



DATE: April 9, 2024  
TO: Silver Spring Design Advisory Panel (DAP)  
FROM: Atara Margolies, Planner III, Downcounty Planning  
  
RE: Staff comments for the April 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 designs. The purpose of the memo is to inform the panel members and the general public of potential design issues based on the Design Guidelines and previous DAP comments 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. Note that Item #2 is a Mandatory Referral, and therefore the presentation to the DAP is 'for information only.'*

### **Item #1**

#### **Ellsworth Place Residential**

GBT Realty

Gresham Smith, architect; VIKA, engineering

#### Submission Overview:

This is the third submission to the DAP. This project is in the Sketch Plan phase of the regulatory review process which the review should be focused on the massing and general layout of the building as well as evaluating the incentive points allocations. This project was last at the DAP in January, and this submission respond to the panel's comments.

In January the DAP commented on:

- The overall massing of the proposed building, particularly the curved corners and terracing.
- The need for a stronger connection between the proposed tower and the existing mall base – the DAP discussed bringing a portion of the tower façade out to the podium base elevation front along Colesville Road and then down to the street in some manner so that the tower, podium and entrance are woven together.

- Desire for a clearer relationship between the tower and the corner mall entrance at Colesville Road and Fenton Street.

The DAP also requested that the applicant include sections with any resubmission that would shed light on the mall structural system and tenant spaces that would be impacted by this addition.

The applicant responded to each of these items in the submission. The building massing has been further developed. The massing is rectilinear, while still maintaining a clear “L” shape. The entrance along Colesville Road now includes a full façade renovation that extends above the height of the mall podium base and is met by a cantilevered “bar” of the “L” that then slopes back from the street towards the roof of the tower. This draws the eye to the one-story void at the first amenity floor above the base but maintains a visual relationship between the tower and the base (p.15). The cantilevered massing also has an angled face on the alley side of the building which appears to die into the vertical circulation tower. This is easiest to understand in the plan diagrams on p. 13.

A section showing the structure that extends above the roof and will be supporting the tower is included in this submission (p. 6).

The rooftop amenity floor is further developed as the location for a pool, and an initial concept for a “cap” is included in this submission. This is illustrated in the last four sheets in the submission (no page numbers) with new plans and precedent images.

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## Item #2

### **G2 Garage – 8615 Georgia Avenue**

United Therapeutics + MCDOT

Desman Design Management / Rodgers Consulting

#### Submission Overview

This is a first submission for a mandatory referral project. This project is the result of a real estate deal between United Therapeutics (UT) and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). MCDOT owns and operates the Spring-Cameron parking garage (Garage 2) through the Parking Lot District program. United Therapeutics has bought that garage from the County and is replacing it with a 675-space standalone parking garage at 8615 Georgia Avenue (see location map on p. 9 of the PDF submission). 8615 Georgia Avenue is currently a surface parking lot between the Core apartments and the 8600 block of Colesville Road, which includes The Fillmore Silver Spring.

As this garage will be developed, and the managed by MCDOT, the project is considered a mandatory referral. Mandatory Referrals are plans submitted by government entities for any type of land use acquisition, sale, or development activity. The Planning Board reviews such plans on an advisory

basis, and provides comments and recommendations, but does not formally approve or deny such plans. Similarly, the DAP comments on this project will be understood as advisory. The DAP will not be voting on Design Excellence points for this project.

For this project, the DAP should consider how the garage relates to the surrounding context, the frontage treatment on Georgia Avenue, and any Georgia Avenue ground-floor activation. It is worth noting that although the sector plan does not expressly prohibit standalone parking garages from being constructed, given the CR 5.0 zoning and height limit of 260' on this parcel, a lot of development potential is squandered by constructing a garage here with no other significant accompanying program.

Project Description:

The garage extends from Georgia Avenue halfway into the depth of the block. The surface parking lot that is accessible from Fenton Street will remain. There will be curb cuts to alleys to the north and south of the garage for entry and egress. The ground floor plan on p. 13 shows that there will be ground floor area for retail or other active use. A transparent stair tower sits at the northwestern corner of the garage, at Georgia Avenue.

The main design feature of the garage is the façade. Vertical, aluminum fins are proposed across the entirety of the Georgia Avenue façade and along portions of the southern façade that will be visible from Colesville Road above the low-rise commercial development on the north side of the block. The fixed fins will be angled differently throughout the façade to provide a dynamic, undulating, visual effect.

Note: The applicant seems to have relied on the 2019 *Silver Spring Streetscape Standards* (currently being updated) for the streetscape design, rather than referring to the street sections in the SSDAC Sector Plan and Design Guidelines for those elements.