

# Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)

## Meeting Notes

Friday, September 10, 2021, 8AM (Virtual Meeting)

### I. PRESENTATION – 7126 WISCONSIN AVENUE

- Judd Ullom, Director of Development, Foulger Pratt; Heather Dlhopsky, Zoning Counsel, Wire Gill; Andy Czajkowski, Associate Principal, SK+I Architecture presented the project.
- The project had been before the IAC previously, but the land assemblage now includes the Capital One Bank site, changing the scale and design of the project.
- The proposed project will include a 225-foot-tall residential tower that is set back 39'6" from the adjacent Seasons Apartment building to the west at 4710 Bethesda Avenue.
- The project will have retail and the residential garage entrance along Bethesda Avenue.
- The building lobby and loading will be on the Miller Avenue side, along with a large bicycle storage facility promoting its proximity and connection to the Capitol Crescent Trail.
- The applicant has also designed a through building drive aisle for a Capital One ATM.
- The building's signature feature will be the articulation of the tower element at the corner of Wisconsin and Bethesda Avenues, which also includes a larger setback and sidewalk width at this prominent corner.
- The primary material of the building façade will be glass.
- The project will make a financial contribution to the public space surrounding the Farm Women's Market, as part of the Eastern Greenway. As part of this negotiation the applicant seeks the increased building height of 225', above 200' designation in the Downtown Plan.

### IAC COMMENTS

- The loading may be challenging given the narrow width of Miller Avenue and should be studied further.
- Expressed concern over the inclusion of the drive thru ATM and its potential to complicate traffic and pedestrian movements at this already busy location.
- IAC members asked for more detail on the contribution to the Farm Women's Market open space. This led to a discussion around the accounting and uses of PIP funds thus far and planned for the future. These items are promised for delivery and discussion at a future IAC meeting.
- Sidewalk width at the corner of Bethesda Avenue and Wisconsin should be generous to preserve view corridors connecting Bethesda Row and Farm Woman's Market.

## II. PRESENTATION – PARK PROJECTS UPDATE: CAROLINE FREELAND PARK AND EASTERN GREENWAY

- Hyojung Garland, Master Planner / Supervisor, Park Planning and Stewardship
- Caroline Freeland Park – Lucas Bonney, Project Manager, Park Development Division, presented the updated park plans relocating the public art sculpture but maintaining its presence and visibility from Arlington Road, creating a large green lawn area for gathering, and enhancing access and pedestrian connections to the Arlington Road corridor.

### IAC COMMENTS

- The playground facilities are often crowded; attention should be paid to the scale making sure that the play area is adequate.
- There is an affinity for the fire station theme, if possible; preserving some element of that would be nice.
- The park has a history of unwelcome visitors after dark, which is a nuisance and concern for the adjacent residential neighborhood. This issue should be considered in both the layout and lighting plan, as well as the operational and policing program for the park.
- Eastern Greenway – Rachel Newhouse, Planner Coordinator, Park Planning and Stewardship, presented conceptual plans for the northern portion of the greenway. The intention is to make sure the spaces are linked together in a cohesive and thoughtful way. Park’s notion of a promenade extending end to end for pedestrian and bicycle movements would serve as that connection. The promenade would have various “enticements” along the way e.g., adult swings, public art, etc.

### IAC COMMENTS

- Expressed the need for careful consideration on the dimension of the proposed promenade and how much residual land that would leave for other landscape planning and programming. Also, if that remaining land would be sufficient to properly integrate the public space with the character, design, and architecture on the block.
- There is a desire for ample seating in these spaces.
- Concern that the desire for a common theme and design for all parcels would potentially stall near term gains and use, as timing and implementation of projects or parks are not likely to be aligned.

## III. PRESENTATION – UPDATE ON PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES SINCE IAC JUNE 4 MEETING including new projects, other relevant matters that have come to the attention of Planning, and personnel changes. Stephanie Dickel, Regulatory Supervisor, DownCounty Planning Division

### INTRODUCTIONS

- Peter Fosselman, Director of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center
- Darren Flusche, Division Chief, Montgomery County Parks

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

For the October meeting (tentative) – Presentation by Planning Staff regarding the Attainable Housing Strategies initiative, with focus on potential staff recommendations that would apply to areas within and immediately adjacent to Downtown Bethesda.

- Montgomery County HOC has recently purchased apartment buildings from ALDON Management, along Chevy Chase Drive. The Committee would like to learn more about Montgomery County HOC 's multiple projects in Downtown Bethesda.
- We will invite HOC's Chief Real Estate Officer, Zach Marks to speak with the IAC and update the group on their Bethesda projects.

#### **V. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The next meeting will be Friday, October 1, 2021.

<http://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/area-1/bethesda-downtown-plan/bethesda-downtown-implementation-advisory-committee/>