

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 4702 Chevy Chase Drive

DATE: July 22, 2020

The 4702 Chevy Chase Drive project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on July 22, 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, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office

Staff

Gwen Wright, Montgomery County Planning Department Director

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Area 1 Division Chief

Stephanie Dickel, Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor

Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator

Cristina Sasaki, Parks Planner

Rachel Newhouse, Parks Planner

Emily Balmer, Area 1 Administrative Assistant III

Applicant Team

Pat Harris, Attorney

Luz Del Mar Rosado, Lessard Design

Jon Fitch, Landscape Architect, Landscape Architecture Bureau (LAB)

Hans Schmit, Winthrop Management

Ulises Montees De Oca, Lessard Design

Lyn Wenzel, Landscape Architecture Bureau, LLC

Tim Longfellow, GLWPA

Ricardo Tovar, Lessard Design

Max Gross, Winthrop Management



Members of the Public

Michael Zajac
Naomi Spinrad
Daniel Ben-Zodak
Emily Aron
Jacob Isserman
Janice Soreth
Jorge Mariscal

Discussion Points:

Staff: The project is at the Sketch Plan stage so the review should focus on massing, urban design with respect to design quality and conformance with Design Guidelines. One clarification we would like to make is that the property to the east is limited in height to 35' as recommended in the Sector Plan but the massing in the submission does show 100'.

Nottingham Drive Frontage & Loading

- Community has concerns with the loading off of Nottingham Drive, considering the narrow street. Residents would like the loading relocated to Chevy Chase Drive where those constraints to not exist with the wider street.
 - *Applicant Response: We studied loading off of Chevy Chase Drive, however that would result in 2/3 of that frontage dedicated to loading and access. The neighbors on Nottingham have their trash pick up directly to the west of this proposed location, and our loading will occur entirely on-site and will not occur within the ROW of Nottingham.*
- The Community concern was really focused on the impact of trash rather than the loading, and they even asked if the front door of the project could face onto Nottingham
 - *Applicant Response: From a contextual standpoint and given the CR zoning, the orientation should be toward downtown Bethesda, not the SFD neighborhood. Additionally, the traffic impacts associated with this type of development would not be appropriate for the residential neighborhood.*
- Nottingham is a wonderful residential street coming into a Park, so I wonder why it is all back of house type elements, could the bike storage and loading be moved further into the building and then some unit fronts on the residential street. If you do that, 1) the service entry will have to be very nice and 2) it helps activate that street and allows people to access the Park better and integrates the unit fronts towards the existing neighborhood. The Project has to do something better for that street than service only.
 - *Applicant Response: I don't think it's a fair characterization that it is only back of house, we have put a lot of effort on that frontage and there will be units facing southerly but the only thing this plan lacking from what you said is unit entries off of Nottingham. Our plan was to design a building with equal treatment to north and south*



- The elevations do look nice but it seems that you are just screening the first floor. Unit entries may help with the discussion of loading and further support that your project is part of that street. The more residential units that face Nottingham, the better.
- I think adding a loading dock on Nottingham is not a great idea, and the more residential units that face Nottingham, the better. I suspect even with the loading off of Chevy Chase Drive to the east side of the driveway entrance, you could pull back both loading and driveway entrances a bit to deemphasize, and emphasize a vertical element with the lobby and shift ground level entrances onto Nottingham.
 - *Applicant Response: Just to confirm, if the loading isn't moved but if we added some permeability to the ground floor of Nottingham, it further equals the frontage and activates this street more and is more neighborly?*
 - *Applicant Response: If we do shift the loading to Chevy Chase Drive, it will result in 50% of the frontage to that access and circulation.*
- Yes, it further activates the street and becomes more neighborly.
- With the way that condos work, there will be plenty of deliveries daily, if there is a way to move both to Chevy Chase Drive, that would be an ideal solution.
- Whatever is chosen for this Project in terms of loading, will set the tone for the rest of the street's redevelopment so we must keep that in mind.

Chevy Chase Drive frontage

- The proposal is not complying with the guidelines for this frontage
 - *Applicant Response: The Design Guidelines allows buildings under 90 feet to utilize alternative methods. We have an 18" stepback as well as balconies that range from 5-9 feet. Throughout the façade we provide a change in plane which creates a rhythm. The addition of balconies provides another layer of articulation. We will also be adding several architectural details such as cornices and stone, further articulating the windowsills and headers. All will limit the appearance of the building. We are also providing varying heights. The top, middle, and base will provide a pleasing pedestrian experience. We also would like to introduce a green wall on the western elevation*
- I appreciate the attempt to compensate for the lack in stepback, but these balconies that are recessed do not really give the perception of the stepback, and the plane seems completely pushed forward. I think the composition of the elevation is nice, but I do not think it adequately addresses the intent of the stepback.
- This is the first property to redevelop along Chevy Chase Drive, and if a proper stepback is not provided here it will set the tone for the entire street and will be less likely for other projects to provide. This street has a more suburban solution not necessarily a downtown solution and the stepback is necessary.
 - *Applicant Response: The difficulty of this small site coupled with the single-family-detached residential district to the rear, we are rather constrained to make a building fully compatible with the Design Guidelines. The result is very small floorplates which makes the project difficult to be successful.*



