




DATE: December 3, 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 December 10, 2025 DAP Meeting

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

Item #1

7475 Wisconsin Avenue

Chris Huffer, Architect, SK+I

MRP Realty and Prime Finance, Applicant

- 1st Concept plan presentation to the DAP, focusing on high-level conformance of building massing and urban design. The Project anticipates using an expedited application process, “Commercial to Residential Reconstruction Plan” (CRR Plan) which will combine the Sketch and Site Plan portion of the process.
- The Site is comprised of four properties located at the prominent southeast corner of Wisconsin Avenue and East West Highway. Each of the properties currently contains:
 - 7401 Wisconsin Avenue (corner of Wisconsin Ave and Montgomery Lane): 5-story office building
 - 7475 Wisconsin Avenue (Wisconsin avenue and East West Highway): 11-story office building with circular corner
 - 4650 East West Highway: 2-story office building
 - 4600 East West Highway: 9-story office building
- The Applicant proposes a phased approach to redevelopment, with the first phase including 7475 Wisconsin Ave and 4650 East West Highway, the second phase to be 7401 Wisconsin Avenue. The 4600 East West Highway office building will remain.
- The first phase would include a mixed-use building up to 442,000 square feet in size with ground floor retail and up to 420 units with 17.6% MPDUs.
- The first phase is split zoned for height, with the tallest mapped height of 250 feet on the corner, stepping down to 175 feet towards the east. The Applicant proposes to increase height by one floor (12') with the provision of MPDUs.
- East West Highway and Wisconsin Avenue are both considered Urban Boulevards, with recommendations for a 25-30 foot build-to-line, a step-back of 10-15 feet above the base. The Proposal will conform to these guidelines, both meeting the 25-30 foot build to line, with a lower building base on East West Highway of 31 feet and a variable step-back of 2'-20'

on East West Highway above the base. The building base on Wisconsin Avenue will be approximately 44 feet with a variable tower step-back of 2'-29' on Wisconsin Avenue.

- East West Highway is designated a canopy corridor and should provide the maximum sidewalk width and determine the feasibility of providing a double row of trees along this street frontage.
- The existing building has a very intentional rounded design treatment at the corner, perhaps to reflect the metro entrance and the importance of this street corner within the downtown. Staff questions whether the proposed massing will achieve the same intentional design and distinguish the base/middle/top as proposed. Perhaps the existing metro entrance at the corner can be enhanced and the base can maintain a consistent height on both frontages.
- It would be helpful to have extended elevations of both East West Highway and Wisconsin Avenue to understand how this proposal will relate to the context of recently constructed and existing buildings in all directions. Based on the perspectives, the proposed base is lower than the surrounding buildings.
- The Applicant proposes to provide a 25-foot tower step-back to the east (4600 East West Highway) by providing a new alley to serve the property and a 35-foot setback to the existing buildings to the south (7401 Wisconsin Avenue, phase 2). The massing proposes a party wall for a portion of the building and states the phase 2 would redevelop in a compatible manner. It would be helpful to have a conceptual diagram visualizing phase 2 to see how the phases relate to each other in massing and to understand the full block internal circulation at build out.

Item #2

4719 Hampden Lane

Alyse Talbott, Design Collective

Washington Properties, Applicant

- 1st Concept plan presentation to the DAP, focusing on high-level conformance of building massing and urban design. The Project anticipates using an expedited application process, “Commercial to Residential Reconstruction Plan” (CRR Plan) which will combine the Sketch and Site Plan portion of the process.
- This Concept Plan is located on a portion of the Site that was previously reviewed by the Design Advisory Panel in 2021 and approved for redevelopment ([previous DAP submission available here](#)). Those regulatory approvals have expired. This Proposal would dramatically reduce the Site area previously approved with frontage on Hampden Lane, East Lane, and Montgomery Lane. The middle and eastern end of the block are outside of this scope of work.
- The Concept Plan proposes to redevelop the reduced Site with a new 250-foot-tall building for up to 260 units with 17.6% MPDUs, for which the Applicant is requesting one floor (12') of additional height.
- The Applicant is requesting initial feedback on the updated design that includes requests for alternative treatments to several of the Design Guideline recommendations:
 - Tower Step-backs on Montgomery Lane and Hampden Lane.

These are both Downtown Mixed-Use streets with a recommended build-to-line of 15-20 feet from the curb and a step-back of 10-15 feet above the base of the building (35-70 feet). The Applicant is requesting alternative treatment given the frontage along both of these streets is limited (less than 80 feet of frontage on both streets). Alternatively, the Applicant proposes to provide a grounded, highly articulated and varied façade on Montgomery Lane. On Hampden Lane, the Applicant proposes to cantilever above the ground floor with a 10 foot step-back at higher levels, approximately 180'-200'. Along East Lane, the Applicant will be providing the recommended 10 foot step-back around the 6th floor.

- Tower Separation Distance

The original design included a tower separation that was coordinated with the neighboring project at the eastern end of the block, with each site providing 22.5 feet of separation for a total of 45 feet, meeting the Sector Plan recommendation. Given how narrow the reduced Site is, the Applicant is requesting alternative treatment for the Sector Plan recommended tower separation (between 45-60 feet for buildings greater than 120 feet in height). The Design Guidelines allows alternative treatments for buildings below 120 feet or with a limited property size/width/depth to reduce tower separation or allow party walls. The Applicant is proposing to provide a 10-foot tower separation on the northern portion (Montgomery Lane) and a party wall on the southern portion (Hampden Lane). The Applicant has provided precedent images to visualize how the Applicant proposes to mitigate the visual impact with façade variation, texture, and patterns.

- It is unclear if the proposed 10' tower setback would achieve the intent of the tower separation, and what impact that would have on the future redevelopment of the neighboring property in the middle of the block. Staff also questions the quality of internal space within the studio units that will have windows facing the 10' setback. There are two alternative options that should be discussed including 1) if a party wall would be more appropriate for the entire eastern façade given the property and entire block is of a smaller size, freeing up some more space along East Lane for step-backs and articulation or 2) could the massing read as two distinct buildings with the portion facing Hampden Lane as one, providing the step-back along East Lane and the party wall as proposed, then the portion facing Montgomery Lane as a second tower like form, providing a lesser step-back on East lane to allow a larger tower step-back to the east.
- The Applicant is proposing to separate the access and loading for the Project, with the vehicular access to be located off East Lane and the loading to occur off of Hampden Lane. Ultimately, access will be determined in coordination with MCDOT during regulatory review.