

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 4824 Edgemoor Lane
Sketch Plan No. 320200020

DATE: January 22, 2020

The 4824 Edgemoor Lane project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on January 22, 2020. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, recommendations regarding design excellence, and the exceptional design public benefits points. The Panel's recommendations will be incorporated into the Staff Report and the Project must return to the Design Advisory Panel before completion of Sketch Plan review. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.

Attendance:

Panel

Karl Du Puy
George Dove
Damon Orobona
Rod Henderer
Qiaojue Yu
Paul Mortensen, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office

Staff

Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director
Elza Hisel-McCoy, Area 1 Division Chief
Stephanie Dickel, Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor
Matt Folden, Lead Reviewer
Cristina Sasaki, Parks Planner
Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator

Applicant Team

Pat Harris, Attorney
Joseph McKenly
Wade McKinney
Robert Kuentzel
Bill Bonstra
Shawn Weigert



Members of the Public

Amanda Farber
MG Diamond
Bonnie Sherman
Neil Goldstein
Nancy Haulik
Richard Haulik
Penny Dash

Discussion Points:

General Comments

- The massing has improved, however it totally defies the Design Guidelines, which should be overcome with design excellence. The refinement of the materials is going to be very important and we cannot determine that at this sketch plan stage.
 - *Applicant Response: We can continue to show you images of what we can achieve through articulation*
- The elevations have improved, understanding it is a very difficult and small site.
- Appreciate the diagrams showing strong Design Guidelines conformance and the difficulties related to full conformance. Location-wise, it is a good site to develop due to location near metro.
- What is the island you are showing in the drawing along Woodmont Avenue?
 - *Applicant Response: DOT and the Sector Plan recommend a two-way separated bike lane along Woodmont Avenue so the drawing is reflecting that median that is part of the facility.*
- Being so close to the metro have you considered further reducing parking?
 - *Applicant Response: We have looked into that as well as working with the nearby County garage but being a condo project, the economics are driving the number of spaces.*
- Your precedents are lovely but they don't really show many brick buildings like you propose.
 - *Applicant Response: There are a handful of brick precedents and others showing terracotta which is becoming more similar to brick buildings and harder to differentiate.*
- What is the grade change?
 - *Applicant Response: From west to the east is about a 6-foot drop from the southeast to the north east corner, not sure how much from the full extent.*
- What's the proposed building separation to the south?
 - *29 feet from the building and directly on the property line.*



Overall Design

- Given the size of the site, the grey brick grid feels like one move too many. Perhaps the curve is the move of the building and the use of the windows and balconies and alternating floor treatment can simplify the feel of the façade while marrying the front/back and addressing the tower separation. It doesn't seem the framing is highlighting anything important and not sure of the purpose. Some members disagreed on the grid and felt it added to the aesthetic quality.
 - *Applicant Response: We like the flat façade at that part of the building as it works with the function of the building.*
- Perhaps keep the grid but lower the height and simplify the materials.

South Façade and Separation from Chase Condominiums

- It is clear from the several comments received that the building separation from this site and the building to the south (the Chase) is the primary issue. Ideally it would be an addition to the Chase but that isn't possible. The two southern units facing the Chase, what if you setback those units significantly back on the upper floors so you had some articulation to the south, break up the massing of the 120' wall and begins to suggest you do have tower separation above the podium.
 - *Applicant Response: Could we address it a different way with window conditions or material articulation? With a steel structure it may pose internal challenges, from a stacking standpoint. We are already pushing it with 12 stories with light gauge steel. If we did push it back, am concerned Chase residents wouldn't want the new residents looking in on them. Also, with the south side, balconies on that side being the south façade will be mostly shaded.*
- What size are those units?
 - *Applicant Response: They are one bedroom and dens, about 800 square feet.*
- How about a curve along the south façade? That would allow the unit size to remain and provide a separation. Something beyond façade materials needs to be incorporated.
 - *Applicant Response: Respectfully, it is not the location to make a strong move like a curve*
- Do we have a plan of the Chase units?
 - *Applicant Response: The units are facing north towards this site with balconies. Both buildings are 120 feet.*
- Is there a way to make up some area that you'd lose with incorporating a notch?
 - *Applicant Response: The notch is required for fire regulations, those windows are at risk.*
- Unsure what setback would be appropriate but Woodmont Avenue is a Downtown mixed-use street up to 70 feet base height, if that could be carried around and step back 10 feet on the Chase side, it would give a nod to the Design Guidelines. What can we do to address this key issue, there is a reasonable



compromise but what was shown today is not the answer and did not make any meaningful moves towards that primary concern.

- Could you consider a setback on the top floors?
 - *Applicant Response: Perhaps we could break up the difference of the setback by doing it on both facades?*

Corner Design

- Corner image, concerned about the white brick piers coming down onto a big glass opening, they seem disconnected and am not convinced by the design. To the right and left there is resolution but the main entrance at the corner does not work. Continuity is needed between the light and beige and grid levels.
 - *Applicant Response: We do want to open up the corner and we hear you, we can work on grounding that.*

Public Comments

Ms. Penny Dash, Chase on behalf of Board of Directors Committee

- Setbacks: Chase wants as much of a setback as possible, articulation will not be sufficient to them.
- Southern wall will be very important and viewed often from users of the metro.
- West wall should also be setback, important views from Edgemoor.
- Project should minimize conflicts between bike/ped/vehicle, it is a very busy street and needs a larger setback than 15 feet on Woodmont Avenue given the loading and bike lanes.

Mr. Diamond, President of Chase Condominiums

- Every unit of the Chase building has balconies on every façade. The renderings show a new development next to a blank wall which is not accurate.
- To the south of Chase is the Edgemoor Condominium built after the Chase and Edgemoor provided a large setback from the property line as well. That setback is comfortable, and serves as precedent.
- We are not saying no development, just a reasonable setback that was discussed here today. It shouldn't come down to economically viable, it should be the right type of development.

Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Project and return to the Design Advisory Panel before Sketch Plan approval for further discussion:

- Tower separation is a big concern and do not feel comfortable moving the Project forward with the massing as proposed at this time.
- Incorporate a setback on south façade upper floors to increase tower separation beyond material articulation.
- Come back on February 26th to discuss massing on the south side.

