Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel

FROM: Laura Shipman
   Design Advisory Panel Liaison

PROJECT: 7000 Wisconsin Avenue
          Sketch Plan No. 320190090

DATE: May 22, 2019

The 7000 Wisconsin Avenue project was reviewed by the Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel on May 22, 2019. 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)
Robert Kronenberg (Area 1 Division Chief)
Elza Hisel-McCoy (Area 1 Regulatory Supervisor)
Stephanie Dickel (Lead Reviewer)
Rachel Newhouse (Parks Department)

Bob Dalrymple (Applicant Team)
Matt Gordon (Applicant Team)
Todd Jacobus (Applicant Team)
Tim Eden (Applicant Team)
Marius Radulescu (Applicant Team)
Dennis Connors (Applicant Team)

Richard Hoye (Member of the Public)
Naomi Spinrad (Member of the Public)
Michael Fetchko (Member of the Public)
Discussion Points:

- So, the two buildings to the south, are they both at 80 feet right now?
  - Applicant response: The Adagio is an 8-story building and pops up, the other is 90 feet.

- Are you proposing below grade parking, where is the access?
  - Applicant response: Yes, below-grade and access from the alley.

- How wide is the alley?
  - Applicant response: Property line to property line it is 20 feet, there is approximately 10 feet of additional space on the other property.

- Is the alley one way or 2-way?
  - Applicant response: We have done the turning movement measurements, and trucks will have to exit via Bradley Boulevard. The alley is two-way.

- I am concerned that we don’t have the drawings showing the turning movements and dimensions and where the choke points are. It is quite congested back there.

- Last time you had sketch-up showing the potential for the alley. Why are you proposing the through-block connection on the south side rather than the north side?

- I am troubled by the lack of adherence to design guidelines, the setback the tower separation. When you go below 120 feet you are supposed to mitigate that with alternate means. I have to say that I am very troubled by this project.

- What is the footprint? Is the project not working is that why you are not proposing it?
  - Applicant response: approx. 22,000 gross sf. It is a tight site and the guidelines are intended more for taller buildings. We cannot meet all the guidelines because we would not have feasibility. If you go from a unit that is 30 feet deep to 40 feet deep then you get an unattractive unit. It is a wholistic approach from inside out.

- I don’t like either design, all I see is the middle. You should lower the base. The design guidelines call for the base to be 30-70 feet, and it’s better lower. Make a base and building on top of it.
  - Applicant response: If you interject a midblock condition that is different from the adjacent buildings it would be different from the others.

- You are setting the precedent for the future buildings and it should be done right.

- If you were to do that could you achieve the same density?
  - Applicant response: If you have all of the service areas you do not have enough space.

- We are not talking a 15ft change but rather a 5 ft change.
Applicant response: With the heights along Wisconsin, a 35ft base is too small comparatively. It would be a residential in nature base compared to other buildings.

• The reality is the whole block on the east of Wisconsin will also be redeveloped and there will be continuity.
• You can have the low-rise that is “historic Bethesda”
  • Applicant response: But this is a high density, high traffic street.
• Because the building is lower the base should be lower to be proportional, with at least a 10 ft setback of upper floors.
  • Applicant response: Having a 10 ft setback will have pressures on the location of columns you will end up with a lower quality building.
• From a density stand-point I don’t see how it would really affect you.
• The point is that at a lower height if you do not have a step-back then you should have alternative treatments.
• I am concerned about tower separation and the alley.
• There needs to be a clean drawing showing the connections with the alley and the dimensions, turning movements, other elements.
• What does the traffic study say about the number of cars?
  • Applicant response: It is less traffic impact than the current retail use.
• Is there concern about tower separation?
• At 120 feet do not see a problem with tower separation.
  • Applicant response: The through-block connection is a significant contribution to the public realm.
• Will there be an obligation for future projects to continue the through-block connection?
  • Applicant response: The Sector Plan will provide the guidance and requirements for future projects.
• The alley may be an opportunity for a table-top crossing and special paving to reduce traffic speeds.

