

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 7126 Wisconsin Avenue

DATE: April 27, 2022

*The **7126 Wisconsin Avenue** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on April 27, 2022. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, recommendations regarding design excellence, and the exceptional design public benefits points. 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 Site Plan stage and the Design Advisory Panel will determine if comments from Sketch Plan have been incorporated and take the final vote for design excellence public benefit points if it is determined the Project is suitable. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

Attendance:

Panel

George Dove

Rod Henderer

Brian Kelly (*joined late*)

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

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief of DownCounty Planning

Stephanie Dickel, DownCounty Regulatory Supervisor

Grace Bogdan, Planner III

Chuck Hines, Park Planner

Emily Balmer, DownCounty Administrative Assistant III

Applicant Team

Heather Dlhopsky, Attorney – Wire Gill LLP

Judd Ullom, Developer – Foulger Pratt

Dori Farley, Developer – Foulger Pratt

Josh Etter, Developer – Foulger Pratt

Andy Czajkowski, Architect – SK+I Architects



Valerie Hochman, Architect – SK+I Architects
Joanna Hess, Architect – SK+I Architects
Matthew Pohlhaus, Civil – Bohler Engineering
Trini Rodriguez, Landscape Architect – Parker Rodriguez
Brian Bolen, Landscape Architect – Parker Rodriguez

Members of the Public

No members of the public in attendance, one public comment received through email

Discussion Points:

Staff: The project is at Site Plan therefore the review is focusing on detailed architectural review, and the DAP may vote on design excellence points at the meeting's end. Staff provided a memo outlining a summary of changes in response to the DAP's comments from the July meeting when the related Concept Plan was reviewed.

Panel:

General Comments

- Great improvement from the first round. I do not have too many concerns with the dimensions of the setbacks as shown in the proposal today. I think you've handled the massing and setbacks meets the intent of the design guidelines. To your credit you've really listened to our last critique. Obviously, the elimination of the drive through bank has made this project more rational and removed a major handicap.
- Significant improvement in the design, I really like the base of the building and the intent of the fenestration pattern of the hinge.
- Is there a Public Open Space requirement for this site?
 - *Applicant Response: Yes there is a 5% requirement and it will generally be provided along Bethesda and Wisconsin behind the property line.*
- Regarding the ground floor, can you explain what is happening behind the property line and outdoor spaces?
 - *Applicant Response: On the miller corner we are proposing the lobby amenity with elevator access and FCC, then retail running along the primary corner of Wisconsin and Bethesda. Most of our transformers are located on Wisconsin Avenue and it is large enough to accommodate the tree pits and wide sidewalk and enhanced streetscape along Bethesda Avenue. There is a grade change along Bethesda Avenue and we are anticipating slab folds to deal with that at the first floor.*
- I very much like this project and I think its come a long way. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues

Materials

- I didn't hear much about materials, can you explain?
 - *Applicant Response: we are looking at a tone on tone for masonry, so a majority of the building will be masonry, with the base a darker masonry but the middle will*

be slightly lighter with maybe a change in texture. The corner top and penthouse is a combination of metal panel and glass.

- Will the corner tower be a different color than the rest of the building?
 - *Applicant Response: It can be lighter, maybe a couple tones lighter. The base can be a really rich, smooth or texture brick and then more shades and playful brick at the tower.*
 - *We agree having a slightly lighter color on the corner tower will be best, the building and site are not very large but we didn't want too bright a color resulting in a busy building.*

Corner Tower

- I think you have a great opportunity at this corner with the column, it could be a flourish element and perhaps not part of the same palette or charcoal color, something more hefty. Visually it looks like it is carrying down a load and there is an opportunity to create a moment there.
- The top of the tower, not sure if it can be taller as the public comment mentioned, but if the spandrel between the windscreen and amenity room glazing could be downplayed to put more focus on the top and flourish. The middle is great, but how it grounds and flourishes at the top could be a bigger scale.
- I think the tower, while elegant as shown, sort of fizzles out at the top and could be an opportunity for something really exciting and since you have the fins going up anyway it seems to me that is one way to do it.
 - *Applicant Response: Thank you for the comments on the top, we know it still needs more work and are happy to hear your feedback and we agree it is an opportunity to embellish.*
- I very much agree of the top of the tower, rather than truncated it, it should be terminated.
- I am concerned about the scale of the elevation itself particularly on the north side. Its interesting how wide it is on the Wisconsin Avenue north perspective and maybe too much. I'm not saying diminish the width, rather the portion to the right, pull that over.
 - *Applicant Response: It is based on the floor plan layout and the elevator top, in some ways its been plan driven.*
- I think the elevations and the rendering look more model-like rather than final and the top and retail entry area does need more work. I would love to see more refinement on the details. I know you are only asking for 10 points but I would love to see the building be better than that. 10 is the minimum required. The importance of this building requires more points than the minimum. I would appreciate seeing another iteration where the applicant goes into detail regarding the fenestration and detail of the elevations and then we can vote on 10 or more points at that time.

Panel Recommendations:

The Panel requested the Applicant to return with refinements to the base, corner tower, and materials as discussed in the meeting.

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: The Claiborne

DATE: April 27, 2022

Attendance:

Panel

George Dove

Rod Henderer

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

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief of DownCounty Planning

Stephanie Dickel, DownCounty Regulatory Supervisor

Grace Bogdan, Planner III

Chuck Hines, Park Planner

Cristina Sasaki, Park Planner

Emily Balmer, DownCounty Administrative Assistant III

Applicant Team

Heather Dlhopsky, Attorney – Wire Gill LLP

Discussion Points:

Staff: The Claiborne project was originally reviewed and voted on by the DAP in October of 2018. The project went on to receive Planning Board approval for the Sketch, Preliminary and Site Plan. The Bethesda Overlay Zone requires projects utilizing BOZ density to meet certain development triggers, otherwise the Site Plan approval is revoked. In this particular case, the applicant applied and was accepted by DPS for the building permit within the 2 years of approval, however it missed the 2nd trigger which requires the building permit to be pulled from DPS within 2 years subsequent to the building permit application being accepted. Therefore, the original Site Plan approval is revoked.



The ownership has changed since the original application and the new owner wishes to resubmit another application that is the exact same design, density, unit configuration as the original approval. Given the DAP has already seen this project and design, does the Panel wish to review the same design again under the new application process?

Panel:

- If there is no change in the design from the original approval, then I don't see why we would need to review again. If I recall, the design was reviewed extensively at the time and the Applicant made all the changes we had requested.

Panel Recommendations:

The Panel voted (4 in favor, 1 abstain) to not review the Claiborne project again and to receive the same amount of design excellence points (10 points) as in the original review.