




DATE: July 19, 2021

TO: Bethesda Downton Plan Design Advisory Panel (DAP)

FROM: Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator, DownCounty Planning 
Stephanie Dickel, Regulatory Supervisor, DownCounty Planning

RE: Staff comments for the July 28, 2021 DAP Meeting

We have one item for discussion at this month's meeting. A portion of this site was previously reviewed by the DAP for Sketch Plan 320190030 as part of the Bethesda Market project, however the site has separated from the Bethesda Market and increased in size. The Applicant is seeking initial comments and feedback as part of concept plan submittal. The previous meeting notes are included below.

Item #1

7126 Wisconsin Avenue

SK&I Architects

Foulger Pratt

- Concept Plan submittal, no design excellence points requested at this time.
- 7126 Wisconsin Avenue was previously part of the Bethesda Market project to preserve the Farm Women's Cooperative Market and deliver the Sector Planned civic green, which was first heard by the Panel in October of 2018 with a favorable review of the Sketch Plan for two schemes.
- The Applicant is no longer formally part of the joint venture to develop the Bethesda Market, however the Applicant will still make a significant financial contribution to fund the sale and ongoing operations for the Market, thereby supporting the Sector Planned vision for the civic green and allowing this Site to increase the maximum height to 225 feet for the portion of property facing Wisconsin Avenue (7126 & 7140 Wisconsin Ave).
- Previously, this portion of the Site was made up of three properties (7126 & 7140 Wisconsin Ave, 4505 Miller Ave), now will increase to four (4708 Bethesda Ave), with a total tract area of 45,945 square feet. 4708 Bethesda Avenue is currently developed with Capital One Bank that has an access point from Bethesda Avenue to a drive thru and parking lot exiting onto Miller Avenue.
- The site is split zoned, with the two properties facing Wisconsin Avenue CR-3.0, C-3.0, R-2.75, H-225 within the Wisconsin Avenue District and the two properties facing Bethesda Avenue and Miller Avenue zoned CR-3.0, C-3.0, R-2.75, H-200 within the Bethesda Row District.
- Staff has previously met with the Applicant and stated there was no support to continue drive thru operations in downtown Bethesda and alternative vehicular/loading access should be studied.

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: Bethesda Market
Sketch Plan No. 320190030

DATE: October 24, 2018

*The **Bethesda Market** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **October 24, 2018**. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, and recommendations regarding design excellence and the exceptional design public benefits points. The Panel's recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report and strongly considered by Staff prior to the certification of the Site Plan. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

Attendance:

Karl Du Puy (Panelist)
George Dove (Panelist)
Damon Orobona (Panelist)
Rod Henderer (Panelist)
Qiaojue Yu (Panelist)
Paul Mortensen (Panelist, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)
Gwen Wright (Planning Director)
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)
Stephanie Dickel (Lead Reviewer)
Cristina Sasaki (Parks Department)
Hyojung Garland (Parks Department)
Rebecca Ballo (Historic Preservation Program Supervisor)

Chris Ruhlen (Applicant Team)
Heather Dhopolsky (Applicant Team)
Tade Willger (Applicant Team)
Jason Sereno (Applicant Team)
Robby Brewer (Applicant Team)



Brad Fox (Applicant Team)
Kofi Meroe (Applicant Team)
Chuck Hathway (Applicant Team)
Jim Bushong (Applicant Team)
Joe Pikiewicz (Applicant Team)

Alicia Delahunty (Member of the Public)
Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)
Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)

Discussion Points:

- Those photos of the market, when was the market built?
 - *Applicant response:* February 4, 1932
- Was the part facing on Wisconsin always parking?
 - *Applicant response:* Yes, we believe it was always parking, we are going through a historic resource analysis. The space between market and pavilion is a great opportunity for a plaza space.
- I hear you on the plaza space, but I am not seeing it now.
 - *Applicant response:* We are envisioning a winter garden extension or greenhouse that would provide more opening on the back of the building, we are going to study.
- Where is the trail? You should show the trail. Will that always be the trail? You need to draw the CCT because it so important, the interim or ultimate version.
 - *Applicant response:* We have added it to the submission and if not we will make sure that we do.
- What is your new market building as part of the public space diagram? Social, contemplative, active? I thought I understood the new market building as union market style, what is happening in the historic market?
 - *Applicant response:* There will be a food-oriented market destination in all three retail spaces. The social gathering functions encompasses all three spaces with an indoor/outdoor flow. This allows us to add elements that don't exist in the elm street park today that occupy people and make it fun like at the wharf including a playground and splash park and dog park. We can accommodate 30 tents in that space and that's our intent. The pavilion activates the space and adds the retail space we need to make this work.



- I think the concern is how much is too much development? You have to believe the apartments facing the parking garage of the adjacent building are not going to be very nice. You have the opportunity to go to a single-loaded apartment corridor, increase the size of the park and get higher quality units. You will not get the GFA you need now but I think that you'd get higher quality units. And you could possibly go from 70 feet to 90 feet.
 - *Applicant response:* We have made attempts to compress that part of the building. We did move the building back, the tower separation dictated how far back we could go.
- What would it take to get to 90 feet all the way across?
 - *Staff response:* affordable housing or master plan amendment.
 - *Applicant response:* there are significant obligations for the park and parking, there is a lot of risk and so to be honest there is only so much chipping away at density that make the risk make sense. We are at the margin already. We have made many moves to be responsive. That incremental request even if it seems small may make the project infeasible. To be clear we would have to eliminate many of the townhouses at grade to get the additional park space
- Comprehensively it is 5 acres of park?
 - *Applicant response:* Our site is 2.7 acres, but if it is all planned together then there are more features and amenities that can be added.
- For the townhouse area that looks narrow, could you orient townhouses to park to get more space in the park?
 - *Applicant response:* There we have 54 feet of park. If we reorient then it dramatically impacts the woonerf. But we could go back and study it. It would dramatically change the character of that road. It might create about 12 feet of additional dimension.
- My concern is how the retail pavilion bifurcates the park from the market building. It would be better if you make the pavilion half and increase the dimension of the east/west connection.
 - *Applicant response:* We agree and want to study the east/west connection. We are creating a consistent setback.
- The setback consistency is less necessary if it is a pavilion. While we prefer the pavilion to residential and want it to work, we want it to be done right.
 - *Applicant response:* We are doing this from a placemaking perspective not necessarily as an economic driver.
- Retail should be double-loaded so that you have activity on both sides of the street. Typically retail in the middle of a park may have more turnover. Maybe you should bring



