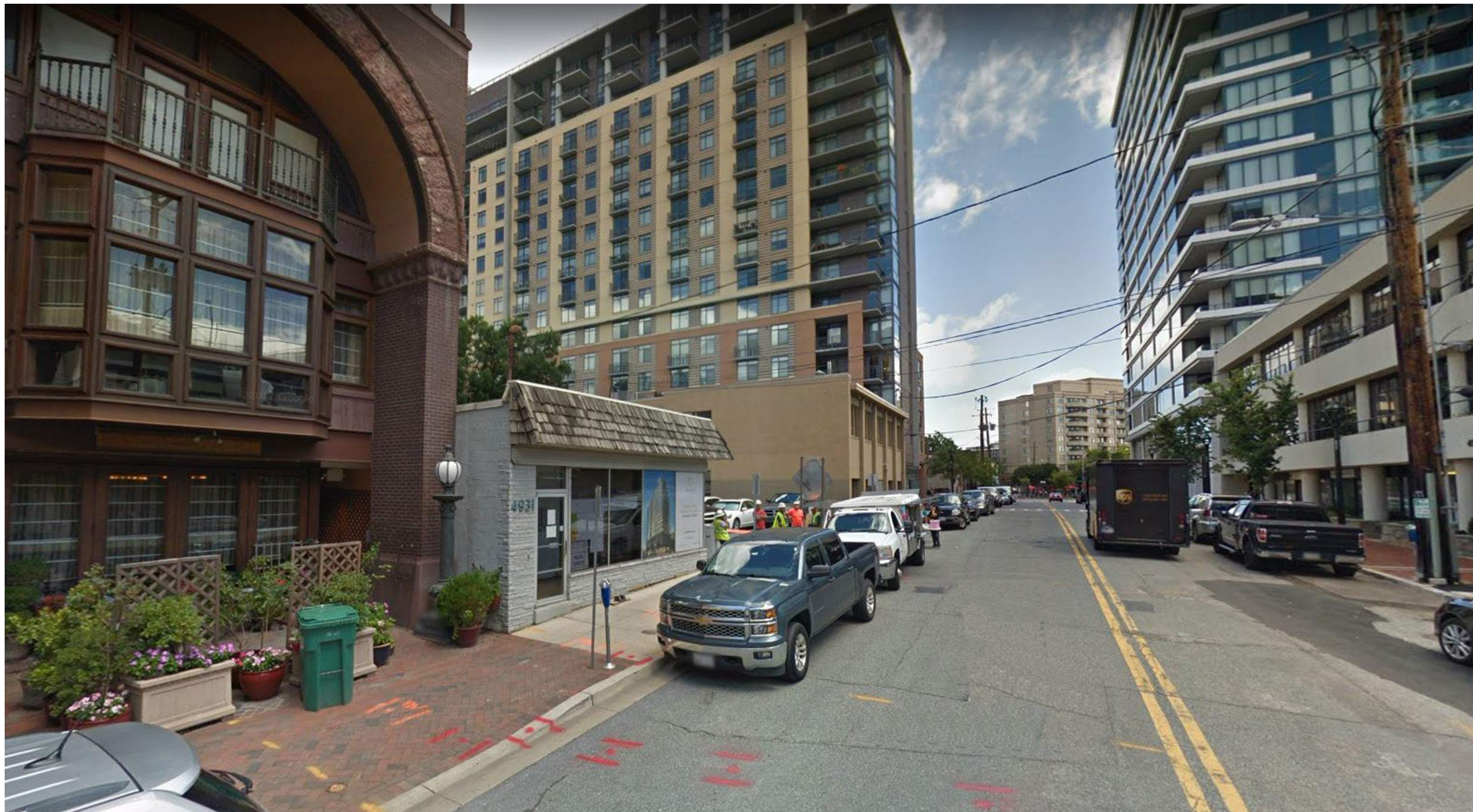
DAVID M. SCHWARZ ARCHITECTS | mauricewalters | architect

