

BETHESDA DOWNTOWN SECTOR PLAN

DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL APPOINTMENT

Description

The Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel (DAP) is a volunteer body that provides design critique of Optional Method Development projects in Downtown Bethesda during monthly meetings open to the public. The DAP advises Applicants, Staff, and the Planning Board on the number of Design Excellence Public Benefit points merited for a project. DAP Rules of Procedure limit panel membership to two consecutive terms. The tenure has expired for the panel member representing the Academia Community. Staff recommends the Planning Board appoint Robert Sponseller, FAIA, for a term of three years from January 2024 to January 2027.

COMPLETED: 01.05.2024

MCPB
Item No. Preliminary Matters
January 11, 2024

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Floor 14
Wheaton, MD 20902



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MASTER PLAN

2017 Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan



Summary

- Staff recommends the Planning Board appoint to the Bethesda DAP one new member, a registered architect representing academia, for a three-year term (January 2024 to January 2027).

Attachments:

- A. Letter of Support from UVA School of Architecture Foundation
- B. Robert Sponseller CV
- C. DAP Rules of Procedure

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

The Bethesda Downtown Design Advisory Panel (DAP) is an integral part of the Bethesda Overlay Zone. The role of the DAP is to provide advice and recommendations that will heighten design excellence and improve the quality of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture in downtown Bethesda.

The DAP is composed of five volunteer members and an ex-officio member representing the Planning Director's Office. Per the DAP's Rules of Procedures (Attachment B) the panel includes a registered architect, landscape architect, community member, developer, and a member of academia.

The Planning Board appointed the original DAP members in 2017 to serve staggered initial terms of two, three and four years. The Board appointed three-year-term panel member Brian Kelly, representing academia, in 2020 for a three-year term which expired in fall of 2023.

SECTION 2: METHOD OF SELECTION & PROFILE OF RECOMMENDED APPOINTMENT

For the open panel seat, Staff sent requests for nominations to several architecture programs in the region including University of Maryland, Morgan State University, University of DC, Catholic University and Howard University, as well as the American Institute of Architects and the local Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAIOP). Staff interviewed two well-qualified registered architects with an academic background.

Staff recommends the Planning Board appoint Robert Sponseller, Design Principal with Shalom Baranes Associates, a DC-based architecture firm. Mr. Sponseller will bring several decades of dynamic knowledge and experience to the Panel. As an architect, he has ushered several projects through the review process in the DC region, including the Bethesda DAP, and has been recognized locally and nationally for his projects. He has received over 30 juried design awards and was recently elevated to The College of Fellows with the American Institute of Architects (FAIA) in 2020, a distinguished honor that is limited to architects who have made significant contributions to the profession and society and who exemplify architectural excellence. Robert has served on panels including peer review design for the DC Office of Planning and DC Mayor's Office for Economic Development and has advised several local jurisdictions on the creation of design guidelines and processes as detailed in his resume (See Attachment B).

As a member of academia, Robert is a regular visiting critic and guest speaker at architecture schools in the region including University of Virginia, University of Maryland, Catholic University, and Roger Williams University among others. As a Board Member of the University of Virginia's School of Architecture Foundation, he helped form DC Urban Lab, a locally focused program studying issues in Washington, DC. The Architecture School Foundation has provided a letter of support (See Attachment A) for his nomination to the Bethesda DAP, and Staff is pleased to have him on board.

**UVA SCHOOL OF
ARCHITECTURE**
Foundation

ATTACHMENT A



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SARC-Fdn@virginia.edu

January 4, 2024

Grace Bogdan-Planner III, Bethesda Design Advisory Panel Coordinator
Maryland National Planning Department
2425 Reedie Drive, 13th Floor
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Dear Grace,

On behalf of the University of Virginia School of Architecture and the UVA School of Architecture Foundation, we write to recommend Robert Sponseller, FAIA to the Design Advisory Panel as part of its effort to encourage design excellence in Montgomery County. In addition to his position on the Foundation Board of Trustees, Robert engages regularly with the School of Architecture through student reviews and juries. Robert recently assisted the School with the formation of the Washington DC Urban Lab, supporting UVA faculty in a locally focused program of study regarding issues in the Washington, DC metropolitan region. His work with the School of Architecture represents the connecting of academic based research and knowledge with the professional and public service communities and elevates the quality of our built environment and public realm.

We are confident that given Robert's involvement with the School of Architecture and Foundation Board of Trustees, his membership as a Fellow in Design with the College of Fellows, and his substantial professional achievements, he will be an excellent addition to the Design Advisory Panel for Montgomery County.

