

# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

## Submission Form

### PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name	
File Number(s)	
Project Address	

Plan Type

Concept Plan ☐

Sketch Plan ☐

Site Plan ☐

### APPLICANT TEAM

	Name	Phone	Email
Primary Contact			
Architect			
Landscape Architect			

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

	Zone	Proposed Height	Proposed Density (SF and FAR)
Project Data			
Proposed Land Uses			
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>	Check if requesting additional density through the Bethesda Overlay Zone (BOZ) If yes, indicate the amount of density (SF and FAR):		



Exceptional Design Public Benefit Points Requested and Brief Justification	
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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.**



**7000 Wisconsin Avenue  
Site Plan Supplemental Narrative  
January 22, 2020 Design Advisory Panel Meeting**

**I. Introduction and Existing Conditions**

Starr Capital LLC and Woodfield Development Company (collectively, the “Applicant”) are the developers of the property identified as 6936 through 7000 Wisconsin Avenue (the “Property”), located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Woodmont Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue, in the Wisconsin Avenue Corridor of Downtown Bethesda. The Property is located in close proximity to a number of retail, residential, and employment uses. The Property is located within a quarter mile of the southern entrance to the Bethesda Metro Station as well as the new Purple Line Station that are both currently under construction.

The Property is currently improved with a single story retail building of approximately 25,000 square feet of leasable area as well as a surface parking lot with 15 parking spaces, with current tenants including Mattress Firm, Orvis, and a martial arts studio. Vehicular access to the Property is currently provided through a curb-cut on Wisconsin Avenue as well as through a 20-foot public alley located to the rear of the Property with connections to Woodmont Avenue and Bradley Boulevard (the “Public Alley”). While the platted Public Alley is 20 feet wide, the improved and paved portion of the alley is as wide as 29 feet along the southern portion of the Property’s frontage and further to the south. The Property is located to the south of a single-story FedEx store and the recently developed Bethesda Solaire project (multifamily units above True Food Kitchen) that is located across Woodmont Avenue. Immediately to the south of the Property are a number of retail buildings, including a Verizon store and a Mattress Firm store, and further to the south is the Adagio Apartments closer to the intersection of Bradley Boulevard and Wisconsin Avenue. The Strathmore garden-style apartments are located immediately to the west of the Property across the public alley.

**II. Proposed Development**

The Site Plan proposes a mixed-use development with up to 200 multifamily dwelling units, approximately 10,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial uses, underground parking, public/private open space, and private amenities (the “Project”). The Project will provide 17.6% Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (“MPDUs”) exceeding the required amount at 15% and in accordance with one of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan’s (the “Sector Plan”) primary objectives of increasing affordable housing opportunities in Downtown Bethesda.

While the Property is zoned to allow 120 feet in building height, the Sector Plan states that the height of the Project should be limited to 110 feet unless the redevelopment includes a movie theater. The Applicant is seeking an additional 12 feet of building height beyond 110 feet (for a

total height of 122 feet) through the provision of greater than 17.6% MPDUs as authorized by Section 59-4.9.2.C.3.b of the Zoning Ordinance.<sup>1</sup> The Site Plan includes 22-foot wide through-block connection to allow for future pedestrian access between Wisconsin Avenue and Strathmore Street. A portion of the through-block connection is covered (approximately 61 feet in length) with a minimum vertical clearance of 25 feet and the remaining portion is open to the sky (approximately 75 feet in length). The northwestern portion of the Project is setback 7 feet from the adjacent property (7008 Wisconsin Avenue) to allow for pedestrian access as well as access to light and air at the upper levels. While the Applicant does not control the properties on the western side of the Public Alley, the Site Plan incorporates a marked pedestrian crosswalk from the through-block connection to an existing pathway that leads to Strathmore Street.

### **III. Modified Design to Address Comments from November 20, 2019**

This Site Plan submittal is specifically focused on addressing the DAP's comment that the Applicant should modify the massing of the Project to meet the spirit of tower separation. In recognition that the Property is a constrained site and that the building height proposed is 122 feet, the DAP recommended that it would be more appropriate for the Applicant to provide alternative treatments for the massing in lieu of compliance with the specific criteria identified in Section 2.4.6 (tower separation) of the Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines (the "Design Guidelines"). To this end, the DAP's meeting minutes recommended that the Applicant explore the following alternatives:

- Tower separation above the base on the south side could be a minimum of 15' deep;
- The composition of the north side of the project could be pushed forward to account for the additional setback on the south side.

Additionally, the audio recording from November 20, 2019 reflects that the DAP recommended that the Applicant could also equally address these remaining DAP design concerns by providing tower separation above the base on the north side (i.e., above the through-block connection) and pushing forward the composition of the south side of the Project to align with base building. (*See 01:05:00 through 01:07:00 of the 11/20/19 DAP audio recording*).

The Applicant studied both of these alternatives to determine how each satisfies the spirit of tower separation as well as to analyze which alternative best compliments the rest of the Project design and composition. Additionally, the Applicant met with M-NCPPC Planning Staff to review the alternatives and receive their feedback. Based upon this process, the Applicant has

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<sup>1</sup> The average residential floor plate is proposed to measure approximately 15,496 square feet and the average dwelling unit size is proposed to be approximately 820 square feet. The Project is proposed to include 6 additional MPDUs beyond the minimum required at 15%, which amounts to approximately 4,920 square feet of gross floor area. Therefore, the Applicant is seeking approval to increase the allowable building height by one floor (12 feet) to accommodate these additional MPDUs such that up to 122 feet is authorized for this Project.



decided to provide tower separation above the through-block connection for 15 feet and to project the southern portion of the façade to align with the base building. The modified massing recesses the tower by 15 feet above the through-block connection in a manner that reduces the party-wall visible from the north. Additionally, by pulling forward the composition of the southern portion of the Project, the primary entrance to the residential lobby is more clearly expressed and identified as recommended in Section 2.4.7.A of the Design Guidelines. Both of these design changes eliminate the potential for a monolithic building façade along Wisconsin Avenue as the rest of the block redevelops. Accordingly, the updated massing for the Project satisfies the spirit of tower separation and the DAP's recommendations from November 20, 2019.

#### **IV. Requested Public Benefit Points for Exceptional Design**

The Applicant is seeking a minimum of 20 public benefit points in the category of exceptional design due to the fact that the Project satisfies the criteria identified in the CR Zone Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines. The Applicant's justification for 20 public benefit points is as follows:

##### **1. Providing innovative solutions in response to the immediate context.**

The Project includes a 2-story covered open space which will allow for public access through the Property and establish the initial phase of a through-block connection for the entire block. The ground floor and lower level floors along the Public Alley to the rear will be animated with retail and residential uses. A courtyard is proposed above the ground-floor retail uses (starting at the 2nd floor) which is located at the southwest corner of the Property thereby providing the best access to light and air for both the Project and neighboring properties. The Applicant has coordinated this design with neighboring property owners to provide a comprehensive solution.

##### **2. Creating a sense of place and serves as a landmark.**

The Project includes both multifamily residential and commercial uses. The addition of multifamily dwellings units with entries and balconies on the through-block connection will allow for greater connectivity between Wisconsin Avenue and Public Alley to the rear. In this respect, the Project will enhance wayfinding for the entire block.

##### **3. Enhancing the public realm in a distinct and original manner.**

The Project will provide a dedication of additional right-of-way on Wisconsin Avenue that will enhance the streetscape with a wide, free and clear pedestrian through-zone that is lined with street trees and landscaping. The retail uses and lobby along Wisconsin Avenue include a 2-story articulation that will turn into a 2-story covered open space perpendicular to Wisconsin Avenue. The retail uses will enhance the public street, wrap internal to the Property and activate the

public open space and streetscape. The Applicant's commitment to provide a 4.5' building setback along the Public Alley will enhance the functionality of this space for the adjacent property owners and residents. The Applicant has coordinated upgrades to the Public Alley with neighboring property owners who currently use the Alley for loading and access.

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

The Project, while a mid-block building, includes a base, middle and top. The Site Plan incorporates a highly articulated 45-foot base and a 6-foot step-back above a majority of the Wisconsin Avenue façade that allows for a human-scaled building edge. The inclusion of a 15 foot setback above the base of the Project on the northern end will allow for access to light and air, and limit the impact of shadows on the public realm. The articulation and materials will transition around the building creating connectivity and a compatible relationship between the Wisconsin Avenue streetscape and rear of the Project that fronts on the Public Alley.

**5. Designing compact, infill development so living, working and shopping environments are more pleasurable and desirable on a site.**

The Project will provide a variety of uses, unit types, and minimize on-site parking. The Project will enhance the ground planes both at the Wisconsin Avenue streetscape and alley level to provide a porosity within the block and allow for further interaction of the residential uses above and the neighboring existing residential uses to access the ground planes from multiple directions and points of entry.

**6. Integrating low-impact development methods into the overall design of the site and building beyond green building or site requirements.**

The Project will remove the existing curb-cut on Wisconsin Avenue and provide all vehicular and loading access from the Public Alley to the rear of the Property, which is consistent with Section 2.3.3 (Servicing, Access and Parking) of the Design Guidelines. The arrangement of the typical floors will provide a courtyard at the southwest corner of the Property, thereby providing access to light and air for both the Project and neighboring properties.

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**7000 Wisconsin Ave  
Bethesda, MD**

