

Montgomery Planning

## 7025 STRATHMORE STREET

### SKETCH PLAN NO. 320240030



Request for up to 170,000 square feet of density for a multi-family residential development with 15% MPDUs, and up to 81,859 square feet of BOZ density with associated Park Impact Payment.

No. 320240030

Completed: 01-15-2024

MCPB

Item No. 8

01-25-2024

Montgomery County

Planning Board

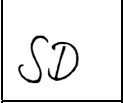
2425 Reddie Drive, Floor 14

Wheaton, MD 20902

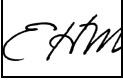
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### LOCATION/ADDRESS

7025-7039 Strathmore Street

### MASTER PLAN

2017 Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan

### ZONE

CR-1.5, C-0.25, R-1.5, H-70 and the Bethesda Overlay Zone

### PROPERTY SIZE

1.34 acres

### APPLICANT

Strathmore Apartments I LP & Strathmore Apartments II LP

### ACCEPTANCE DATE

November 1, 2023

### REVIEW BASIS

Chapter 59

### Summary:

- The Sketch Plan application proposes to redevelop a site in downtown Bethesda with a new residential building up to 70 feet in height with a maximum density of 170,000 square feet for up to 180 units with 15% MPDUs.
- The Application proposes to use up to 81,859 square feet of Bethesda Overlay Zone with associated Park Impact Payment (to be determined at Site Plan).
- The conceptual building will have frontage on Woodmont Avenue, Strathmore Street, with access and frontage off a public alley.
- A Sector Planned through-block connection partially exists from Wisconsin Avenue to the public alley and this Project will complete the connection from the public alley to Strathmore Street.
- No correspondence has been received as of the posting of this staff report.

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## SECTION 1: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

### SKETCH PLAN 320240030

Staff recommends approval of 7025 Strathmore Street, Sketch Plan No. 320240030, for up to 170,000 square feet of density for a multi-family residential development with 15% MPDUs, and up to 81,859 square feet of BOZ density with associated Park Impact Payment on 1.34 acres, zoned CR-1.5, C-0.25, R-1.5, H-70' and the Bethesda Overlay Zone (BOZ), in the 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan*. The following site development elements shown on the latest electronic version of Sketch Plan No. 320240030, as of the date of this Staff Report submitted via ePlans to the M-NCPPC, are required except as modified by the conditions below.

1. Maximum density and height;
2. Approximate location of lots and public dedications;
3. General location and extent of public open space;
4. General location of vehicular access points; and
5. Public benefit schedule.

All other elements of the Sketch Plan are illustrative and subject to refinement at the time of Site Plan.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. **Density**  
The Sketch Plan is limited to a maximum of 170,000 square feet of total residential development.
2. **Height**  
The development is limited to a maximum average building height of 70 feet, as measured from the building height measuring point to be illustrated on the Certified Site Plan.
3. **Incentive Density**  
The development must be constructed with the public benefits listed below unless modifications are made under Section 59.7.3.3.I. Total points must equal at least 100 and be chosen from at least 4 categories as required by Section 59.4.5.4.A.2. The requirements of Division 59.4.7 and the *CR Zone Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines* must be fulfilled for each public benefit. Final points will be established at Site Plan approval.
  - a) Connectivity and Mobility, achieved by providing fewer than the maximum parking spaces under the Zoning Ordinance, a through block connection, and installing streetscape beyond the Site frontage;
  - b) Diversity of Uses and Activities achieved by providing units designed with enhanced accessibility for the disabled;
  - c) Quality of Building and Site Design, achieved through architectural elevations, exceptional design, and structured parking; and

d) Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment achieved through the purchase of building lot terminations, cool roof, and a vegetated wall.

**4. Streetscape**

The Applicant must install the Bethesda Streetscape Standard along the entire Site Frontage, including the undergrounding of utilities.

**5. Public Open Space**

The Applicant must provide a minimum of 10% of the Site Area (26,996 square feet) as Public Open Space, totaling 2,700 square feet.

**6. Park Impact Payment**

The Applicant must make a Park Impact Payment (PIP) to the M-NCPPC before release of the first above-grade building permit. The final amount will be determined at Site Plan.

**7. Green Cover**

a) At the time of Site Plan, the Applicant must provide a minimum 35% of Site Area as green cover as described in Section 2.4.1 of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan and Section 2.3.2 of the associated Design Guidelines; any proposed tree canopy must utilize tree species and canopy sizes at 20-year maturity per the M-NCPPC Approved Trees Technical Manual.

b) Any green roof installed pursuant to this condition must have a minimum soil depth of six inches (6") or Staff-approved equivalent.

**8. Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines**

At the time of Site Plan, the Applicant must demonstrate the following:

a) Comments have been addressed from the Design Advisory Panel as specified in their September 27, 2023 meeting minutes including submission of additional details to ensure the through-block connection is of an appropriate height and width; and

b) Project conformance for street typology, parks and open space, site design, building form, creative placemaking, and any site-specific guidelines in accordance with the *Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines*.

9. The Planning Board has reviewed and accepts the recommendations of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation ("MCDOT") in its letter dated November 27, 2023, and incorporates them as conditions of the Sketch Plan approval. The Applicant must comply with each of the recommendations in the letter, which may be amended by MCDOT if the amendment does not conflict with any other conditions of the Sketch Plan approval.