- The setback is clearly an issue, and 100% of the elevation does not need to step back but a majority should, and in this case almost the entire perception of the elevation is all pushed forward. This sets a really bad precedent.
- The grid surrounding the balconies does not help, if you could lighten the façade up, and remove some of the horizontal and verticals. We'd like to see a couple options moving forward that would provide some setbacks and lightening of the composition.
- If the middle three bays potentially came up and setback and then the left and right are setback, then you have an argument that you see the setbacks from the street. But these are some of the options we'd like to see.
- There are other alternatives for the trash dock, you could put it behind the lobby and roll it out to the street.

Public Comments

- *Dr Jacob Isserman, Nottingham Drive resident*
I appreciate this discussion and I feel our comments have been heard and addressed by the Panel. The neighbors have said our homes our setback about 30' rather than the required 20' so that is interesting between the required setback and the neighborhood precedent. Lastly, the entrance to Norwood Park is not being celebrated by Montgomery County as one of its prized parks. We are wondering about the potential for a pedestrian connector from Chevy Chase Drive into Norwood Park.
 - *Applicant Response: When we heard from the Community there was concern about having people access the Park so if everyone is on the same page that would be helpful guidance but if not, that is a challenge.*
 - *Staff: We have made similar comments as well as our Parks Staff requesting the connection.*
- *Daniel Ben-Zadok, Nottingham Drive resident*
The trash is definitely an issue as the trash truck often blocks our access to and from the street.



Panel Recommendations:

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

- a. Provide options for massing along Chevy Chase Drive;
- b. Develop options for location and configuration of loading on Chevy Chase Drive and Nottingham Drive; and
- c. Explore the treatment of Nottingham Drive façade in terms of pedestrian and unit entries; and
- d. Explore potential Park connection from Chevy Chase Drive.



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: Avondale, 320200050

DATE: July 22, 2020

*The **Avondale** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on July 22, 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, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office

Staff

Gwen Wright, Planning Director

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Area 1 Division Chief

Stephanie Dickel, Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor

Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator

Cristina Sasaki, Parks Planner

Hyojung Garland, Parks Planner

Emily Balmer, Area 1 Administrative Assistant III

Applicant Team

Soo Lee Cho, Miller, Miller & Canby

Kevin Park, SJ Investment Corp

Brett Swiatocha, Perkins Eastman DC Perkins

Pat La Vay, Macris Hendricks and Glascock, P.A.

Discussion Points:



Staff: The Panel reviewed this Project in June and raised concerns that being the first redevelopment on the block, it should set the tone on the street. The Panel requested the Applicant to take a holistic look of the street's urban design and redevelopment. The Sketch Plan stage focuses on massing and urban design with regard to the Design Guidelines and more specific issues to be addressed at Site Plan.

- At the last meeting, you said the lobby entrance needed to project from the facade to accommodate fire access but now you are showing it in the middle?
 - *Applicant Response: Yes, at one point we only looked at relocating the curb line to conform to the Master Plan, but we were able to extend the curb and make it tie in without disturbing private property, so we've been able to straighten the curve and extend the curb out to Wisconsin Ave.*
- I really appreciate that you have taken the time to explore the options, it is going to make our decision making and discussions much easier. This will be a model for other submissions to explore other ideas for the context rather than one site. I am very impressed.
- You are not showing the curb cuts in the renderings, rather a continuous grass strip. I assume curb cuts will be present?
 - *Applicant Response: You are correct, there will be curb cuts that we did not include in the rendering.*
- I find Option 2 and 3 acceptable, I think the larger setback is not necessary if you have a proper setback at the base.
- I think the better solution is Option 3. We all know the street will redevelop and pulling the face back all the way to the ground allows the space to be fully recognized and acknowledge the existing houses. It implies a base while scaling the building down. I like the build-to-line getting pulled back, which the future redevelopment will also have to honor.
- I like the larger setback at the ground, having the buildings farther back just seems better for this street and I have a huge prejudice against Option 2, where it has a huge setback and it bumps back out. My only suggestion for Option 3 is that the two-story base is actually a layer that projects out (only inches or even a foot) so rather being a negative space it is a positive projected layer and more seen.
- Option 3 is an anti-base kind of base, and it will have a strong impact of the overall façade.
- I think we all can agree that Option 3 is the best massing, and other minor features to be determined at Site Plan.
- I think it is much better and the street will certainly benefit. It is more compatible, acknowledging the housing will change over time, this will set the proper precedent.

