

Item 8 - Correspondence

From: [Bogdan, Grace](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: mgordon@sgrwlaw.com
Subject: FW: 7749 Old Georgetown Road Planning Questions: Minimum Building Distance
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:12:49 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

Could you please include this in the testimony for item 8 on tomorrow's PB agenda?

From: Bogdan, Grace
Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:12 AM
To: Vichy Ma <vichyma@gmail.com>
Cc: Dickel, Stephanie <Stephanie.Dickel@montgomeryplanning.org>; Hisel-McCoy, Elza <Elza.Hisel-McCoy@montgomeryplanning.org>
Subject: RE: 7749 Old Georgetown Road Planning Questions: Minimum Building Distance

Good Morning Hui-

I apologize for such a delayed response to your email below, this only recently came into my hands. My name is Grace Bogdan, Project Planner for the 7749 Old Georgetown Sketch Plan.

The Bethesda Design Guidelines recommend a setback between towers ranging from 45' – 60', during application review we are looking for a minimum distance from the property line of 22'6", so if/when the adjacent property redevelops and provides the additional 22'6", it would equal the minimum 45' distance envisioned by the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan. I have provided links to those documents at the bottom of this email. Section 2.4.6 of the Design Guidelines discusses conditions where a tower may be built up to the property line, however noting that party walls should mitigate their visual impact with elements such as public art, lighting, texture and/or patterning that provide visual interest.

In this particular application, the proposal would allow for the 22'6" tower setback to the south (7905 Fairmont Avenue), however given the small nature of the site could not also provide the setback to the north and has proposed essentially a party wall condition. Staff recommends a condition on the Sketch Plan (Condition 10.i) for the Applicant to provide visual elements to mitigate the impacts of this blank wall as they move forward to the Site Plan application. The Sketch Plan was reviewed by the Fire Access Division of the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services, with certain items to be addressed including the requirement of zero openings (windows) at the lower level on the south and eastern facades at the time of Site Plan review. In regards to the other development referenced in your email below, the St Elmo apartments, this tower was also reviewed under the new Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan and Design Guidelines and will have a setback of 22'6" from the property line.

The Sketch Plan Application is scheduled for tomorrow's Planning Board hearing. You can view the agenda and staff report in the links below and I've also included links to where you can view the meeting online or sign up to speak/testify, however please note the deadline to sign up is today at

noon.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Grace

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan: https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/BDP-COUNCIL-ADOPTED-MAY2017_SMALL-FOR-WEB.pdf

Bethesda Design Guidelines: https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/BDP-Urban-Design-Guidelines_Approved-July-2017_sm-1.pdf

Planning Board Agenda 12/14/2023: <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda-item/december-14-2023/>

Sign up to testify: <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/meetings/signup-to-testify/>

View Planning Board online: <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/meetings/watch-online/>



Grace Bogdan (she/her/hers)
Planner III, DownCounty Planning Division
Bethesda Design Advisory Panel (DAP) Coordinator

Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reedie Drive, 13th Floor, Wheaton, MD 20902
grace.bogdan@montgomeryplanning.org
o: 301.495.4533



From: Vichy Ma <vichy.ma@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, June 26, 2023 6:36 PM

To: Dickel, Stephanie <Stephanie.Dickel@montgomeryplanning.org>

Cc: MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>

Subject: 7749 Old Georgetown Road Planning Questions: Minimum Building Distance

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Ms. Dickel,

I'm Hui Ma, I'm a Montgomery County resident for more than 7 years and currently living in Bethesda. I came across the planning notice of 7749 Old Georgetown Road. I have been super excited with all the new developments at downtown Bethesda, which convey the strong economic growth even

during the pandemic. While I just one concern about recent developments that I would like to share with you.

First, may I ask what are the regulations in Montgomery county on the minimum distance between multi-family residential buildings? I have this question because I realize some of the recent development are extremely close to existing high-rise residential buildings. Examples include 4922 Saint Elmo Ave and 7607 Old Georgetown Rd, which face directly to other residential buildings' windows with maybe 40 feet distance. I have similar concerns with 7749 Old Georgetown Road, because according to the plan, there is only 22'-6" distance between the upper floors of this building and 7905 Fairmont Ave to the southeast side, and there is a similarly small gap on the northeast side to 4922 Saint Elmo Ave, which is currently under development.

I feel that these close-up high-rise buildings create a somewhat depressing scene in downtown Bethesda. And it is hard to imagine that people who live inside them would enjoy the view of nothing but other's living room through the window. Besides that, I'm also worrying that such approach may introduce fire safety issues, because there is no firefighting apparatus could reach higher floors of these buildings through such small gaps.

Just for your reference: I believe that the minimum window-to-window distance of New York City is 60 feet for buildings over 50 feet tall. Do we have similar regulations on the minimum distance requirements in Bethesda? I Googled around but couldn't find such information. If we don't have one yet, I hope it could be implemented. After all, residents of Montgomery County would expect a more enjoyable and safer living environment than downtown Manhattan. Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

Best regards,
Hui Ma

From: [Bogdan, Grace](#)
To: [Coello, Catherine](#); [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Fwd: 7749 Old Georgetown Road Planning Questions: Minimum Building Distance
Date: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 2:13:01 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

Hi Catherine,

Could you please include this to the Board for Item #8 this Thursday?

Thanks

Grace

From: Dickel, Stephanie <Stephanie.Dickel@montgomeryplanning.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 1:00 PM
To: Bogdan, Grace <grace.bogdan@montgomeryplanning.org>
Subject: FW: 7749 Old Georgetown Road Planning Questions: Minimum Building Distance



Stephanie Marsnick Dickel
Regulatory Supervisor, DownCounty Planning Division

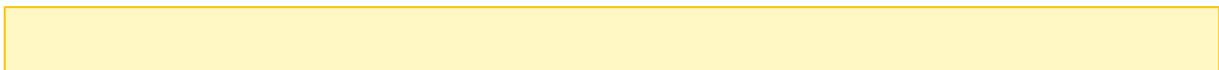
Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902
stephanie.dickel@montgomeryplanning.org
o: 301 495 4527



WE'VE MOVED!

THE NEW PARK AND PLANNING HEADQUARTERS IS NOW LOCATED AT
2425 REEDIE DRIVE, WHEATON, MD 20902

From: Vichy Ma <vichyma@gmail.com>
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To: Dickel, Stephanie <Stephanie.Dickel@montgomeryplanning.org>
Cc: MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>
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Best regards,
Hui Ma