Panel Recommendations:
The following recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report.

1. Design a lower base height of approximately 35-45 feet to be in proportion to the height of the buildings and step-back the floors above the base no less than 5 feet, with 10 feet step-back recommended.
2. Provide a clear drawing of the alley connections, dimensions and turning movements for trucks.
3. Provide a landscaping plan to illustrate how the site design works.
4. Public Benefit Points: The project is on track to achieve at least the minimum 10 Exceptional Design points required in the Bethesda Overlay Zone if these recommendations are met.
5. Straw vote: 4 in support but with conditions, 1 does not support
5/29/2019

Mr. Elza Hisel-McCoy, Supervisor #1 Real Estate Team
Park and Planning
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Mr. Hisel-McCoy,

Attached are copies of the recent correspondence regarding the Proposed project in the 6900 - 7000 block of Wisconsin Avenue. This project for mixed use high rise with the garage access into the back alley parallel to Strathmore Avenue. The attached letters have expressed our concern about creating/adding to a bottleneck for access to all the residences and businesses that face Wisconsin Avenue and Strathmore Avenue.

Gerald and Sandra Robin
The Adagio
6820 Wisconsin Ave. #6014
Bethesda, MD 20815

Dpandr.or@gmail.com
Sandrarobin0439@gmail.com

Attached Correspondence to Mr. Casey Anderson 5/19/19 and 5/11/19
Dear Mr. Anderson,

Sir, I would be grateful for the following answers, for it appears evident that this project, another monolith on Wisconsin Ave., will change my life forever.

1. Have requested projected use, and increase in flow patterns, for the alley and its new usage?? This has not been forth coming! PLe
2. The following recent traffic obstacles have either blocked entry to our alley at both ends or made for back up in traffic, To enter or exit? Why?
3. Due to cement island, a left turn approach into alley from Woodmont is impossible now. Could I go to

Acc: Stephanie Pickel
d. Now, the latest insult is a no entry entirely from Bradley Blvd — 25 feet from our garage entry. Why?

Of course, next, maybe, a steel barrier in front of our garage.

In summation, these adverse actions are not minor, or innocent! There are an impaction and insult to our ability to live in this neighborhood. As shown above, these charges are so gross that they are invade and threaten our ability and time to enjoy life. Why don’t you perceive the impact and negative forces being created? Restore and remove these obstacles!

Lastly, and not least this...
d. Now, the latest insult is a no entry entirely from Bradley Blvd — 7.5 feet from our garage entry. Why?

Of course, next, maybe, a Steel Barrier, in front of our garage.

In summation; these adverse actions are not minor, or innocent!

These are an impingement and insult to our ability to live in this neighborhood.

As shown above, these changes are so gross; that they are in essence and threaten our ability and time to enjoy life.

Why don't you perceive the impact and negative forces being created? Remember and remove these obstacles.

Lastly, and not least, this
will destroy property values!! Do you fully comprehend?—we will not just be driving cars, but Dodgems, going through multiple gyrations, in slow-motions? Why?

I will, if required, recreate the traffic conditions, patterns and lost time, due to the faulty deviations and potential hazards, due to these restrictions and obstacles. Perhaps, this will demonstrate the dramatic and destructive changes, imposed upon us!

My wife just returned from a nearby safetyway—being divested from turning into the alley on Bradley Blvd—she spent an extra twelve minutes in “frustration”, driving. This is beyond conceivable—others should know!

Postscript: Most sincerely, Dr. Gerald [Redacted]
What disturbs me so much is the matter of still another giant monstrosity, the "fatal accident," not just a "stretch." Please drive through our streets—see the many obstacles to our way of normal commerce. Not even before, difficult to impossible now! Why? A sincere plea for help and sanity.

