




DATE: September 20, 2023

TO: Bethesda Downton Plan Design Advisory Panel (DAP)

FROM: Grace Bogdan, Planner III, Downcounty Planning   
Stephanie Dickel, Regulatory Supervisor, Downcounty Planning  
Atul Sharma, Assistant to the Deputy Director, Director's Office  
Paul Mortenson, Senior Urban Designer, Director's Office

RE: Staff comments for the September 27, 2023 DAP Meeting

This will be a hybrid meeting, attendees can participate in person or virtually.

## Item #1

### 7025 Strathmore Street

Architects Collaborative Inc

Vika, Landscape Architect

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sketch Plan presentation, focusing on high-level conformance of building massing and urban design.
- The Project proposes a new 70-foot tall residential building located on the corner of Strathmore Street at Woodmont Avenue, with frontage along an alley that connects Woodmont Avenue to Bradley Boulevard to the south.
- Strathmore Street is considered a Neighborhood Connector Street and Woodmont Avenue is a Downtown Mixed-Use Street. The proposal shows the design respecting the build to lines on each of these streets with a 15 feet setback on Woodmont Avenue and a 20 feet setback on Strathmore Street.
- Given the proposed height of the building, the Applicant has elected to use Alternative Methods to reduce tower bulk rather than providing the sector plan recommended step-backs. These methods include unique geometry, modulated and articulated façade, and limited apparent face.
- The alternative method to reduce bulk through modulation and articulation of the façade includes bays on both street facades, which project over the build-to line on Strathmore Street and appear heavy and visually horizontally continuous. More detail on the relationship of the bays and balconies to the ground floor and street would be helpful.
- The design features a two-story base with a prominent curved corner with lobby. Currently, the first floor looks shorter and compressed under the second floor of the base articulation. The base design should appear taller than the individual floors above, and could be improved by moving the proposed canopy from above the 1<sup>st</sup> floor to the 2<sup>nd</sup> story.
- The Applicant could consider moving the main lobby entrance currently shown on Strathmore Street and fitness center entrance currently shown from the alley to a more prominent location on the curved corner to further activate the frontage. The frontage zone

of the building could be utilized for seating and active uses, as recommended in the Design Guidelines, rather than landscaping. Activation for the residential portion of the base could be improved with individual unit entries from the street for the ground floor units.

- The Sector Plan recommends a through block connection along the southern edge of this Property that would link Wisconsin Avenue to Strathmore Street. 7000 Wisconsin, which was seen before the DAP and currently under construction, has provided their portion of the through block connection and a connection on this Property would complete the link. The Applicant proposes to provide this connection along the southern property line with a sidewalk and open space area that will be partially under the building above, which tends to partially privatize this space. More details should be provided to show the height of this space and how it will be activated with the adjacent building uses and how it will be recognized as public rather than semi-private.
- The Applicant is requesting 20 exceptional design points.
  - *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*