**10. Future Coordination for Preliminary and Site Plan**

In addition to any other requirements for Preliminary Plans under Chapter 50 and Site Plans under Chapter 59, the following must be addressed in the subsequent applications as appropriate:

a) The Applicant must submit and receive approval of a Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan;

b) Provide and receive approval of a stormwater management concept plan consistent with Chapter 19 of the Montgomery County Code, which also addresses the recommendations

of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan, Water Quality Section (2.4.2.B) and the associated Design Guidelines on Pages 54-62 of the Sector Plan;

- c) Demonstrate how each public benefit satisfies the Zoning Ordinance, the Bethesda Implementation Guidelines, and the CR Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines and provide the following:
  - i) Minimum height and width, materials and furnishings for proposed through-block connection; and
  - ii) Additional detail for proposed vegetated wall that will guarantee success such as, but not limited to, a system and maintenance plan.
- d) Incorporate Bird-Safe Design elements into the building's architecture with emphasis on Glass Coverage and Glazing, per pages 80-81 of Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines;
- e) Provide a noise analysis as part of the Preliminary Plan submission;
- f) Provide a Canopy Exhibit and supplemental tree planting along streets and public spaces to support a minimum of 50 percent overall canopy cover, on a plan-wide basis, per the Sector Plan recommendations;
- g) Address the SITES & LEED recommendations of the Sector Plan;
- h) Coordinate with MCDOT to provide an operational analysis of the public alley. Include 7000 Wisconsin Avenue as a pipeline project.
- i) Coordinate with MCDOT on reduced truncation of the Site corners of Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue.
- j) Coordinate with MCDOT to show the latest design of the two-way separated bike lane on the north side of Woodmont Avenue, opposite the Site.
- k) Submit a scope for Transportation Impact Study (TIS).
- l) Coordinate with MCDOT and Planning staff on a potential improved crossing of Woodmont Avenue within the vicinity of the Site.
- m) Explore increasing building setback at the first floor along the public alley from 3 feet to 4 feet based on sight distance and truck maneuverability analysis.

#### **11. Validity**

A site plan must be submitted within 36 months after the date the resolution is sent per Section 59.7.3.3.G.

#### **12. DHCA**

The Planning Board has reviewed and accepts the recommendations of the Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs ("DHCA") in its letter dated January 9, 2024, and incorporates them as conditions of the Sketch Plan approval. At the time of Site Plan and Preliminary Plan review, the Applicant and Staff will review the current market-rate affordability in the development for consistency with Sector Plan recommendations regarding affordable housing and options for incorporating additional affordable units.

### 13. **Fire Access**

The Planning Board has reviewed and accepts the recommendations of the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (“MCDPS”), Fire Department Access and Water Supply Section in its letter dated January 2, 2024, and incorporates them as conditions of approval. The Applicant must comply with each of the recommendations in the letter, which MCDPS may amend if the amendment does not conflict with other conditions of Sketch Plan approval.

## SECTION 2: SITE DESCRIPTION

### VICINITY

The Property is located in downtown Bethesda within the South Bethesda District, a block west of Wisconsin Avenue at the corner of Woodmont Avenue and Strathmore Street. Wisconsin Avenue is comprised of commercial buildings including a single-story FedEx store, a Verizon store and Sleepy's Mattress store. Taller mixed-use buildings along Wisconsin Avenue include the 120-foot-tall Bethesda Solaire project that is located across Woodmont Avenue to the north and the 90-foot tall Adagio Apartments closer to the intersection of Bradley Boulevard and Wisconsin Avenue. The recently approved, and under construction, 7000 Wisconsin Avenue Project (Camille Apartments) is located on Wisconsin Avenue directly to the southeast of the Project Site across the public alley. Directly north of the Site across Woodmont Avenue is a nine-story residential building. To the west of the Project Site the uses transition to predominantly residential buildings varying in height from single family and townhouses to four story garden apartment buildings.