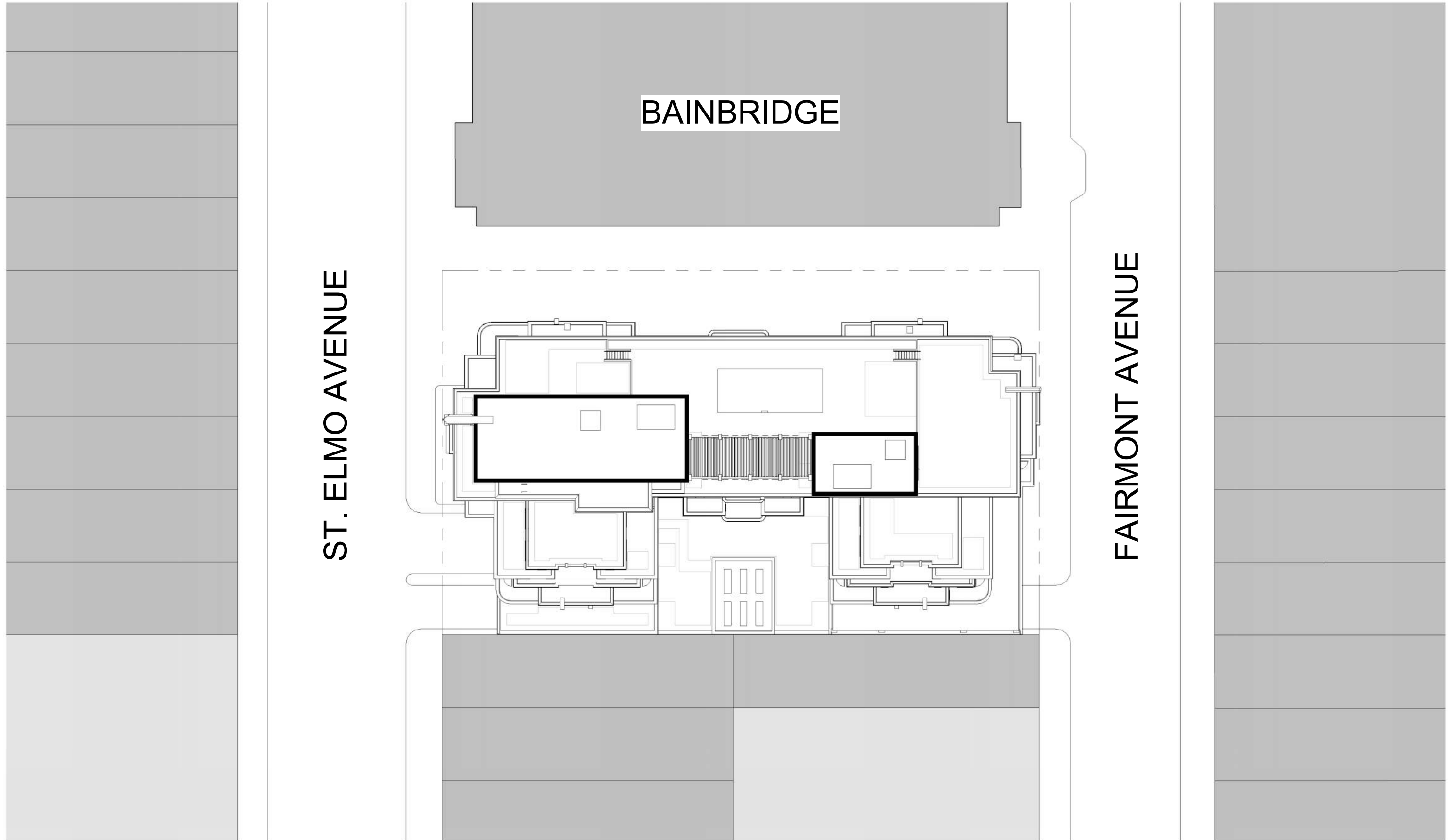


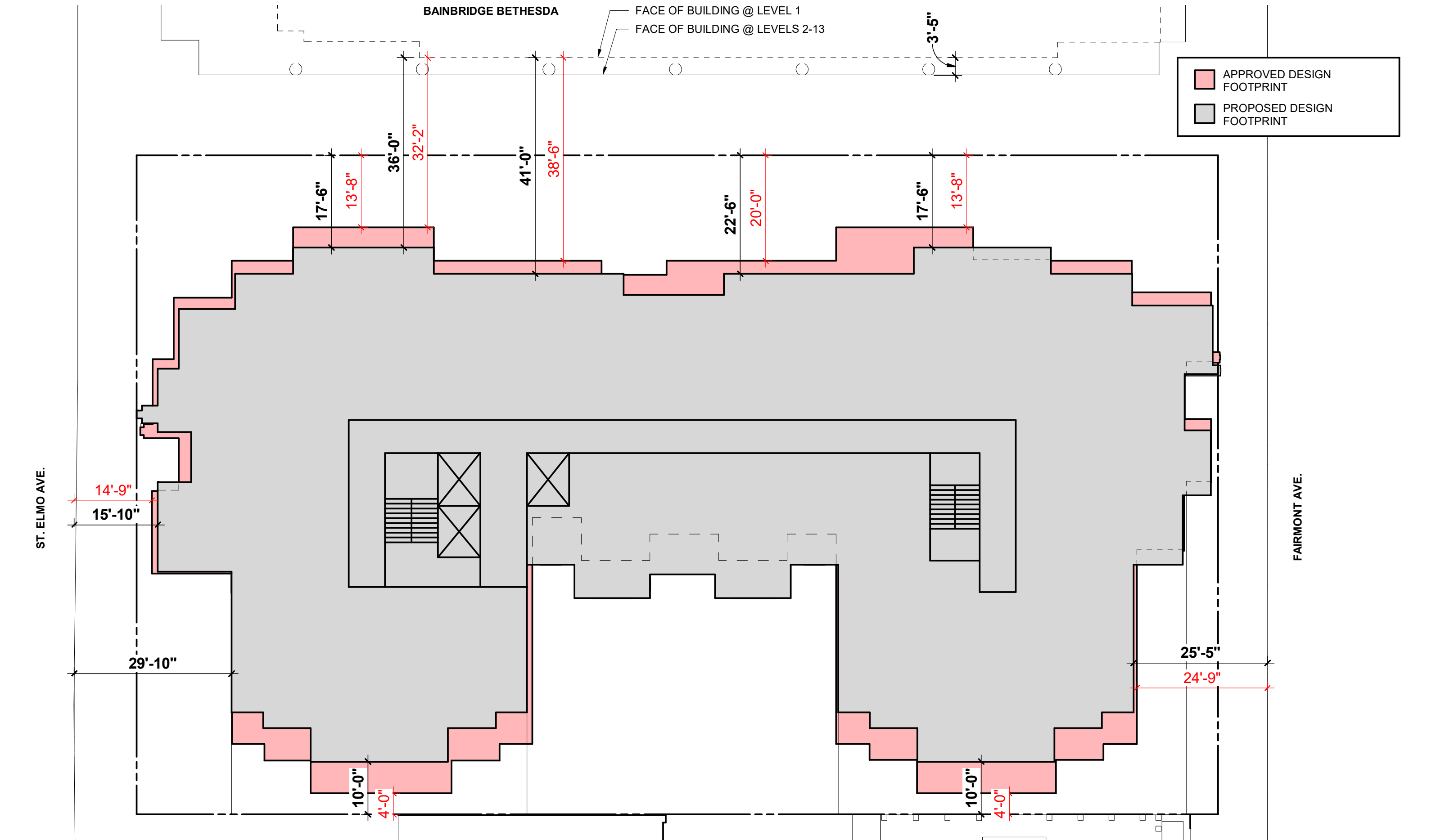
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REVISED MASSING DIAGRAM

ST. ELMO APARTMENTS



APPROVED DESIGN (21STORIES)



PROPOSED DESIGN (22 STORIES)





APPROVED DESIGN (21 STORIES)



PROPOSED DESIGN (22 STORIES)



DAVID M. SCHWARZ ARCHITECTS

mauricewalters | architect

VIEW FROM OLD GEORGETOWN ROAD

ST. ELMO APARTMENTS



10/23/2019



APPROVED DESIGN (21 STORIES)



PROPOSED DESIGN (22 STORIES)