JAN. 8th, 2020

**SK+I ARCHITECTURE**

**Design Advisory Panel  
Pre-Submission  
Preliminary Plan and  
Site Plan**

**Woodfield Development and  
Starr Capital**

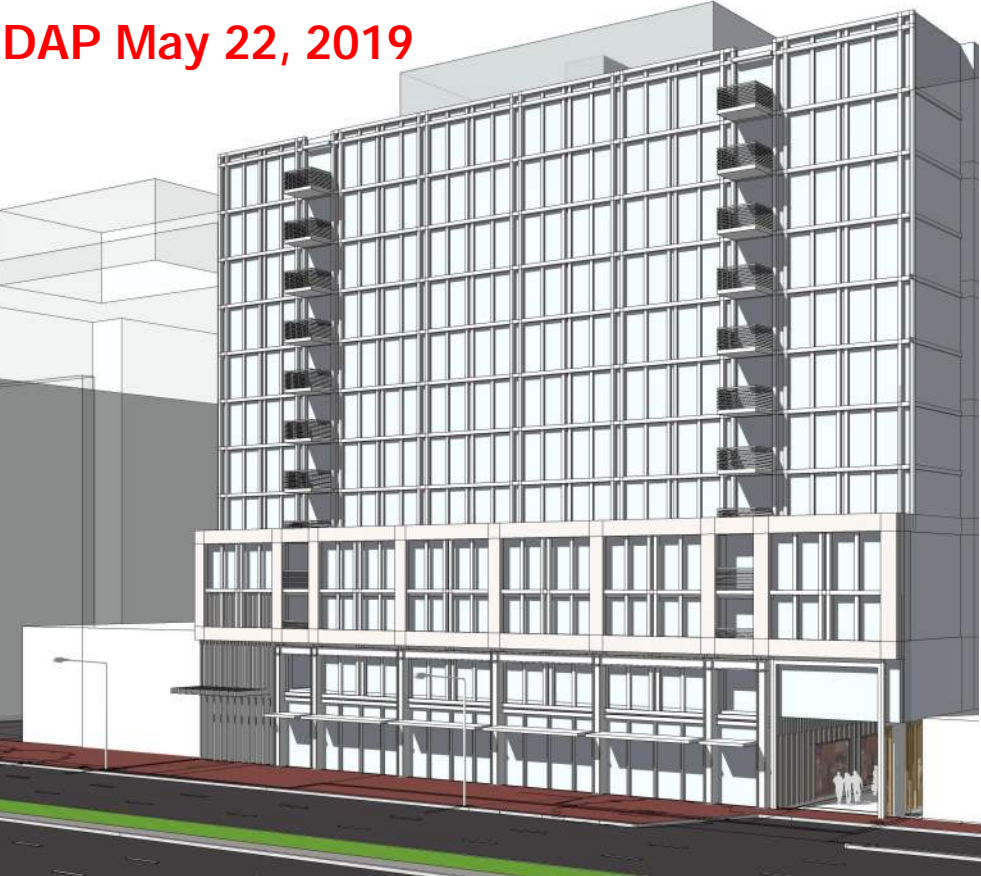




DAP April 24, 2019



DAP May 22, 2019



- Discussion Points:
- The Applicant should submit revised drawings to be discussed at the January DAP meeting addressing the points included in this memorandum.
  - The panel accepts the shown 45' base and 6' step-back, but in conjunction with efforts to address the tower separation comments below.
  - Members of the panel are concerned that the current design does not sufficiently address tower separation above the base on Wisconsin Avenue, and will contribute to a monolithic building façade as the block redevelops. Given that the building is under 120' tall and on a constrained site, meeting the spirit, rather than the specific criteria, of the tower separation may be appropriate on this site.
- The Applicant should explore the following alternatives:
- Tower separation above the base on the south side could be a minimum of 15' deep;
  - The composition of the north side of the project could be pushed forward to account for the additional setback on the south side.
- Explore alternative treatments of the base element to accentuate the tower separation efforts above (e.g., flipping it about the vertical axis) and the mid-block connection

- Panel Recommendations:
1. The Applicant should submit revised drawings to be discussed at the January DAP meeting addressing the points included in this memorandum. The project will be revised and reviewed again at the Panel's January meeting.

DAP Nov. 20, 2019



Proposed



Response to DAP comments

1. 45' base and 6' set-back
- 2a. tower separation above the base on Wisconsin Ave. to reduce monolithic building facade
- 2b. set-back on the North side(minimum 15' deep)
3. alternate treatments of the base to accentuate the tower separation efforts



DAP as previous on Nov.20

Proposed



WOODFIELD  
DEVELOPMENT

7000 Wisconsin Ave.

Bethesda, MD

JAN. 8th, 2020

02

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Massing Comparison



**7000 Wisconsin Ave  
Bethesda, MD**

JAN. 8th, 2020

**SK+I ARCHITECTURE**

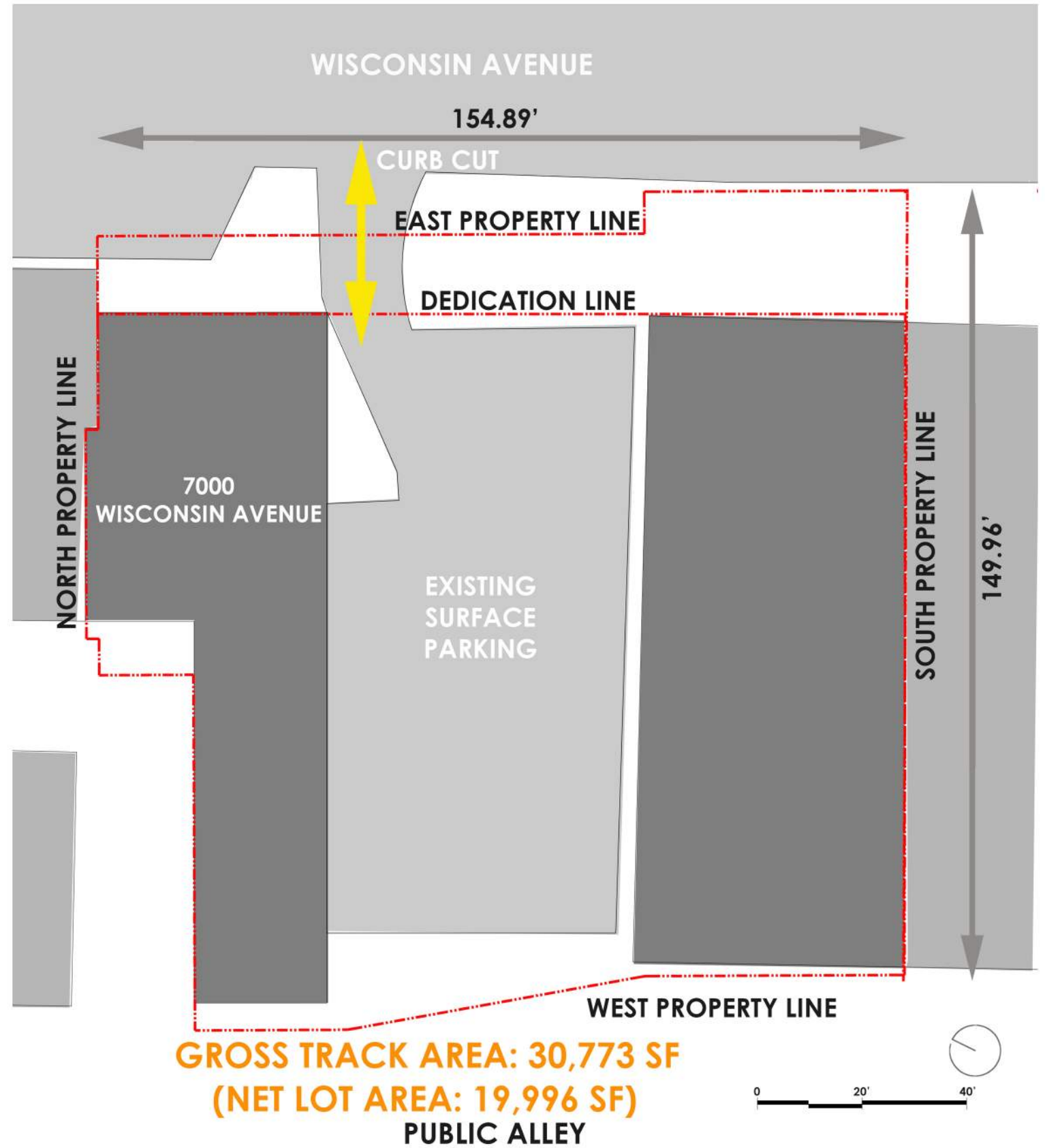
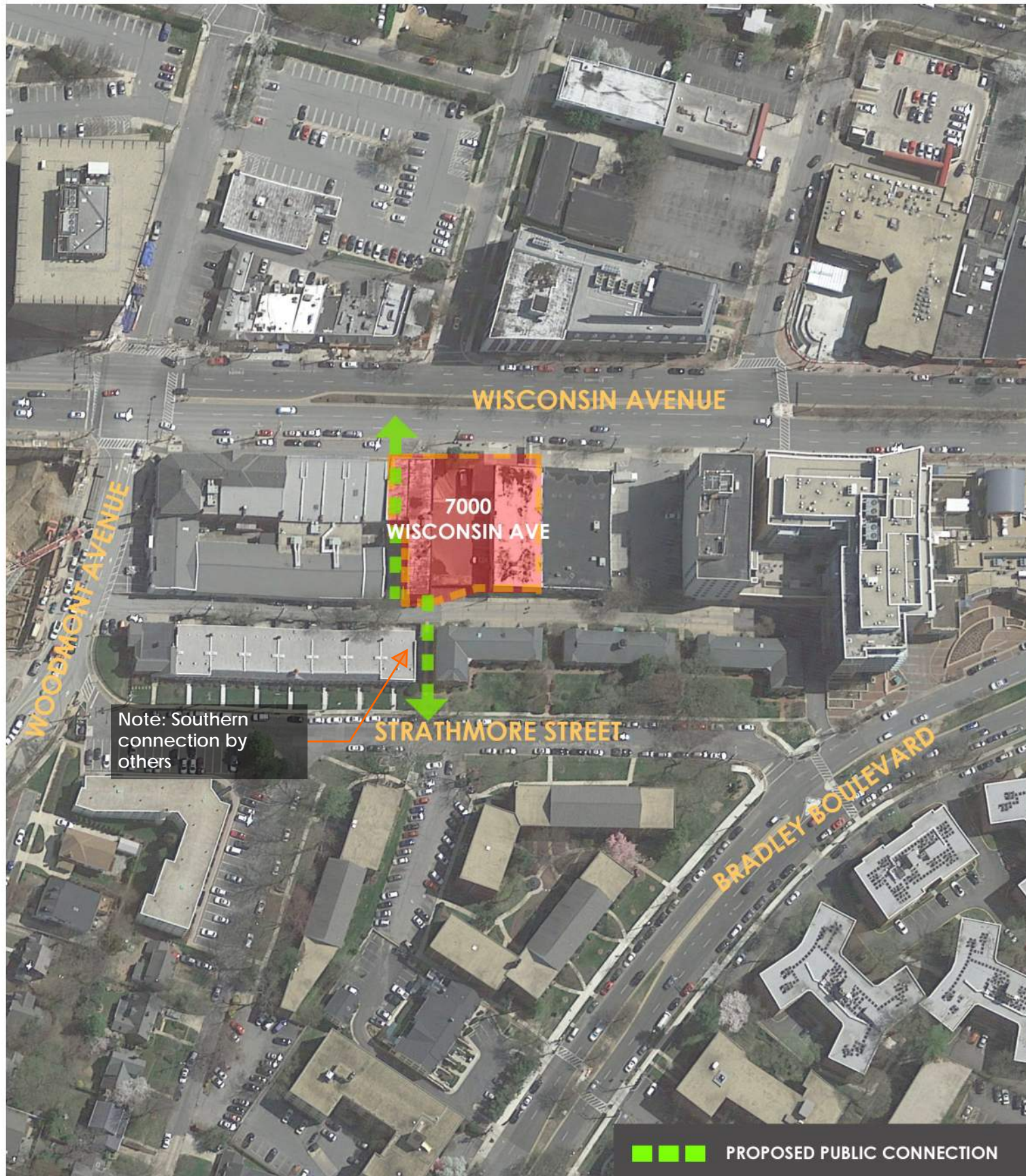
**Design Advisory Panel  
Pre-Submission  
Preliminary Plan and  
Site Plan**

