



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

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

#### **SPRC Meeting #5**

**October 28, 2013**

**Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Nancy Iacomini, Steve Cole, Inta Malis, Rosemary Ciotti, Eric Gutshall, Karen Kumm Morris**

---

### **MEETING AGENDA**

This was the fifth meeting of the major site plan amendment submitted for Marymount at Ballston. The agenda of the meeting was to review and discuss comments and outstanding issues based on the previous SPRC meetings and allow the applicant to present any revisions and present how comments and issues have been addressed. The meeting began with an introduction by the SPRC Chair, followed by a summary of outstanding issues by staff. A summary of the discussion is below.

### **SPRC DISCUSSION**

#### **Applicant Presentation**

- The applicant presented revisions and responses to issues and comments specifically related to building architecture for the academic office building and the design of the proposed public plaza. The applicant in addition explained its intentions and design philosophy for the building and the open space presenting concepts of a revised open space design as well as a revised penthouse.
- Staff comments to the presentations included that while there had been improvements made, the applicant should continue to work on the corner design for the open space plaza and that the proposed revisions to the penthouse while a step in the right direction were too subtle.

#### **SPRC Comments**

##### **Open Space & Landscaping**

- Applicant was strongly advised that there should be no steps anywhere on the project (with respect to public spaces); it should be fully and equally accessible to all. Further, questions were raised about how students with disabilities access the building whether interior or from the plaza related to the communicating stairs.

- Request that more context of the proposed buildings be provided as it relates to the streetscape and the landscaping of the surrounding and existing buildings, and specifically how the proposed corner of Fairfax and Glebe relates to the other three adjacent existing corners at the intersection.
- Noted that the corner plaza is a significant public space that appears to be designed as a circulation space only. It was further noted that it was designed attractively but not designed for users and that user comfort needs to be added; Need a rich plant palette to the landscape architecture to make it a fabulous place to experience.
- Question to explain the intent of the corner versus the interior plaza and the nature of the spaces being public and/or private.
- Concern expressed regarding the orientation of the academic office building in that it does not address directly the corner. Questioned whether there is a different design of the plaza or a way to extend the first floor of the academic office building to better address the corner.
- Concern expressed about private outdoor café seating at the corner.
- Question raised about the corner of the open space design and how it reflects the current curve of the existing building as indicated by the applicant.
- Questions regarding the materials proposed for the sidewalk –
  - concrete sidewalks and pavers in the plaza
- Concern expressed regarding the curvilinear planters proposed in the plaza in that they may interrupt pedestrian flow and goes against the site desire lines.
- Concern expressed that plans seem to still be a work in progress.

### **Building Architecture**

- Further questions raised about the applicant's intent to put blue panels on the walls and seating in the open space and continued encouragement to employ a wider use of the existing blue panels on the proposed building(s). At a minimum it was expressed that the applicant should provide a historic marker for the Blue Goose building.
- It was commented that the western façade showed significant improvement.
- It was noted that the canopy of the residential building may be a detraction and it should be looked at to see if it would be better without one.
- Question regarding the design intent for the upper floors of the academic office building that will in the immediate future be used as office and not as academic; Will the design be maintained with the use of those floors as office? Applicant encouraged to show the façade as it is intended to be used.

### **Other**

- Question regarding the parking garage and whether or not the slabs are on the same level for both buildings, and if so, could the garage entrances be shared; Follow up question regarding whether or not the fact that the garage entrances are not proposed to be shared is a function of the stairs.
  - It was noted that the floor slabs were on the same level, but there was no desire for shared garage entrance for the two uses. The applicant did indicate their

intent to design the garage with a knock-out panel to provide for shared use in the future.

- It was indicated that the function of the garage entrances not being shared was not related to the steps proposed in the plaza.

### Community Benefits

- Bluemont Civic Association indicated and provided a resolution at its meeting last week their desire to have community benefits associated with the project in the community of the site. In no order of priority the BCA proposes the following as community benefits by their resolution: 1) A contribution to the fund for building the west entrance to the Ballston Metro; 2) The completion of the passive recreation components of the Ballston Beaver Pond Restoration Project; 3) The creation of a community meeting space within the development project; and 4) A contribution to projects identified in the updated Bluemont Neighborhood Conservation Plan.
- It was noted that the Ballston Virginia Square Civic Association Meeting was occurring simultaneous to the SPRC meeting and so there was no vote or resolution to share. It was however indicated that there is preference for a contribution to the western entrance of the Metro station but in partnership with Bluemont Civic Association.
- It was noted that the different nature of the two civic associations should be respected and that there are limited opportunities for community benefits associated with a site plan in Bluemont due to the nature of lower scale residential, less dense development than in Ballston Virginia Square.
- Question raised regarding the affordable housing bonus and the number of units proposed on-site.
  - 5 with the base contribution on site or cash and 12 units on-site with the bonus density request.
- Concern again expressed regarding the bonus density request for 110,000 square feet and the interpretation of Section 15.6.7.a of the Zoning Ordinance. It was noted that the section of the ordinance does not specifically allow for bonus density although it has certainly been expanded for such use (ex: 3901 Fairfax). It was further noted that the other provisions of this section, 15.6.7.b, etc talk specifically about modification related to site specific conditions. It was suggested that benefits have to be close to the site and related to the development on the site – such as Ballston Beaver Pond, trail and sidewalk improvements, western entrance contribution.
- There was support for a contribution to the Ballston Beaver Pond and improvements to access to the pond by the Parks and Rec Commission.

### Wrap Up

- General support regarding there being no steps in the plaza.
- It was noted that the cycle track needs to have a continuous planting strip.
- General consensus that there was improvement on the architecture but that the plaza is a work in progress and it is still not quite ready. It was generally stated that one more meeting may be needed before the project moves forward to the Planning Commission

and County Board. Specifically, the corner plaza needs more thought and design in terms of how it will work and how it will be used/activated.

- There was a comment regarding the architecture of the residential building, in that the more work that is done to improve the architecture of the academic office building the more it diminishes the design of the residential building.
- Expressed continued concern regarding the glass façade of the academic office building, the penthouse of the academic office building and the lack of historic reference.
- Strong comment concerning need to acknowledge existing Blue Goose building in way more public and permanent than an interior to a café. Suggestions were made including re-use of some blue panels around and above exterior entrance to Blue Goose Café, re-use of some panels in the corner plaza and re-use of panels as sculptural entities in the both the corner and interior plaza.

**NEXT STEPS**

- TBD