

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: Hampden East

DATE: June 24, 2020

*The **Hampden Lane** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on June 24, 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 Sketch Plan stage and will need to return to the Design Advisory Panel at the time of Site Plan to review comments provided and determine final vote for design excellence. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

Attendance:

Panel

George Dove

Karl Du Puy

Rod Henderer

Damon Orobona

Qiaojue Yu

Paul Mortensen, ex-officio member and 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

Jonathan Bush, Planner Coordinator

Hyojung Garland, Parks Staff

Emily Balmer, Area 1 Principal Administrative Assistant

Applicant Team

Robert Dalrymple, Attorney

Matt Gordon, Attorney

Daryl South, Developer

Janel Kausner, Developer

Robert Sponseller, Architect

Xijue Wang, Architect

Jonathan Bondi, VIKA

Members of the Public

Alexander McSpadden



Discussion Points:

Staff: At Sketch Plan we want to focus on the massing and Design Guidelines, this project's options include several upper floors of the building that project over lower floors of the building, this has been an important issue the DAP has been dealing with so we want to be sure the DAP addresses that part of the design.

Base and building setbacks

- What is the grade change between Montgomery and Hampden?
 - *Applicant Response: Hampden Lane is 84 feet which is our measuring point, and adds another floor as you move to Montgomery Lane, so 94 feet on Montgomery Lane, a 10-foot change.*
- How can you justify an 8 story base when the DG recommends otherwise?
 - *Applicant Response: Through setbacks, sculpting, expression of programming, mediating through architecture*
- The single-story retail at the base seems odd in its highlighted detachment from the residential podium. Could it be more integral to the podium? Could the base elevation be a couple stories rather than just 1 so it has a stronger presence facing the rarely used plaza across North Lane? Hopefully this project will provide more life to this plaza but providing a little more height to the first story could help.

Cantilever

- I'm impressed with the project but concerned about the cantilevers proposed. Can you summarize them?
 - *Applicant Response: We are doing a cantilever between the office and residential option, focusing on the southwest corner over to the property line about 8 feet. It becomes a cantilever because we are expanding the sidewalk zone and pushing in the retail. We can pull it back however we felt the strong expression added to the project and is common to all three options. The other 'cantilevers' within the upper stories are more about modulation and will not affect public space.*
 - *Staff: Many of the cantilevers we've seen in the past were to capture additional FAR, which is different from cantilevers that are purposeful for architectural design, if you can explain and justify the difference that would be helpful.*
 - *Applicant Response: It is not about FAR, mostly about creating an interesting corner and celebrating these program elements through sculpting. This corner will be seen from the south, west, and Wisconsin and will be enhanced and provide interesting and changing views. In this early stage of design, offsets are exaggerated to heighten the design point. As we progress, the sculpting could be better expressed through a change in materials and possibly less cantilever.*
- The vertical arrangements of the program pieces is really great, the issue of overhangs have not received great public response and is a great touchpoint, especially with the Planning Board and may not result in a positive public response. The corner seems a bit overly



complicated and I believe there may be other ways of simplifying and doing it without an architectural overhang.

- Hampden Lane is a very narrow street and the overhang may create a compression of space. The view from Wisconsin Ave will signal something special, but also something heavy hanging over public space. I suspect pulling it back may make it more palatable moving forward.
- I think the relationship is very important and agree the prominence of the overhang is a problem on Hampden. It seems that the separation of the retail at the base is so pronounced. Is this separation warranted? Almost too equal, wondering if a stronger base is a way of easing the need for a cantilever from Wisconsin. But I agree that the corner is very important.
 - *Applicant response: I agree, perhaps we can mesh these uses a bit, but I think the sculpting to some extent is still necessary. I think this outdoor seating is most viable at this corner location.*
- The retail is being pushed back from the build to line to allow additional sidewalk for café zones which we would want. The suggestion is to push the cantilever back.
- The cantilever seems like it could work without being so heavy, perhaps 5-6 feet not 8 feet. I really like the idea of pushing and pulling and having the separation and I am confident this could be pulled off.

Rear Façade

- The neighbor to the east articulated their adjacent façade rather significantly by making the tower separation wider at the ends and more narrow in the middle. You chose to do a flat façade at this separation. Might you want to consider something a little less harsh to reflect what is happening on the neighboring façade.
 - *Applicant Response: Noted.*

Loading

- I wish MCDOT would allow you to split the access between Hampden Lane and Montgomery Lane. We are not supportive of the consolidated loading as it will become a less desirable pedestrian environment.
 - *Applicant Response: I agree, Hampden Lane is one of the nicer streets and it would be great to have more retail there especially with the plaza across the street. Montgomery Lane does not get as much foot traffic.*
- There may be an opportunity to combine access for both projects and a coordinated effort between the two properties could solve this problem.