**Woodfield Development and  
Starr Capital**



**ALL SUPPLEMENTAL SLIDES ARE  
FROM PREVIOUS DAP  
PRESENTATIONS WITH UPDATED  
DESIGN**





WOODFIELD  
DEVELOPMENT

7000 Wisconsin Ave.

Bethesda, MD

JAN. 8th, 2020

01

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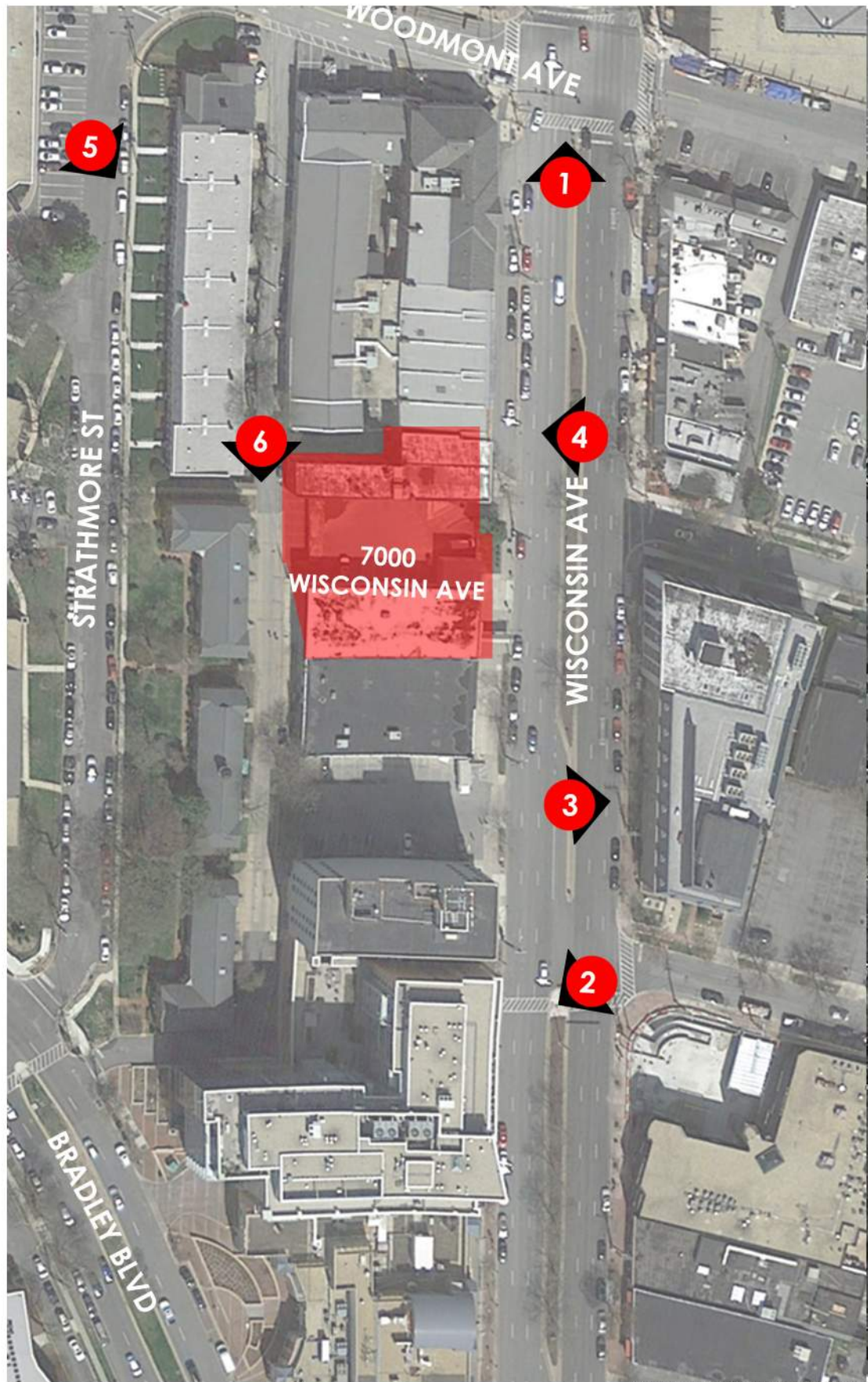
Existing Condition

SK+I  
ARCHITECTURE



STARR CAPITAL





1 WISCONSIN AVE NORTH



3 ACROSS FROM SITE ON WISCONSIN AVE



5 PROPERTIES ON STRATHMORE



2 WISCONSIN AVE SOUTH



4 NEIGHBORING RETAIL AND LAY-BY STREET PARKING



6 ALLEY AT REAR LOOKING SOUTH

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**7000 Wisconsin Ave.**

Bethesda, MD

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**Site Photos**



Wisconsin Avenue

**2.1.2 Urban Boulevard**

Urban Boulevards typically carry a significant amount of pedestrian, bus and vehicular traffic, and connect to major transit nodes. These streets are predominantly lined by high-rise buildings with a mix of commercial and residential uses. Examples of Urban Boulevards include Wisconsin Avenue and Old Georgetown Road.

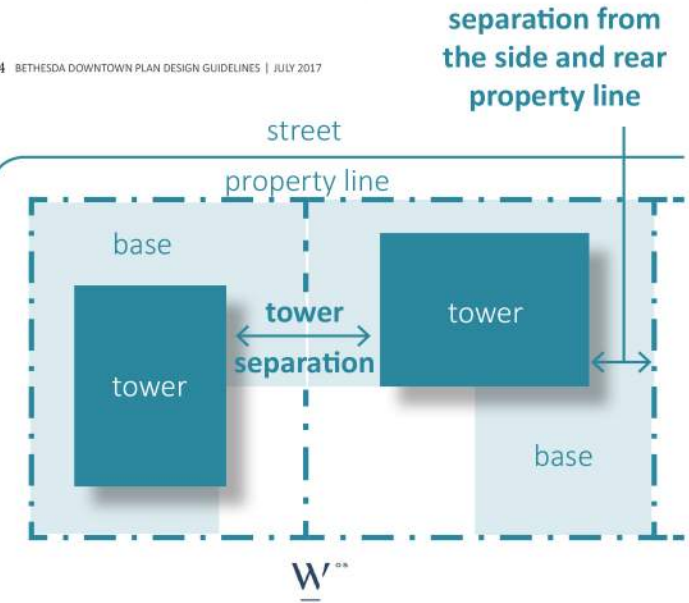
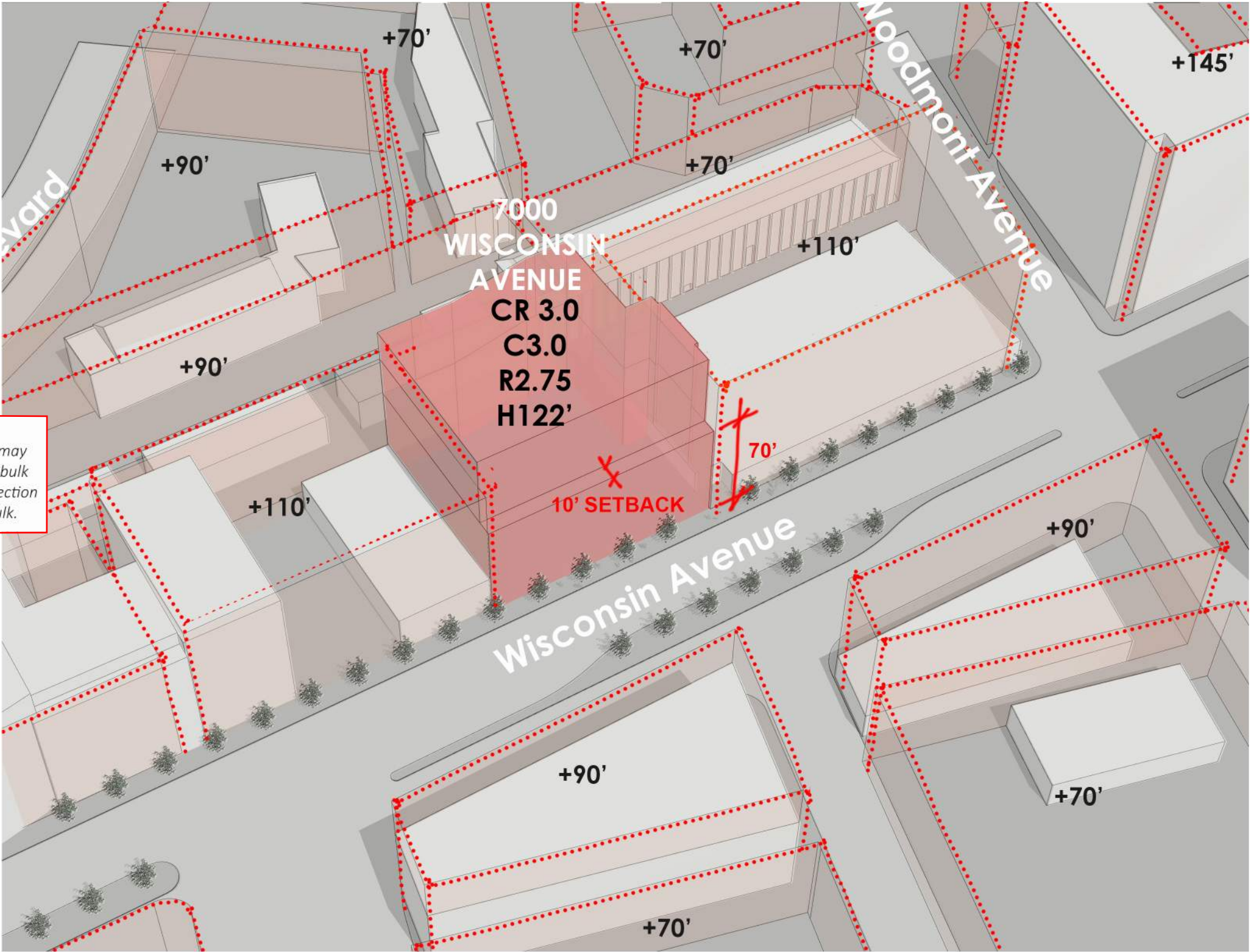
**Intent:** Building and sidewalk design along Urban Boulevards should ensure both efficient pedestrian flow and comfort despite the prominence of large-scale buildings and streets.

**Table 2.01: Urban Boulevard**

Sidewalk Zones	
A. Planting/Furnishing Zone:	6- 10 ft.
B. Pedestrian Through Zone:	10- 20 ft.
C. Frontage Zone*:	0- 10 ft.
Building Placement	
D. Build-to Line:	25-30 ft. from street curb
Building Form	
E. Base Height:	3-6 stories (35-70 ft.)
F. Step-back:	10-15 ft.**

**Alternative Treatments**

**\*\*** On this street type, buildings under 120 ft. may consider alternative methods to reduce tower bulk other than step-backs. These are outlined in Section 2.4.8 Tower: "Menu" of Methods to Reduce Bulk.





2.4.8 Tower: “Menu” of Methods to Reduce Bulk

Intent: Downtown Bethesda is an important location in Montgomery County for increased building heights to accommodate future growth. However, collectively, buildings at taller heights can be an imposing presence on the public realm by casting large shadows, limiting sky views and creating an uncomfortable scale for pedestrians.

A. Limit Tower Floor Plate

Reduced tower floor plates limit shadows on the public realm and allow access to sky view while also improving the quality of the building’s indoor environment.



B. Use Unique Geometry

Varied geometry adds visual interest and helps to reduce the perceived bulk of a building’s upper floors. Angled and curved facades allow a building to be viewed dynamically from different vantage points. They can enhance privacy between towers in close proximity by directing views away from nearby windows.



C. Vary Tower Heights

Whether creating a large development with several towers, or an infill development between multiple existing towers, variation in building height can reduce the imposing massing of several large structures built adjacent to each other.



There are several ways to reduce the actual bulk of a building’s upper floors or to creatively reduce the perceived bulk of the building. Below is a menu of design techniques that can be used to sculpt building towers and achieve a varied skyline responsive to human scale. Every project is not required to apply every method; however, several should be used in combination to best meet the guideline intent.

