


Montgomery Planning

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE: January 15, 2021
TO: Bethesda Downton Plan Design Advisory Panel (DAP)
FROM: Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, DownCounty Planning 
RE: Staff comments for the January 20, 2021 DAP Meeting

Staff welcomes Brian Kelly, Director of the Architecture Program, Associate Dean for Development and Faculty Affairs, and Professor at the University of Maryland's School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, to represent Academia on the DAP. Brian brings extensive experience in Academia as a critic and lecturer on urban design and architecture, as well as significant tenure on the University of Maryland's Campus Architecture and Landscape Review Board and in the private sector marrying urban design and architecture.

The only project to be discussed at the meeting will be The Avondale, which the Panel saw last in July 2020, with a favorable review at Sketch Plan. Now the project team is presenting for Site Plan review, though no application has been submitted to the Department. Attached are the Notes from the July meeting.

The Avondale
Perkins Eastman
SJ Investment Corp

- Site Plan, focusing on more detailed and developed architectural expression and site design, consistent with the Design Guidelines; 1st presentation.
- Panel direction from Sketch Plan:
 - 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.

Attachment

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.

