

Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: 4 Bethesda Metro Center
Sketch Plan No. 320180110

DATE: June 27, 2018

*The **4 Bethesda Metro Center** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **June 27, 2018**. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, and recommendations regarding design excellence and the exceptional design public benefits points. The Panel's recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report and strongly considered by Staff prior to the certification of the Site Plan. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

Attendance:

George Dove (Panelist)
Qiaojue Yu (Panelist)
Rod Henderer (Panelist)
Paul Mortensen (Panelist, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)
Gwen Wright (Planning Director)
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)

Bob Harris (Applicant Team)
Herb Heiserman (Applicant Team)
Simon Carney (Applicant Team)
Rich Fernicola (Applicant Team)
Peter Glasson (Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)
Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)
Patricia Kolesar (Member of the Public)
Richard Hoyer (Member of the Public)
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Dick Tustian (Member of the Public)
Leanne Tobias (Member of the Public)
Maj-Britt Dohlie (Member of the Public)
Bethany Rogers (Member of the Public)
Anthony Udoka (Member of the Public)
Christopher Cohn (Member of the Public)
Bobby Lipman (Member of the Public)
Deborah Schumann (Member of the Public)
Linda Miller (Member of the Public)
Susanne Shwetz (Member of the Public)
Melissa Leebaert (Member of the Public)
Jeanne Weiss (Member of the Public)
Caroline DeLasare (Member of the Public)
Melanie Manfield (Member of the Public)
Suzanne Shultz (Member of the Public)

Discussion Points:

- One of the problems we are having is that you are still holding onto office as a potential program. The residential option is a much better massing.
 - *Applicant response:* We are leaning in the direction of residential. But we do not want to take office off the table. We understand that there are more articulation issues that we would need to do if it were commercial, but there is a footprint we would need to stick to in order to be viable.
- You have made some great improvements since the last meeting. I wish you had a physical model so we could see in. I note there are improvements since the latest submission.
- The improvements along Wisconsin Avenue are good. I'm glad you made a comparison to other public spaces. I think it is bigger than the Capital Crescent Civic Green and the Apex plaza space. More localized comparisons of Bethesda would be helpful.
- What is the floor to floor height from the bus bay below? There is limit to which people will walk up stairs and this may be beyond that limit.
 - *Applicant response:* We are trying to give reason to be there and draw people up.
- We as a group had real reservations about how the Central Lawn will work. Now that you have made significant improvements the Metro Space and realize the space that is designated as the lawn could never be occupied by a part of the building you might as well make the lawn as good as you can. However, for it to work will require extensive programming



- I think you have made great great improvements.
- The massing on first floor is really important. The widening of the promenade is great. Now you have a face looking towards Wisconsin Avenue as a destination. Now the promenade is a great space and part of the plaza. I like the idea of opening it up and making better use of the space for people to enjoy the activity and action.
- Clearly the relationship of lawn to bus bay below and north stair is very important.
- I like the height adjustments on the north and south to add variation.
- You have created a more seamless spatial movement through the site, creating substantially improved visual connections and the promenade becomes one of the most important spaces as one of three rooms. This is substantially improved over what you had before, and I hope the community thinks similarly.
- Now it is a series of spaces that move one to the other and if the right retail is there it will be successful.
- Programming and activation of the ground floor are important.
- Having a stage in the back could be a great amenity, for concerts, it could be a tremendous opportunity.
 - *Applicant response:* The objective is to work with Bethesda arts on performing arts.
- What is the width of the body of the tower?
 - *Applicant response:* 65' at the center.
- The aspect ratio is going to be very elegant. I am rooting for the residential solution.
- I don't want to suggest everything is ok, the connection to west and south is still very important.
- Is there a way people can be freely drawn up into the Central Lawn from Woodmont Avenue through 3 Bethesda Metro Center to help activate this space?

Panel Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report along with the recommendations from the April 25th meeting (attached).