D. Modulate and Articulate Facades

Techniques to break up large facades and reduce perceived building bulk include shifts in massing to allow for upper floor terraces, green roofs and balconies; changes in facade planes; and varied fins, frames and mullions to add depth to glass facades.



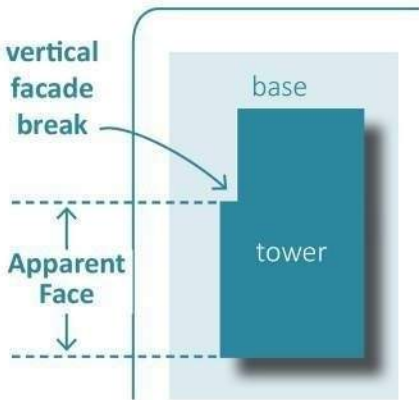
E. Vary Tower Placement and Orientation

Similar to variation in tower height, variation in tower placement and orientation can increase perceived separation between towers, reduce the perceived imposing massing of several adjacent towers and increase privacy by orienting views in different directions.

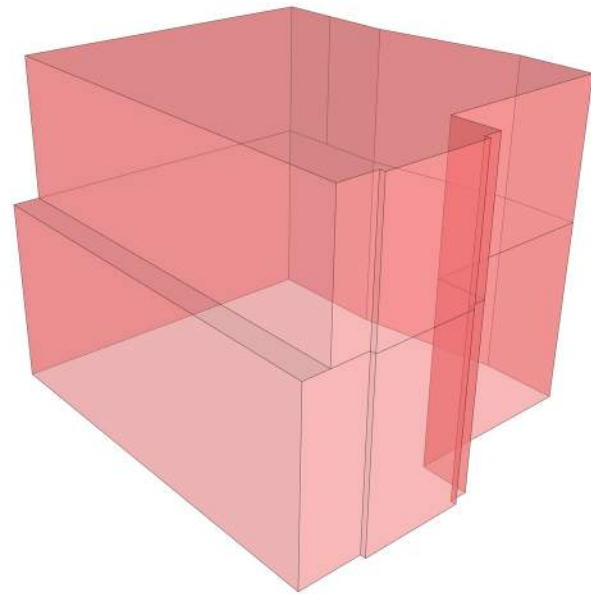


F. Limit Apparent Face

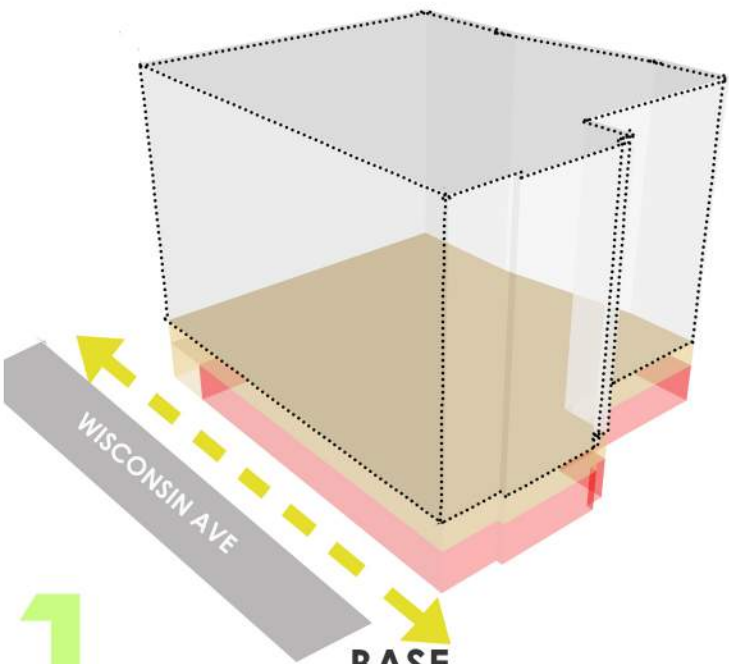
The apparent face is the length of a facade plane that is unbroken by vertical changes in depth. Limiting this length reduces the perceived bulk of a long building facade.



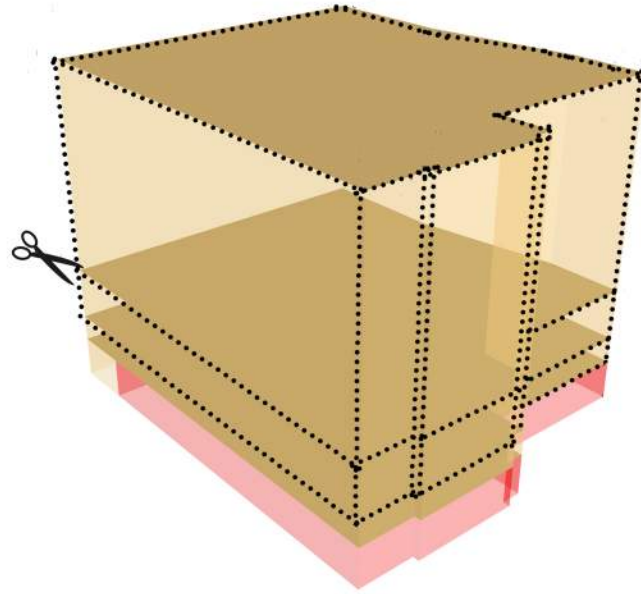




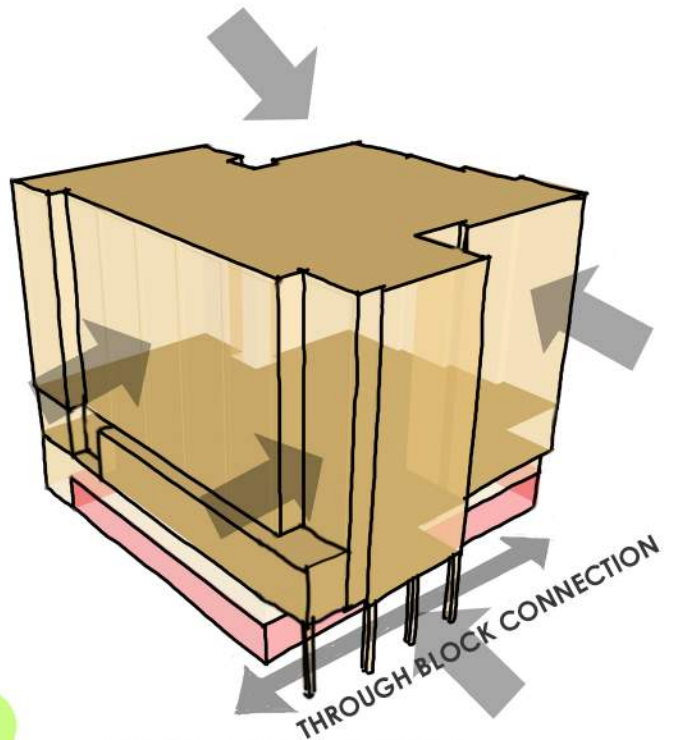
**STRICT INTERPRETATION OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES**



