



DATE: October 10, 2023  
TO: Silver Spring Design Advisory Panel (DAP)  
FROM: Atara Margolies, Planner III, Downcounty Planning  
RE: Staff comments for the October 18, 2023, DAP Meeting

This will be a hybrid meeting; attendees are welcome to participate virtually or in-person.

*Note: This memo recaps the main issues raised at the DAP meeting in July and provides some key information about the resubmission.*

#### **Item #1**

##### **8676 Georgia Avenue**

Roadside Development

Bonstra | Haresign, architect

##### Submission Overview:

This is the second submission to the DAP. This project is in the Sketch Plan phase of the regulatory review process. Note that this project is under review by the DAP as well as by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) because the project includes a building that is on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation – the Tastee Diner cab.

##### Review of issues from July 21 DAP meeting:

The DAP identified several issues with the overall building massing at the July 19 meeting. These addressed overall massing, façade, parking and placement of the Tastee Diner cab. Below are the main points from the July 19 meeting for review:

- The base of the building needs to respond more directly to the townhomes across Ramsey Avenue.
- The DAP was concerned about the placement of the Diner and expressed that it needs more of its own space and its own treatment within the plaza being created at Cameron Street and Ramsey Avenue.

- A 4' setback along Cameron Street does not meet the Design Guidelines.
- The horizontal screening above the Tastee Diner should have more articulation so that it appears as part of the overall architecture of the building rather than just a screened parking lot. This horizontal screening is also overpowering to the diner.
- Overall concern about lack of design elements to emphasize the corner at Georgia Avenue and Cameron Street. Concern about the design of the Georgia Avenue façade, if a setback as required by the Design Guidelines is not feasible. The DAP was also concerned about how the proposed building meets the Verizon Building and the function of the vacant open area created along the Georgia Avenue sidewalk will work or not.
- The Panel discussed how to mitigate the impact of a parking garage façade along Georgia Avenue. DAP would like to see a façade that contributes to activation, ideally via liner units or other non-garage uses. Façade treatment of parking levels should be fully integrated into the greater building design. It should not appear as if the parking levels are entirely different from the building above.

The applicant included a narrative that responds to these comments. They have included diagrammatic street sections, draft renderings, and a 3D video, among other exhibits. Note that upper level floor plans and façade details will be available at Site Plan, but are not typically developed at the Sketch Plan phase of review.

Note about Diner placement: The Proposed Diner Car plan shows that the location of the Diner car has been revised and now pulls away from the building and reads more as an object. The southwest corner and back wall will be reconstructed, and the Diner will be connected to the ground floor of the building via a link that is rendered in illustrative images included as a glass/transparent link (see pages 3 and 12 of the PDF submitted). This location is consistent with the Historic Preservation Commission's (HPC) feedback from the preliminary consultation on August 16, 2023. The HPC will provide additional comments on the revised placement at their October 25, 2023 meeting. As the HPC's approval is required for any relocation or alteration of the Diner, the DAP should focus on other aspects of the building and site design.

The DAP also requested the following exhibits with resubmission:

- Ground floor plan showing programming and then upper parking levels so the DAP can understand the relationships within the base.
- Parking plans with circulation diagrams.
- Street level massing perspectives (with people) that show the relationship between the Diner and the proposed open space;
- Street sections along Georgia Avenue, Cameron Street and Ramsey Avenue. Provide multiple sections where necessary to show different conditions, including people, trees and any buildings across the street.
- Details of Georgia Avenue façade to understand how that will be treated.
- More information about the open space so the Panel can understand how it relates to the Diner and what sort of experience/programming will be provided in this space.

The design team provided many of these exhibits, but not all, as some are more appropriate for Site Plan (parking plans, façade details). The submission includes several diagrammatic street sections, partial renderings, material concepts, façade studies and a video of a ground-level walkthrough along Cameron Street from Georgia Avenue to Ramsey Avenue.

Additional Notes:

- Planning staff, including Historic Preservation staff, met with the team to discuss many of these issues including placement of the Diner before this resubmission.
- As required by the Sector Plan, the applicant is requesting all 10 points for Exceptional Design.
- The following will be further explored in Site Plan:
  - How the façade treatment will differentiate base from tower where no step-back is shown across all frontages;
  - Treatment of Georgia Avenue corner and façade;
  - Façade design for above-grade parking to ensure it is “invisible” from the exterior;
  - Design of the “cap” at the upper levels of the tower