1. The preferred massing is the residential option.



2. Continue to develop all of the access points to the plaza level including from the bus bay below, the north stair and the connections to the west and south.
3. Continue to emphasize the activation of the ground floor and programming the open space because these are critical elements.
4. Provide a physical model at site plan if possible to allow the panel to see the relationships to the open space and between buildings.
5. Public Benefit Points: The project is on track to achieve the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone.
6. Straw vote: 3 support with conditions to meet the panel recommendations above



Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: 4 Bethesda Metro Center
Sketch Plan No. 320180110

DATE: April 25, 2018

*The **4 Bethesda Metro Center** project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on **April 25, 2018**. The following meeting notes summarize the Panel's discussion, and recommendations regarding design excellence and the exceptional design public benefits points. The Panel's recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report and strongly considered by Staff prior to the certification of the Site Plan. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel free to contact the Design Advisory Panel Liaison.*

Attendance:

Karl Du Puy (Panelist)
George Dove (Panelist)
Damon Orobona (Panelist)
Rod Henderer (Panelist)
Qiaojue Yu (Panelist)
Paul Mortensen (Panelist, Senior Urban Designer in the Director's Office)

Laura Shipman (Design Advisory Panel Liaison)
Stephanie Dickel (Lead Reviewer)
Gwen Wright (Planning Department Director)
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)
Leslye Howerton (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)
Matt Folden (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)
Grace Bogdan (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)
Margaret Rifkin (Director's Office)
Mike Smith (Development Ombudsman, Montgomery County Executive's Office)

Bob Harris (Attorney, Applicant Team)
Simon Carney (Applicant Team)
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Peter Glasson (Architect, Applicant Team)
Richard Fernicola (Applicant Team)
Scott Phillips (Architect, Applicant Team)
Andy Jones (Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)
Patricia Kolesar (Member of the Public)
Reggie Oldak (Member of the Public)
Richard Hoye (Member of the Public)

Discussion Points:

- Public Comments:
 - The Bethesda bus bay should be welcoming, currently the metro station is a negative and poor entryway. Focus not on what is above but on the station level, and the perspectives for others looking at the site from afar as a pedestrian from blocks around. Happy to see the development to make it a more welcoming place. How does this site speak to a broad cross-section of people?
 - The residents would prefer a corner park, we have sent emails to protect the Bethesda open space. The central lawn is not central, it is hidden and you cannot see it.
 - Like this plan a lot, reminds me of small streets and squares in European cities. It is a respite from the urban area. The angled building allows some of an open space. I personally would not want to hang out at the corner. Programming is very important and getting in the right retail.
 - As a pedestrian, it is critical to have massing of buildings to make the intersection feel more comfortable. Having too much space at the corner is uncomfortable like at the Chevy Chase bank building which is a failure.
- The space has diverse programming and includes active and passive uses. The lawn space seems secluded. With all of the buildings around and shade will the lawn grow?
 - *Applicant response:* We have done several shade studies and are confident the lawn will grow.
- Will parking and circulation/loading affect public space?
 - *Applicant response:* There is no additional parking proposed. We are using the existing garage, may utilize existing loading, or work with WMATA to add loading. These will not affect the public space.



- I'm a proponent of maximum transit use, but we will be losing a public garage to Marriott, and many find that the garages are too full. MCDOT did a detailed parking study, the team may want to look at the study.
- Assume that you have analyzed all the problems today with this plaza. There are probably 20 different levels. The great spaces are great because they are linked to everything around them. One of your precedents was Bethesda Lane, having a street at each end makes it successful and active. But you don't have that, when you look at the grand stair it is clearly not used, there is no connection to Woodmont from the plaza. There are several new residential buildings on that side, so how do you get up and over from Woodmont onto this plaza. The lack of these links kills the plaza space. There used to be a lot of retail, but if you put new retail here, it may be highly used for a year or so but what will sustain it. The plaza can't just be programmed, there has to be something else. The entrance to 3 Bethesda seems to be secondary and the Woodmont Ave building has a secondary entrance. In order for all of this to work, there has to be a coordinated effort including changing lobbies and reorienting retail. The location of the stair is very poor.
 - *Applicant response:* You are right and it is a challenging space in every respect. It is not going to be a perfect space but more retail and development will help. We will talk to Chevy Chase Land Company about incorporating their space into the design.
- Need a prominent visual to bring you up into this space, there is no porosity to bring and draw people up into the space.
- Show more drawings to show the plan of bus bay and perspectives of the views coming from that level.
 - *Applicant response:* We are working closely with WMATA on the design of that level.
- How are you going to establish a new ground plane?
 - *Applicant response:* There is enough run to do an ADA compliant slope, with an almost imperceptible slope.
- I come from a firm that does a great deal of retail, and we do predictive heat mapping to see where pedestrians go in the space. Try heat mapping to see what that gets you. Is there a way of making the Chevy Chase Land space an active participant rather than boundary?
- The back stairway down is so miserable.
- The problem we are having is we don't know what the building is right now, its program. Suggest half of the building should be raised up at least 30 feet in the air. Anchor the