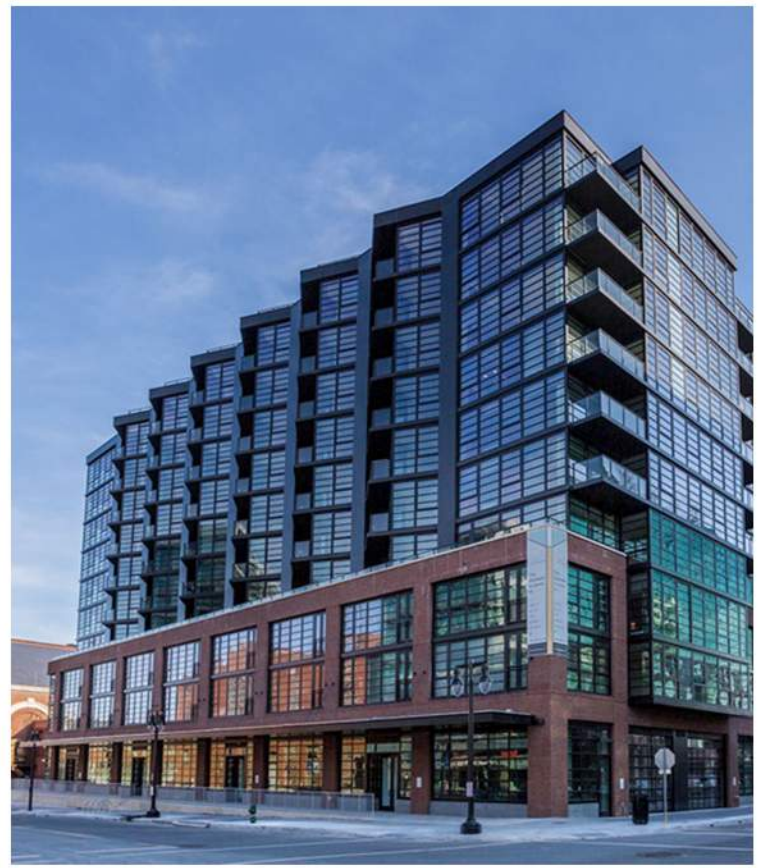
**1**  
**BASE**  
CREATE COMFORTABLE SCALE FOR PUBLIC RHEALM



**2**  
**TOWER**  
REDUCE BULK



**3**  
**SHAPE THE TOWER**  
LIMIT TOWER FLOOR PLATE  
MODULATE AND ARTICULATE FACADES



**WOODFIELD**  
DEVELOPMENT

**7000 Wisconsin Ave.**

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Bethesda, MD

**Form Development Diagram**

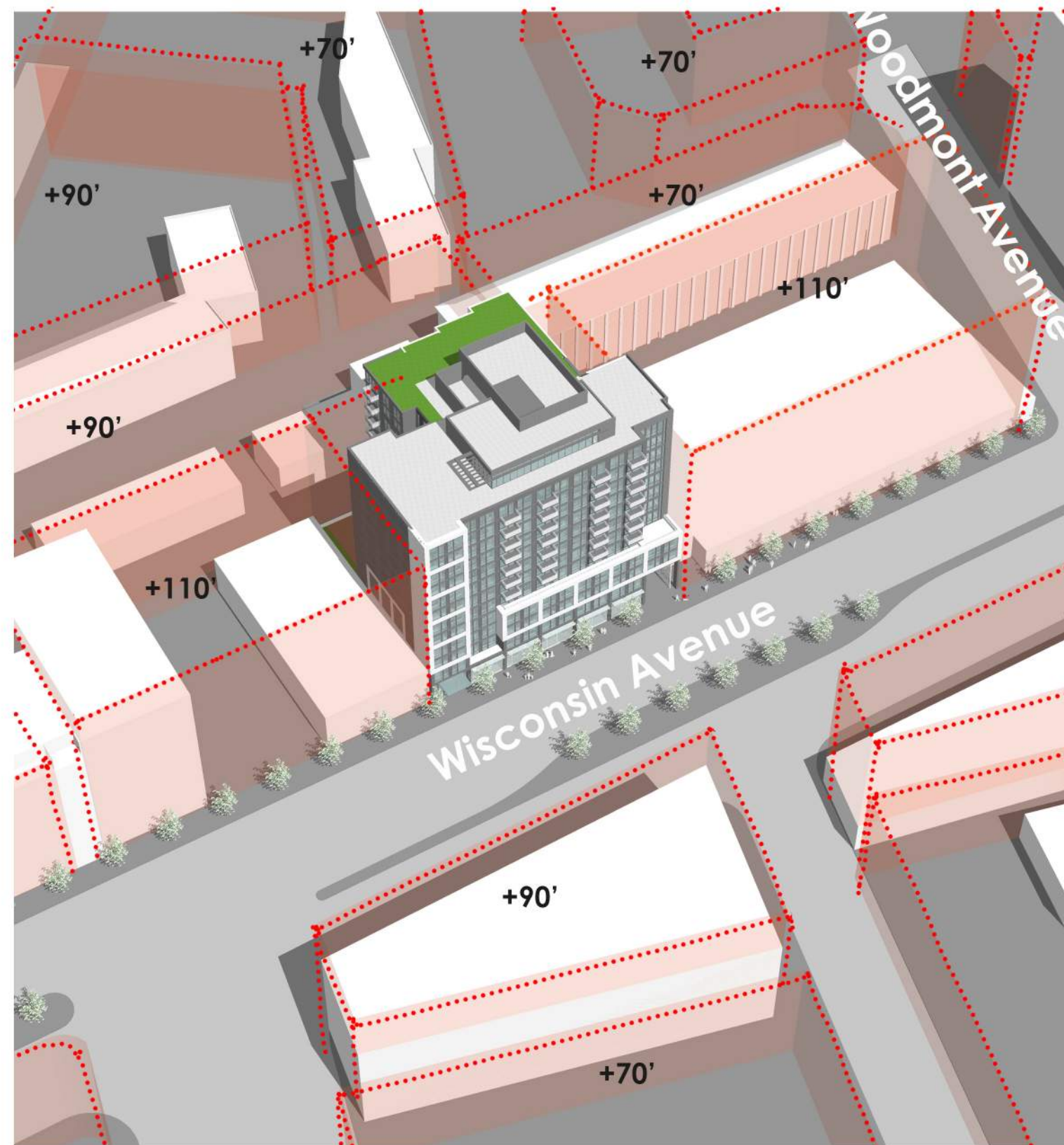
