



Silver Spring Design Advisory Panel – April 17, 2024 Meeting Notes

Revised April 19, 2024

Item #1

Ellsworth Place

GBT Realty, with Gresham Smith – architect; VIKA - engineer

This was the third presentation of the Ellsworth Place project to the DAP. The following meeting notes summarize the DAP's comments and thoughts regarding the design of the project. The DAP agreed that the project could continue through Sketch Plan and return at Site Plan for the next design review.

Attendance:

Design Advisory Panel:

Bill Bonstra (virtual)

David Cronrath

Alice Enz

Praj Kasbekar (virtual)

Qiaojue Yu (virtual)

Staff:

Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director

Paul Mortensen, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office

Atul Sharma, Assistant to the Deputy for Development and Design Review (virtual)

Stephanie Dickel, Regulatory Supervisor, Downcounty Planning

Atara Margolies, Planner III, Downcounty Planning

Henry Coppola, Parks, Planning and Stewardship Supervisor (virtual)

Cristina Sasaki, Parks Planner (virtual)

Applicant Team:

Gus Bauman, Beveridge and Diamond, P.C.

Ian Duke, VIKA (virtual)

Josh Sloan, VIKA (virtual)

Trey Culpepper, GBT Realty

Brandon Bell, Gresham Smith

Jennie LeNoue, Gresham Smith

Meeting Notes:

The applicant team presented updated exhibits that addressed the DAP's comments from the January 2024 meeting. The applicant team noted that the DAP had provided helpful comments at the last meeting and that the presentation addressed the comments and presented revised direction for the overall massing of the building.

The presentation focused on the following main points raised by the DAP at the January meeting:

- Bring the residential tower down to the ground along Colesville Road in a significant manner that contributes to the design of the tower and the entire development. This submission tried to address the suggestion from some DAP members to bring the north-south leg of the 'L' to the ground visually, even if there are structural limitations.
- Simplify the tower massing and eliminate the curves as they do not help define the building, and they create odd-shaped spaces in the interior.
- Create a first-floor amenity space that clearly defines the tower from the base.
- Do not use the Colesville Road / Fenton Street mall entrance as inspiration for anything, but also do not ignore it. It needs to be addressed in some way.

In response, the applicant advanced the design to address several of the issues listed above. The massing is rectilinear, and the north-south bar of the 'L' massing is differentiated by the north façade sloping from the mall base level up to the roof. The top of the tower is now more articulated such that it is visible from Colesville Road. The applicant provided further information on the structural limitations of the existing building, and more detail about the proposed amenity spaces.

DAP Comments:

Overall Massing:

The DAP appreciated the effort the team took to respond to the major comments. The overall mass of the building is heading in the right direction. The DAP likes the emphasis on the north-south bar of the 'L' over the east-west bar but would like to see the team take that further. This can be done in a number of ways, including, but not limited to, modifying the massing of the tower so that visually the north-south bar appears to extend all the way to the ground, by articulating the top/cap of the tower more, and through façade articulation and materials which will happen during Site Plan review.

The DAP believes the existing corner feature at Colesville Road and Fenton Street is unfortunate and awkward in its relationship to the streets and greater pedestrian environment. In this iteration the tower hangs over the entry space, even though the bottom floor of the tower is recessed. The DAP felt that this could be better resolved by pulling the tower back at the corner and possibly adding a projection at the eastern end to gain back square footage. The tower should not overhang this space. See attached sketches at the end of these meeting notes to better understand the DAP's suggestion for this eastern end of the tower.