Kind Regards,

Malo A. Hutson, Ph.D., MCP
Dean and Edward E. Elson Professor
UVA School of Architecture

Woody Wingfield
Executive Director
UVA School of Architecture Foundation

Jeana Ripple
Chair, Department of Architecture
UVA School of Architecture



Robert M Sponseller, FAIA

Design Principal

Robert Sponseller is a Design Principal at a prominent Washington DC-based architecture firm. He has led the design, development and implementation of some of the region's most significant buildings and projects. His work includes large scale master plans, multiple-building projects and individual structures in the National Capital region and surrounding metropolitan centers. His projects include both new construction and adaptive re-use in historic districts. He has successfully ushered significant projects through design review boards including the Commission of Fine Arts, the DC Historic Preservation Review Board, the DC Zoning Commission, the Old Georgetown Board and review boards in surrounding jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia. His innovative projects include explorations of building type and program and focus on a long-term sustainable vision for the built environment.

Leadership in the Profession

In 2020, Robert was elevated to The College of Fellows of The American Institute of Architects, who recognized him in the 'object of design' for his notable contributions to the advancement of the

profession of architecture. His nomination noted, "Robert's work is a recognized model for the national challenge faced by our urban centers of reintroducing density into our commercial cores to create living downtowns. His buildings never fail to uplift our spirits when we experience them in our community."

Academic Outreach and Mentorship

Robert works regularly with regional academic institutions through speaking engagements, presentations, and juries at Schools of Architecture. He is currently working with the Dean and Faculty of the University of Virginia as a Board Member of the Architecture School Foundation. In 2020 he fostered the formation of a Washington DC based research studio with UVA faculty studying local issues.

Robert is a regular visiting critic at architecture schools including the University of Virginia, the University of Maryland, Catholic University, Roger Williams University and others. He has been a juror on national and international design awards juries. Robert has served in a peer design review capacity for the DC Office of Planning and DC Mayor's office for Economic Development. He has advised local jurisdictions and agencies on design guidelines and approvals processes, including Arlington Virginia, Montgomery County Maryland, and the Urban Land Institute. His community outreach includes his participation at ULI where he has been a mentor for their Young Leaders program.

Recognition

Robert's work has been nationally and internationally recognized by his peers, receiving more than 35 juried design awards and numerous additional industry awards. In 2015 he was awarded the Urban Land Institute's Global Award for City Market at O. His designs have been widely published in design journals, books and nationally distributed publications. His projects are regularly referenced as best practices in design guidelines published by planning departments and jurisdictions.

Education

Robert received his Master of Architecture degree from the University of Virginia and his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Notre Dame.

Selected Projects

Projects for which Robert's role was lead Design Principal

1000 + 1050 Thomas Jefferson Street

Georgetown, Washington, DC – Design Principal

The Wilson and Elm Office and Apartment Building

Bethesda, Md – Design Principal

The Nigerian Chancery

The International Center, Washington, DC – Design Principal

City Center DC Apartments-Convention Center Redevelopment

Washington, DC - Design Principal

JBG Headquarters -4747 Bethesda Avenue

Bethesda, Md – Design Principal

City Ridge: Former Fannie Mae HQ Site Redevelopment

Washington, DC – Design Principal

Walter Reed Redevelopment Masterplan

Washington, DC - Design Principal

1820 Fort Myer Drive

Arlington, VA - Design Principal

22 West Street Condominiums

Washington, DC - Design Principal

The City Market at O Street-Masterplan and Buildings

Washington, DC – Design Principal

880 P Street -Apartments

Washington, DC - Design Principal

Intersect at Eighth and O Streets- Apartments

Washington, DC – Design Principal

Cityline: 4500 Wisconsin Avenue

Washington, DC – Design Principal

4915-21 Auburn Avenue

Bethesda, Md – Design Principal

The Boro - Masterplan and Buildings

Tysons, VA - Design Principal

Vita Residential Building

Tysons, VA - Design Principal

7607 Old Georgetown Road - Apartments

Bethesda, MD - Design Principal

The Georgetown Incinerator Site Redevelopment – Masterplan and Buildings

Washington, DC-Design Principal

Capitol View - Apartments

Washington, DC-Design Principal

912 F Street Condominiums

Washington, DC - Design Principal

The Odyssey – Apartments and Condominiums-

Arlington, VA - Design Principal

4500 East-West Highway- Office Building

Washington, DC - Design Principal

Selected Awards

AIA AWARDS

Excellence in Architecture Design Awards: Gold Award, 2020

AIA - Potomac Valley Chapter
4747 Bethesda Avenuye, Bethesda, MD

Award of Excellence: Architecture Award, 2019

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
Signature Building, Reston, VA