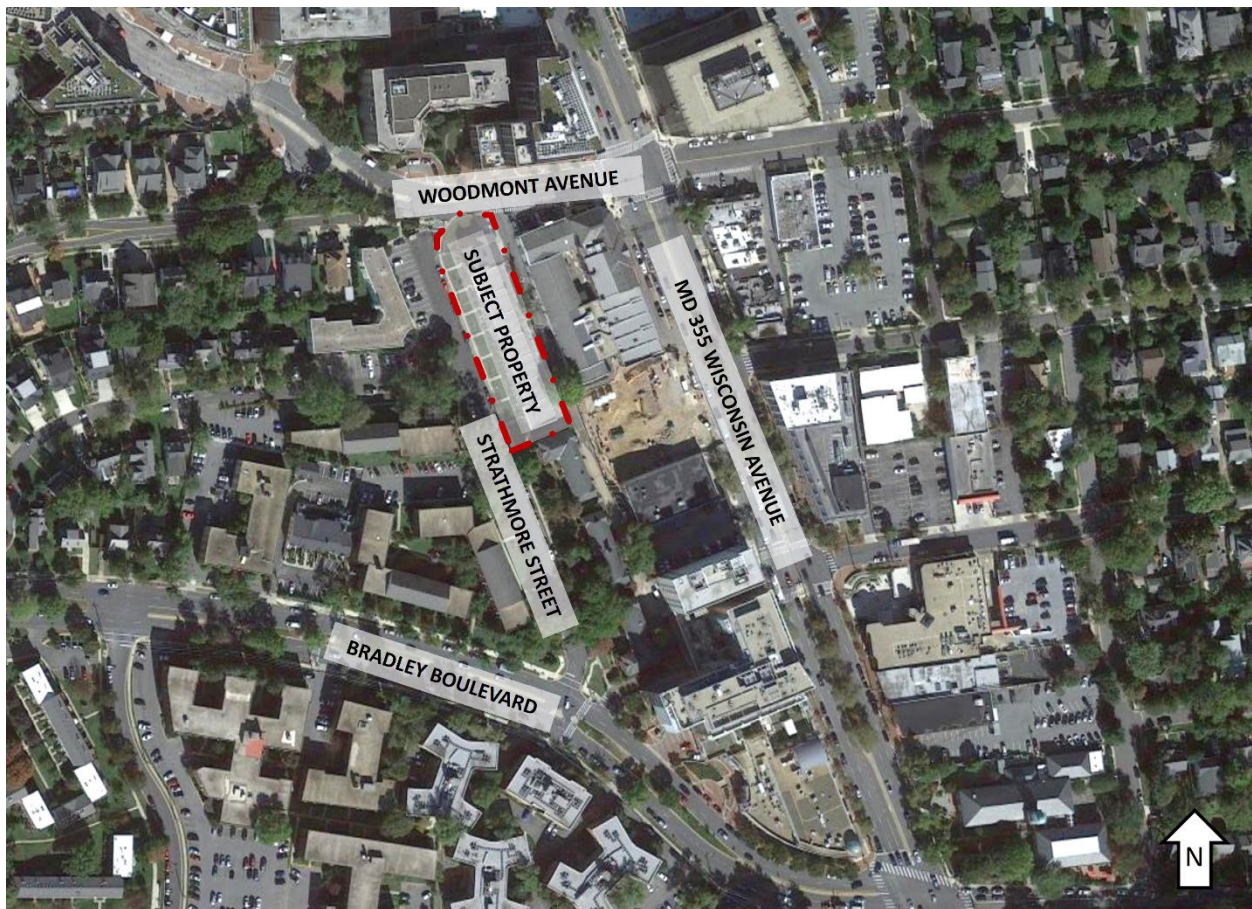


Figure 1 – Vicinity Map



## PROPERTY DESCRIPTION & ANALYSIS

The Subject Site (Subject Property, Property, Site) is located at the intersection of Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue. The Property is comprised of lots 1, 2, 3, and part of lot 4 originally created by the George Sacks Subdivision recorded in Plat No. 653, containing 1.34 tract acres, with 0.62 acres of Site area after right-of-way dedications.



*Figure 2 – View of Subject Property from Strathmore Street*

The Site is zoned CR-1.5, C-0.25, R-1.5, H-70 and within the Bethesda Overlay Zone and is currently developed with a two-story garden apartment building containing 32 units. The building faces Strathmore Street with several lead sidewalks to enter the building, and a sidewalk to the public alley in the rear at the southern property line. Vehicles access the two-way alley off Woodmont Avenue or Bradley Boulevard to the south, providing rear garage access for several properties facing Wisconsin Avenue. The dimensions of the alley vary along the total length and is encumbered by existing utility poles and garbage cans, however along the site frontage is 20 feet in width.

The Property is in the Little Falls Branch watershed, which is a use class I-P<sup>1</sup> watershed. The Site is not associated with any areas of forest, 100-year floodplains, or steep slopes. There are lawns and a few landscape elements in the front of the site. Additionally, there is a significant White Mulberry tree and a specimen Pin Oak tree, measuring 26 and 33 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH), respectively, located in the back alley of the Property. The soils associated with the Property are classified as urban

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<sup>1</sup> Use I-P: WATER CONTACT RECREATION & PROTECTION OF AQUATIC LIFE, AND PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY. Waters that are suitable for: water contact sports: play and leisure time activities where the human body may come in direct contact with the surface water; fishing; the growth and propagation of fish (other than trout); other aquatic life, and wildlife; agricultural water supply; industrial water supply and uses as public water supply.

land and are not considered highly erodible or otherwise sensitive. There are no known rare, threatened, or endangered species on the Property.

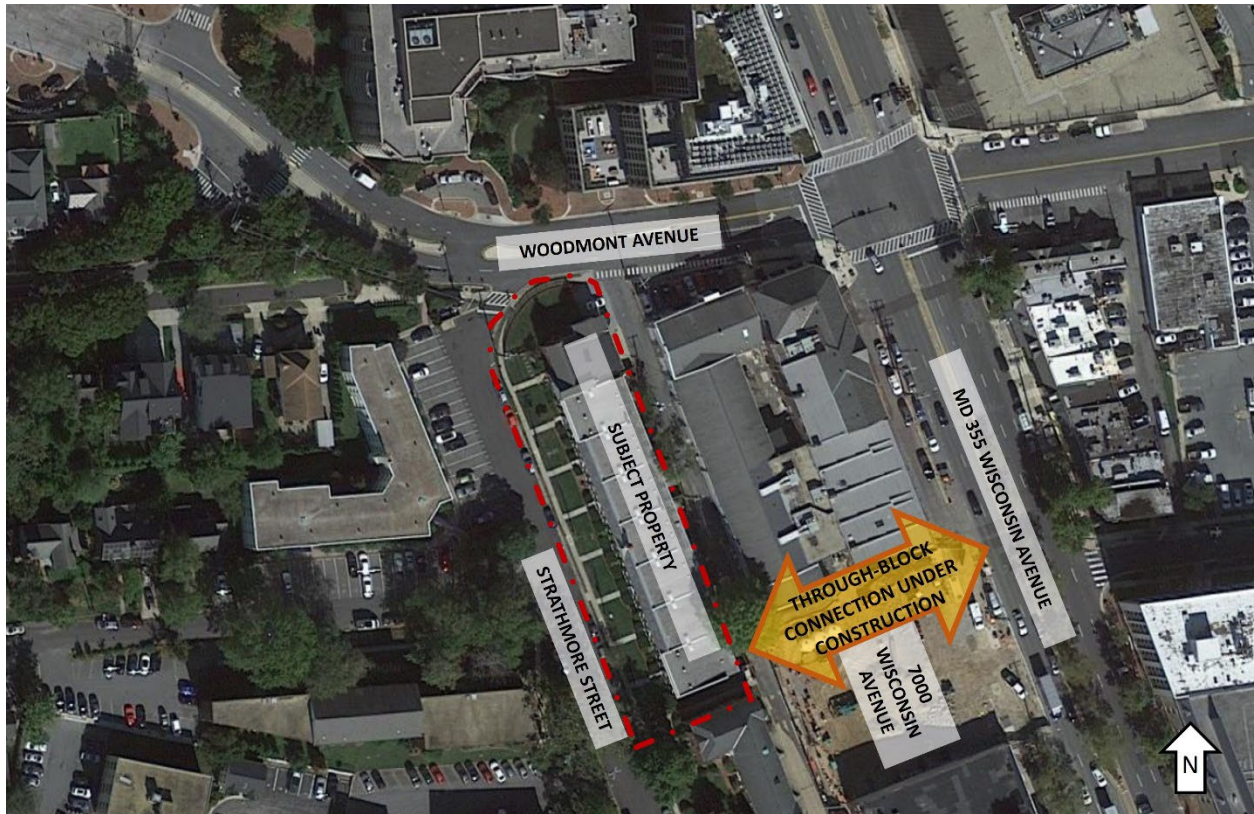


Figure 3 – Aerial of Subject Property

## SECTION 3: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### PROPOSAL

The Applicant proposes to redevelop the site with a new residential building up to 70 feet in height with structured parking access from the public alley. The development envisions a total density of 170,000 square feet for up to 180 units with 15% MPDUs. Included in the Proposal is continuation of a through-block connection to achieve a Sector-Planned pedestrian connection from Wisconsin Avenue to Strathmore Street.