JAN. 8th, 2020



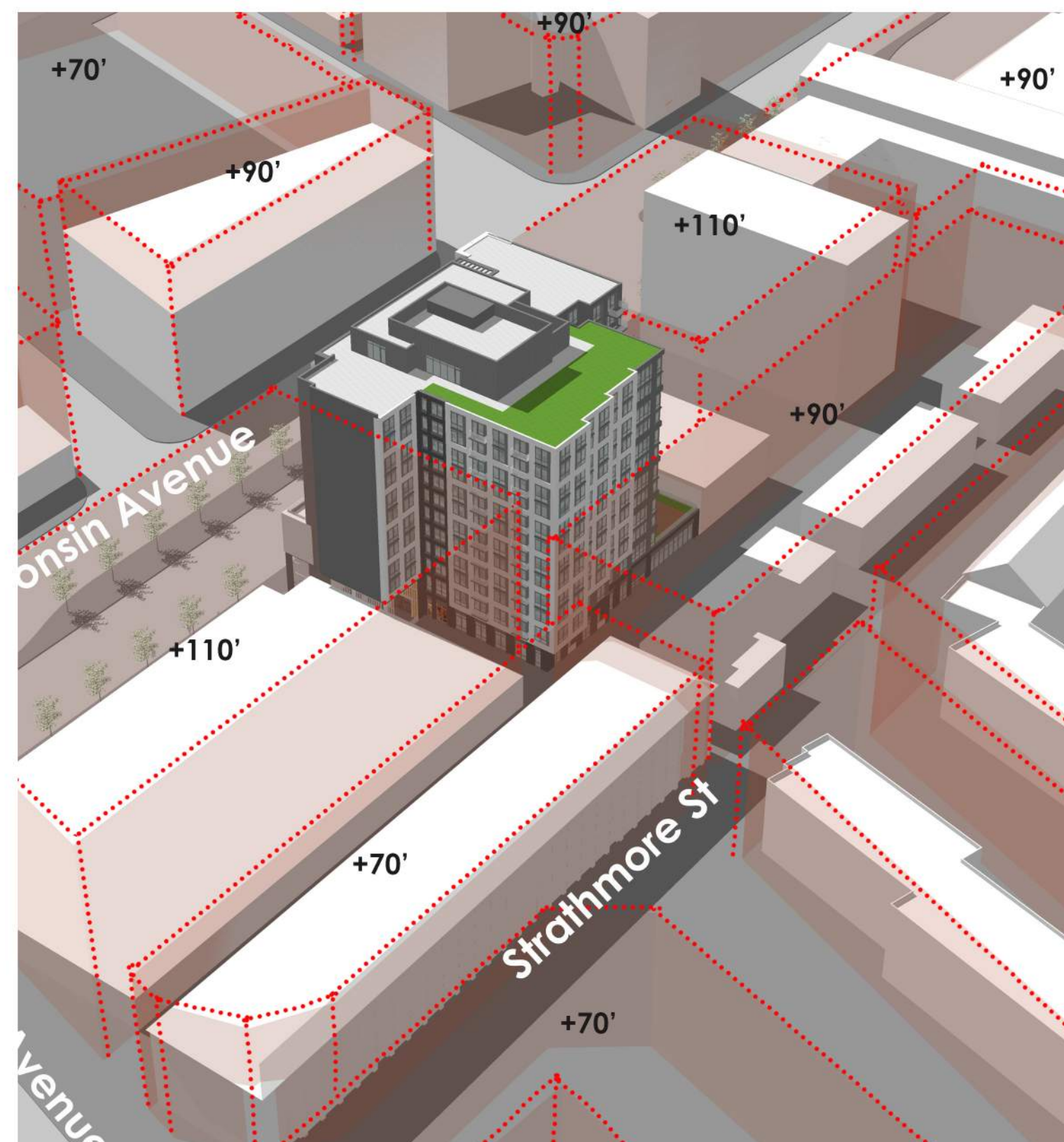
**STARR CAPITAL**



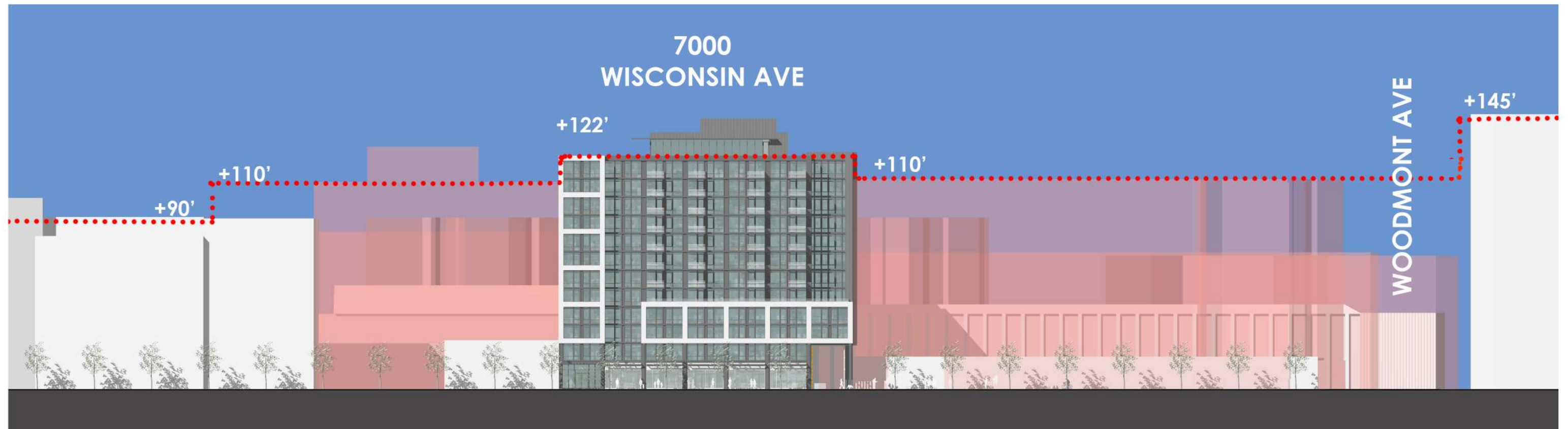
THE VIEW FROM SOUTH-EAST



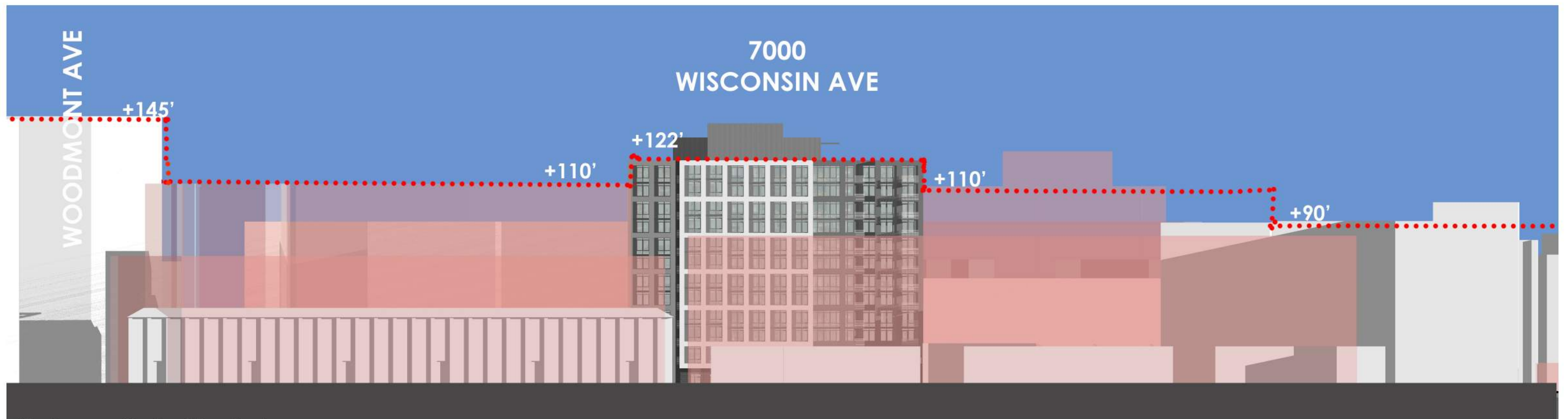
THE VIEW FROM NORTH-WEST





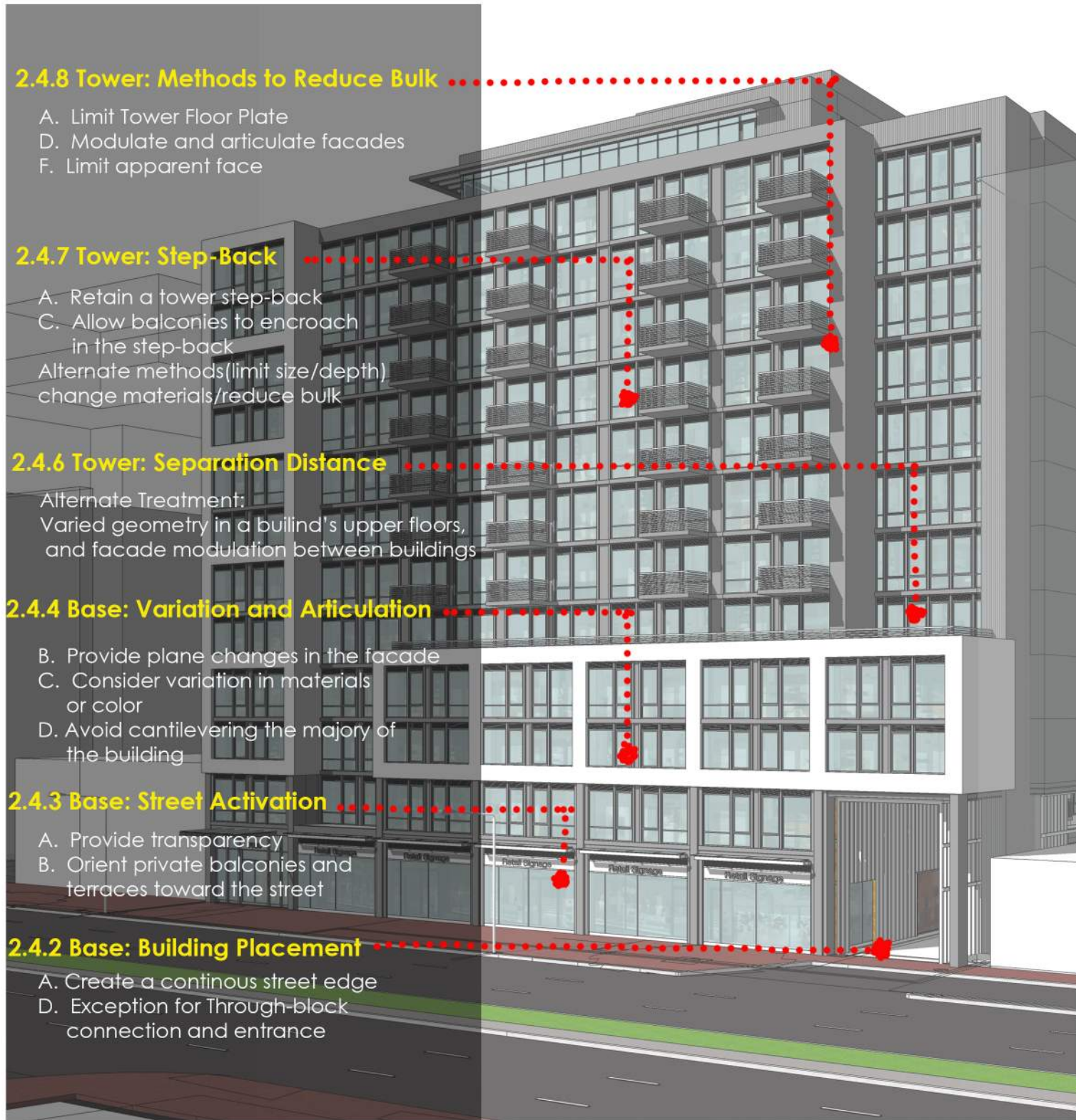


Wisconsin Ave - Looking West

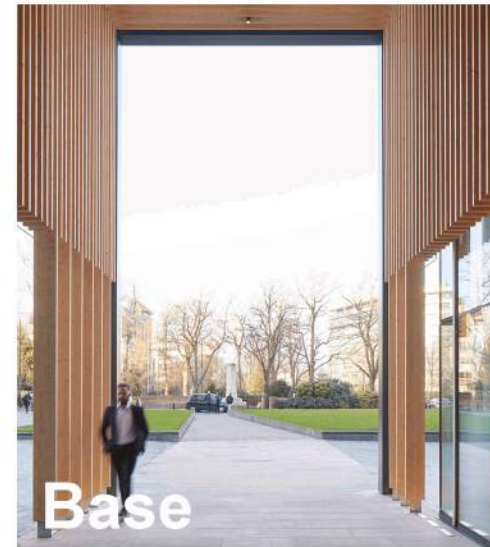
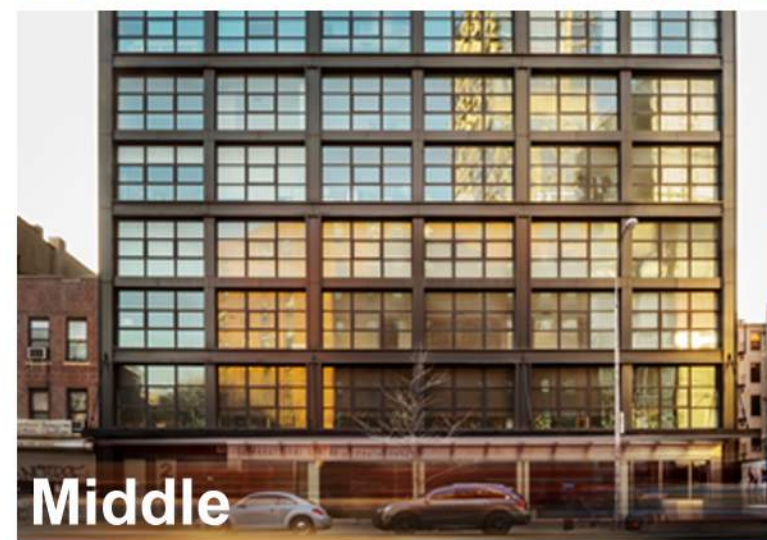