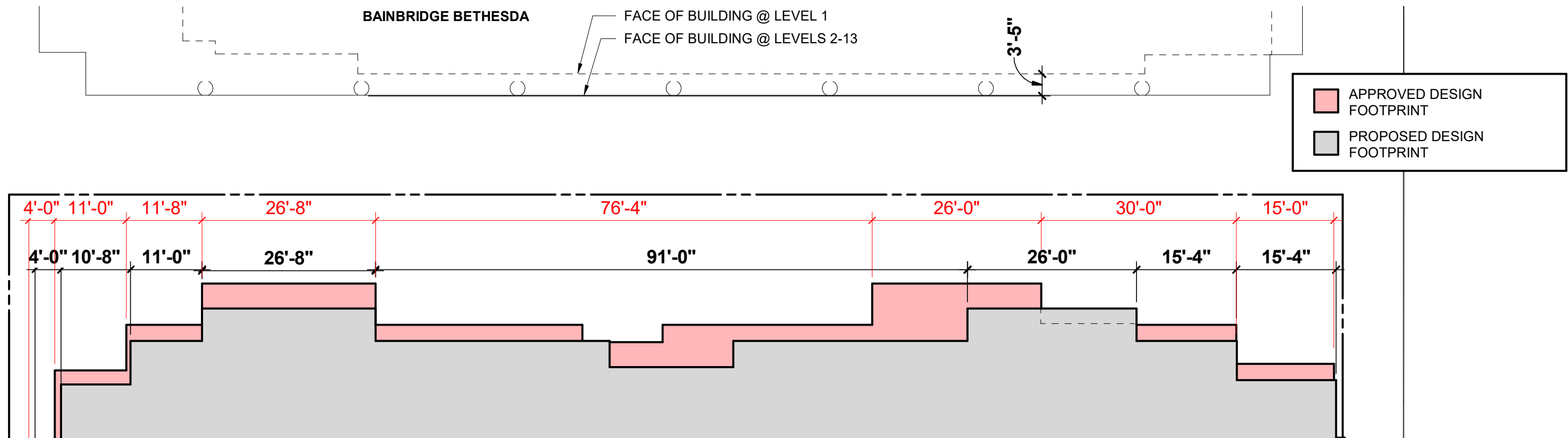
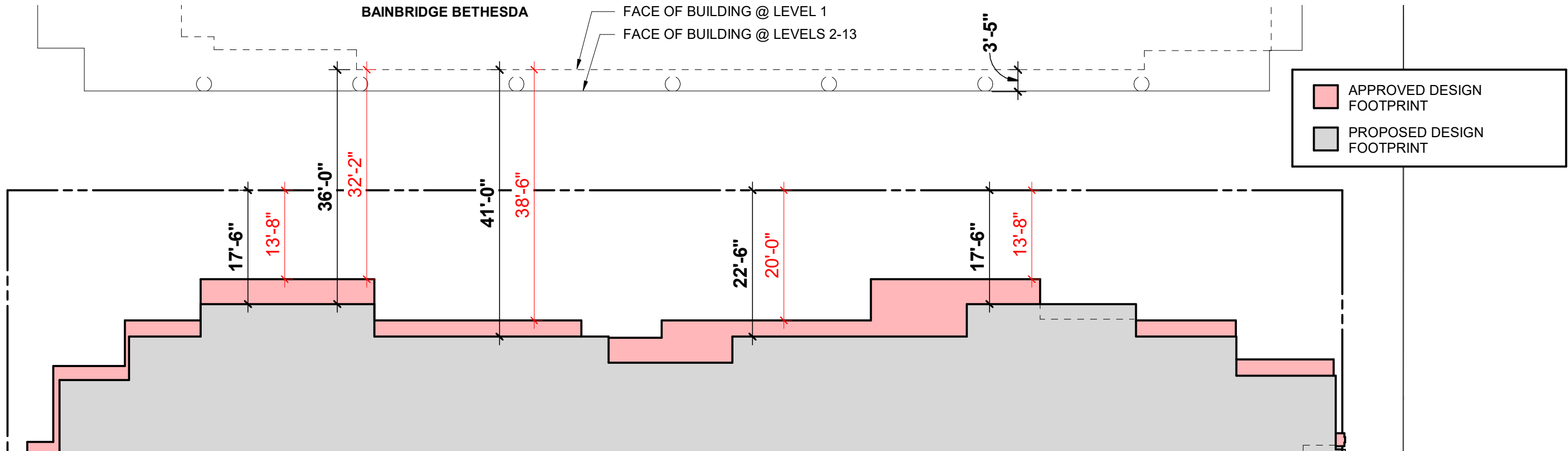