Pardon me, but I just saw "the proposal" for almost 200 units. My goodness, that's only, disregard the workers and employees and businesses. That easily 500 cars! To dump on a sir, Masada— that is untenable, unrealistic, and a death wish for our community (doe)
In conclusion, look around. Nearby construction has closed sidewalks and streets, clogged traffic, unmercifully for months, with no end!!

The tax dollar cannot, should not, have such a value attached, that a quality neighborhood should be overrun and stripped of its ability to enjoy life. When will you de-stress and ease present barriers?

Please, please rethink and discard this unwieldy proposal! I send you your explanation and traffic patterns and anticipated traffic and their disposal routes. Lastly, how do you expect this to impact and impair, time loss, increased traffic, shot and entropy times, convergent patterns, size of vehicles allowed, impact on existing businesses, etc.

Thank you for prepared evaluation times and studies on all of the above and possible variables and situations.
Dear Mr. Anderson,

I would be very grateful, Chairman, Planning Board, for your counsel and explanation as to why another elevated building with cars exiting from our alley. Why has the sketch plan of the developer been given initial approval by your boards? May I understand that rationale?

Bethesda appears to have reached a saturation phase of development. My wife and I are in our 80s and love the city—walking consists of how to get around barriers and can now be hazardous! Driving is a lengthy, often risky art form!

The Alley—a vital and only entry to our home—often encumbered by our parked cars, truck, large and small.
and leaving a multi-story business building, small business parking and homeowners. It is once again the only ingress and egress for over 200 car owners, visitors, laborers, and workers daily where we live.

The loss of time, extended extreme difficulty in competing to gain access to our home over the increased risk of accidents, by the dumping of heavy new traffic on our alley which is always now trying to cope!

The cope is dealing with the already copious increased traffic and those cars who use the alley as a cut thru. Too often long, long delays always on Wisconsin Ave.

As an example of what is now "normal aggravation," This week, at 8:32 am, a garage truck stopped in the upper portion of the alley to perform its
duties, a traffic passes, during these loading of large cars from nearby businesses. Twelve minutes later, the truck is able to finish its loading and find a small section of the alley to pull over, so I can squeeze through. But when I get to the end of the alley to exit, the 3 large awaiting to reach Wisconsin Ave is picked up, beyond where I can enter.

To explain, right lane goes right, the middle lane is directed straight, the left lane goes left.

There is no way or no one to let me in the traffic lanes. Finally, I was caught.
Let me in, as far as the right hand turn lane. But, I take my life in my hands, signal and go into the middle lane, directed go straight only, but I must, to reach our important destination and appointment. I signal on and honk King, with trepidation, I swing into and outside of the entering left lane traffic, cars honk repeatedly and I complete the U turn. Speaking to our general manager today she has changed her answer, to control alley traffic where she has scrapped her car twice.

This is our alley—there are many tribulations, but it what we have, as part of our home! Unless you are approving a plan for safe passage of alley traffic.
I have not mentioned the many obstacles on entering and exiting from Broadly Blvd. that would take another two pages.

What I will say, over and over, any plan to dump further traffic in this alley is not just unrealistic—it would compromise and destroy our pleasure in living here.

I am aware money talks as do increased TPD dollars, but this proposal would portend an great life burden for us, with questionable value.

Sir, please show us why this plan was given initial approval? Will you kindly speak before our association?

Yours, Gerald Robin
In conclusion, look around, nearby construction has closed sidewalks and streets, clogged traffic, and mercilessly for months with no end!!

