

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 8001 Wisconsin Avenue

DATE: November 17, 2021

The 8001 Wisconsin Avenue project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on November 17, 2021. 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

Brian Kelly

Damon Orobona

Qiaojue Yu

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

Staff

Gwen Wright, Planning Director

Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director of Planning

Stephanie Dickel, DownCounty Regulatory Supervisor

Jonathan Bush, Planner Coordinator

Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator

Hyojung Garland, Park Planning Supervisor

Rachel Newhouse, Parks Planner

Emily Balmer, DownCounty Administrative Assistant III

Applicant Team

Bob Dalrymple, Attorney

Matt Gordon, Attorney

Vince Burke, Developer

Brian Downie, Developer

John Torti, Architect

Greg Goldstein, Architect

Jeremy Sharp, Architect

Trini Rodriguez, Landscape Architect

Steven Sattler, Landscape Architect



Ian Duke, Engineer

Members of the Public

Paige Nerenberg

Discussion Points:

Staff: The project is at Sketch Plan and the review is focused on massing, urban design with respect to design quality and conformance with Design Guidelines. This is the first time this project has been before the Panel, Staff has provided a memo outlining topics for discussion related to height, proposed open space, and building massing perspectives

Panel:

General

- Thanks for the thoughtful presentation, it seems the project has been well massaged.
- The project is definitely moving in the right direction and at a level of detail that we typically do not get at Sketch Plan.

Massing

- The massing of the building is wonderful and very clearly explained.
- I was initially going to push for the setback along Wisconsin Avenue but having seen the presentation and level of detail I actually think the alternative treatment will work well. The massing is very well broken up and the increased greenway is very beautiful and I'm very supportive.
- I think the central spine for the massing is an interesting choice, we could be looking at a donut with a central courtyard but this articulation at the courtyards is quite preferable.

Eastern Greenway

- Purposeful setback makes much more useful in an urban space and an extension of a future park to the north.
- I think setting the building back 70 feet to allow a larger space, as opposed to 45 feet and stepping up was a great move.
- Given this is the first large project along the Eastern Greenway, it is similar to the Avondale Project where we required the project to set the tone of the street and perhaps that is something we should consider here too, creating a streetscape along Tilbury street so there is cohesion along the street.
 - *Applicant Response: Will there be a specific streetscape for Tilbury Street?*
 - *Staff:* Perhaps streetscape is not the right term here, there is a need for the Eastern Greenway to be a consistent experience over the 4-5 blocks, Parks Department created that framework and presented it to the Applicant and the IAC. That will continue to be reviewed throughout this process.
- It seems the important piece is the 'promenade' because it acts as a datum and perhaps the plantings and articulation of the pathwork within the promenade should differentiate itself slightly from the path and overall framework. Right now it is shown as matching the surrounding streetscape but if it remains different, since the greenway may not be able to be the similar width

all the way down, so the datum and streetscape can be consistent but the promenade can remain distinct.

- How will the promenade be linked the north and south and how will the promenade be programmed and activated? Thoughts for moving forward.
- The access from the ground floor units to the Park space will be an interesting point to look at moving forward.
 - *Applicant Response: The access point will be further developed, the program is not fully developed but we are looking for it to be useful and useable to get the most potential out of that connection.*
- Right now the building has one access point to the Eastern Greenway. Do those units want to have direct access to the Park to generate activity or just have overviews to the Park? Thoughts moving forward.
 - *Applicant Response: Yes, and this has become a vertical issue as well. So how can we employ the level below the datum line will need to be figured out.*
 - *The beauty of this is that it is an entire block and the design will be cohesive, the challenge is that we have four sides and no side of this building wants to be the backside.*

Architecture

- The building reads certainly as a residential character with the sloped roof, will complement the neighborhood to the east.
- I was relieved to see that the renderings are showing a traditional design rather than classical, and I think the project has been well thought out. The sloped design along Tilbury Street is a good tool to relate with the residential character and compliment the area. I think the era you're shooting for is just right.
- If there is going to be a distinction between the architectural characters and a narrative that begins to develop, perhaps there is a fictive beginning to the building and overtime the building progresses with additions, that may guide the choice of language down the line. I find it an interesting composition; classicism is not off the table for me. For example, University of Michigan Law Library is an amalgam of various styles that comes together beautifully as if it was built over time, if there was a fictive history that brings these characters together, that could work.

Panel Recommendations:

At Sketch Plan a straw vote is taken to determine whether the Project is on track to receive the minimum 10 points for Design Excellence. The Panel voted 4-0 that the Project is on track.