APPROVED DESIGN (21 STORIES)



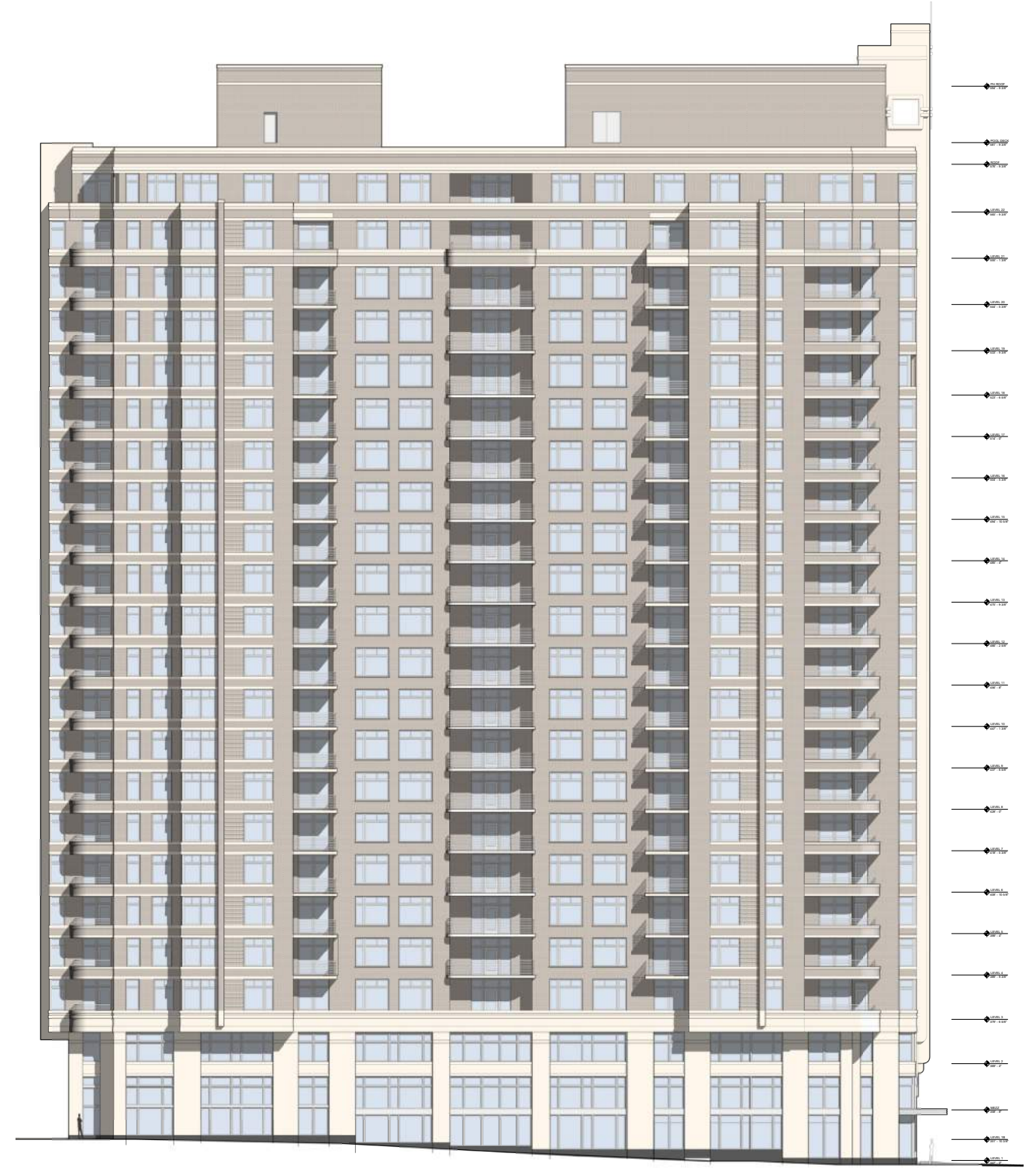
PROPOSED DESIGN (22 STORIES)







APPROVED DESIGN (21 STORIES)



PROPOSED DESIGN (22 STORIES)

Note: Fenestration shown for illustrative purposes and is subject to further revision and refinement