- promenade and increase visibility from Wisconsin and visibility to the back space similar to 7359 Wisconsin. Could be an architectural space at the human scale.
- *Staff response:* If you go with this approach you just have to ensure that this is a fully designed gathering space rather than just a walking area.
- Explain Wisconsin intersection and pedestrian crossing at Wisconsin.
 - *Applicant response:* Pedestrians cross from the pedestrian refuge. We think the tunnel has been successful with the artwork.
 - *Staff:* What is below the central lawn. Could you eliminate the central lawn and make it more about connecting from Woodmont and the bus bay?
 - Could be a glassed in pavilion? So that it is a destination in winter and summer. Maybe more secondary to the primary building.
 - *Staff:* Green up the entry plaza, make it greener like the central plaza. Make a central glassy element at the escalator in the middle of the lawn. If they need ventilation do it at the back where the central lawn is.
 - *Applicant response:* We are talking with WMATA about a unique canopy rather than typical canopy.
 - Would help on ground floor plan to show land uses around with true plan of uses around.
 - We looked at the spaces just to compare this to plazas we know, the central green is the size of Rockville town center, entry plaza is size of Bethesda Lane. Might help to compare with similar sized spaces that people know.
 - *Staff:* The panel has not looked closely at the building. Would prefer that the project come to talk about building massing before sketch plan review at the Planning Board.
 - Would like to see 3d models, physical models. Very clear presentation about the massing. See 7607 Old Georgetown Road's submission to the Design Advisory Panel.
 - Is this the only place where the building could be?
 - *Applicant response:* Could be a little closer to Wisconsin based on the structure but we tried to balance thoughts from members of the community to have some space at the front of the building.
 - Public Comments (cont.):
 - Would like to echo comments to provide more green at the front of the building.



- How does the plan bring folks together? Like the idea of raising the building for the community and travelers, like union station. And to map what are the routes that people would use. Honor the back-door experience. Create a 24-hour walkway to and from bus bay area.
 - *Applicant response:* From the entrance to the bus bay we are working with e-bikes and have met and working on a way to bring folks up to the 3 Bethesda Metro area. We are inheriting a desert in the bus bay but who would know that Dunkin Donuts would be the beacon, we want to create other beacons there.

Panel Recommendations:

The project will return to the panel prior to Planning Board review and will focus on building placement, massing and the relationship to the Metro Station and Bus Bay below. The following are initial recommendations.

1. Ensure that there are clear links between the plaza and the destinations around it, particularly to the residential areas west of Woodmont Avenue where the connection is poor.
2. Work with Chevy Chase Land Company to incorporate their space into the design.
3. Show more drawings to show the plan of bus bay and perspectives of the views coming from that level.
4. Do predictive heat mapping to see where pedestrians go in the space.
5. Consider raising half of the building at least 30 feet in the air. Anchor the promenade and increase visibility from Wisconsin and visibility to the back space similar to 7359 Wisconsin, as long as the space is a major gathering space and not just a walkway.
6. Provide 3d models and physical models if possible. Create a very clear presentation about the massing. See 7607 Old Georgetown Road's submission to the Design Advisory Panel as an example.
7. Explore making the central lawn area more about connecting from Woodmont and the bus bay. Could possibly be a glassed in pavilion so that it is a destination in winter and summer. Maybe more secondary to the primary building.
8. Green up the entry plaza, make it greener like the central plaza. Make a central glassy element at the escalator in the middle of the lawn. If they need ventilation do it at the back where the central lawn is.

