

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 4725 Cheltenham Drive

DATE: February 26, 2020

The 4725 Cheltenham Drive project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on February 26, 2020. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, recommendations regarding design excellence, and the exceptional design public benefits points. The project is in the conceptual stage and will need to return to the Design Advisory Panel at the time of Sketch Plan review for recommendation. 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
Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator

Applicant Team

Steve Robins, Attorney
Liz Rodgers, Attorney
Josh Sloan, VIKA
Devon Lauer, Developer
Shawn Stadler, Architect
Sungjin Cho, Architect

Members of the Public

Paige Nerenberg
Jack Alexander



Discussion Points:

General Comments

- Consider consolidating services off Cheltenham for the future building next door.
- Would like to see the delineation of the neighboring site on the drawings. Show the ownership pattern on the ground floor plan with a distinct dash line.
 - *Applicant Response: As we move forward, the corner is unknown, the neighboring property is under a long lease and not sure if that will be redeveloping in the near (or long) term. If they do reconfigure the adjacent site they will have the opportunity to utilize the alley for services also.*
- Can you show us the typical floor plan, how big is your floor plate?
 - *Applicant Response: Here is the loading and it shows how close it is, we have about 8,000 sf.*
- Good presentation, one comment is you are really deep into the floorplate with balconies and it doesn't show in the massing.
 - *Applicant Response: What we want to understand initially is how the idea of a tower setback can be achieved without impacting the small floorplate. Once we understand how the balconies work we will progress that fenestration and come back to you.*
- The eastern elevation is facing onto Cheltenham Park and alley, and the Project is treating that as an alley as opposed to a transition. The alley is an amenity you should be taking advantage of.
 - *Applicant Response: Right now there is a barrier off the alley (a fence) and we aren't in control of that, as well as tall trees. Currently that alley is utilized as a true alley.*
- There is a significant amount of effort to transform and extend Veterans Plaza as a true park, so this is the half block between two parks, is this really a neighborhood local street? It's a very unique situation within the broader realm perhaps there needs to be even more space at the sidewalk that provides the green connection between these two fairly significant parks. This is the primary connection from Norfolk into the neighborhood. Is 16' enough?
 - *Applicant Response: We are already exceeding the minimum 12'.*
- Maybe beyond the dimension is there a way the design can enhance that connection beyond the standard treatment?
 - *Applicant Response: How does that comment relate to pulling the services off the alley? If we can figure out the services off the alley, we can work on that. Given the small size of the building, the loading and services will also be very small and not as impactful as it may seem. We also have units facing that park and we are trying to embrace that as an amenity.*
- I think the alley should be designed as a shared use space, and if the amount of circulation is minimal, then we should consider really utilizing it as such. The section diagram thru of the building, alley, park will be very important, and you have a real opportunity to make a 'terrace' feel. Perhaps propose a different material for alley that will be pedestrian friendly? Pavers?



- *Applicant Response: There is an opportunity to provide ground entrances so we can work on maximizing that alley.*
- Parks has some renovations coming up at Cheltenham Park so we can coordinate and it could be a great opportunity.
- If you look at the massing and recognize the opportunities of these parks on either side, and the location of your services on the back, perhaps the units should be wrapped around to the rear to take advantage of the views to those parks. I also agree that Cheltenham is the more important connection for pedestrians.
- The zoning code requires loading to occur off the alley. There are also bike lanes proposed on Cheltenham and loading should not interfere with that.
- What is your tower setback?
 - *Applicant Response: We stepped back the tower 15 feet from the northern property line, assuming they would build along that property line. We are allowing for vertical separation to reduce bulk of the tower, and we will articulate that. It is a very tight site.*
- With the Sketch Plan submittal, show the recommended bicycle lanes on the frontage so we can consider that with the design.
- Add Marriott's massing to the drawings and highlight the parks (Veterans and Cheltenham) in the drawings as well. Provide a section showing the relationship between the Project, alley, and Cheltenham Park.
- It is exciting to take advantage of the unique location with the parks. We didn't really discuss today the massing, and watch out with the balconies given the small building.
 - *Applicant Response: We are focused on the alternative materials section of the guidelines. Although the project is in its preliminary stages we do believe it is in line with the intent of the Bethesda Design Guidelines and we are getting the sense we are on the right track. We will work on the items discussed today.*