Award of Excellence: Architecture Award, 2019

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
VITA Tysons, Tysons, VA

Award of Merit in Architecture, 2018

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
880 P Street, NW, Washington, DC

Award of Merit in Architecture, 2017

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
Apartments at CityCenterDC, Washington, DC

Award of Merit in Architecture, 2015

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Presidential Citation for Urban Catalyst, 2015

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Award of Merit in Architecture, 2008

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
22 West, Washington, DC

Award of Merit in Architecture, 2006

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
912 F Street, NW, Washington, DC

Award of Excellence in Architecture, 2005

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
4500 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Award of Excellence in Architecture, 2005

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
Langston Lofts, Washington, DC

Award of Excellence in Architecture, 2003

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
Georgetown Incinerator / Ritz-Carlton Residences, Washington, DC

Award of Excellence in Architecture, 2002

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
2200 M Street, NW / Ritz-Carlton Residences,
Washington, DC

Award of Excellence in Architecture, 2002

AIA - Washington DC Chapter
Nigerian Chancery, Washington, DC

National/International Awards

Award of Excellence, 2022

Center for Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat
The Wilson and Elm, Bethesda, MD

Global Award for Excellence, 2015

Urban Land Institute
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Grand Award, 2009

Residential Architect Magazine Design Awards
22 West, Washington, DC

Merit Award, 2007

Residential Architect Magazine Design Awards
912 F Street, NW, Washington, DC

Merit Award, 2006

Residential Architect Magazine Design Awards
Langston Lofts, Washington, DC

American Architecture Award, 2008

The Chicago Athenaeum: International
Museum of Architecture and Design
Georgetown Incinerator / Ritz-Carlton Residences,
Washington, DC

Awards for Excellence, 2015

Architectural Precast Association
Apartments at CityCenterDC, Washington, DC

Awards for Excellence, 2009

Architectural Precast Association
Capitol View on 14th, Washington, DC

Top Opportunity Zone Project, 2019

Real Estate Forum Globe St. ADAPT Awards
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Regional Awards

Mayor's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation, 2021

DC Historic Preservation Office
City Ridge, 3900 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Design Excellence Award, 2023

Montgomery County, MD Planning Department
The Wilson and Elm

Residential Design Award, 2018

Washingtonian Magazine
880 P Street, NW, Washington, DC

Residential Design Award, 2017

Washingtonian Magazine
Apartments at CityCenterDC, Washington, DC

Residential Design Award, 2015

Washingtonian Magazine
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Residential Design Award, 2009

Washingtonian Magazine
22 West, Washington, DC

Jury Citation, 2015

Montgomery County, MD Planning Department
Design Excellence Awards
Eleven55 Ripley, Washington, DC

Honor Award, 2019

Fairfax County, VA Exceptional Design Awards
Signature at Reston Town Center, Reston, VA

Merit Award, 2019

Fairfax County, VA Exceptional Design Awards
VITA Tysons, Tysons, VA

45th Anniversary Awards, 2016

DC Preservation League
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Mayor's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation, 2005

DC Historic Preservation Office
4500 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Merit Award, 2019

Fairfax County, VA Exceptional Design Awards
VITA Tysons, Tysons, VA

45th Anniversary Awards, 2016

DC Preservation League
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Mayor's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation, 2005

DC Historic Preservation Office
4500 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Award for Architecture, 2005

DC Department of Housing and Community Development
Georgetown Incinerator / Ritz-Carlton Residences,
Washington, DC

Trends Award for Excellence in Mixed-Use Development, 2015

Urban Land Institute Washington
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Award of Excellence, Best Business District Office, 2015

NAIOP Real Estate Development Association DC/MD
4500 East West Highway, Bethesda, MD

Award of Excellence, Best Mixed-Use Project, 2014

NAIOP Real Estate Development Association DC/MD
CityCenterDC, Washington, DC

Award of Excellence, Best Renovation - Historic Restoration, 2014

NAIOP Real Estate Development Association DC/MD
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Grand Award, 2011

NAIOP Real Estate Development Association DC/MD
22 West, Washington, DC

Vision Awards, 2014

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City
CityMarket at O, Washington, DC

Selected Lectures and Activites

UVA School of Architecture Foundation Board

Member - 2020-Present

Northwest DC Development Trends

Speaker, Bisnow June 2022

Contemporary and Compatible: A Symposium on Contextual Modern Design in Historic

Districts- Symposium Organizer and Speaker, "Language of Modernism." Sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation / DC Historic Preservation Office, March 15, 2009

