

# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

## Meeting Minutes

**PROJECT:** 4702 Chevy Chase Drive

**DATE:** January 25, 2023

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*The **4702 Chevy Chase Drive** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on January 25, 2023. 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.*

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### **Attendance:**

#### Panel

Jonathan Fitch (recused)

Yulia Beltikova

Brian Kelly

Damon Orobona

Rod Henderer

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

#### Staff

Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Planning Director

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, DownCounty Planning

Stephanie Dickel, Regulatory Supervisor DownCounty Planning

Atul Sharma, Acting Assistant to the Deputy Development & Design Review

Grace Bogdan, Planner III

Adam Bossi, Planner III

#### Applicant Team

Pat Harris – Attorney, Lerch Early

Max Gross – Winthrop Development

Luz Del Mar Rosado – Architect, Lessard Design

Roxanne Edwards – Lessard Design

Gaëlle Gourmelon – Landscape Architect, MKSK Studios

Tim Longfellow – Engineer, GLW Engineering



## Discussion Points:

Staff: This is the second site plan presentation to the DAP. The project was originally reviewed by the DAP in October of 2022 and comments were provided to focus on the simplification of the building's architecture and language.

Panel:

### *General Comments*

- The series of subtle changes have come through well and changes the look and feel of the building.
- To your credit I think the most important thing you've done is create these 3d drawings. They show the building in a much more refined way than the elevations, which are currently still reflecting heavier line weights than the reality. It is for the betterment.
- A lot of the alignment issues have been solved, the cornices make much more sense.

### *Northern (Chevy Chase Drive) Elevation*

- For the front façade, the asymmetry of it seems a little jarring.
- Yes, it did seem unresolved from the elevation drawings, but the 3d shows it a little nicer. Perhaps the view from the east may show this a little different, but this doesn't bother me as much with the setback, I think it helps take the focus off the garage and if it did line up perhaps the garage would become more focused.
  - *Applicant Response: There are many uses happening on this side with access and loading and lobby areas, the units are also bigger on these lower floors, based on code, function and use and it was our intent to break those down with this dynamic front.*
  - I think the asymmetry has been discussed plenty at previous meetings and the way they have addressed it works quite well.
- Is this the only location where the stone base is being proposed? It looks like a retail entry rather than residential
  - *Applicant Response: It is wrapping around the base on the east façade and it was intended to highlight the entry. The rendering shows it more smoothly.*
  - I think the change in material here in that one location is appropriate, its typical that the surround for a major entry would be differentiated, if we took it away it would make the entry less legible and gravitate towards the center two bays of the façade. I think its helpful and I appreciate that it turns the corner.
  - It goes back to the symmetry, or asymmetry. There is some balance there having the stone piece. Should it be higher?
  - I like it the way it is, I like that it is a different shape than the garage and it plays into the whole façade.
- What kind of mechanical system are you going to use, vertical or horizontal?
  - *Applicant Response: the building ventilation details have not been finalized, both options are on the table. We have the green roof requirement which reduces the amount of space on top, it may be a combination on top and other vertical.*

- If it is a horizontal exhaust through the façade it would be important to show that as it may affect the location of the operable doors and windows, affecting the rhythm being shown on these elevations.

#### *Southern (Nottingham Drive) Elevation*

- The only issue I see now is the southern side of the building as it approaches the property line. Is there anything more that can be done to address the relationship of this building edge to the single family residential to the south. This reminds me of the Cathedral Mansion in DC. Is there any way of modeling the southern surface to better scale the building in relationship to the residential to the south. The urbanist approach to transition from building to single family would be on an alley not a street front, and that can't happen here so I am wondering if the building can be broken slightly, perhaps allowing a reveal in the middle that is more akin in scale to the single family across the street. By breaking up this elevation more with possibly a reveal or change in material, it can possibly look a bit more like separate townhouses rather than a singular elevation that is the full width of the elevation. This subtle break down in scale is more sympathetic to the single family homes across the street.
- I think the Cathedral Mansion is a great example, and I think perhaps the two bay/ three part composition on this southern edge would be a solution. Perhaps the cornice could be located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor rather than the 4<sup>th</sup>
- \*Brian Kelly façade material change\* material effect a change in plane without actually stepping back
- What's the height limit for the building at this location?
  - *Applicant Response: It is about 37 feet, it is not 35 feet as it is located just off the property line.*
  - So it is about the same height as allowed by the single family zone across the street?
  - Yes.
- One of the big controversies during Sketch Plan review was the Nottingham Drive frontage and the Applicant, over many meetings at the DAP, has significantly improved this frontage. Now the comment about further articulation is good, but I don't want to take away from the progress that has made.
- The break proposed on the Chevy Chase frontage is subtle, but it makes a difference, so perhaps this is something we can incorporate on the Nottingham Drive frontage. It could offer the appearance of a step without creating too much differentiation, to keep it simplistic.
  - *Applicant Response: Could that break be towards the middle of the façade not the side, so it becomes a three-part articulation rather than a 4 part?*
  - Yes, a subtle change with the center (either side of the stairs), which helps break the scale more.

**Public Comment:**

- I appreciate how the project has evolved. The Southern Façade still gives me pause, if some consideration could be given to the 3 bay composition that would help break down the massing more.
  - *Applicant Response: We envision this to be to be 3 3.5 floors you see, they are more compressed due to the construction system being more shallow.*
  - What is the structural system?
  - *Still refining that detail but we do know that it will be more shallow*

**Panel Recommendations:**

The Applicant is requesting 25 points for design excellence. Based on the submittal, the DAP unanimously (4-0) voted that 20 is more appropriate with the following condition:

1. Update the southern façade with a 3-part articulation subject to review by staff during the Site Plan application.