




DATE: September 17, 2025

TO: Bethesda Downton Plan Design Advisory Panel (DAP)

FROM: Grace Bogdan, Planner IV, Design, Placemaking, & Policy Division 
Stephanie Dickel, Regulatory Supervisor, West County Planning
Sandra Pereira, Supervisor, Design, Placemaking, & Policy Division
Paul Mortensen, Planning Innovation Lead, Director's Office

RE: Staff comments for the September 24, 2025 DAP Meeting

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

Item #1

Montgomery Pearl

Benjamin Yonce, Architect, BKV Group

John Neilson, Landscape Architect, BKV Group

- 2nd Sketch Plan presentation to the DAP, focusing on high-level conformance of building massing and urban design.
- At the first presentation to the DAP in July, there were several comments regarding the need for more context to understand the topography of the site and relationship with Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) improvements. Additionally, the Panel expressed a strong desire to revisit the 'pinch point' at the rear of the site and further the connection with the CCT, among other comments captured in the [meeting notes](#).
- The Applicant's resubmission includes updated renderings and drawings showing the relationship with the CCT which will be supported by a 3D model at the meeting, and has made modifications to the proposal in response to the comments made in July. Notably, the revised proposal:
 - Aligns the height of the West building and Central building base
 - Simplifies the language of the Montgomery Avenue elevations to be more consistent with southern facade
 - Expands the rear connection area with the CCT:
 - Pulls back the building footprint of the East building from the CCT to create more meaningful space
 - Elevates the landscape area between the Central Building and the CCT where the design originally was sunken to create an uninterrupted experience and resting station possibilities
- These improved revisions, along with the additional context and precedent images included in the resubmission, provide a refined massing with big picture moves expected of a sketch plan with the details to be furthered at Site Plan.
- The Applicant is requesting 25 points for exceptional design.

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*