Public Comments

One member of the public attended, but no comments provided

Panel Recommendations:

At Sketch Plan a straw vote is taken to determine whether the Project is on track to receive at least 10 points for design excellence. The Panel voted 5-0 that the Project is on track with the following comments to be addressed at Site Plan:



- a. Further development of the base articulation, including how it relates to the public spaces across East and Hampden Lanes;
- b. Continue to develop the design to address the use of building overhangs based on the comments above;
- c. Further refine the relationship between the rear facades;
- d. Study the potential for shared access between the two buildings with clear preference for split access between Montgomery and Hampden.



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: Avondale, 320200050

DATE: June 24, 2020

*The **Avondale** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on June 24, 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 Sketch Plan stage and will need to return to the Design Advisory Panel at the time of Site Plan to review comments provided and determine final vote for design excellence. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

Attendance:

Panel

George Dove

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Rod Henderer

Damon Orobona

Qiaojue Yu

Paul Mortensen, ex officio member, 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

Jonathan Bush, Planner Coordinator

Emily Balmer, Area 1 Principal Administrative Assistant

Applicant Team

Soo Lee Cho, Attorney

Kevin Park, Developer

Brett Swiatocha, Architect

Pat La Vay, Engineer

Members of the Public

Sandy Silverman

Discussion Points:



Context and Compatibility

- Such a small site you have here, did the development group look to assemble additional properties?
 - *Applicant Response: We were interested in assembling more lots to make it more scalable and have approached the adjacent property owners many times, but they were not interested in selling.*
- Unfortunately for this project, the master plan looks to a street not as a space between buildings but a dividing line between the mass and zones on the north and south side. The zones and heights allowed on each side are completely different.
- What discussions were had with the bank tower property to the south for possibly sharing the use of the alley for service and parking access to your site?
 - *Applicant Response: We have not yet had a chance to sit down with them but do anticipate doing so shortly. We are intending to follow through although our brief phone conversation did not seem overly optimistic.*
- You need a more coordinated urban design plan for this street. Being the first developer on this street, this Project will set the tone and this ground floor plan does not fulfill that job. The idea of making gestures to two story buildings seems counterintuitive so I think you need to design a holistic building in and of itself. The fragmented ownership is really problematic, especially leaving one parcel essentially undevelopable to the west of your site. Really looking forward to a more coordinated effort at this street to help evaluate your specific project.
- Compatibility not too much a concern with existing buildings as they will likely be redeveloped but this design needs to think about what will be here along the street in the future.
- Solving your problem for entry and parking access is not going to solve the entire street. The street needs to be solved first. A coordinated urban design for this street has to be established before we have a building that addresses the problem of the street. Otherwise we will have a strange selection of buildings solving problems on a piecemeal basis rather than a coordinated design. Locating a lobby because of the fire access is not a solution.

Base & Lobby

- Projecting the entrance lobby over the build to line by several feet is not the right tone to set for the street.
- You have set back the side elevation at the west. How do you plan to handle the party wall to the east?
 - *Applicant Response: It is a less than ideal scenario but felt necessary to build to the eastern property line to keep the project viable. We are exploring materials, articulation, texture patterns to express the façade rather than a uniform blank wall. We have also considered a public art expression but the location facing a dead-end street is not great, especially with the high potential for future redevelopment to block it.*



- The building type and mass for the zone across the street should be considered in the design of buildings on this side of the street. You need to follow the form for the Neighborhood Residential Street in the guidelines with a 2 to 3 story base and a clear setback above that must be maintained. Remove the lobby intrusion, and maintain the setbacks from the street are ultimately important.
- As handsome as the articulation is it is problematic from a planning point of view.
- The base is much more solid than I expected it to be. Have you considered moving the lobby to the middle? As drawn the base seems conflicted and heavy compared to the rest of the building
 - *Applicant Response: Yes, the building is a bit symmetrical and it does seem ideal to put the lobby in the middle, however the fire access requirements are driving the location of the lobby. We've been working through this challenge. The street itself is challenging from an access standpoint due to the dead-end condition.*
- Perhaps the slot in the middle is more prominent than what it needs to be, if narrowed it will not be so symmetrical
- I like the two-story base rather than three stories. Three stories would result in 'pants too high'
- The setback above the base is also half of what is recommended in the guidelines, and that is another problem. The setback is supposed to be 15' and they are proposing 8'
 - *Applicant Response: The units would be too squeezed with the double loaded condition and would not be a viable project.*
- We are talking about a base and a tower but is there a need for a base at all? If there was a solution that did not provide the full base would other panel members consider the deviation? I think architects need to explore.
 - *Applicant Response: The street type does require the base and setback.*
- Staff: We have serious concerns as outlined in the staff memo and provided those comments as part of DRC.