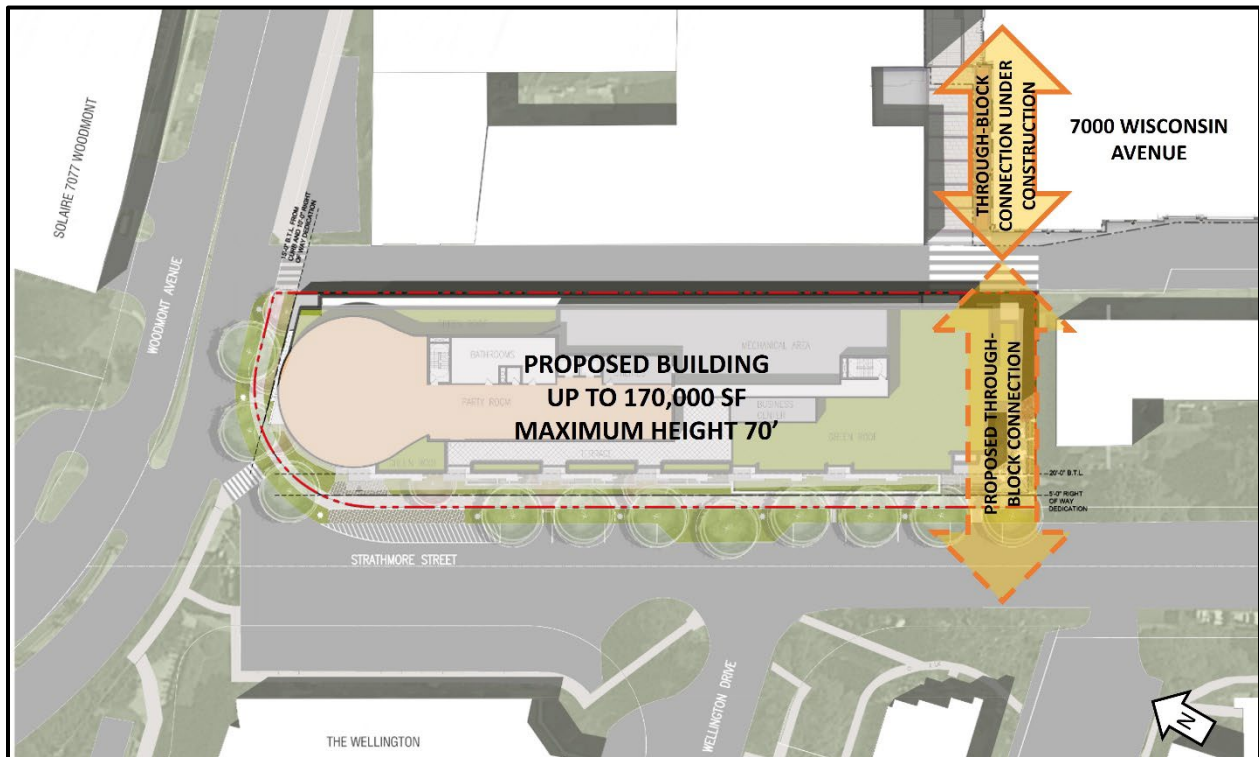


Figure 4 – Concept Rendering of Sketch Plan No. 320240030

### BUILDING/ARCHITECTURE

The proposed massing has been uniquely formed in response to the curved corner of Strathmore Street with a circular edge and a transparent two-story base with lobby entrance. Along Strathmore Street the Applicant proposes ground floor units with patios to be compatible with the lower story residential to the west. The massing above will be articulated with a rhythmic pattern of bays and balconies.



*Figure 5 – Perspective from Woodmont Avenue facing east*



*Figure 6 – Perspective from Strathmore Street facing north*



*Figure 7 – Perspective from Woodmont Avenue facing southwest across public alley*

The Proposal was presented to the Bethesda Design Advisory Panel in September of 2023. The Panel voted that the Project was on track to receive a minimum 10 design excellence points as required for projects within the Bethesda Overlay Zone, with the following to be provided at site plan review:

1. A section showing the view corridor from Wisconsin Avenue through the pedestrian connection to Strathmore Street;
2. A section from the curb on Strathmore Street through the building showing the relationship of the ground level patios and building footprint with bays projecting above.

## OPEN SPACE

Based on the tract area and number of street frontages, the Project is required to provide 10% of the Site area as open space, totaling 2,700 square feet. The Applicant proposes to meet this requirement through the proposed through-block connection at the southern boundary of the Site. The 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines* identifies several locations where public connections are recommended as shown in Figure XX below. The *Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines* recommend public through-block connections to be a high-quality design, open to the sky and wide enough to allow pedestrians and cyclists to pass through comfortably, and others to pause and sit or access building the corner, public art, signage or other design elements, which draw people into the connection from the sidewalk. Through-block connections are required to be a minimum 15 feet in width, as the Applicant proposes, and the exact dimensions of the through-block connection and design elements for the Subject Application will be finalized at the time of Site Plan.

Figure 2.04: Public Through-Block Connections and Trails



Figure 8 – Public Through-Block Connections and Trails Figure from Bethesda Downtown Design Guidelines

The Applicant has provided conceptual renderings to visualize how this space will feel with the inclusion of a gathering/seating space, focal feature, and proposed vegetated wall. A portion of the through-block connection will be under the building above, and will connect through the public alley to the portion of the through-block connection now under construction with the 7000 Wisconsin Avenue project. As discussed further below, the Bethesda Design Advisory Panel requested additional information and images of the through-block connection to be reviewed at Site Plan to ensure the space, including height and width, is appropriate and inviting to the public.