You on View: Showcasing Washington, DC Based Architects

Speaker, Reinvention / Shelterlab Conference, Residential Architect and Architect Magazines, AIA|DC, October 14, 2014

Design Loci: Contemporary Design in Washington, DC

Speaker, ArchEx: Architecture Exchange East, AIA Virginia Chapter, November 8, 2013

District Architecture Center Talk: Residential Architecture Elevating the Everyday

Lecturer, AIA|DC, October 30, 2018

Sustainability and Leadership in Design

Panelist, Urban Land Institute Washington, March 19, 2015

CityCenterDC: The Rebirth of a Livable and Walkable Neighborhood

Speaker, Urban Land Institute Washington, September 18, 2013

AIA Residential Architect Awards Jury

Annual Awards Juror - 2012

Young Leaders Group: Learn from the Best

Panelist, Urban Land Institute Washington, April 30, 2013

Preserving and Planning for Progress Symposium

Speaker, District of Columbia Mayor's Office and DC Office of Planning, March 1, 2016. This event established the theme for the DC 2020 Historic Preservation Plan, Preserving for Progress.

Next Cities: Urbanization, Ecology, and Social Justice

Speaker, University of Virginia School of Architecture DC Alumni and Admitted Student Reception, April 5, 2018

Transforming Tysons: Creating a Sense of Place at Greensboro Station

Speaker, Real Estate Lenders Association DC Chapter, September 20, 2016

Design Excellence Peer Review: DC Private Developments

ATTACHMENT B

Design review of new private developments on formerly public properties in DC's NoMa and Mount Vernon Triangle neighborhoods, District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, 2003 - 2009

Design Review Process Advisor

Architectural Reviewer/Advisor, Arlington County, VA Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development, 2010 - 2011

Shaw and Mt. Vernon Triangle - From the Jazz Age to the Jazzed Age

Panelist, Bisnow, December 15, 2015

Affordable Housing Re-Zoning Study

Studies to identify opportunities for affordable housing through rezoning of District-owned sites, District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development, 2019

Housing Affordability Task Force

Panelist-Urban Land Institute task force on improving approvals/entitlement process for affordable housing

Design Review Process Advisor

Architectural Reviewer/Advisor, Arlington County, VA Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development, 2010 - 2011

Bethesda, MD Downtown Master Plan Design Guidelines

NAIOP MD/DC Leadership Committee Member/Architectural Liaison to Montgomery, County MD Planning Department, 2017

Bethesda, MD Downtown Master Plan Live Forum

Speaker, Montgomery County, MD Planning Department, October 29, 2014

Montgomery County, MD Recreation Guidelines Update

Professional Work Group Member, Montgomery County, MD Planning Department, 2015 - 2017

Studio Theatre Design Committee

Pro-Bono Design Advisor for Conservatory and Student Housing Facilities, Studio Theatre, Washington, DC, 2015-2019

Young Leaders Mentorship Program

Annual Mentor, Urban Land Institute Washington, 2013 - 2019

Washington Studio Formation Sponsor

University of Virginia School of Architecture, 2018-2019

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan – Design Advisory Panel

Rules of Procedure Revised September 23, 2020

PURPOSE

The Design Advisory Panel (DAP) is an integral part of the Bethesda Overlay Zone. The primary goal of the DAP is to provide advice and recommendations that will heighten design excellence and improve the quality of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture in Bethesda. The DAP will be guided by the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan and the related Design Guidelines. To remain competitive within the greater Washington, DC region and to attract the best and brightest to the Bethesda community, it is essential to design great places in which people of all ages, ethnic and economic backgrounds will want to live, work and play. The DAP will help to achieve this outcome.

RELATIONSHIP TO CR ZONES

The Commercial – Residential Zones (CR Zones) were created and adopted with an emphasis on creating great mixed-use, walkable places. Development proposals under the CR Zones are required to provide public amenities and need to focus on design intent to make sure quality is paramount to the applications and that an attractive public realm will be the outcome.

The Bethesda Overlay Zone creates a system for density allocation above and beyond the CR Zone density mapped in the 1994 Bethesda CBD Sector Plan. The requirements for getting additional density from the Bethesda Overlay Zone pool of density include review by the DAP. The additional “BOZ” density should only be allocated if a high degree of design excellence is achieved and the DAP will advise the staff and the Planning Board on this issue.