The tax dollar cannot and should not have such a value attached, that a quality neighborhood should be overrun and stripped of its ability to enjoy life. When will you assist and ease present barriers and impend disorderly proposal! and send me your explanation and traffic patterns and anticipated # cars and their disposal route. Lastly how do you expect this to impact and impair time loss, increased traffic, lost and entrapment convergence patterns, size of vehicles allowed, impact of existing businesses, etc. Thank you for prepared evocative analysis and study. On all of the above and possible variables and situations
June 19, 2019

Ms. Stephanie Dickel, Planner Coordinator  
Area 1 Planning Division  
The Maryland-National Capital  
Park & Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

RE: Sketch Plan No. 320190090  
7000 Wisconsin Avenue

Dear Ms. Dickel:

We have completed our review of the revised sketch plan uploaded to eplans on June 14, 2019. A previous version of this plan was reviewed by the Development Review Committee (DRC) at its meeting on April 16, 2019. The following comments are tentatively set forth for the subsequent submission of a preliminary plan:

All Planning Board Opinions relating to this plan or any subsequent revision, preliminary or site plans should be submitted to the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services in the package for record plats, storm drain, grading or paving plans, or application for access permit. This letter and all other correspondence from this department should be included in the package.

1. We defer to MSHA for improvements to Wisconsin Avenue (MD 355).

2. Pay the Montgomery County Department of Transportation plan review fee in accordance with Montgomery County Council Resolution 16-405 and Executive Regulation 28-06AM ("Schedule of Fees for Transportation-related Reviews of Subdivision Plans and Documents").

3. Per Section 49-31 (p) of the County Code, this project will require both Planning Board and MCDOT Director approval for the primary access being provided from the alley.

4. **At the preliminary plan stage:**

   A. Show all existing topographic details (paving, storm drainage, driveways adjacent and opposite the site, sidewalks and/or bikeways, utilities, rights of way and easements, etc.) on the preliminary plan.
B. Submit storm drainage and/or flood plain studies, with computations. Analyze the capacity of the existing public storm drain system and the impact of the additional runoff. If the proposed subdivision is adjacent to a closed section street, include spread computations in the impact analysis.

C. Submit a truck circulation for review by the M-NCPPC and MCDPS. This plan should delineate the proposed movements on-site between the anticipated access locations, the proposed truck loading spaces, and the proposed dumpsters. The truck circulation pattern and loading position should be designed for counter-clockwise entry and a left-side backing maneuver. Passenger vehicle travel ways should be separated from the expected truck circulation patterns and storage areas. The applicant may also need to provide documentation of their proposed delivery schedules.

D. Submit a completed, executed MCDOT Sight Distances Evaluation certification form, for all existing and proposed site entrances onto County-maintained roads, for our review and approval.

E. Coordinate with Mr. Corey Pitts of our Division of Transportation Engineering regarding the Bus Rapid Transit system. Mr. Pitts can be contacted at 240-777-7217 or corey.pitts@montgomerycountymd.gov.

F. Coordinate with Mr. Wayne Miller of our Division of Transit Services to coordinate improvements to the RideOn bus facilities in the vicinity of this project. Mr. Miller may be contacted at 240-777-5800 or wayne.miller2@montgomerycountymd.gov.

G. Submit a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) if required by the Planning Department.

5. Coordinate with Ms. Beth Dennard (beth.dennard@montgomerycountymd.gov or 240-777-8384) of MCDOT – Commuter Services Section regarding the following TDM comments:

A. Traffic Mitigation Agreement: With the preliminary plan application, submit draft Traffic Mitigation Agreement with the Preliminary Plan application. Contact Beth Dennard at (240) 777-8384 for the most recent TMAg template for residential development with commercial use. When submitting the draft to Commuter Services for review, provide an editable redline. Prior to the issuance of any building permits by MCDPS, the applicant will need to enter into a Traffic Mitigation Agreement with the Planning Board and this Department to help achieve the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan’s NADMS goal of 55%. Within MCDOT, the applicant should coordinate with Ms. Sandra Brecher, Chief of the Division of Transit Services/Commuter Services Section. Ms. Brecher may be contacted at 240-777-8383. The TMAg should include but not be limited to the following:
i. Car Sharing Parking: Provide 1 carshare space or the number required by law, whichever is greater, in a highly visible, preferentially-located spot available to the public. It is recommended that the space be located in an area of parking facility easily visible to and accessed by theater-goers.

ii. Electric Car Charging: Provide two EV-ready spaces or the number required by law, whichever is greater, on site.