Figure 9 – Rendering (left) from Strathmore Street looking towards Wisconsin Ave and Planview (right) of proposed through-block connection for 7025 Strathmore Street



Figure 10 – Rendering (left) and Planview (right) of approved through-block connection for 7000 Wisconsin Avenue

TRANSPORTATION

All vehicular access will be from the public alley on the east side of the Site. This includes both the open-air loading bay and access to the sub-grade parking garage. The alley is 20-feet wide, which meets the minimum design requirements for public alleys that serve as primary access for motor vehicles (Section 59-6.1.4.C.1). The Applicant currently proposes to setback the building along the alley 3 feet from the Property line. However, given the presence of utility poles and illegally positioned dumpsters and other trash receptacles, the project has been conditioned to explore setting the building back an additional foot (4 feet total setback) to provide more space for maneuverability.

7000 Wisconsin Avenue, a multi-family residential project located on the opposite side of the public alley, was required to make the same setback for the first two floors, for the same reason.

The alley currently operates bi-directionally, but both termini restrict left turns. MCDOT has requested that the Applicant conduct an analysis of the current operations of the public alley intersections at both ends, to be submitted with the future Preliminary Plan. Trips estimated to be generated by 7000 Wisconsin Avenue will be included as a pipeline projects. The operational analysis should address demands for traffic heading westbound in and out of the Site.

MCDOT also voiced concerns about the sight lines and tapered angles of the Loading Zone and Garage entrance. Truck turning templates and sight lines will be evaluated and finalized at the time of Preliminary Plan.



Figure 11 – Site Access and Circulation

The Sketch Plan shows marked on-street parallel parking along the Site frontage on Strathmore Street and a layby in front of the lobby main entrance to the building. The purpose of the layby is to provide designated space for rideshare pick-up/drop-off, and unscheduled deliveries from services such as Amazon or UberEATS. MCDOT has concerns about the proximity of the layby to the functional intersection of Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue. The Applicant has been directed to continue working with MCDOT and Planning staff to reach a consensus on a potential short-term parking configuration that ensures safe, adequate, and efficient circulation to and around the Site.



Pedestrian access and comfort will be improved by the frontage improvements that will be required along Woodmont Avenue and Strathmore Street. Woodmont Avenue is a Downtown Mixed-Use Street, which requires a minimum of five feet for the Planting/Furnishing Zone and a minimum of eight feet for the Pedestrian Through Zone. Strathmore Street is a Neighborhood Connector, which requires a minimum of six feet for the Planting/Furnishing Zone and a minimum of six feet for the Pedestrian Through Zone. The final roadway cross sections for all street frontages will be determined at the time of Preliminary Plan.

The Project proposes replacing the existing 32-unit mid-rise multi-family building with a high-rise residential building with 180 units. In accordance with the 2020-2024 *Growth and Infrastructure Policy*, the Project is estimated to generate a net increase of 73 peak hour person trips in the morning and 70 in the evening. Therefore, the Applicant will be required to submit a Transportation Impact Study (TIS) at the time of Preliminary Plan. The Site is located within the Bethesda CBD Transportation Policy Area, a Red Policy Area, and thus a vehicle adequacy test will not be included in the scope of the (TIS).

## ENVIRONMENT

Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue are designated as canopy corridors within the 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan* (Sector Plan). The 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines* recommend that streets within the canopy corridors provide the maximum sidewalk width possible and consider opportunities for double rows of trees (page 32). The Applicant is proposing to incorporate larger shade trees (3-Inch caliper) with a double row of trees on Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue frontages to enhance the green cover.

### Forest Conservation

A Natural Resources Inventory/ Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) No. 420231860 was approved for the Subject Property on July 07, 2023. The plan, designated No. 420231860, identifies the existing man-made and natural features associated with the Property, such as the buildings, street trees, and landscape elements. As previously stated in the Property Description, there is one significant White Mulberry tree and a specimen Pin Oak tree, located in the back alley of the property. Although no forest is on-site or adjacent to the Property, a Forest Conservation Plan or Exemption will be submitted as part of the future Preliminary and Site Plan submissions.

### Green Cover

The Sector Plan includes a number of recommendations to achieve the urban green goals. An important recommendation to this effect is the on-site 35% green coverage minimum. The green cover may include singularly or a combination of intensive green roofs (8 inches or deeper) or tree canopy cover. The Application consists of a Site Area of 26,996 square feet (SF), which results in a green cover requirement of at least 9,449 SF. Currently, the Application proposes to meet this requirement through an 8-inch-deep intensive green roof. Also, the Application is providing

supplemental landscape planting along Woodmont Avenue streets and public spaces to support the Sector Plan wide goal of at least 50 percent overall canopy cover on a plan-wide basis.

### Noise

The Project proposes residential units to be built adjacent to arterial roadways and would therefore be subject to a noise analysis at the time of Preliminary Plan submission. Staff supports a waiver for the exterior noise per Section 2.2.2 of the 1983 Noise Guidelines, as mitigation such as noise barriers is not practical in an urban environment, however the noise analysis for interior units will still be required at Preliminary Plan.

### Stormwater Management

Although a stormwater management concept plan is not required at Sketch Plan, the Applicant has provided a concept stormwater management narrative. This narrative describes the proposed on-site stormwater management for the project as using Environmental Site Design (ESD) to the maximum extent practicable via green roof facilities and bio-retention, due to existing constraints. Final treatment methods and/or waivers will be determined at Preliminary and Site Plan by the Department of Permitting Services.

## SECTION 4: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Applicant has complied with all submittal and noticing requirements. A pre-submittal public meeting was held on June 20, 2023 related to the 7025 Strathmore Street Sketch Plan. Several residents from surrounding properties were in attendance. Questions related to the number of parking spaces, the rental/sale configuration of the units, any bonus density or height, the presence of any retail, the approximate timeline for the approval process, building height, use of the alley, architectural style, and construction issues were discussed.

Staff received one email with concerns regarding the Project that is included as Attachment E. The concerns are related to impacts of the Project on the existing public alley for which access is proposed from. Access from the alley will require approval at the time of Preliminary Plan from MCDOT based on additional analysis including a traffic operational analysis, sight distance analysis, and truck turning movements.

