

SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

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

SPRC Meeting #4

October 17, 2013

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Nancy Iacomini, Steve Cole, Jane Seigel

MEETING AGENDA

This was the fourth meeting of the major site plan amendment submitted for Marymount at Ballston. The agenda of the meeting was to review and discuss the proposed Open Space, Community Benefits and Construction Issues. The meeting began with introductions of attendees, and then an overview of the agenda and intentions related to review and discussion by the SPRC Chair, Nancy Iacomini. After presentations by both staff and the applicant on the open space, there were questions and then discussion on the various topics on the agenda. Below is a summary reflecting more of the discussion.

SPRC DISCUSSION

Open Space

Applicant Presentation

- The applicant lead with a brief presentation to reiterate proposal for open space and landscaping for the site with some revisions since which included:
 - Raised slab elevations to smooth the grade and eliminate some steps in the open space plaza area connecting the accessible route to be immediately adjacent to the steps.
 - Eliminated a curb cut on Wakefield Street and moved the bus stop closer to the street.
 - Added two shade trees on Wakefield.
 - Lowered the crest of the proposed "berm" by 18" to minimize any perceived barrier to pedestrians.

Staff Presentation

- Staff provided a brief presentation highlighting elements of the proposed open space plaza to be further considered in terms of meeting several design principles. This included presenting several precedent images to demonstrate some of those principles.

SPRC Comments

- Questions were raised about the proposed location of the shelter for the bus stop on Wakefield, why it is located as proposed and how many people it could accommodate. It was suggested that the bus stop should be able to accommodate all people.
- Question was raised as to the nature of the interior courtyard space and whether it was intended to be public or private.
 - Applicant indicated they would provide an easement over the plaza at the corner and a pathway through the site.
 - Comment was made that an easement should be provided over the plaza if this is to be considered the open space contribution.
- Questions and discussion were raised regarding the steps proposed in the plaza and whether or not they could be eliminated altogether. Further there was question and discussion about how to better facilitate student movement in stepping up to get on the shuttle bus based on the proposed design of the bus bay to include bollards and curb to be mounted.
- Question raised regarding the width of the ramp proposed in the plaza adjacent to the steps.
- Question regarding the County standard for clear sidewalk width and materials required to be concrete. It was noted that it was difficult to read the pattern of what is clear sidewalk (public) versus what is the private space. Further, it was indicated that there appears to be no pedestrian realm on N. Wakefield. Comments were made that there is a need for a permanent symbolic notion that prioritizes movement of pedestrians over vehicles.
- Concern raised about the notion of having private space on the corner. Comments were made that the entire corner should be opened up. Also it was noted that there was a need to soften the corner.
- General concern was expressed about the proposed geometry/shape of the green panels and potential for making it private. Concerned that everything is chopped up and that there should be no berms or anything higher than 18 inches. Expressed that there is a need for clear lines of site from back of side walk to building entrances. Grass panels are too large and don't follow line of site; creates dead spaces behind them.
- Indicated a need for a more coherent space.
- Noted that there was no play area provided for residential building.
- Question regarding the total amount of proposed open space on the site. Not as inviting as one would like. Open and invite community given Marymount's connection to the community.
- Comment about the location of an existing bike share on the north side of 11th street, should be an opportunity to incorporate this into the proposal.
- Excitement expressed about the proposed dedicated cycle track; Signage will be important. It was further noted Comment raised that wayfinding is a challenge. Where do they go at the other end of the cycle track. A one block cycle track is concerning. Need to see how everything connects, signs, signals needed. A larger exhibit of how everything connects will be helpful.

- Suggested that the applicant come up with something that marries staff comments and the applicant proposal regarding the open space.

Community Benefits

- Overview provided by staff of the proposed community benefits for additional density requested.
- Noted that outstanding issues should be resolved before bringing project forward to PC.
- Noted that there was no proposal for the western entrance funding for Metro; should be considered.
- Community members expressed a preference for a contribution to be made for the western entrance to the Metro Station over an open space contribution. In addition, there was a preference expressed for improved sidewalk and path lighting providing access to the site from the west.
- With respect to the open space contribution proposed, it was noted that it is hard to justify the four urban parks as associated with the project and that there should be a consideration for something by way of improvements that works for both Bluement and Virginia Square. Indications were that the open space contribution needs to look west of the site. Ballston Beaver Pond has less value to the public.
- Question raised about the scope and frequency of access proposed to the auditorium.
- It was indicated that it should be emphasized that historic preservation is a community benefit. It was also noted that public art/preservation/open space should be combined.
- It was noted that the retail should not be considered as a community benefit as it is an easy thing to request be changed without any process in the future.
- Concern expressed that the Zoning Ordinance is so restrictive in terms of achieving bonus density and that open space is being used in appropriately. TDR is a great opportunity here.

NEXT STEPS

The next SPRC meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 28, 2013 at 8:30 PM. Proposed topics for discussion include: Review of outstanding issues and the applicant's response to the entirety of meetings on the project since beginning the review process in June 2013.

Additional information requested:

- Information needed on public access to conference space.