



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT: 7749 Old Georgetown Road

DATE: July 24, 2024

Attendance:

Panel

Yulia Beltikova

Rod Henderer

Robert Sponseller

Paul Mortensen, ex officio member, Chief Urban Designer in the Director's Office

Staff

Atul Sharma, Assistant to the Deputy Director

Stephanie Dickel, Downcounty Regulatory Supervisor

Grace Bogdan, Planner III

Adam Bossi, Planner III

Applicant Team

Matt Gordon – Attorney

Doug Firstenberg – Stonebridge

Chris Huffer – Architect, SK&I

Sami Kirkdill – Architect, SK&I

Steve Sattler – Parker Rodriguez

Marius Radulescu – Architect, SK&I

Discussion Points:

Staff: This is the 2nd presentation before the DAP for a Site Plan level of review responding to comments from the June 24th DAP meeting.

Panel:

- Do you happen to have a plan detail that compares the Old Georgetown Road frontage? I saw the massing comparison but not the plans. That's alright if not. I think it has improved along Old Georgetown Road, it has more of a gap and a differentiation from before. Its stronger and more consistent. I appreciate the piers at the corner as well. I notice you didn't land the podium volume on Old Georgetown Road as you do on St Elmo Avenue, so it wraps and floats, as opposed to landing, correct?
 - *Applicant Response: Yes, we looked at landing but with the pedestrian movements and the retail space we felt that it was a little crowded.*
- Looking at the detail of the panels, I'm noticing the gaps at the floor lines, is that inherent to the system you are using?
 - *Applicant Response: Yes, that is part of the window wall system, the bottom panel has a 2" gap between the panels. The second line we are showing is the venting from the units which is hidden in that gap.*
 - I think its worth it if it's integrating the venting.
- I appreciate the hard work and the diligent comparative. The change is a very positive improvement. I think some additional improvement to the 2-6 floors could occur on Old Georgetown Road at the base, but that is minor and I'm happy to suggest this move forward. For the record I liked the taller penthouse, but this updated solution works as well.
- I agree with the comments and appreciate the fact that you responded to our comments particularly along Old Georgetown Road. I didn't appreciate how you reduced the massing of the penthouse on St Elmo Avenue, I didn't recognize that in our June meeting.
- I agree with the improvements and adding more contrast.
- I appreciate the fact you are using masonry to add texture at the street level around the service entries along St Elmo. I'm wondering if there could be some sort of artistic graphic integrated into this wall that has a reference to the Canopy Corridor along St. Elmo Avenue, perhaps something green, to lighten the length of the dark blank wall and service doors similar to Pike and Rose or the Wharf. There are many other development precedents in the region to look towards.
- (staff) John provided written comments given he could not attend today's meeting which state this is a thoughtfully designed building and suggests 20 design excellence points. He notes that the Old Georgetown Road façade leaves opportunity for café spaces or other creative sidewalk features and again supports studying a layby or some

other form of delivery short term parking on St Elmo Avenue for the needs of the building.

Panel Recommendations:

The Applicant requested 30 design excellence points, which is a building that would be deserving of national recognition. The DAP felt the design is in line with a superlative design within Montgomery County and voted (3-0) in support of 25 design excellence points. The Panel agreed with integrating artistic and/or graphic features around the loading area that can be reviewed during the Site Plan process to improve pedestrian interest.