Public Comments

- Ms. Paige Neremberg – I live in the neighborhood right behind there, and when you talk about removing the fence, there are a significant amount of little children and for safety, please keep that in mind. Especially with the alley, it is active.
 - *Applicant Response: Perhaps we can work on the visibility of the fence, without reducing the security. We can work on that with the section that the DAP requested, we hear you.*

Panel Recommendations:

This is just a consultation visit so the notes will be available for the Applicant team to incorporate into the design and address at Sketch Plan.



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 7340 Wisconsin Ave
320200010 Sketch Plan Application

DATE: February 26, 2020

The 7340 Wisconsin Ave project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on February 26 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 at the time of Site 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 (present, abstained)
Qiaoque 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
Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator
Marco Fuster, Lead Reviewer

Applicant Team

Bob Harris, Attorney
Sylke Knuppel
James Hamilton
Tom Brink
Joel Sherman



Discussion Points:

General Comments

- I'm very intrigued with the splayed western façade option with the adjacent property, as the angle improves the design. What happens if the neighboring property doesn't move forward? Even if the neighboring property keeps it straight, the angle would improve this design, stand alone.
 - *Applicant Response: We are concerned about that also, but this process can help with that.*
- Can you get to the site in an uber with a drop off? You have a lot of intersection issues here with curb cuts, etc. so I'm coming out of DC on Wisconsin, how do I get here?
 - *Applicant Response: You'd either have to turn left on Woodmont or Bethesda Avenue and turn onto Hampden Lane. You can't turn into Hampden from Wisconsin. Hampden is two directions, but a quiet street.*
- So I drop my parents off and then I can drive into the parking garage? OK. I think you guys did a really good job with this.
 - *Applicant Response: The original project had double loading off Montgomery and we heard that it wasn't ideal and loading could not occur off Montgomery under the new Sector Plan, so we tried to design this so we could keep back of house and keep the entrance appealing for pedestrians and residents. Our operating partner will make sure this works operationally and have had their input in this design.*
 - *Applicant Response: We want to keep this walkable, and in this urban environment, we really hope that most of the vehicle traffic will be for drop-offs. Thankfully we also have a lot of public parking within ¼ mile of this site.*
- I think you guys did a really good job with the landscaping plan, but the northeast corner, is the planter flush with the sidewalk?
 - *Applicant Response: It is currently flush, but could be a seat wall*
- I wonder if using small planting pots would help make it more fluid rather than a planter. It definitely needs to be flush.
 - *Applicant Response: Part of it is the green cover requirements and then the furnishings could be more mobile. We agree the treatment should be as flush as possible due to all the bicycle and pedestrians.*
- Those improvements are also in the right-of-way, with any non-standard conditions to be approved by DOT and DPS due to maintenance issues. There are also a lot of things going on in that corner that they need to review.
 - *Applicant Response: The triangle could potentially be abandoned, there are a number of solutions we can consider.*
- We can discuss with BUP, that is a good conversation to have and communicate with them the potential here.
- I wonder if this is the trigger necessary to discuss that whole circulation pattern going on with one-way streets down at Woodmont and within the neighborhood. The sector plan did



- recommend reviewing the one way loops in the downtown. It would have to be a DOT-initiated study along with SHA.
- Public art was a big idea in Bethesda 30 years ago. This is a fantastic location for public art, something strong and dramatic with a vertical element? Considering public art will help with conversation with BUP.
 - The massing has come a long way, thank you for the improvements.
 - How will the service circulation work in the building? Will trucks need to back in and/or out of the service entrance onto the street? If it works, we might suggest a one-way, single lane service access that can enter on Hampden lane and then exit on Montgomery lane. There is a lot going on the first floor and this might help.
 - *Applicant Response: We've worked a lot with staff, and we hope this improvement helps create a sense of arrival. We can work on providing art, and we want to continue to make this visually pleasing.*

Public Comments

No members of the public present

Panel Recommendations:

The following comments should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

- The design that has significantly improved. If the Applicant can do the splayed option with the western façade, that would be a huge improvement.
- The Panel maintains the original vote taken at the September 25, 2019 meeting. The project is on track to receive the minimum 10 points.