Panel Recommendations:

The Panel voted 5-0 that the Project is on track to meet the minimum 10 design excellence points with the following to be addressed at Site Plan:

- a. Further develop Option 3 with the larger build-to-line and provide further detail on the relationship and treatment between base and upper floors as to how the massing is expressed.



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

ITEM: Discussion Procedures

DATE: July 22, 2020

Attendees:

Panel

George Dove

Karl Du Puy

Rod Henderer

Damon Orobona

Qiaojue Yu

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

Staff

Robert Kronenberg, Montgomery County Planning Department Deputy Director

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Area 1 Division Chief

Stephanie Dickel, Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor

Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator

Matthew Folden, Planner Coordinator

Cristina Sasaki, Parks Planner

Hyojung Garland, Parks Planner

Dominic Quattrocchi, Parks Planner

Rachel Newhouse, Parks Planner

Emily Balmer, Area 1 Administrative Assistant III

Members of the Public

Penny Dash

Neil Goldstein

Bob Wallach

Michele Rosenfeld

Amanda Farber

Shawn Weingast



Staff Description:

- This is a meeting to discuss the Panel's procedures. Members of the public have been invited to attend the meeting, but there will not be any public comment taken.
- The Panel is an advisory body and our current DAP Rules and Procedures do not include procedures for reconsiderations. We'd like to discuss if this is something the Panel would like to consider, and if so, what that would include.
- This came about as a result of the recent Site Plan item, 4824 Edgemoor Lane, that the Panel reviewed and approved in June. Members of the community were not on the call although that particular project was at the Panel a total of 4 times between the Sketch and Site Plans, and members of the community were active in 3 of the 4 meetings.
- There was a request by residents of the adjacent Chase Condominium to allow them to present their case to the Panel. To be fair, there wouldn't be any point to allow folks to present views where the Panel voted in the affirmative to not see it again, it did not seem appropriate to allow this if the Panel were not to reconsider the vote.
- If the Panel decided that the idea of reconsidering a Site Plan vote is something worth allowing, there would be the following questions:
 - Who could make such a request
 - On what grounds would the request be based on
 - How would people have to submit a request
 - How the reconsideration would work in terms of timeline and hearing
 - Other elements similar to the Planning Board reconsideration procedures.
- What are the Panel's thoughts on reconsideration of votes?

Panel Discussion:

- My thoughts are we are an advisory body to the Planning Board, and we should not be reconsidering items unless directed to do so by the Planning Board. Were the parties not properly notified of the DAP's 4th meeting?
 - *Staff response: There are no required public notice requirements for the DAP, the materials are posted online the week before but we do not have a mechanism in place requiring notification.*
- Has the Planning Board requested the DAP to reconsider the specific project that resulted in this request?
 - *Staff response: No, this particular project has not even submitted an application. As previously stated, the DAP is an advisory body and Staff includes the Panel's input within the staff report but staff is not required to fully agree with the Panel's decisions or recommendations. We could certainly update our rules of procedure. The vote at sketch plan is a preliminary vote to state the project is on track with any major items to be discussed at site plan. Site Plan review is the final vote and so all major items should have been addressed. If the Panel decides there should be any reconsideration request that it should be limited to votes for site plan review.*



- The community has a chance to weigh in again at the time of Planning Board, correct?
 - *Staff response: Yes, we encourage the community to continue to discuss with staff and provide input at the Planning Board meeting.*
- As the Bethesda area representative I have sympathy for the residents. I do believe as a site plan review, for that particular project, I believe the project remains weak which is why I only voted 10 points.
- One suggestion I have is that the lead reviewer on the Project is letting the community be aware of the meetings moving forward, perhaps this one just slipped through the cracks.
- This is a slippery slope, we are supposed to be evaluating architecture and conformance with the Design Guidelines. The community concerns have nothing to do with the architecture, their concern is the placement of the building and we cannot control proximity of new development. I am not in favor of this.
- I think if the Planning Board remands the project back to us, then we can do that.

Panel Recommendations:

The Panel does not wish to revise the Rules and Procedures to allow reconsiderations, unless specifically requested by the Planning Board. Rather, Staff will focus on ways to improve notifications to the public. The Planning Board already has the power to remand projects back to Staff and/or the DAP, however the Rules of Procedure can be revised to clarify that process. The revised procedures will be presented at the September meeting.