## SECTION 5: SKETCH PLAN 320240030 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of a Sketch Plan is to identify general land uses, development intensity, and public benefits for the optional method of development in the CR, CRT, EOF or LSC zones. The Sketch Plan is intended to be conceptual in nature with an emphasis on building densities, massing, heights and anticipated uses, the locations of open and public use spaces, the general circulation patterns for all modes of transportation, an estimated range of peak hour trips and relationships between existing or proposed adjacent buildings and rights-of-way. Details of the proposed development are determined during Preliminary and Site Plan review. Section 59.7.3.3.E of the Zoning Ordinance states: “To approve a Sketch Plan the Planning Board must find that the following elements are appropriate in concept and appropriate for further detailed review at Site Plan. The Sketch Plan must:”

**1. Meet the objectives, general requirements, and standards of this Chapter;**

*Table 1: 7025 Strathmore Street Sketch Plan Data Table for CR Zone, Optional Method, Section 59.4.5.4*

<b>Development Standard</b>	<b>Permitted/ Required</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
<b>Tract Area</b>	n/a	58,761 sf (1.34 ac)
<b>Tract Area - Prior Dedication</b>	n/a	29,856 sf (0.68 ac)
<b>Tract Area - Proposed Dedication</b>	n/a	1,909 sf (0.04 ac)
<b>Site Area<sup>1</sup> (tract area minus dedications)</b>	n/a	<b>26,996 sf (0.62 ac)</b>
<b>Mapped Density</b> <b>CR-1.5, C-0.25, R-1.5, H-70'</b>		
<b>Residential (GFA/ FAR)</b>	88,141 sf (1.5)	88,141 sf (1.5)
<b>Commercial (GFA/FAR)</b>	14,690 sf (0.25)	0 sf (0)
<b>Total Mapped Density (GFA/FAR)</b>	88,141 sf (1.5)	88,141 sf (1.5)
<b>BOZ Density</b>		81,859 sf (1.39)
<b>Total GFA/FAR</b>		<b>170,000 sf (2.89)</b>
<b>MPDU requirement</b>	15%	15%
<b>Building Height, max</b>	70 ft	70 ft
<b>Public Open Space (min s.f.)</b>	10% (2,700 sf)	10% (2,700 sf)

<sup>1</sup> Site area is determined by tract area minus any previous and proposed dedications per Section 59.4.1.7.A

**a) Implement the recommendations of applicable master plans (59.4.5.1.A)**

The Project substantially conforms to the recommendations for the Property included in the 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan*. Specifically, this Sector Plan builds on the past successes of Downtown Bethesda to create a truly sustainable downtown by focusing on components that will bolster the elements most in need of enhancement. The recommendations include:

1. **Parks and open spaces**, including new civic greens at Veteran’s Park, Bethesda Farm Women’s Cooperative Market, Capital Crescent Trail and new urban parks, pathways and gateways.
2. **Affordable housing**, including the preservation of existing market-rate affordable housing, providing a mix of housing options and the provision of Moderately Priced Dwelling Units in exchange for development incentives.
3. **Environmental innovation**, including more energy-efficient buildings, better stormwater management, improved sidewalks and bicycle routes, and other measures to enhance community health and quality of life.
4. **Economic competitiveness**, based on new development, public amenities and proximity to public transit to attract businesses and visitors from throughout the region, and foster entrepreneurship and innovation.

The Property is designated as Site 177 in the South Bethesda District and the Sector Plan rezoned this Site from R-10 to a comparable CR zone to promote infill redevelopment of residential apartments and increased lot coverage. This District is adjacent to the mixed-use Wisconsin Avenue Corridor District. The South Bethesda District is an established residential neighborhood situated north of Norwood Local Park. The district has a garden character with tree-lined streetscapes and planted setbacks, and offers several opportunities to create improved connections for pedestrians and bicycles within the district. The residential community is predominantly composed of garden apartments and townhouses, with the exception of a neighborhood of single-family homes in the northwest section.

Specifically, the Project addresses the following goals as outlined in the Sector Plan and South Bethesda District sections of the Sector Plan:

- *Improve connectivity throughout the district and between Downtown Bethesda and Norwood Local Park.*

The proposed through-block connection will complete the Sector Planned connection from Wisconsin Avenue to Strathmore Street, which will further the vision of improving pedestrian connectivity between downtown Bethesda and Norwood Local Park (located to the south of Strathmore Street).

- *Encourage some redevelopment of aging housing into mixed-income housing opportunities.*

The existing garden style apartments on the Subject Property were constructed in 1942 with no regulated affordable housing and lacking amenities typical of newer developments. The proposed redevelopment will provide a modern building with amenities and 15% MPDUs.

- *Incentivize expanded affordability for housing.*

The proposed moderately priced dwelling units, which is anticipated to be up to 27 units (15% of 180 units), will provide county regulated affordable housing on an existing site with 32 units that contain no county regulated affordable housing.

- *Promote incentives to reduce parking.*

The Bethesda Overlay Zone allows a reduction of parking from the Zoning Ordinance minimum standards. The Applicant proposes to provide 155 spaces for the 180 unit building given its proximity to numerous public transportation options including the Bethesda Metro Station. The final number of parking spaces will be reviewed at the Site Plan stage.

- *Balance development with transitions to single-unit residential neighborhoods surrounding the Sector Plan area in residential and edge districts, such as . . . South Bethesda*

The massing has been designed to be respectful of the lower residential buildings to the west of the Site. The Strathmore Street frontage will include ground floor units that provide a townhouse feel with patios, and the massing will be further broken down through bays and balconies.

#### Transportation Recommendations

Woodmont Avenue is a Downtown Mixed-Use Street, which requires a minimum of five feet for the Planting/Furnishing Zone and a minimum of eight feet for the Pedestrian Through Zone. Strathmore Street is a Neighborhood Connector, which requires a minimum of six feet for the Planting/Furnishing Zone and a minimum of six feet for the Pedestrian Through Zone. The final roadway cross sections for all street frontages will be determined at the time of Preliminary Plan.

The 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* recommends a separated bike lane along Woodmont Avenue; however, it has been determined that it will be implemented as a two-way separated bike lane on the north side of the street, opposite the Site, therefore the Applicant will not be required to participate in the implementation.

