

## SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

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

#### SPRC Meeting #6

December 9, 2013

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Nancy Iacomini, Steve Cole, Rosemary Ciotti, Eric Gutshall, Steve Sockwell, Jane Siegel

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### MEETING AGENDA

This was the sixth meeting of the major site plan amendment submitted for Marymount at Ballston. The purpose of the meeting was to review and discuss the applicant's response to outstanding issues related to: 1) building architecture, 2) Landscape/Open Space Design, and 3) Historic Reference. The meeting began with an introduction by the SPRC Chair, followed by a presentation by the applicant and committee comments.

### SPRC DISCUSSION

#### Applicant Presentation

- The applicant presented revisions in response to issues and comments raised at the October 28, 2013 meeting specifically related to building architecture for the academic office building and the design of the proposed public plaza. This included changes to incorporate historic references to the existing blue goose building into the building architecture, open space, and landscaping.

#### SPRC Comments

##### **Building Architecture**

It was generally felt that the architecture was much improved overall, especially the academic office building. There was a positive response to the blue lighting proposed. Below are two areas of note where additional comments were raised for further consideration by the applicant: 1) the proposed canopy on the roof of the residential building and 2) the entrance to the academic office building.

##### ***Rooftop Design***

- Question raised regarding the function of the rooftop canopy on the academic office building. The applicant indicated the purpose was to provide shade/relief and to accentuate the building's height at the corner.

- Additional comments were made regarding the canopy of the residential building. It was noted that there was general appreciation for the canopy proposed on the academic office building but that the canopy proposed on the residential building was a distraction.
- It was questioned as to whether the applicant could or would consider for the rooftop of the residential building something softer or greener than the canopy proposed.
- It was noted that trees on the roof would be a great feature/amenity.
- It was indicated that the canopy was considered to be unnecessary and that something that relates more to the use of the rooftop (amenities for residents) and people being on the roof would be more appropriate.
- It was indicated that canopies are okay if functional with additional questions raised regarding the reason no access was proposed to the roof of the academic office building to which the applicant responded liability.
- There was additional question regarding the lighting of rooftop amenities proposed on the residential building and how that would be addressed. Specifically, would anything proposed in that regard take away from the lighting proposed on the rooftop of the academic office building? The applicant indicated that they did not intend to light the residential building rooftop with an up light like that proposed on the office building.
- There was comment regarding a recent condition placed on several site plans to address rooftop lighting and how any lighting proposed would meet this condition.
- There was a comment regarding the setback of the penthouse on the academic office building and the additional detail proposed being a big improvement and a suggestion that glass panels like sky lights be provided at the roof of the residential building.

### ***Ground Floor***

- A question was raised about the amount of ground floor retail proposed in the residential building, where specifically it was located, and how many units were lost from the initial proposal in providing for the ground floor retail.
- A point was made about being concerned about site activation at the ground floor should the retail not be successful or ultimately be developed as shown on the plans.
- It was noted that with the amount of restaurant space proposed, ventilation should be built in.
- There was also a concern expressed that images depicted by the applicant may not be accurate in terms of visual obstructions to the landscape courtyard such as signal poles, County required light poles, etc.
- There were several comments raised regarding the location of the main building entrance to the academic office building and how pedestrians would know where it is located. It was noted that the entrance is not well defined. A general comment was provided and noted that the concerns regarding the building entrance and plaza in relation to the corner are a direct result of the building's placement on the site, which for a few is still a dislike with the plan.

- It was further indicated that a sign should be provided for Marymount like the blade signs shown on the residential building. It was noted that identification was lacking for the academic office building and the building should be noted.
- A question was raised as to whether the addition of banners/banner system for place making could be considered here.

### **Historic Reference**

- Questions regarding clarification of vertical blue elements incorporated into the design of the academic office building façade. Specifically whether or not the vertical blue panels shown at the entrance of the Blue Goose Café had been extended on the exterior of the building beyond the first floor to the second floor of the building. The applicant indicated that they had not extended the blue panels vertically on the façade of the building.
- Blue accents were positively received and it was noted that the design has come a long way but noted that there was an expectation that more blue would be incorporated vertically at the building entrance. The applicant responded that the blue lighting and blue spandrel glass is their interpretation of incorporation of vertical elements.
- The blue walls in the landscape plaza were received positively and a question was raised regarding whether the applicant was amenable to preserving the terrazzo flooring with the existing building address. The applicant indicated that they would reuse the terrazzo flooring in as much as possible, and likely at the building entrance given the building's address will remain unchanged.
- Appreciation was expressed for the historical references, but it was noted that there could have been more incorporation and generally expressed that it is difficult to see the building go away and history reduced to markers.
- A suggestion was made with respect to discussions on the concerns over the building entrance not be well defined that the applicant should consider accentuating the entrance with the blue panels.

### **Landscape & Open Space**

The revisions to the plaza were generally well received and considered to be well done, nice and providing a place where people would want to be, overall. The main comments that were raised were related to the provision of a pathway that goes against the natural desire line and the provision of clear sidewalk width delineated from the plaza, with varying thoughts on this. There were also some comments regarding plaza use and activation.

#### ***Desire Line & Clear Sidewalk Delineation***

- Considerable discussion raised regarding the proposed paving and path shown through the plaza and to the entrance of the academic office building. Specifically it was questioned why there was not a path created that would take you directly to the entrance of the building. It was noted that the overall plaza design was liked and that the applicant should consider adding an arm off of the serpentine path to the building entrance.

- A question was raised regarding the distance from the curb to the face of building and needing the clear sidewalk to be delineated.
- Comment regarding the plaza not addressing the corner, but noted that this may be more a function of dissatisfaction with the academic office building's placement.
- Noted that the curved nature of the plaza may need to be in the interior courtyard and not on Glebe which should be more in keeping with the desired path of travel as a linear route.
- Noted that if staff is okay with not having clear sidewalk and new policy is being established, that this should be articulated.
- It was expressed that there was a need to follow the MTP regarding sidewalk and that if we are moving away from this, we need a process on that. Concerned about doing it through site plans. Need to delineate desire line of clear sidewalk.
- Honor the desire lines especially if the project will contribute to the future metro entrance.

#### ***Plaza Use & Activation (General)***

- It was noted that the interior courtyard will likely not be used and that it will be a dead space. Further it was noted that there should be consideration for providing more interaction between the building and the courtyard.
- While the plaza is much improved, the applicant needs to think through who will actually use these spaces. For example, the benches on Glebe, who will want to sit there?
- It was noted that it will be a challenge to draw people into the plaza.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

- The project is proposed to move forward to public hearings of the Planning Commission and County Board at its January 2014 meetings.