



DATE: July 23, 2026

TO: Silver Spring Design Advisory Panel (DAP)

FROM: Grace Bogdan, Planner IV, Design, Placemaking, & Policy Division
Atul Sharma, Chief, Design, Placemaking, & Policy Division
Paul Mortensen, Senior Urban Designer, Director's Office
Natasha Fahim, Planner III, Design, Placemaking, & Policy Division

RE: Staff comments for the July DAP Meeting

This will be a hybrid meeting; attendees are welcome to participate virtually or in-person.

Item #1**Blairs Block F2/G****The Tower Companies**

Design Collective, Architect

Mahan Rykiel Associates, Landscape Architect

- The proposed project is a continuing phase of a larger master planned effort to redevelop the Blairs property over an extended period of time. In 2013, the Planning Board approved the Blairs Master Plan which generally extends from Colesville Road west of the Silver Spring Metro, Eastern Avenue, Blair Mill Road, and East -West Highway (excluding two corner lots) approximately 30.4 acres.
- The Master Plan and associated regulatory approvals (Project Plan, Preliminary Plan, and Site Plan) were approved prior to the new zoning code and optional method of development. The proposed amendments are not required to receive public benefits for design excellence, however the review by the Silver Spring DAP is intended to ensure the project remains in conformance with the Silver Spring Downtown Communities Plan (SSDCP) and Design Guidelines.
- The project proposes an amendment to the previously approved site located southwest of the multifamily high-rise known as the Pearl 1, which was constructed in 2017 as the first phase. The second phase, which has frontage on Eastern Avenue and Blairs Mill Road, was originally approved as two multifamily high-rise buildings with a linear pedestrian connection from the intersection at Blair Mill Road and Eastern Avenue to the north, framed by an existing private street, High Park Lane. The project has evolved in response to market conditions and now proposes to be a single mid-rise residential building ranging in height from 5-7 stories for approximately 350 units that wraps an above-grade parking structure.
- The massing lines the Blair Mill Road frontage as well as the internal High Park Lane, with an extended wing that parallels the proposed pedestrian connection and existing Pearl 1 building,

with an opening on Eastern Avenue. The project proposes a glass one-story fitness center facing Eastern Avenue that connects the main mass and wing. The vehicular and loading access is consolidated off High Park Lane, and the building focuses the main residential entry inward to the site, fronting on the master planned central open space.

- Related Design Guidelines Recommendations:
 - The Project is located within the South Silver Spring District, which integrated the approved Blairs Master Plan and recommends a pedestrian connection from Blair Mill Road, through the project site, north to East-West Highway. Within the project site are several privately owned parks proposed with the Blairs Master Plan and incorporated into the SSDCP. These open spaces are not proposed as part of the project, but the project has been designed to face the building entry onto these central open spaces.
 - The pedestrian connection has been designed as a 50-foot-wide mews between this project and Pearl 1, from Eastern Avenue to the central open spaces, and onto the Metro Station. This connection has been shifted from the intersection of Eastern Avenue and Blair Mill Road to be in between Pearl 1 and this project. Pedestrian scale lighting, seating, shading devices, and active frontages along this mews are proposed to activate the space.
 - The Silver Spring District has recommendations for development along Eastern Avenue to ensure compatibility with the single family residential on the west side. This includes limiting building height to 70 feet for any development within 20 feet of the right-of-way (ROW) line. The project proposes to setback the building approximately 23 feet from the Eastern Avenue ROW line due to significant changes in topography. Total building height in this location is 79', with a generous ground floor and five stories of residential above. The project also proposes a massing break along Eastern Avenue with a one-story fitness center and hallway passages that frames a courtyard behind.
 - The ground floor will be very important to the life of the public realm along Eastern Avenue and Blair Mill Road. Staff recommends ground entry units along both frontages and the proposed mews on the western portion.
 - Blairs Mill Road is considered a Downtown Street Type B, and conformance with the ROW sections will be carried out through the regulatory review process. However, the building setback from the ROW along both frontages should be discussed by the DAP. During preliminary conversations with the project team, Staff recommended that the building be as close to the street as possible to achieve a continuous street wall as desired by the Design Guidelines. Given the topography, the Applicant states that the current setback is necessary. The project has been revised to include landscaping along the setback as well as individual walk ups to ground floor units that face onto Blair Mill Road and the Mews, in response to Staff comments.