#### Environmental Recommendations

Strathmore Street is identified in the Sector Plan as a Canopy Corridor. Canopy Corridor designations are intended to create green corridors that connect parks, trails, stream buffers, and denser forest networks beyond the Bethesda boundaries. The corridors also align with recommended bike and pedestrian priority streets where tree canopy becomes a crucial element to enhance shade and comfort while also providing an ecological benefit. The Proposal will conform to the Bethesda Streetscape Standards and provide a 6–8-foot street tree buffer/furnishing area, with a 6-10-foot-wide sidewalk and 5-8 feet of building frontage zone.

The Sector Plan includes a number of recommendations to achieve the urban green goals. An important recommendation to this effect is the on-site 35% green coverage minimum. The green cover may include singularly or a combination of intensive green roofs (8 inches or deeper) or tree canopy cover. The Application consists of a Site Area of 26,996 square feet (SF), which results in a green cover requirement of at least 9,449 SF. Currently, the Application proposes to meet this requirement through an 8-inch-deep intensive green roof. Also, the Application is providing supplemental landscape planting along Woodmont Avenue streets and public spaces to support the Sector Plan wide goal of at least 50 percent overall canopy cover on a plan-wide basis.

**b) *Target opportunities for redevelopment of single-use commercial areas and surface parking lots with a mix of uses.***

The Property is currently residential and will be redeveloped at a higher density to support the surrounding commercial uses on Wisconsin Avenue.

**c) *Encourage development that integrates a combination of housing types, mobility options, commercial services, and public facilities and amenities, where parking is prohibited between the building and the street.***

The redevelopment will provide a higher density of residential housing with county regulated affordable housing, along with amenities throughout the building. The Site will also provide for a pedestrian connection from Wisconsin Avenue to Strathmore Street to increase accessibility from South Bethesda District to the downtown and surrounding services.

**d) *Allows a flexible mix of uses, densities, and building heights appropriate to various settings to ensure compatible relationships with adjoining neighborhoods.***

The Proposal will conform to the maximum building height of 70 feet to ensure a compatible transition from the taller buildings along Wisconsin Avenue to the lower density residential that exists in the South Bethesda District. Additionally, the Project will provide for enhanced streetscape along the Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue frontage, as well as the Sector Planned through-block connection.

**e) *Integrate an appropriate balance of employment and housing opportunities.***

The Proposal will provide for an increased residential density with 15% MPDUs near downtown Bethesda with transit and employment opportunities.

**f) Standardize optional method development by establishing minimum requirements for the provision of public benefits that will support and accommodate density above the standard method limit.**

The Project will provide the required 100 public benefit points from a minimum of 4 categories to achieve the desired incentive density above the standard method limit. Final determination of public benefit points will be determined at the time of Site Plan.

**2. Substantially conforms to the recommendations of the applicable master plan:**

As discussed in Finding 1.a above, the Project substantially conforms to the 2017 Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan.

**3. Satisfy any development plan or schematic development plan in effect on October 29, 2014;**

The Sketch Plan is not subject to a development plan or schematic development plan.

**4. Achieve compatible internal and external relationships between existing and pending nearby development;**

The Proposal will achieve compatible internal and external relationships nearby. The redevelopment will connect to the recently approved 7000 Wisconsin Avenue mixed use project that provides a through-block connection from Wisconsin Avenue to the public alley, and this Project will complete the connection from the public alley to Strathmore Street. The Project will enhance the streetscape along Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue and will provide offsite improvements within the right-of-way along Woodmont Avenue with further detail to be determined at Preliminary and Site Plan.

**5. Provides satisfactory general vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist access, circulation, parking, and loading;**

The Sketch Plan shows improved sidewalks along the Site frontages on Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue. The final dimensions of the street buffers and sidewalks will be determined at the time of Preliminary Plan and must meet the minimum widths of the 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines*. Both Strathmore Street and Woodmont Avenue are identified as canopy corridors, which strongly encourages providing the maximum sidewalk width possible, and planting a double row of trees.

The Applicant has indicated that a below-grade parking garage will be provided with access off of the public alley, as required by the Zoning Code. The exact number of parking spaces for motor vehicles and bicycles will be determine at the time of Site Plan.

A designated loading space is required for all projects with more than 50 residential units. The Sketch Plan shows a loading dock with access off the public alley.

The Project has been conditioned to setback the building from public alley a minimum of three feet to improve maneuverability in the same manner, and to explore setting back an additional foot to total 4 feet, as was required of 7000 Wisconsin Avenue. Applicant will also need to re-evaluate the open-air loading dock and garage entrance off the public alley at the time of Preliminary Plan. As required by MCDOT, the Applicant will conduct an operational analysis of the public alley. Providing this analysis with truck turning templates and sight-line evaluations of all vehicular access points will be required with the Preliminary Plan.

The Sketch Plan demonstrates satisfactory access, circulation, parking and loading. The final details and design will be determined with future submissions of the Preliminary and Site Plans.

**6. Propose an outline of public benefits that supports the requested incentive density and is appropriate for the specific community;**

Taking into account the considerations in Section 59.4.7.1.B, including the recommendations and objectives of the Sector Plan and any applicable design guidelines, the Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines, the size and configuration of the site and its relationship to adjacent properties, similar public benefits nearby, and additional enhancements related to the individual public benefits, the following outline of public benefits supports the Applicant’s request for incentive density and is appropriate for the community surrounding the site, as described below.

For the proposed development, the Zoning Ordinance requires 100 points in 4 categories. The. Although at the time of Sketch Plan review only an outline of public benefits needs to be approved, the following table shows both the categories and points for the public benefits requested at Sketch Plan to demonstrate the project’s ability to meet the requirement to provide sufficient benefit points.