Tower Façade to Ground:

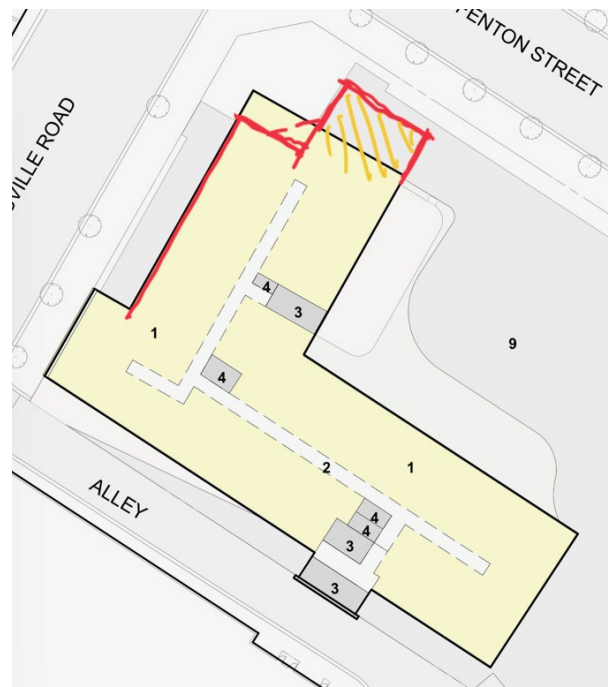
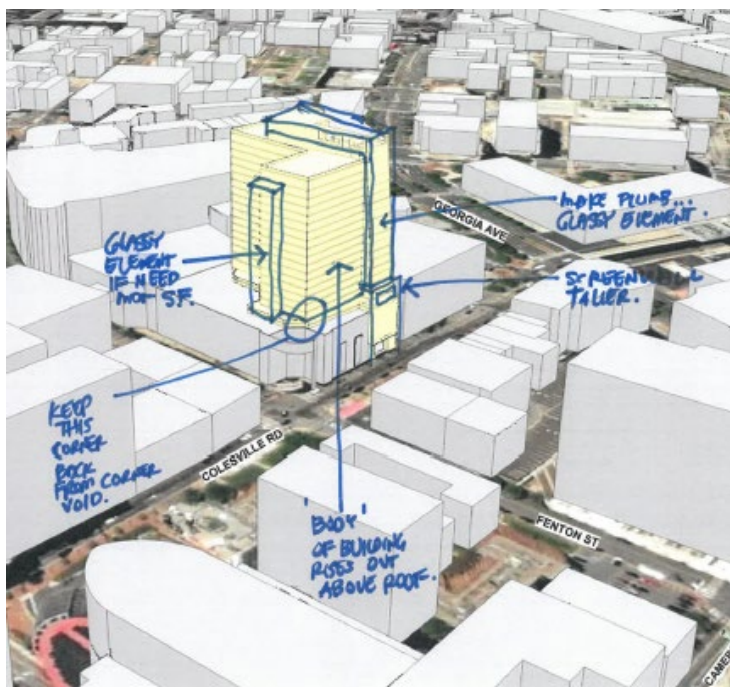
The DAP continued to discuss the connection between the tower and ground in response to the applicant's presentation. The north-south bar of the 'L' comes down and is in line with the renovated façade above the new residential entry on Colesville Road, but apparently, due to structural limitations, and some existing upper floor leasing agreements, it hovers over the lower amenity floor and does not physically connect down to the ground. There was discussion about doing something with materials or façade design to "close the gap" at this location. An additional suggestion was to possibly use lightweight materials to create a visual connection from the tower to the ground. Another suggestion was to allow the base (mall mass) to extend up a few floors at this location to again accentuate the northern end of the north-south bar and connect the tower to the mall with an overlapping mass. The DAP has returned several times to precedent of a building with a tower that brings one face all the way down to the ground without a break, and the base appears to contain a parking garage (p24 of the submission packet). The DAP believes this precedent is important and reflects their comments on overall massing.

Project to return again at Site Plan

Overall, the DAP felt the project is moving in the right direction. The DAP agreed that the project could proceed through the Sketch Plan process and return to the DAP during Site Plan. One DAP member requested that the team bring further structural information at that time so that the DAP can continue to understand the limitations that the team is dealing with. There was a strong desire that within the Site Plan review process, the applicant will continue to address the DAP's massing comments as they move forward into materiality and fenestration detail.