MAKE UP OF THE DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL

The Design Advisory Panel will have five members. According to the Bethesda Overlay Zone, the DAP must be “composed of relevant independent professionals including at least one resident of the Bethesda community.”

Nominations for members will be solicited from the community and from organizations including but not limited to: CBAR, NAIOP, the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, AIA, and ULI.

The DAP should, at a minimum, have the following expertise:

1. One registered architect representing academia and/or other jurisdictions in the region with a design review panel.
2. One registered architect from the greater Montgomery County community.
3. One member of the development community. This person may be a developer, real estate professional or involved in real estate investment.
4. One Bethesda community member who has a professional interest in urban design, architecture, and/or landscape architecture.

Members of the DAP will act in a professional manner, provide comments to Planning Department staff and the Planning Board, and be mindful of any conflicts of interest from associations with development teams, property owners or associations. The DAP should include the Planning Department’s Senior

Urban Designer as an ex-officio member, and another Planning Department staff member will serve as a liaison to the panel. If conflicts of interest arise, the specific panel members will recuse themselves from the discussion and recommendations. For reviews of Site Plan application projects that require an official vote on the number of Design Excellence Public Benefit points, if the quorum of voting members results in a split vote, the Senior Urban Designer may cast the deciding vote.

DAP members must be approved by the Planning Board and will serve three-year staggered terms. At initial appointment, two members will serve for two years, two members will serve for three years, and one member will serve for four years. The terms of membership will be staggered from this point onward.

Upon official acceptance of an appointment, each voting member may serve two consecutive three-year terms. After serving two terms, DAP members must take a one-year absence at a minimum from service before being considered for an additional term. Prior to completion of their first term, DAP members interested in remaining on the panel must submit a letter requesting to renew their term to the Planning Board for approval. If a DAP member's term is ended early, a new member may be approved by the Planning Board to serve the remainder of the term. If approved, the new panel member may renew for two additional terms.

Members of the DAP may vote to make minor revisions to the Rules of Procedure as necessary to improve the panel review process and logistics. These revisions are subject to Planning Director approval, but do not require approval from the Planning Board. The Planning Board will be updated on minor revisions at the next major change update.

ROLE OF THE DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL IN THE REGULATORY PROCESS

The DAP will review:

- **All Optional Method Development Projects** – All optional method projects in Bethesda will be presented to the DAP. Although the optional method typically begins with Sketch Plan submission, applicants are strongly encouraged to go through the Concept Plan process and meet with the DAP at this Concept Plan stage. If the applicant does not wish to file a Concept Plan, they must meet with the DAP to review their project early in the Sketch Plan process.
- **Projects Seeking Additional Density through the BOZ, Bonus Points through the CR Amenity Guidelines, and/or Height as a MPDU Bonus** – In order for projects to be considered for additional density or height, the applicant must meet with the DAP early on to review point allocations and to assess urban and architectural design implications.

The DAP will be guided by the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan, the Bethesda Downtown Design Guidelines, the Bethesda Overlay Zone and the CR Zone criteria for granting density incentives for exceptional design.

The DAP will meet regularly once a month and more often as development applications are submitted and in need of review. This is a significant time commitment and panel members will need to respond within the timelines set forth by our zoning ordinance and development application schedules. The DAP will receive all the review drawings and/or access to the drawings one week in advance of the review meeting.

Written comments from the panel will be provided to Planning Department staff at Concept, Sketch and Site Plan stages. The assigned staff liaison will assist with the comments as needed.

DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL MEETINGS

While DAP meetings are primarily for panel members to consider and comment on proposed developments, meetings should be collaborative, and input from developers, their consultants, and members of the public is encouraged. Because panel members are volunteers, however, the DAP is not expected to meet for more than one hour on any single project.

Members of the public who wish to participate in a DAP meeting should notify the DAP's staff liaison before the meeting. Those who have not notified the staff liaison in advance may sign up to participate the day of the meeting. Citizens will be invited to participate in the order in which they sign up. In certain cases, there may not be sufficient time for all interested citizens to participate. Members of the public who wish to ensure their comments are considered by the DAP should submit them in writing to the DAP's staff liaison no later than twenty-four hours before the DAP meeting. Any written comments submitted to the DAP will also be sent to the Planning Board before the Board meets to consider the proposed development.

Although DAP meetings are intended to be informal, it may be necessary in certain cases, such as meetings with many interested citizens, for the DAP to impose equitable time limits on public comments or other reasonable rules of order. When possible, the staff liaison will announce time limits at the start of the DAP meeting.

RECONSIDERATION REQUESTS

The DAP will only entertain requests to reconsider votes from the Planning Board.