



DATE: January 9, 2024
TO: Silver Spring Design Advisory Panel (DAP)
FROM: Atara Margolies, Planner III, Downcounty Planning
RE: Staff comments for the January 17, DAP Meeting

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

Note: This memo identifies initial staff issues and comments on the submitted revised design. The purpose of the memo is to inform the panel members and the general public of potential design issues based on the Design Guidelines to be discussed during the DAP meeting. As part of the development review process, staff will make their own recommendations to the Planning Board regarding the required findings for conformance with the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Sector Plan and the Design Guidelines, and overall compatibility, informed by the DAP's comments and vote.

Item #1

Ellsworth Place Residential

GBT Realty

Gresham Smith, architect; VIKA, engineering

Submission Overview:

This is the second submission to the DAP. This project is in the Sketch Plan phase of the regulatory review process. The applicant initially presented the project to the DAP in November and this submission responds to the panel's comments.

In November the DAP commented on:

- The overall massing of the proposed building;
- The need for a strong connection between the tower and the existing base;
- Lack of relationship to the Fenton Street/Colesville Road mall entrance at the base;
- Relationship of the proposed tower to the alley adjacent to the site;
- Location of the proposed amenities floor.

The applicant responded to each of these items in the submission. The building massing has been simplified, although it also appears significantly less articulated and somewhat monolithic as a result

(pages 15-17). The building corners appear to be rounded now, which is a departure from the previous massing. There are curved outdoor balconies now facing Colesville Road and Fenton Street that are noted as a “massing gesture” to the curved façade of the base at this intersection.

Façade improvements are proposed to the base for the full height of the base at the location where the new residential tower entry is proposed along Colesville Road. The redesigned part of the façade will extend up to reach the bottom of the tower and will be integrated with the design of the amenity floor at the first floor of the tower. The amenities have been split between two floors – the pool remains at the top floor, now sharing that floor with units, while some of the other amenities are now at the first floor of the tower above the mall roof, providing a buffer between the commercial and residential uses.

While the applicant acknowledges that the connection to the alley is complicated, the submission states that the design of the elevator core will be part of the solution and it will be explored further in later phases of design.

Additional exhibits have been provided to address specific requests from the DAP:

- Plan diagram delineating the location of the original Hecht’s building;
- 3D massing from 2012 showing the previously proposed office tower above the base.