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 4824 Edgemoor Lane
320200020 Sketch Plan Application

DATE: February 26, 2020

The 4824 Edgemoor Lane project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on February 26, 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 at the time of Site Plan review. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.

Attendance:

Panel

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Stephanie Dickel, Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor
Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator
Matt Folden, Lead Reviewer
Rachel Newhouse, Parks Department

Applicant Team

Pat Harris, Attorney
Robert Kuentzel
Shawn Weingast
Wade WcKinney
Scott Troise



Members of the Public

Neil Goldstein

Richard Haulk

Nancy Haulk

Penny Dash

Charles Mokoff

Robert Wallach

Discussion Points:

This is the 3rd visit to the DAP for this project. The primary issue to be addressed is the treatment of the southern façade, particularly as it relates to the Design Guidelines Tower Separation requirement.

General Comments

- For the south façade, do you have a preference between the two massings presented?
 - *Applicant Response: The first massing with the smaller amount of setback would be the preference. Given the steel structural type, it would be easier to construct.*
- The architecture and materials have been simplified for the better but I maintain significant concerns regarding the tower separation, particularly to the south. Very few things in the Design Guidelines have been met and more effort needs to be put in to make the tower separation work.
 - *Applicant Response: Coming from the District with more urban nature, this just doesn't seem like an issue in comparison.*
- I recognize in downtown DC; this wouldn't be an issue. But the Design Guidelines created a typology that is unique to Bethesda. The Guidelines were designed to encourage something different.
 - *Applicant Response: Agree, but when this site was slated for redevelopment it was known that it would redevelop as a stand-alone site, and given the size and constraints, we think there needs to be some flexibility.*
- Is there a zoning option to go higher so there is some relief about designing the small floorplates?
 - *Applicant Response: There would be a floating zone option and perhaps up to 150 feet would be necessary, but there would still be some inefficiencies with the smaller floor plate.*
- Given the Sector Plan is so new, a rezoning would not be considered at this time. There was not much discussion on these sites, during the Sector Plan process. The discussion was focused on the small size. You could go higher with an increase in MPDU density.
- Typically at Sketch Plan, the Panel can make the recommendation that the design is on track to make the points, with focus on x, y, z; or the panel could decide that the project is just not on course. It is a recommendation from the Panel and staff has to bring the application to the Planning Board, who would ultimately make the decision.
- If you look at the setback diagram of the massing, to meet the intent of the Design Guidelines, I don't think a site like this would need to completely meet the tower separations on all sides,



but you do need it on the south side as a minimum. I think the Panel has made that consensus. Also, because of the height and uniqueness of the site, we are also saying you don't need to fully meet the setbacks from the street. So, the problem here is the one tower separation on the south side. How do we resolve that? It is hard to vote on this.

- Tower setback, there is the spirit of the tower separation which there has been no effort to meet. The splaying option that was proposed for another project (7340 Wisconsin) could work here, above the base. Could this project do something similar to another recent project where the façade splays from the middle?
 - *Applicant Response: That would reduce the building and add inefficiencies.*
- We would want the separation above the base of 3 to 4 stories maximum. The aesthetics otherwise have come a long way.
- The two-story base that you have in the elevation is strong. Not sure about the balconies, they cannot project in the ROW, please confirm in writing that it is OK because it varies between state and county roads. The second floor balconies do not work at all as they are too low.

Public Comments

- Nancy Haulk – We believe in density and height, but this doesn't make sense as the smallest lot in Bethesda. This 12-story wall will look silly. More important is the quality of life for those that face. This is intolerable. Their balconies face this.
- Penny Dash – The loading and circulation remains a concern with the public realm and heavy pedestrian nature of the area. Being directly on the property line will create future issues for Edgemoor residents. Concerned about the foundation and the construction necessary for that.

Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

The Panel voted 5-0 that the project is on course to meet the minimum design excellence points with the following condition:

- Explore methods to increase tower separation above the base (4 stories) to achieve a minimum separation of 30' and an average of 40'.