*Table 2: Public Benefit Calculations- Division 59-4.7*

<b>Public Benefit</b>	<b>Maximum Points Allowed</b>	<b>Proposed in concept</b>
<b>Connectivity and Mobility</b>		
Minimum Parking	20	7
Through-Block Connections	30	15
Streetscape Improvement	20	7
<b>Diversity of Uses and Activities</b>		
Enhanced Accessibility	20	15
<b>Quality Building and Site Design</b>		
Architectural Elevations	30	15



Exceptional Design	30	20
Structured Parking	20	20
<b>Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment</b>		
Building Lot Terminations (BLT)	30	3
Cool Roof	10	2
Vegetative Wall	10	6
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>Min Required 100</b>	<b>115</b>

Per Section 59.4.9.2.C.4.g of the Zoning Ordinance, the Bethesda Overlay Zone eliminates the category for Transit Proximity, increases the maximum amount of public benefit points available in certain categories, and requires a minimum amount of public benefit points for Exceptional Design and Energy Conservation and Generation. Applicable to this Sketch Plan are the Overlay Zone’s increase in maximum points available for Minimum Parking (from 10 to 20 maximum points), Architectural Elevations (from 20 to 30 maximum points), Exceptional Design (from 10 to 30 maximum points), Cool Roof (from 10 to 15 maximum points), and Energy Conservation and Generation (from 15 to 25 maximum points).

## CONNECTIVITY AND MOBILITY

### Minimum Parking

The Applicant requests 7 points for providing fewer than the maximum allowed number of parking spaces. Points for this incentive are granted on a sliding scale from no points for providing maximum allowable number of on-site spaces to 20 points for providing no more than the minimum number of spaces on-site. Final determination will be made at Site Plan and Staff supports the category at this time.

### Through Block Connection

The Applicant requests 15 points for providing a through-block connection. Points for this incentive are based on design criteria such as open-air access, width, connections to transit, parks, or public buildings, retail access, and wall glazing adjacent to the connection. The Applicant proposes a minimum 15-foot wide pedestrian connection at the southern property line, with a portion of the connection under the building. As requested by the Bethesda Design Advisory Panel, additional detail will be required at Site Plan to ensure the through-block connection is of an appropriate height and width in relation to the 7000 Wisconsin Avenue portion of the through-block connection. Staff supports the category at this time with final determination based on this criterion at Site Plan.

### Streetscape Improvement

The Applicant requests 7 points for implementation of off-site streetscape improvements along Woodmont Avenue at the intersection of Strathmore Street. These improvements will enhance the

pedestrian/bicycle circulation in the vicinity of the Project. Staff supports the category with final review of details at Site Plan in coordination with Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

## DIVERSITY OF USES AND ACTIVITIES

### Enhanced Accessibility

The Applicant requests 15 points for constructing dwelling units with interiors that satisfy the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Points for this incentive are granted on a sliding scale calculated on the percentage of complying units. Final determination of complying units will be made at Site Plan. Staff supports the category at this time.

## QUALITY BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

### Architectural Elevations

The Applicant requests 15 points for providing architectural elevations as part of the Certified Site Plan showing particular elements of the design such as minimum amounts of transparency, maximum separation between doors, and other design priorities of the applicable Sector Plan and implementing design guidelines. The Applicant states that the proposed building has been designed to provide architecture and site design elements that will respond to the recommendations of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan, as well as with applicable recommendations in the Design Guidelines concerning building height, placement, massing, compatibility and other characteristics. Staff supports the category at this time.

### Exceptional Design

The Applicant requests 20 points for building and/or site design that enhances the character of a setting. As a site receiving an allocation of Bethesda Overlay Zone density, the Project is subject to the Design Advisory Panel review, which will award points based on the quality of the design. The Applicant asserts that the Project fulfills many recommendations of the *Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan* and Design Guidelines which was presented to the Bethesda Design Advisory Panel twice in September of 2023. At that meeting, the Panel voted that the Project is on track to meet a minimum 10 design excellence points with further details of the proposed through block connection to be provided at Site Plan review. Final points will be determined at the time of Site Plan. Staff supports the category at this time.

### Structured Parking

The Applicant requests 20 points for providing structured parking in a below grade parking structure. Staff supports the category at this time.

## PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### Building Lot Termination (BLT) Purchase

The Applicant requests 3 points for the purchase of BLT easements or equivalent payment made for every 31,500 square feet of gross floor area comprising the 7.5% incentive density floor area. Points are granted by the calculation of BLTs as provided in Section 59.4.7.3.F of the Zoning Ordinance. Staff supports the Applicant's request at this time.

### Cool Roof

The Applicant requests 2 points for proposing to provide a cool roof that will collectively meet or exceed a solar reflectance index (SRI) of 75 with a slope at or below a ratio of 2:12, and a minimum SRI of 25 for slopes above 2:12. Staff supports the category at this time.

### Vegetated Wall

The Applicant is requesting 6 points for the installation and maintenance of a vegetated wall at the southern property line. Incentive density of 5 points is appropriate for buildings that meet the requirements of the zone, additional points may be appropriate if other criteria are met such as greater percentage of coverage, southern or western exposure, plants with varying flowering seasons and/or integration into an overall energy or environmental site design program. Given the location of the proposed vegetated wall will be north facing, and that vegetated walls within urban areas of Montgomery County have not particularly been executed successfully in the past, Staff communicated significant reservations regarding effective implementation of a vegetated wall on this Site. The Applicant has stated that the wall system will provide a minimum three feet of soil depth to assist in implementation, however Staff's concerns beyond soil depth are hydration, establishment and maintenance. Staff has requested the Applicant provide additional information at the time of Site Plan including potential wall systems that will guarantee a successful establishment and allow for easy maintenance and replacement if necessary to determine if points can be achieved in this category.

- 7. Establish a feasible and appropriate provisional phasing plan for all structures, uses, rights-of-way, sidewalks, dedications, public benefits, and future preliminary and site plan applications.***

The Project will be built in one phase.

## SECTION 9: CONCLUSION

As conditioned, the Sketch Plan application satisfies the findings under Sections 59.7.3.3 and the applicable standards of the Zoning Ordinance, and substantially conforms to the recommendations of the 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan*. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the 7025 Strathmore Street Sketch Plan No. 320240030 with the conditions specified at the beginning of this report.

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### ATTACHMENTS

*Attachment A: Sketch Plan*

*Attachment B: Agency Letters*

*Attachment C: Bethesda Design Advisory Panel Minutes from September 27, 2023*

*Attachment D: Affidavit Regarding Community Meeting and Meeting Minutes*

*Attachment E: Community Correspondence*