

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 7000 Wisconsin Ave
Site Plan No. 820200090

DATE: January 22, 2020

The 7000 Wisconsin Ave project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on January 22, 2020. 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:

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
Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator

Applicant Team

Bob Dalrymple, Attorney
Matt Gordon, Attorney
Dennis Connors, SKI
Tim Eden
Todd Jacobus



Members of the Public
Dedun Ingram

Discussion Points:

General Comments

- This is the best version so far and it seems you incorporated comments well from the last session.
- It seems the penthouse was setback?
 - *Applicant Response: Yes, we updated that since the last DAP comments.*
- The setback on the north side is the better solution than the south side.
- The balconies in this public are very public and prominent, they typically collect a lot of junk and other projects have masked this with panels, but Panel members disagreed about the concern.
- The whole composition with the vertical and horizontal is balanced, but with the through block connection with the bulk over it seems slightly off. Materials work quite well in the through block connection and help reduce the bulk identified by other Panel members.
- What retail will be there? Will they work well with the all glass?
 - *Applicant Response: Would be neighborhood serving retail, and we would provide them with a set of guidelines to work within their space.*
- North elevation- typical existing condition in Bethesda is what the potential future party wall will look like. The light masonry grid that was shown in previous designs has been removed. We would like to have something there, like a visual element/banner/mural/ something that changes over time. Why did you take the frame away? What are your thoughts?
 - *Applicant Response: We felt the base was a 'seat' in the previous design, but as we changed from that base it did not fit right on that façade, we will continue those frame elements on the north, but the south will be maybe a metal panel or similar material. The white represents a masonry material.*
- What is that tension point at the sidewalk? What do the guidelines call for Wisconsin Ave?
 - *Applicant Response: The Design Guidelines did not speak directly to that, but the layby will go away when the adjacent site redevelops over time. In the interim we do not make the existing sidewalk more narrow, but it cannot change right now. We highlight the through block connection through the pavement material.*
- The public realm should remain public and private should remain private, the through block should be continuous so as not to confuse the two. BUP mentioned they do not want nonstandard elements in the public ROW, so Bethesda Streetscape should be the sidewalk in front of through block. This may be a DRC comment during Project review.
- How do residents access alley units?



- *Applicant Response: Dwelling units fronting the through block connection have two access points, the main from the interior of the building and the secondary access from the through block connection.*

Public Comment

Dedra Ingram, Chevy Chase resident

- Disappointed there isn't a true tower separation for this building on the south or the north. Our concern has been due to the street location there is not any break in buildings on the west side and so there will be a solid wall. The community assumed with the through-block connections those would create the breakup and view of the sky but with this design it does not. It is an aggressive feeling.

Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendation should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. The Panel acknowledges this site has been extremely difficult to develop due to site constraints and economic viability and appreciates the Applicant's efforts to address their concerns.
2. Public Benefit Points: The Applicant is requesting 20 Exceptional Design points, the Panel votes to support 10 Exceptional Design points, 3 in support (2 members would have supported 15), with the following conditions.
 - a. Demonstrate articulation on north and south façade walls either through grid, mural, or other visual amenity.
 - b. There must be no blank walls in interim condition (before buildings develop alongside).