Strathmore St - Looking East



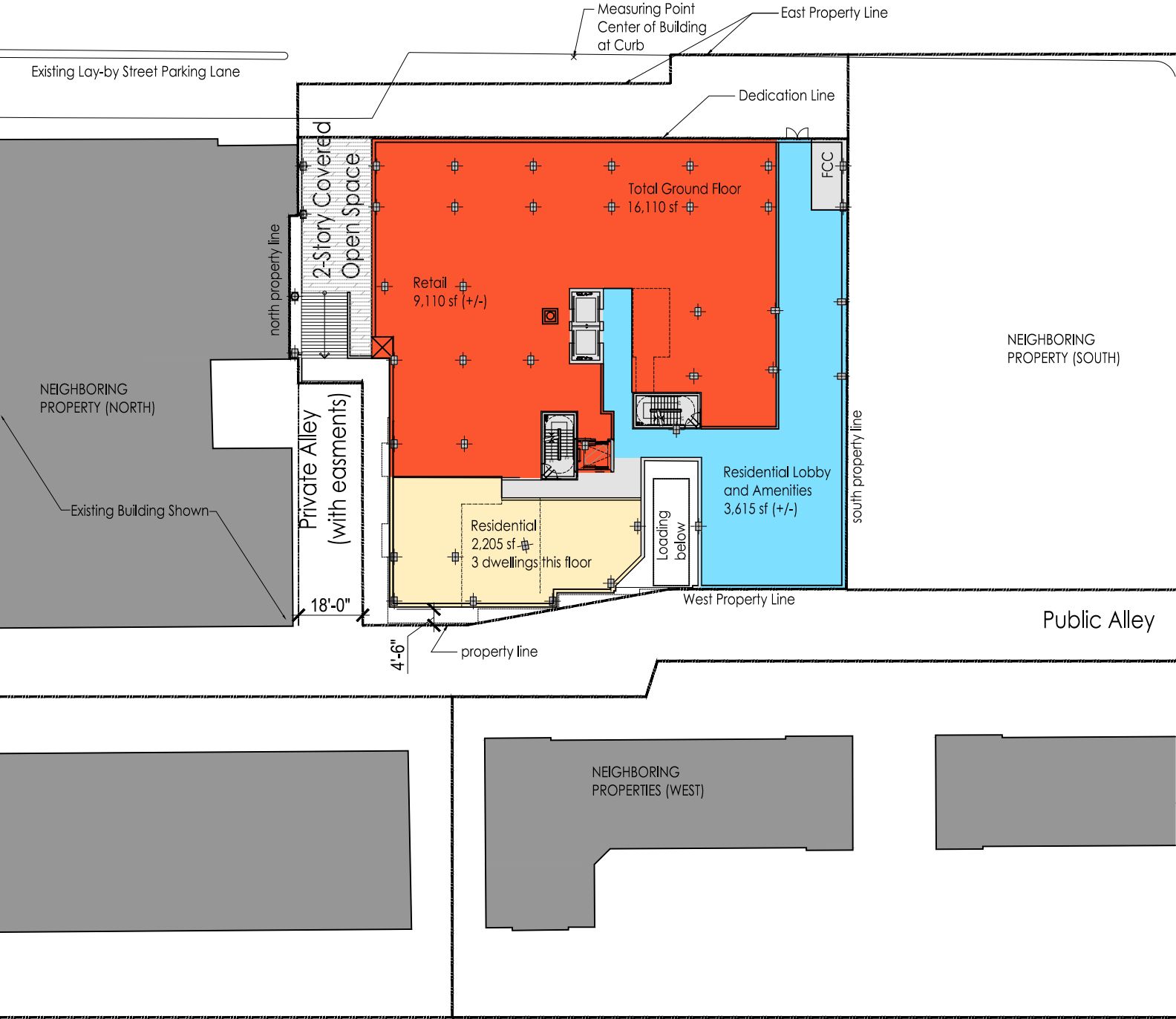


Perspective view from Wisconsin Ave

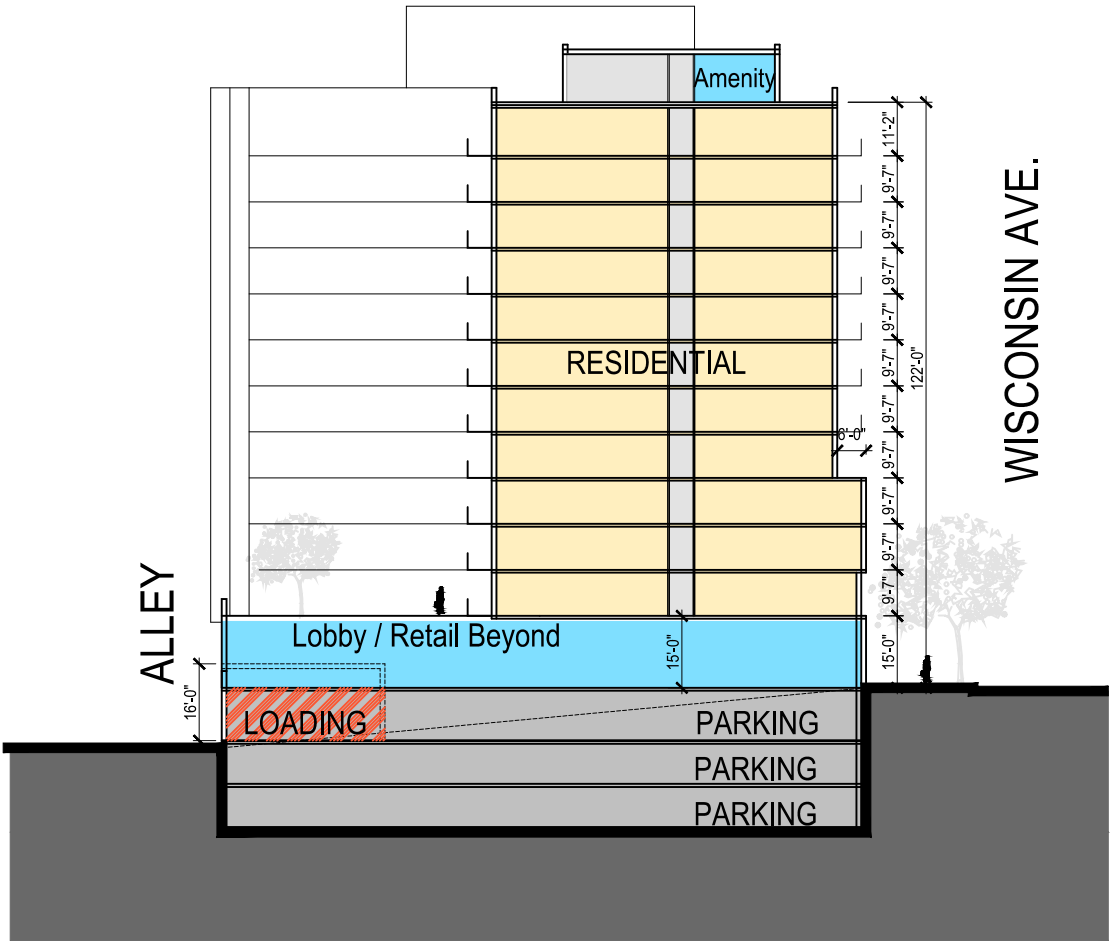




# WISCONSIN AVE

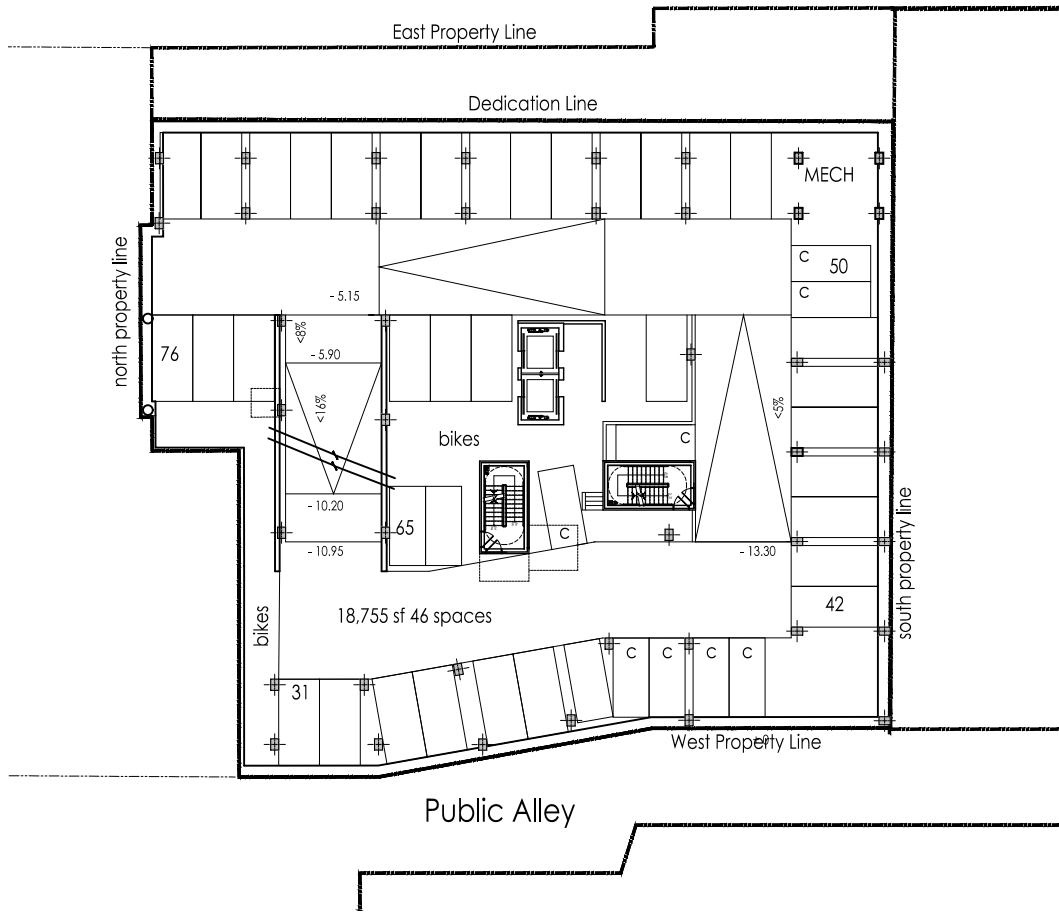


2 Ground Level Plan  
SCALE: 1" = 40'



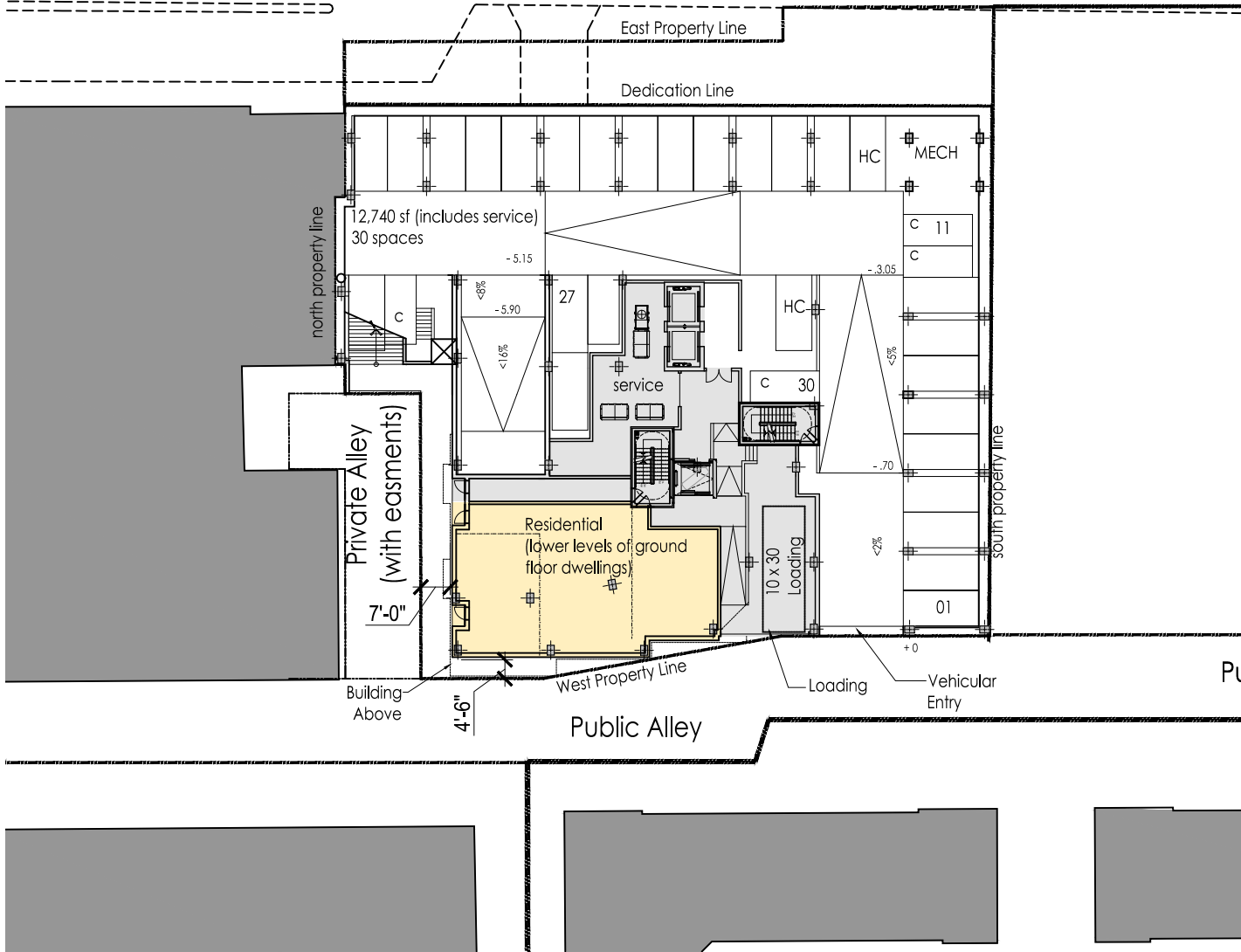
1 Building Section  
SCALE: 1" = 40'

WISCONSIN AVE



2 Typical Garage Plan (below grade)  
SCALE: 1" = 40'

WISCONSIN AVE



1 Alley Level Plan  
SCALE: 1" = 40'



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7000 Wisconsin Ave.

Bethesda, MD

JAN. 8th, 2020

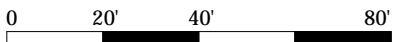
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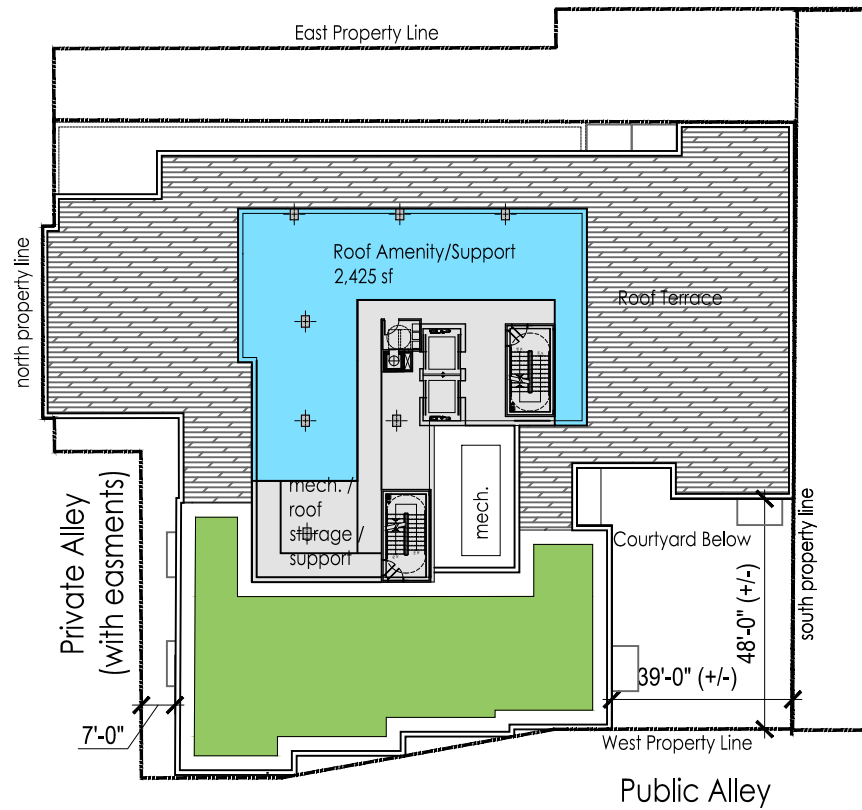
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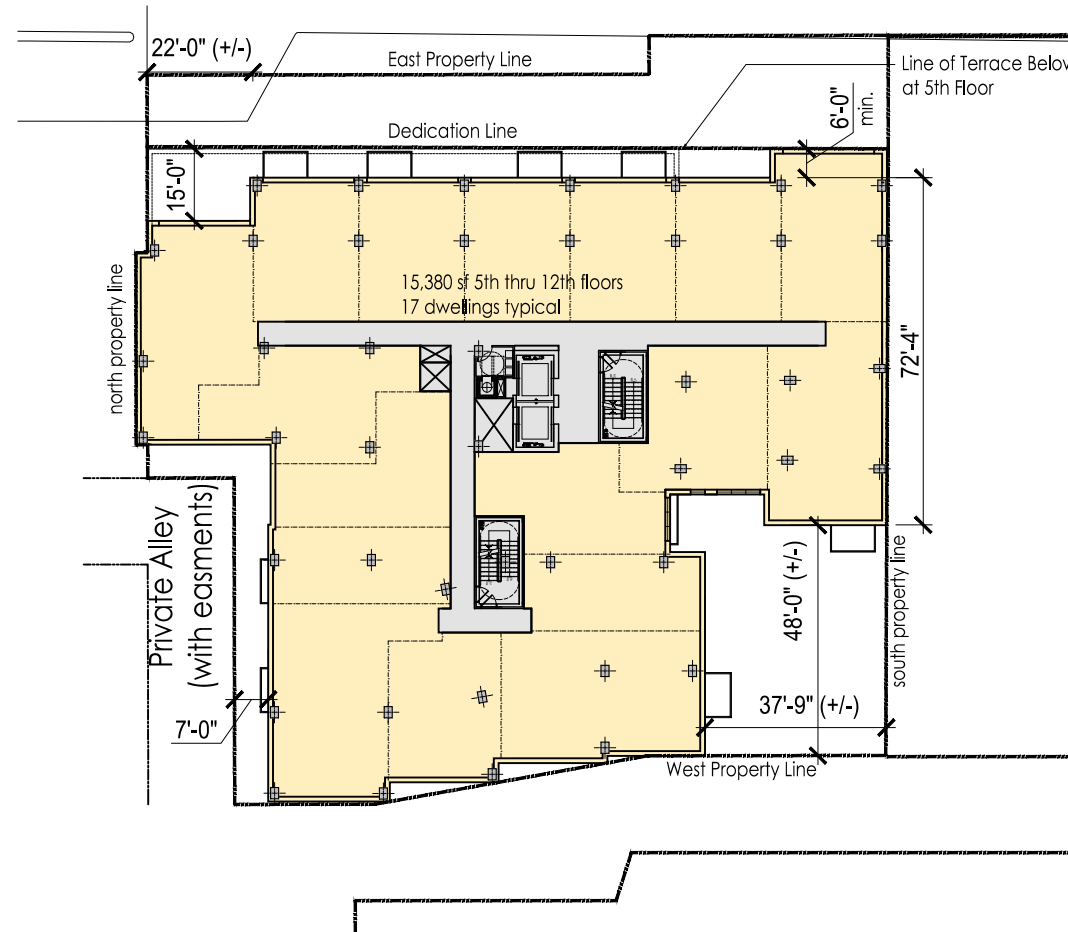
Garage Plan and Alley Level Plan



