




DATE: January 17, 2024

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 Mortensen, Senior Urban Designer, Director's Office

RE: Staff comments for the January 24, 2024 DAP Meeting

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

Item #1

Lot #25

Torti Gallas Architects

Parker Rodriguez

- 2nd Sketch Plan presentation to the DAP, focusing on high-level conformance of building massing and urban design.
- At the November DAP, the Panel requested the Applicant return with diagrammatic floor plans showing options with an entrance into the courtyard from the Eastern Greenway and more detailed drawings/diagrams of how the building will relate to the adjacent streets with the parking plinth raising up out of the site.
- The resubmittal includes the following major changes: extension of lobby/amenity space to face the greenway, elimination of 'bridge' element on Highland Avenue, creation of visual connection between courtyard and the greenway through new lobby layout.
- The floor plans show the amenity space facing the greenway with a connection into the interior courtyard, and in section it is highlighted as a two-story amenity space fronting the greenway, this reflects the Panel's requests from the November meeting and is a significant improvement to the layout. However, Page 29 of the submittal shows a pedestrian level rendering from the greenway and the proposed massing offers little visual cues of a two-story entrance/amenity space. Perhaps this could be emphasized through change of material, similar to corner lobby glazing, rather than the heavy base masonry.
- Page 27 of the submittal shows pedestrian level renderings of the public realm along Highland Avenue and Maple Avenue showing a two-story masonry base with balconies above the first floor (top of parking garage below).
- On all facades, attaching the substantial upper bays to the base through the piers would eliminate the dark horizontal shadow on the third level and ground the bays to the base.
- The Applicant is requesting 20 points for exceptional design.

Resources:

[November meeting minutes hyperlink](#)

[November submission hyperlink](#)

Design Excellence Guide:

- *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*