

## **SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY**

### **1000 N. Glebe Road Marymount University Ballston Center (SP #64)**

#### **SPRC Meeting #1**

**June 20, 2013**

**Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Nancy Iacomini, Steve Cole**

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### **MEETING AGENDA**

This was the initial meeting of the major site plan amendment submitted for the site of the Blue Goose building – Marymount at Ballston. SPRC Planning Commission Chair for the project, Nancy Iacomini, provided introductory remarks including an overview of the purpose of the SPRC, identification of any participants or attendees that were new to the process, setting the overall context for the meeting – format, ground rules, agenda, etc. It was provided that the focus of the meeting was introductions, land use and zoning and site design and characteristics. This was followed by an introduction of all those who were in attendance including an overview of the applicant team by Brian Scull of the Shooshan Companies. After the introductions there was a presentation by staff. Staff presentation covered site location, existing conditions, land use, zoning, adopted plans and policies, a summary of the applicant’s submission including requested modifications from Zoning Ordinance requirements and a brief summary of preliminary issues. The applicant then followed with a presentation that included providing background and context relevant to the relationship between the co-applicants, the reason why redevelopment is proposed and the intent of Marymount in pursuing redevelopment of its existing building at this location. Architects for the redevelopment project, from SK&I and Gensler then presented a site design and analysis, review of the proposed site layout and characteristics and building design and architecture. The applicant, in order to aid their presentation and discussion also provided a 3-D model of the proposal. Following is a summary of comments based on the SPRC discussion.

### **SPRC DISCUSSION**

#### **Land Use & Zoning**

- Questions raised regarding how much we have pushed/expanded “C-O-2.5” in the past regarding bonuses and exclusions.
- It was indicated that the review should be based on the numbers as opposed to the form of the density (bulk, height, mass) because this is not a form based zoning district when considering the appropriateness of the density requested.

- Question was posed as to how “C-O-2.5” has been handled in with previous site plan proposals in this area and also what incentives have been given to other universities, specifically Virginia Tech and George Mason University.
- There was considerable discussion regarding whether or not the request for the amount of density mean perhaps a rezoning should have been requested? There seemed to be no opposition to the density in proposed on the site but more so the amount of density requested as a matter of policy/precedent to the extent that it exceeds what is permitted under the current Zoning district. Questions were raised regarding whether or not there are other ways to achieve the requested density with GLUP amendment and rezoning.
- Question posed about the proposed subdivision and its impact on density.
- There was discussion regarding the timing in trying to resolve the issue related to density and whether or not a Special GLUP study and rezoning would have resolved the issue in a more timely manner.
- Some concern was expressed about exceptions being requested in general.
- While there is no concern with the density in terms of bulk/mass/height, concern was expressed regarding the impact on already failing intersections and traffic with respect to the addition of more people that would result directly from the increased density proposed.
- Concern expressed that extraordinarily creative justifications have not been created in discussions to date regarding the density proposal; This could mean that anything “created” at this point can be used elsewhere (would set a precedent for others) and that’s the issue.
- Sector Plan may have anticipated in providing that the timeframe for the plan would be within 3-5 years of its adoption not knowing long-term how the area would redevelop, and so a request for a special GLUP study (typically only done in areas that are unplanned) may not be out of the question.
- Concern expressed that it was never considered or approached that the zoning was wrong for the density proposed.
- Question regarding whether or not there were considerations by the applicant for one building as opposed to two at 2.5 FAR?

### **Site Design & Characteristics**

- Comment raised regarding whether or not with the proposal we are creating the urban street wall in the context of other surrounding buildings with a request to provide something that shows this. Appears that the building is not in keeping with the rest of the street wall frontage and what urban design principal we should we be adhering to here.
- Noted that the intersection of Glebe and Fairfax is hostile to pedestrians and therefore not a good place for a plaza and won’t be widely used. Existing adjacent plazas are already inactive, big, empty spaces. Need tighter street wall. Will be another open, empty, dead space and not contribute to pedestrian experience.

- Indicated that the 3-D model provided by the applicant is helpful; Shows that the space is not inviting. Not visible to pedestrians. What is said is not what may be experienced. Arrangement of buildings and uses on site and efficacy of open space and street edge not achieved. Corner seems unbalanced.
- Concern expressed with the height of the corner building being shorter than the residential building.
- Question regarding how the site design fit within the larger context of other development nearby.
- Indicated that all existing four (4) buildings at intersections adjacent to the site and including the existing Blue Goose building, currently address the corner. The proposed building design does not.
- Question as to who will be invited into the plaza since there is no retail and what the view is heading south on Glebe Road (maintain corner/curve with angle).

### ***Historic Preservation***

- HALRB staff provided information about the history of the blue goose building and site. This was followed by additional comments and history from HALRB representative to the SPRC for the project. It was indicated by HALRB Representative and Historic Preservation staff, that the applicant should preserve some or all of the building façade. May provide community benefits for density for preservation. Give more consideration to preservation.
- Comment was raised regarding being unclear on the official position of the County as it relates to the preservation of the Blue Goose building and a question was raised as to when the applicant was made aware of HALRB and HP Staff comments.
- Noted that it is most appropriate to re-use building materials as building materials.
- The applicant indicated that rehab/restoration of the existing 1960s building did not make sense here. Historical context is the buildings use not its design.
- Appreciation was expressed to the HP staff and HALRB representative for coming and participating in the process and integrating their review with the overall SPRC process.
- It was indicated that historic preservation is not always about preservation only. Find a way creative way to do this.

### **Wrap Up**

After wrap up comments by committee members, SPRC Chair Iacomini provided a summary of the primary issues that were raised by the committee:

- Disquiet about stretching “C-O-2.5” density with regard to precedent and history of “C-O-2.5”.
- Concern about how the office building addresses the street at the corner of Fairfax and Glebe, the size of the plaza, and is it inviting; prominence of residential building from the north.

**NEXT STEPS**

- Schedule to have a meeting on the project site or a tour of the site prior to the next SPRC meeting.
- Staff to provide information on the following:
  - How “C-O-2.5” has been handled for other adjacent site plans
  - Any incentives given to Virginia Tech and George Mason University by site plan for education use.
- Applicant to provide the following:
  - Drawings of the proposal at the “C-O-2.5” maximum densities permitted under the Zoning Ordinance by site plan.
- Next SPRC meeting scheduled for Monday, July 15, 2013 at 8:30 PM.