

# Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

**FROM:** Laura Shipman  
Design Advisory Panel Liaison

**PROJECT:** Edgemont Bethesda II  
Sketch Plan No. 820180170

**DATE:** June 27, 2018

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*The **Edgemont Bethesda II** 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.*

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## **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)  
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)  
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)  
Leslye Howerton (Area 1 Planner Coordinator)

Chris Huffer (Applicant Team)  
Marius Radulescu (Applicant Team)  
Sami Kirkdil (Applicant Team)  
Aubrey Fenton (Applicant Team)  
Ben Stoll (Applicant Team)  
Pat Harris (Applicant Team)

Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)  
Amanda Farber (Member of the Public)  
Richard Hoyer (Member of the Public)



## Discussion Points:

- The building is held back to the south?
  - *Applicant response:* Yes, away from the Christopher.
- Is the ground floor at the top of the sill?
  - *Applicant response:* Yes, the first corner mitigates the slope.
- What material is the base?
  - *Applicant response:* Masonry material
- What is the height of the building? You note that you are doing alternative treatments.
  - *Applicant response:* 150'. Because of the narrowness of the site the building would be unbuildable with full step-backs. Because of separation from the Christopher condominium as well we are constrained.
- The new base treatment is an improvement.
- Though there is better discipline in the design, the canopy was a good feature that has been lost.
  - *Applicant response:* The building has a treatment and that is the big move, the roof becomes secondary. Because all buildings will have a roof terrace it provides variety from other buildings.
- The building still feels naked at the top.
  - *Applicant response:* Not every building has to have a rooftop canopy element, for example the Silver Spring building (Eleven55 Ripley) is successful and does not have a top).
- Not every building needs to have a signature top, however do not see how the corners are unique, they all seem the same. The top treatment does have the ability to signify the corner and heightens that corner so that it is taller and explains that it is a special corner.
  - *Applicant response:* We are not averse to looking at that, and we are happy to look at what can define the corner more. We have studied many schemes, and are exploring how to follow the geometry with a base and that doesn't have to have a top treatment. We are trying to do something more pure.
- The corner could have a stronger gesture.
  - *Applicant response:* We may not solve this here but there may be a tweak or two we could do this on the southeast corner.



- The north corner is far superior now to what it was. The base height is not where it should be. I am delighted there isn't a flying wedge like every other building. The consistency throughout is good.
- The Southeast corner could be stronger. Could make a small gesture at the top that might make a difference.
- The building really embraces the curve of Woodmont well. But if there is a way to subtly enhance the corner with a treatment at the top.
  - *Applicant response:* This is a soldier building, it does not have to be like the apex building which is two times the height.
- The shadow lines are going to be very effective.
- What are the stormwater treatments?
  - *Applicant response:* We are doing as much green cover as we can and retrofitting the existing roof. As well as bioretention on the site.
- I question whether we will continue to have bike share stands in the future. The plaza needs clarity, if it is going to be the space that bikers use and people come to. There should be a hierarchy. There needs to be a formal treatment, it just seems random.
  - *Applicant response:* We want this to feel like an extension of the sidewalk and to be truly public, not just an entrance to the building.
- It could be something, the seating that draws you in.
  - *Applicant response:* We will take your comments back so that this does not seem random.
- Woodmont from Old Georgetown all the way to Montgomery - I don't think there is a door that faces that stretch and that is why it is dead to pedestrians. There is nothing bringing people in and out of your building to make that better, though there is glass. If you put entries on this façade it could help. The Shalom Baranes building in Silver Spring allows entries and exits along the base, unfortunately the grade precludes that here.
  - *Applicant response:* The challenge is, I don't know how you fix it this has happened after many decades and this area is dead. It is a speed alley. Changing this portion to two-way and adding a bike lane, as well as having art will also help to make that better. We looked at ground floor units and they didn't work.
- It is going to be extremely important what the ground floor material and detail will be because that is what people will experience.



- For future projects come in with a zoning diagram to show why you can't do the guidelines for us to evaluate.
- Could the art or sculpture be placed in the plaza instead of offsite?

**Panel Recommendations:**

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Emphasize the southeast corner of the building. This could be through a subtle treatment of the top that makes this a stronger corner.
2. Develop the design of the plaza. There should be a hierarchy and a formal treatment, currently it seems random. Consider including public art in the plaza instead of off-site.
3. Activate the base of the building further through material, texture and detail because this is what pedestrians experience. Provide ground floor entries along the Woodmont façade if feasible.
4. Public Benefit Points: The panel recommends that the project receive 20 points not the 25 points requested.
5. Vote: (2) support the project (1) supports with conditions to meet the panel recommendations above.