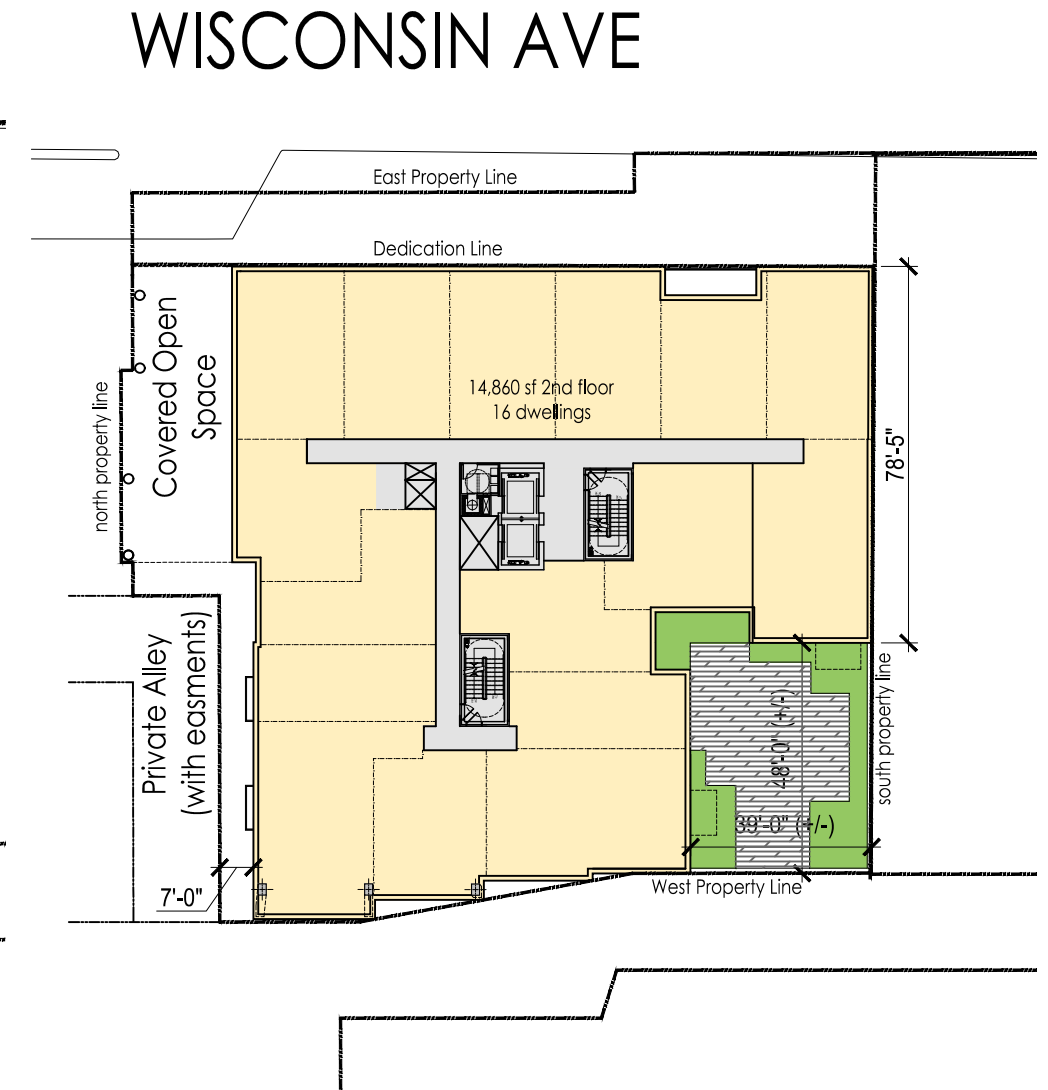




3 Roof Plan  
SCALE: 1" = 40'



2 Typ. Floors  
SCALE: 1" = 40'



1 Second Floor Plan  
SCALE: 1" = 40'

# WISCONSIN AVE







East Elevation

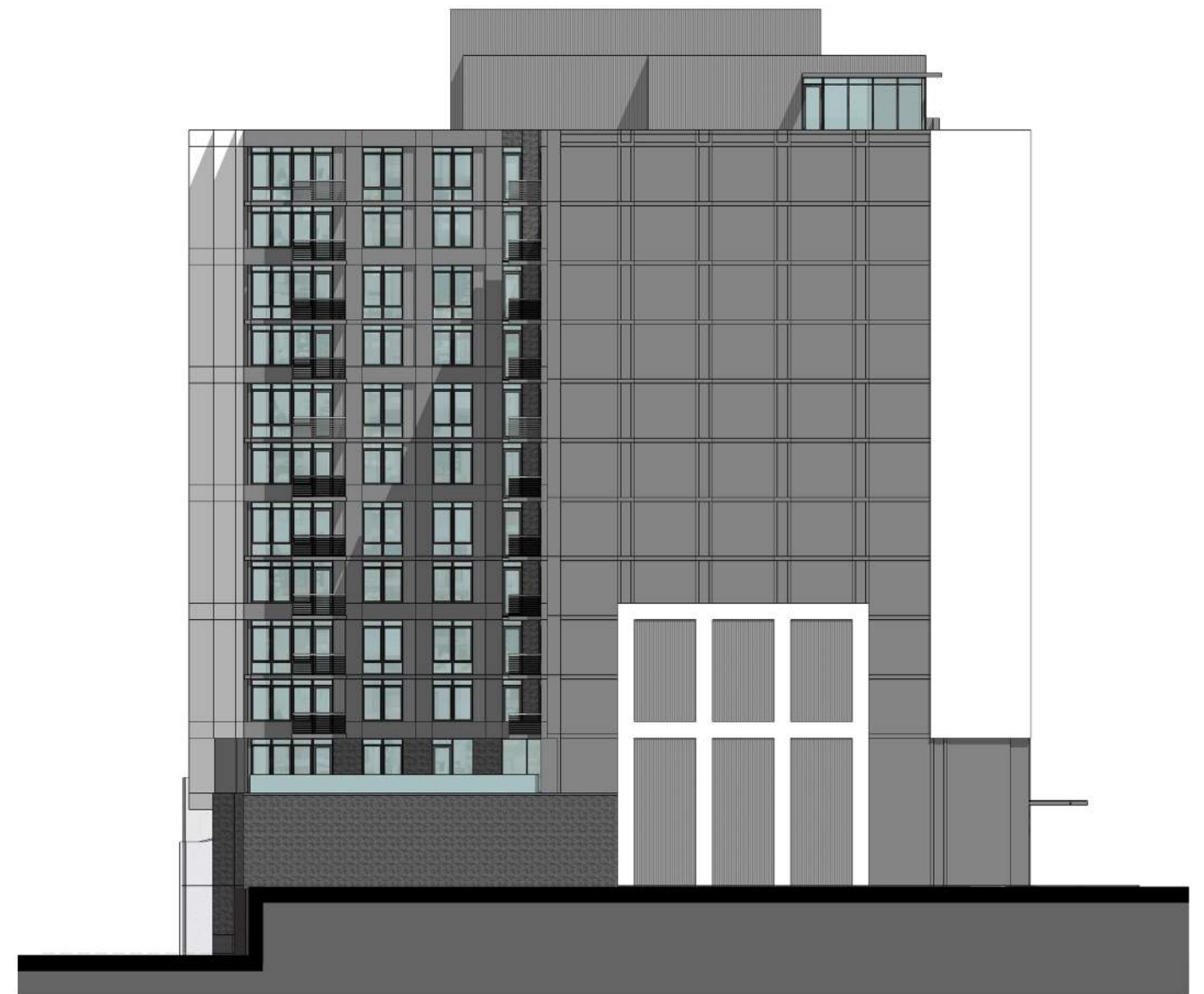


North Elevation





West Elevation



South Elevation





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**7000 Wisconsin Ave.**

Bethesda, MD

JAN. 8th, 2020

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View Wisconsin from South-East





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**7000 Wisconsin Ave.**

Bethesda, MD

JAN. 8th, 2020

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View Wisconsin from North-East





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**7000 Wisconsin Ave.**

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JAN. 8th, 2020

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Closed-up View Wisconsin from South-East





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**7000 Wisconsin Ave.**

Bethesda, MD

JAN. 8th, 2020

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Closed-up View Wisconsin from North-East





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**7000 Wisconsin Ave.**

Bethesda, MD

JAN. 8th, 2020

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Closed-up View Back-Alley from North-West





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**7000 Wisconsin Ave.**

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Closed-up View Back-Alley from West





Note: Railing shown at court for fall protection if necessary

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Closed-up View Back-Alley from South-West