Additional Notes:

Below are sketches as mentioned above:



Item #2

G2 Replacement Garage

United Therapeutics / MCDOT

Rodgers Consulting, Fox Architects, Desman Design Management

This was the first presentation of the G2 Replacement Garage project to the DAP. This project is a Mandatory Referral as it will be a County owned and operated parking garage. This is part of a larger real estate deal between United Therapeutics and Montgomery County.

Attendance:

Design Advisory Panel:

Bill Bonstra (virtual)

David Cronrath

Alice Enz

Praj Kasbekar (virtual)

Qiaoju Yu (virtual)

Staff:

Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director

Paul Mortensen, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office

Atul Sharma, Assistant to the Deputy for Development and Design Review (virtual)

Stephanie Dickel, Regulatory Supervisor, Downcounty Planning

Atara Margolies, Planner III, Downcounty Planning

Cristina Sasaki, Parks Planner (virtual)

Applicant Team

Zach Pawlos, Rodgers Consulting

Robert Graham, Rodgers Consulting

Chris Ruhlen, Lerch, Early and Brewer

Bill Kominers, Lerch, Early and Brewer

Dan Slear, Layline LLC

Robert Breslaw, United Therapeutics

Leslie Chang, United Therapeutics

J.P. Spickler, Fox Architects

Kate Mooney, Fox Architects

John Judge, Desman Design

Jeff Mudd, Whiting-Turner (virtual)

James Bradshaw, Whiting-Turner (virtual)

Meeting Notes:

The applicant presented an overview of United Therapeutics (UT) and its existing campus in downtown Silver Spring. The team reviewed the plans for future campus expansion and how via a real

estate deal with Montgomery County, UT will be building a new standalone parking garage facing onto Georgia Avenue. UT will be redeveloping the existing Spring-Cameron Garage (Garage 2) site and will be replacing 675 of the existing 1311 spaces in a new standalone garage (Garage 22) on Georgia Avenue between Colesville Road and Cameron Street.

The DAP was not enthusiastic about a standalone parking garage in downtown Silver Spring on a prominent site on Georgia Avenue. DAP members felt it conflicted with the overall goals of creating a vibrant downtown in Silver Spring and an active Georgia Avenue corridor, particularly given that the two other projects that are before the DAP are new residential developments proposed in the same neighborhood. They felt a standalone garage facing onto this important street will not contribute to creating a “healthy” urban area. DAP members wanted to hear more about the development deal and why mixed-use options that combined parking with residential development were not pursued, or some sort of alternate approach that locates the garage in a way that has less impact on potential future development along Georgia Avenue. The applicant merely responded that other paths were discussed but this is where they landed.

The DAP appreciated the applicant’s attempts to create a well-designed, colorful, interesting screen for the concrete garage behind. Although the applicant attempted to show how a canopy at the residential building to the north influenced their delineation between the base and the garage mass above, the DAP thought it was very difficult to judge the design without seeing the full Georgia Avenue elevation from Colesville Avenue to Cameron Street. In addition, there was concern that emphasizing the vertical circulation stair at the north end of the garage façade actually detracted from the design, and the DAP recommended that the team consider extending the fin/screen design across the full façade. There was also discussion about including a canopy over the entire ground floor, with some possible emphasis at the lobby entrance to fully engage the street. The DAP also suggested designing the façade along the alley such that it is obvious where the entrance to the garage is from a design perspective, not just because of the inevitable signage that will be there. The DAP questioned what uses would be suggested for the first floor to help activate the street. Although program uses were not suggested yet, one DAP comment suggested the vertical circulation might be moved to the southern end so that the “commercial” use within the first floor could have a direct relationship to the retail uses across the alley to the north. There was also a brief discussion about a possible connection between the mass of the screened elevation and the ground. Currently, the screening totally floats above the ground with the first floor composed of 100 percent storefront glass.

Although the DAP did not discuss streetscape, it was noted that the applicant used the 2019 Streetscape Standards, which are in the process of being updated, and it did not seem like they relied on the Sector Plan (which has street sections for this portion of Georgia Avenue) or the Design Guidelines.

As this is a mandatory referral, the DAP’s comments are merely advisory, and this project will not return to the DAP.