

# Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan

## Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)

Meeting Notes

Friday, May 7, 2021, 8AM (Virtual Meeting)

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 AM.

### I. **PRESENTATION – 7070 ARLINGTON ROAD PROJECT (BETHESDA ROW / FEDERAL REALTY)** (Stefano Sani, Hickok Cole Architects) (35-40 minutes)

- Mark Hendrickson (Federal Realty), Pat Harris (Lerch Early Bower), Stefano Sani (Hickok Cole), and Patrick La Vay (MHG) presented the project.
- The Project is located at the southwest portion of the Bethesda Row District.
- Existing zoning is split between CRT-2.5 with an allowable building height of 70 feet and CRT-2.5 with an allowable building height of 90 feet.
- The development would make use of the existing surface parking lot to the rear of the retail on the south side of Bethesda Avenue, and allow for the existing retail to remain.
- The project would serve as a gateway for people entering the Bethesda CBD from Arlington Road.
- The massing includes a corner element at the intersection of Arlington Road and Bethesda Avenue, a suspension element at the tower, and a single bar architectural feature.
- The massing embodies the intent and spirit of the design guidelines, with setbacks. The project will articulate the volume of the building to relate to the adjacent residential community, and include horizontal and vertical elements to break down scale.
- 9 stories at its maximum height with a penthouse (including indoor and outdoor amenities).
- The design includes active street frontages with retail and lobby space.

- Vehicular access from Arlington Road; incorporates mechanical parking stacks. The mechanical parking system allows the project to fit the levels of parking into 2 levels.
- The Applicant expects the Sketch Plan to be accepted in the next month to allow for approval in the Fall. A subsequent Site Plan application will be filed, and it is expected that a shovel in the ground could occur in 2023 at earliest, subject to market and construction costs.
- The Applicant presented to DAP on 2/24, and it was well received
- Step-backs begin at 68' and 48', with 15-foot step backs.
- Balconies are embedded on street frontages but may be projecting along driveway and rear.
- The design intends to integrate the indoor levels of the ground-floor into the exterior sidewalk to make for a more pleasant experience.
- 20-feet of sidewalk on Arlington and 17-feet on Bethesda Avenue, consistent with what is there today.
- 17.6% MPDUs proposed, above the minimum 15%. The additional MPDUs allows for another 12' of height, but the Applicant is only proposing 100 feet now.
- A question regarding signing the Bethesda/Arlington intersection as a "Barnes Dance." Jeff Burton advised there are constraints in front of the Amazon bookstore that preclude adding signage, but this intersection will continue to function as a "Barnes Dance."

**II. PRESENTATION – PLANNING DEPARTMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES, INCLUDING THE ATTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGIES INITIATIVE** (Lisa Govoni, Housing Planner, Montgomery County Planning) (35-40 minutes)

- Lisa Govoni provided an overview of the Montgomery Planning Department's multi-year effort to address housing studies beginning in 2017 with the rental housing study.
- A number of policies have been adopted over the last several years to encourage and preserve affordable housing, including the MPDU update, ADU ZTA, COG housing targets, Growth and Infrastructure policy, and WMATA pilot legislation.
- Thrive 2050 is ongoing, and the missing middle housing study along with Councilmember Jawando's ZTA and Councilmember Riemer's

draft ZTA for missing middle. These ZTAs are on hold until the Planning Department completes its ongoing study

- Attainable housing study is intended to spur more diverse types of housing, including missing middle housing. It will also help the County grow its housing supply to meet future population growth.
- How can we diversify housing options in the County?  
We will look at neighborhoods zoned exclusively for single family homes, and also look at densifying our corridors (e.g., Route 29).
- More equitable and inclusive housing policies included.
- Attainable housing is un-subsidized market rate housing that is suitable and appropriate for the households that live here.
- Attainable Housing is not income restricted
- Missing middle housing refers to a range of building types that are compatible in scale, form and construction with single-family homes, but includes multiple units. Missing middle housing includes the following scales:
  - Small scale – duplexes, triplex, fourplex (2 – 2.5 stories)
  - Medium scale – stacked flats and apartments (3-4 stories)
  - Large scale – mixed-use, live/work, stacked flat apartments (4-5 stories). These would be more appropriate along BRT and transit corridors (e.g., Route 29), and applied through Master Plan processes.
- The County needs to produce many more units to meet demands for housing, and the study will also help with homeownership opportunities.
- Average detached home in Montgomery County sold for \$775,000 and attached structure sold for \$370,000 in 2020.
- Single-family homes are getting larger in the County due to tear-down custom rebuilds.
- Concerns from community include compatibility, architectural covenants, parking and infrastructure demands (schools, roads, etc). However, the Planning Department staff intends to develop a pattern book with design standards to ensure that these concerns are addressed.
- The Planning Board will transmit recommendations to the Council by July 8, 2021.

- The intent is to create more flexibility for these other types of housing units by-right through the Site Plan review process that will be guided by a pattern book (with architecture, parking and other design standards) created by the Planning Department to guide compatibility with existing single-family neighborhoods.

### **III. NEW BUSINESS**

- Hampden East Project – Presentation is scheduled for the June meeting.
- Parks Department to present on the Eastern Greenway.
- Request for presentation on plans for and status of Bikeways in Bethesda.
- Annual monitoring report to be shared with IAC in the next several months.

### **IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Next meeting Friday, June 4, 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 AM.

Attendees:

Mark Hendrickson  
Dedun Ingram  
Leslye Howerton  
Fanny Gonzalez  
Susan Wegner  
Patricia Harris  
Naomi Spinrad  
Jack Alexander  
Stefano Sani  
Christopher Smith  
Patrick La Vay  
Jad Donohoe  
Lisa Govoni  
Nick Driban  
David Wahl

Emily Balmer  
Matthew Gordon  
Michael Fetchko  
Jeff Burton  
Stephanie Dickel  
Joyce Gwadz  
Ken Hartman  
Adam Roberts  
Hyojung Garland  
Amanda Farber