B. Pedestrian, Bicycle and Shared Mobility Devices:

i. Provide excellent pedestrian and bicycle circulation, amenities & accommodations throughout the development.
   1. Provide circulation paths in locations with high activity to provide “eyes on the street” to enhance the experience of biking or walking and to enhance safety.
   2. Locate bike racks in weather-protected, highly visible and active locations.
   3. Provide a small bicycle repair station for residential use near bicycle racks/bicycle parking spaces. Consider placing the station in public open space area.

ii. Bikesharing: Provide space in the Project suitable for a 15-dock bikeshare station (or similar provision required by the County) to enable this form of transportation to be used by residents, employees and visitors at the Project. The location of this space will be coordinated between the Applicant and MCDOT, based upon the requirements of the bikesharing system and in a highly-visible, convenient and well-lit location on the Project. A typical bikeshare station requires a site that is 54’ by 7’ in size with four to six hours of solar exposure per day. Applicant must provide conduit to the bikeshare station in the event solar access is insufficient. The Applicant will be required to pay for the preparation of space. Applicant must allow MCDOT or its contractors access to the Project to install, service and maintain bikeshare stations. The County maintains full discretion to install, operate, move, relocate or discontinue service of a bikeshare station based on review and analysis of usage, performance, or budget. The Applicant will be required to assist MCDOT in the promotion of bikeshare among employees and visitors at the Project, in order to accomplish the objectives of the TMD.
C. Display and Communication of TDM Information:

i. Incorporate display space in residential lobbies and other high pedestrian activity areas and opportunity for information on each level of parking facilities.

ii. Provide opportunity and connections for a monitor to display Real Time Transit Information Signs in lobbies, elevators, and parking facilities. This will enable outreach to building tenants, employees, visitors, etc.

iii. Provide concierge/reception desk with an area where transit information and pass sales can be transacted – e.g., obtaining transit information, loading of SmarTrip cards.

D. Design Guidelines:

i. Design building frontages on Wisconsin Avenue with two-way visibility for transit vehicles, as well as taxis, etc., to compete with the private auto. It is important that passengers can wait comfortably inside climate-controlled area.

6. Permit and bond for required public improvements (to be determined at the preliminary plan stage) will be required prior to approval of the record plat. The permit may include, but not necessarily be limited to the following improvements:

A. Improvements to the public right of way will be determined at the preliminary plan stage based on a review of the additional information requested earlier in this letter.

B. Enclosed storm drainage in all drainage easements.

C. Underground utility lines.

D. Street lights.

E. Street trees.

F. Permanent monuments and property line markers.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this sketch plan. If you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, please contact me at william.whelan@mymontgomery.gov or (240) 777-2173.

Sincerely,

William Whelan
Development Review Team
Office of Transportation Policy
cc: Plan letters notebook

cc-e: Timothy Eden Starr Georgia, LLC
      Meredith Byer Dewberry
      C. Robert Dalrymple Linowes & Blocher
      Kwesi Woodroffe MSHA District 3
      Sandra Brecher MCDOT CSS
      Beth Dennard MCDOT CSS
      Corey Pitts MCDOT DTE
      Wayne Miller MCDOT DTS
      Sam Farhadi MCDPS RWPR
      Marie LaBaw MCFRS
      Vince Subramaniam MCDOT DTEO
Stephanie,

I’ve completed DHCA’s eplans comments on the 7000 Wisconsin Avenue Sketch Plan, as follows:

#320190090
Status: Recommend for Approval
Comments: No further comments.

Lisa

Lisa S. Schwartz
Manager, Affordable Housing Programs Section
Montgomery County DHCA
1401 Rockville Pike, 4th Floor
Rockville, MD 20852
Work: 240-777-3786
Fax: 240-777-3691
lisa.schwartz@montgomerycountymd.gov
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mpdu