

# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

## Meeting Minutes

**PROJECT:** 4719 Hampden Lane

**DATE:** May 27, 2026

### **Attendance:**

#### Panel

Sandeep Walia

John Tschiderer

Robert Sponseller

Paul Mortensen, Ex-officio

#### Staff

Atul Sharma, Chief, Design, Placemaking, and Policy Division

Sandra Pereira, Urban Design Supervisor, Design, Placemaking, and Policy (DPP) Division

Adam Bossi, Planner III, West County Planning

Meghan Flynn, Planner II, West County Planning

Natasha Fahim, Planner III, DPP

Darcy Buckley, Parks Planner

#### Applicant Team

Matt Gordon – Attorney, Selzer Gurvitch

Alyse Talbott – Architect, Design Collective

Fiver Soraruf – Architect, Design Collective

Brian Bolen – Architect, Design Collective

#### Discussion Points:

Staff: This is the first site plan presentation to the DAP. The review will focus on response to the first-round comments including refinement of the party wall and tower setback. There are no members of the public present at the meeting.

Panel:

#### *General*

- This is a very amenity rich building and is unique for the market. From a developer's perspective, this is a great building.



- What is happening on the east parcel? Could it develop?
  - *Applicant Response: It is not controlled by the applicant at this time. We studied it and confirmed that the site can still develop.*
- There was some discussion on the design of the blank party wall. There was a comment on possibly filling in the blank panels within the gridded design with artwork and some comments on providing horizontal fenestration or details to the upper dark blank wall. In general, the DAP felt good about the direction of detail on the blank party walls.

#### Base

- Can you overhang the green setback of the tower facing East Lane on the front line to gain more depth within the floor plans? Seems like the project will benefit from some more depth, a modest overhang might be helpful to the building. The proportion of the massing and building is great. The taller corner of the plaza is nice.
- Do you control the design of the crosswalk at Hampden Lane to the southern plaza across the street? Having a wide crosswalk to reach the south plaza will be very beneficial. Then perhaps a small plaza at the entry level will be a great idea instead of a ramp pathway and a set of stairs. Could there be more of a plaza along Hamden Lane, instead of a pathway?
- I agree with Paul, the plaza should be bigger and more readable and connected to the south plaza across the street. Can you bring the plaza pavers inside the Bethesda sidewalk pavers to emphasize the crossing and sense of arrival?
  - *Applicant Response: It is a right-of-way question, here is the view from the plaza, the walkway is ADA accessible, and we can look at this condition. We need the green for green cover as well.*
- Try to diminish the loading as much as possible to minimize the view, is the loading apron brick?
  - *Applicant Response: Yes, it is brick, and the loading is setback so it will not immediately be seen.*
- Overall, I like the massing and moves on elevations. On the north façade, there is not enough green area. What's behind the glass on the northern façade?
  - *Applicant Response: There is a pet spa, bike room, and then units on the upper floors. Given there is a traffic control box in the middle of the sidewalk and storm drain, it is difficult to add more green with these constraints.*
- Could there be material on the blank wall? Perhaps some artistic elements to it?
  - *Applicant Response: The material is brick and the monochromatic application is a challenge.*

#### **Panel Recommendations:**

The Panel voted (3-0) in support of 25 design excellence points for the Project and the staff should pay close attention to ground plane treatment of the plaza and the street and landscaping during the regulatory review of the plan.

# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

## Meeting Minutes

**PROJECT:** 7475 Wisconsin Avenue

**DATE:** May 27, 2026

### **Attendance:**

#### Panel

Sandeep Walia

John Tschiderer

Robert Sponseller

Paul Mortensen, Ex-officio

#### Staff

Atul Sharma, Chief, Design, Placemaking, and Policy Division

Sandra Pereira, Urban Design Supervisor, Design, Placemaking, and Policy (DPP) Division

Adam Bossi, Planner III, West County Planning

Meghan Flynn, Planner II, West County Planning

Natasha Fahim, Planner III, DPP

Darcy Buckley, Parks Planner

#### Applicant Team

Matt Gordon – Attorney, Selzer Gurvitch

Nick Gordon – Developer, MRP Realty

Chris Huffer – Architect, SK&I

Liam Butt – Architect, SK&I

#### Discussion Points:

Staff: This is the first site plan presentation to the DAP. The review will focus on response to first round comments including refinement of the metro entrance and base of the building. There are no members of the public present at the meeting.

Panel:

#### *General*

- The metro station entrance is much improved and the base surrounding it seems much resolved. The Wisconsin Avenue base is a bit tough with only the glass panels.



- I agree the corner has improved a lot and there is more space for pedestrians at the ground plane.
- Could the pots and planters be more modern and aligned with the contemporary design of the building? Door openings on Wisconsin Avenue make seating elements in front of the entry doors seem odd. Could you create better privacy for the seating elements in front of the retail between entry doors?
- Can you describe the base, middle, top for this building?
  - *Applicant Response: We are showing the flat elevation of Wisconsin, and seeing the chamfer at the southern end on the floor plan, which was not showing well in the rendering.*
- The building “skin” is a very tight fenestrated panel of vertical and horizontal elements that seems to be just cut at the bottom, cut at the podium and cut at the top without some type of completion or weight or structure at the cut lines to “hold” the panel or “complete” it. What would those elements look like at the ends where they are cut? It seems there is no top finishing element on the podium level at the glass balcony. It is the same for the bottom of the panel at the metro entrance, where the red columns come down and terminate at the base without any bottom element to hold or support them.
  - *Applicant Response: We did that intentionally because we wanted to emphasize the verticality.*
- Is there some way to show how the base will hold the weight of the tower along Wisconsin with either structural columns or some fenestration rather than just blank glass panels?
  - *Applicant Response: The glass panel base is designed for flexibility for retail.*
- The massing of the two volumes is almost too separated, and the tallest mass is almost not seen from Wisconsin Avenue to the north. Because Wisconsin is the more prominent street, it seems the taller mass should be better experienced from that frontage. The phase 2 blank wall is also quite large.
  - *Applicant Response: Phase 2 will be a totally separate building with a separate core that will likely attach to this building.*
- I agree the party wall view feels unfinished.
- The recessed balconies is a good improvement but there could be another layer of articulation.
- Why is there such a big setback on East West Highway at the eastern lower wing?
  - *Applicant Response: We are trying to amenitize the adjacent building with a view of the terrace, and it makes for a more efficient L-shaped building.*
- Is the second-floor space along East West Highway usable?
  - *Applicant Response: Yes, the terrace will have some patios to the adjacent units and stormwater management.*
- For the color pallet, does it have a timeless effect using these colors?
  - *Applicant Response: We are leaning toward a burgundy copper material.*
- (Staff) Does the DAP want to see this again?
  - The site is a major location. I would like to see it again, but do not want to slow down the process, so I am okay with both scenarios.

**Panel Recommendations:**

The Project will return to the Panel with the following additional items to inform a future vote on design excellence points:

- 1) Massing of the tower along Wisconsin Avenue, particularly the southern part of the building near potential phase 2 looking north, to make sure the mass reads more dynamic and the taller volume that faces East-West Highway is visible as a part of the top from Wisconsin Avenue to the south.
- 2) The ground floor treatment of the façade along Wisconsin Avenue and around the metro entrance at the corner to ensure the architecture is supported by some sort of overhang or canopy or is grounded to the street.