APPROVED DESIGN





PROPOSED DESIGN





APPROVED DESIGN

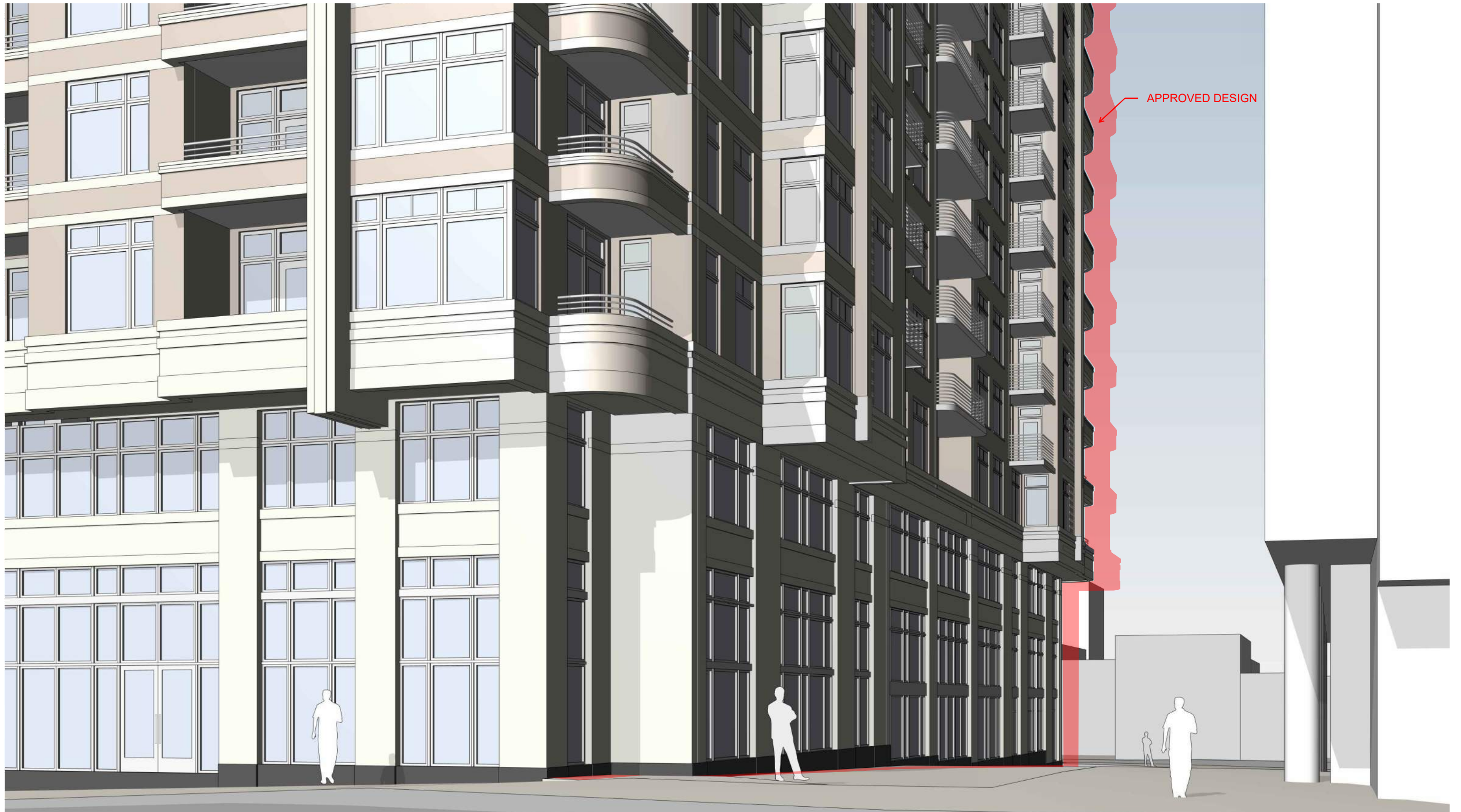


DAVID M. SCHWARZ ARCHITECTS | maurice**walters** | architect

PROMENADE VIEW - FAIRMONT AVE.
ST. ELMO APARTMENTS

 **DUBALL**
LLC

10/23/2019



PROPOSED DESIGN



ST. ELMO

FAIRMONT AVENUE