Tower

- This mass is so large in this context. Ideally this building would have a 2-3 story base with a single loaded tower setback behind, with the corridor facing the alley and the units facing north. That design would be more sympathetic to the neighborhood, but obviously you would lose some density.

Public Comments

- *Mr. Sandy Silverman*
It is a complicated challenge given the divided zoning. Perhaps a solution is the no-base option. Moving the lobby would be an improvement. I appreciate the Panel's comments

Panel Recommendations:

The Panel requested to see the project again with incorporation of the Panel's comments prior to voting. Issues the applicant should address:



- a. Develop a diagrammatic overall vision for the urban design of the future redeveloped street as a starting point to set the context for this design.
- b. Explore options to reduce the overall bulk and better conform the massing to the Design Guidelines, including:
 - a. The massing and articulation of the base itself and its relationship to both the existing conditions on the street and the envisioned future context;
 - b. The massing of the tower;
 - c. The Applicant is encouraged explore all options that may provide a solution, including a building that does not have a base if the plane of the building aligns better with the rest of the street.



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 4824 Edgemoor Lane

DATE: June 24, 2020

The 4824 Edgemoor project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on June 24, 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 Site Plan stage and the Design Advisory Panel will determine if comments from Sketch Plan have been incorporated and take the final vote for design excellence public benefit points. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.

Attendance:

Panel

George Dove

Karl Du Puy

Rod Henderer

Damon Orobona

Qiaojue Yu

Paul Mortensen, ex officio, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office

Staff

Gwen Wright, Planning Director

Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Area 1 Division Chief

Stephanie Dickel, Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor

Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator

Jonathan Bush, Planner Coordinator

Matthew Folden, Planner Coordinator

Emily Balmer, Area 1 Principal Administrative Assistant

Applicant Team

Pat Harris, Attorney

Bill Bonstra, Architect

Shawn Weingert, Developer

Robert Kuentzel, Architect

Wade McKinney

Pat La Vay, Engineer

Discussion Points:



Staff: This project is at Site Plan, the Panel saw this project many times at the Sketch Plan stage, the main issue which was conditioned to be addressed at Site Plan is the treatment of the south façade and the relationship with the Chase Condominium. Also at Site Plan the Panel should be looking for a detailed analysis and conformance with the Design Guidelines.

- I think the design has certainly improved on Woodmont and at the south facing façade. The evolution of this project has definitely moved in the right direction.
- Why do you have the wide two stories line above the base and then the additional two stories high at the southern end of the east elevation? The integration seems awkward. I really like the top 6-7 stories, but the base doesn't seem to wrap the corner and relate to the Woodmont piece. I think it needs some attention and not convinced it needs the four-story base at the southern end.
 - *Applicant Response: The thinking was Woodmont has the high 3-4 story base and use it as a transition for the tower.*
- What is the material and role for the two-story spandrel at the corner?
 - *Applicant Response: The whole building will be brick but the idea was this white mass would be distinct from the ground.*
 - *Applicant Response: We could continue the spandrel at the 2 stories to a 4 story level at the base to help frame the mural on the upper stories at the west elevation.*
- I hear you and can understand the logic but concerned the two-story horizontal spandrels will defeat the verticality of the tower. I think eliminating the gray spandrel at the corner may allow continuity at the corner and will allow the tower to extend to the ground. It may be a rendering issue, but the spandrel seems very heavy at the 2nd story, and at the 4th floor it will be too high.
 - *Applicant Response: What if the 4th level just became spandrel only? I hear what you're saying but we can refine it so its not so competing between vertical and horizontal.*
- Agreed, breaking the spandrel would be an improvement and address comments we've had in the past, while making the corner more pronounced.

Panel Recommendations:

At Site Plan a final vote is taken to determine the amount of design excellence public benefit points to award the Project. The Applicant requests 15 points, the Panel voted 3-2 in support of the 15 points requested (2 in support of 10). The following condition should be incorporated and reviewed by staff during the Site Plan process.

- Simplify the façade at the prominent corner so the gray horizontal spandrel doesn't interrupt the vertical reading of the tower.