retail closer to Willow. The retail street/plaza could be between the historic market and new pavilion.

- *Applicant response:* We do want to make this a two-sided space with activation and that is our goal.
- You are going to have a nice plaza facing Wisconsin. And a nice park facing the other side. So, you have a park to the east and the park to the east, so something in between is more of a retail street more like Bethesda Lane. Maybe it is less green at the middle.
- Percentage of park to the building is one issue.
- Concerned about congestion of access from Wisconsin and conflict with pedestrians in option B.
 - *Applicant response:* The farm women's market building would move 23 feet to create sufficient space and have fire access, safe pedestrian passage in 40 feet.
- You are also building under the market for parking
 - *Applicant response:* Yes.
- In option A it's a problem of the relationship between pavilion and park because of the parking entrance.
- I think the massing has gotten better, and the relationship to the market. Really unfortunate not to do option A. We like option A better. I think it is nice to have residential above the pavilion.
- The sentiment in the town is that residential above the retail pavilion will create a wall within the park, effectively separating the park into two, one for Bethesda off of Wisconsin and one for the Town to the east. It needs to be one park for Bethesda.
- I think option A has taken a gigantic step forward. The building is not just one wall but is broken in many spots, I appreciate the idea of increasing the height and thinning building, I think the transition from a wider to more linear park at the south is sound. You have a 4-block park that goes from larger to more intimate. Having townhouses along the south is really important and a little compromise on the public space width is acceptable. I see it as a linear movement through the site with fingers. I share concern that new pavilion is separated from park with ramp, but if Willow is the link and there are fingers that come off of it this is less of a problem. I am very intrigued by the massing configuration of the west building.
- 7126 Wisconsin - I think that the building creates an architectural statement that is a good resolution of what is a very tight sight even when it steps back out.



- I think the development team should be applauded for how they have looked at the site comprehensively and with the collaboration with many agencies.
- The master plan envisioned that both lots could be park, if you recognize how little park space there is in Bethesda.
- I agree that there is not enough green in Bethesda, but I am in favor of bigger park space and greener.
- What I don't like about the two towers is the symmetry. The space between the pavilion and market is more important than creating the slot right in the middle, you could have solid as a backdrop to the market.
- Similarly, on 7126 the corner could be emphasized and be more off center.
- The guidelines talk about a base but it does not require that the base be the entire building, the tower can come down. I think in 7121, the base is more important along the market than on Wisconsin. Looking at asymmetry more will help some of the moves.
- I think there are too many moves on Wisconsin.
- I think it is important to point out the scheme may be ok for option B the symmetry might make sense. But on A scheme it makes less sense.
- In defense of them, the previous design for the west side of Wisconsin was alien to the site. And there is an improvement. I like the precedent images for 7126 better than what I see in the sketch. You might be trying a bit too hard, maybe it is just 2 moves. A vertical element and supporting element. There should be more compatibility between the base and tower above.
 - *Applicant response:* I think originally, we got too into the façade before coming to consensus on massing and now we will go back to exploring the façade.
- In the future, who is going to maintain the park? Important to know.
 - *Staff:* there might be a partnership with the owner, though ownership will likely be with Park and Planning.
- The parking extends into the green space, you are showing a lot of trees over the parking. We are right now studying a 3-level garage that will limit the footprint of parking below and allow more space for trees.
- It would be nice if you could get those massive species trees coming across east west rather than a perfect edge grass field.



- *Applicant response:* We've thought about special paving and table top road between park spaces, we definitely like the idea of the mature canopy. We will be having meeting with Historic and having charettes with the Parks Department.
- There could be a structure between the 2 buildings, a winter garden. I hadn't been thinking about it, I had been considering lights and connection but not an actual structure.
- The design of the new market Hall and what happens between the two is important and is not developed enough.
- The sun and shadow diagrams are also important to provide.

Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Preference for Option A if it is feasible; however, three of the panel members would like to see a greater proportion of green space on the space potentially compressing the building to increase the green space.
2. There should be more attention to the east/west connections across the site from Wisconsin to the park either widening on Willow or widening of the woonerf.
3. Consider not having as much symmetry in the massing of the buildings, could create verticality in the building and not have base along the entire building. The Wisconsin façade could be different than the façade along the market.
4. Further develop the winter garden or some connection between the old market building and the pavilion.
5. Create connection between the ground floor of the pavilion to the park. Currently there is separation because of the parking access ramp.
6. Provide sun and shadow diagrams to see building impacts on the park.
7. Public Benefit Points: The project is on track to achieve at least the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone.
8. Straw vote:
 - Option A – **1** support, **4** support with conditions to meet the recommendations above.
 - Option B – **5** support with conditions to meet the recommendations above.

