



DATE: November 10, 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 November 17, 2021 DAP Meeting

We have one item for discussion at this month's meeting which will occur virtually.

Item #1

8001 Wisconsin Avenue

BF Saul Company

Torti Gallas Architects

- 1st Sketch Plan presentation
- The Applicant proposes to redevelop the entire block located on Wisconsin Avenue, West Virginia Avenue, Tilbury Street, and Highland Avenue. The Project is located in both the Wisconsin Avenue District and the Eastern Greenway Residential Edge District.
- The Applicant has been working with Parks Staff to realize the Sector Plan's goals for the Eastern Greenway. Parks has prepared a Design Framework for the complete multi-site park experience and presented it to the development team and the community. Further design of the greenway will continue in coordination with Parks staff throughout the development review process.
- The Applicant proposes to construct a new mixed-use development consisting primarily of multi-family residential with ground floor commercial. The building will front onto Wisconsin Avenue with a height of 90 feet and decrease in height to 70 feet adjacent to the future greenway and Tilbury Street.
- The Design Guidelines encourages development adjacent to the Eastern Greenway to orient ground floor uses, entries, balconies, and terraces onto the greenway to further activate and improve the public space. As proposed the building will provide one entry fronting onto the future greenway.
- The Proposal will require the abandonment of the existing alley connecting West Virginia Avenue and Highland Avenue. On the Highland Avenue frontage, the Applicant proposes a new porte cochere with an additional garage access point closer to the future Eastern Greenway, and one access point from West Virginia Avenue for loading.
- The Project will provide the recommended sidewalk zones and building placement for Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Highland Avenues, however the Applicant is requesting alternative treatments for all frontages in regards to recommended building form for base height and stepback. While Wisconsin Avenue is considered an Urban Boulevard and the Design Guidelines allows alternative treatments to be considered for buildings less than 90', this does not extend to West Virginia Avenue and Highland Avenue as they are Neighborhood Local Streets.

- The Applicant states the alternative treatments along Wisconsin Avenue include a transition course approximately 20 feet above the retail, and will provide further variation through depth of windows and change of planes between masonry and glass.
- The perceived massing will be reduced along West Virginia Avenue & Highland Avenue frontages through proposed courtyard (West Virginia Ave) and the porte cochere (Highland Ave), giving a varied depth to the ground level street wall.
- Along Tilbury Street, the façade is setback 70' for the future greenway, and the elevation is designed with multiple plane changes as well as a sloped roof on the top floor to emphasize the residential character of East Bethesda.
- The Applicant currently seeks 30 points for design excellence.
 - 10 Points: Generally consistent with the Design Guidelines and meets four of the CR Guideline Criteria
 - 20 Points: Superlative design that in a uniquely compelling way meets the Design Guidelines or overcomes a significant site or similar constraint; a top example of design within Montgomery County
 - 30 Points: Singular design that exemplifies the highest intent of the Design Guidelines and may be considered a top example of design within the Mid-Atlantic region