

## SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

### Latitude Apartments (Site Plan #426)

#### SPRC Meeting #4

March 28, 2013

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Steve Cole, Brian Harner, Rosemary Ciotti

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### MEETING AGENDA

This was the fourth SPRC meeting for the Latitude Apartments Site Plan. Rosemary Ciotti, who is chairing the item, provided introductory remarks. The applicant gave a summary of the revisions made to the project after the last SPRC meeting on January 31, 2013. Major changes include the following:

- Increasing the size and shifting the location of cultural/educational space from 10<sup>th</sup> Street to Fairfax Drive
- Moving parking garage access from N. Monroe to N. Nelson Street
- Adding nine dwelling units
- Decreasing the overall number of parking spaces while increasing the amount of proposed shared parking
- Removing garage exhaust vents from 10<sup>th</sup> and N. Nelson Street
- LEED Gold certification

The applicant also presented the building design, changes to the ground floor plan, and the proposed public plaza.

### SPRC DISCUSSION

#### Site Design & Characteristics

- Proposed pass-through of the site at ground floor level is a good idea
- Provide dimensions for the plaza area as well as the distance to the street/curb.
- Sector Plan suggested an L-shaped building on this site and the ability to create a plaza at the corner with a greater depth; not sure if the proposal creates an area that is deep enough to feel like a real plaza
- What kind of retail is anticipated in the small area facing 10<sup>th</sup> Street?
  - ATM
- Difficult to comment on appropriate location for a cultural use without knowing what the use will be; same level of information provided about this space as was done for 3901 Fairfax should be provided
  - County is not going to be responsible for managing/leasing this area, applicant is aware they will be responsible for this

- How would patrons of the cultural/education use park and enter the building? Is there both internal and external access?
  - Yes. Patrons could park in garage, take elevator to first floor, and access the cultural space from inside the building
- Public uses located on more public face of the building is a plus
- Provide additional information about the proposed sidewalk and streetscape. Will the proposed patterns be allowed to extend past the property line?
- Show how the proposed building lines compare with the existing buildings on adjacent blocks; are proposed build-to lines are consistent with the neighborhood?

### **Building Design**

- Concern about overall building massing; show the committee what the building would look like without the requested 25% bonus density for Affordable Housing
- Explain the components of the roof, what parts are at which heights, and clearly identify what is above 125'
  - Central bar is at 134'
  - Mechanical penthouses are within each tower, incorporating elevator/stairs AND mechanical equipment
  - Proposal combines mechanical equipment and architectural features
- Entrances to cultural space should be provided on both Fairfax and Monroe Streets
- Where is leasing office?
  - Mezzanine area, which lowers overall height of this space in the center
  - Concern that this impacts the viability of its use for a cultural/educational use, please explore how to address this or, at the very least, put the mezzanine portion at the back of the space
- Location of main lobby doors may intrude on activities that taking place in the plaza
- Where and how will deliveries be received?
  - From all street sides except Fairfax Drive
  - Applicant will verify with DES what best location for this should be
- Applicant will need to explain and justify why the additional height being sought is a benefit to the community, not to themselves
- Concern expressed about use of pre-cast concrete as a building material and its propensity for leaching. Explain how this will be addressed and/or consider the use of a site plan condition as a way to ensure proper maintenance and enforce remediation if a problem arises later.
- What can be done with regard to building design to better communicate that Virginia Square has a cultural/arts focus? particularly at the base of the building?
  - Potential to use patterns and textures in the concrete features of the building
  - Artistic treatment of the interior garage exhaust is another option
- Concern about the proposed 10<sup>th</sup> Street elevation, which includes a blank wall and glass windows at the upper levels, and its visual impact on neighbors to the north.
  - Area above 134' would not be visible from the Monroe Condominiums due to stepbacks proposed and height of the building

- Are there plans to illuminate areas shown in color?
  - No, color choices have also not been finalized yet.
- Provide more detailed information showing what the retail corner along 10<sup>th</sup> Street will look like. As proposed, more should be done to activate this façade and make the retail portion more distinctive.
- Provide drawings and images that walk us around the entire site, each frontage is important.
- Reconsider balcony design. Successful balconies are recessed and there are zoning implications for ones that extend past the property line. Once the building is occupied, their appearance may also be an issue, particularly for rental apartments.
- Concern about lack of articulation of the glass connection (and its underside); this is an important feature and is not there yet.
- More articulation is needed of the proposed, monolithic glass box; concern that its proposed relationship with the two masonry blocks weakens it.

### Open Space

- Who is the anticipated user of the public plaza? It's unclear who would use it and if it would work/function.
- Provide more information about how the plaza is meant to be used and motivation behind design decisions. What is the connection between this space and the cultural use? What are the sight lines and travel paths to the main entrance? Is there a community gathering space?
- What is the scale of the globe feature? Explain how it would look and why it is proposed to be located there
  - 6' in height at its peak, slopes downward on the sides
  - Would not be transparent, proposed metal/mesh structure
  - Garage intake must be at opposite corner from garage exhaust; if located on the ground, code requires it be surrounded by plantings 3 feet in height. Proposal was meant to be a creative solution for a building code requirement.
- What sound impact would the garage intake (globe) have?
  - Should operate with minimal noise
- What is the area of the uncovered public plaza space (exclude pass-through area)?
- Plaza design is too crowded now, should connect with the cultural space and not be treated as a separate use. Permanent items reduce flexibility in how it can be used.
- Distinguish this plaza from the poorly designed public space across the street

### Other

- Concerns previously mentioned about land use remain unresolved. Sector plan calls for a mixed-use building with office/commercial and cultural or educational uses.
- Connection to Metro, as called for in the plan, should be provided

### **NEXT STEPS**

- The next SPRC meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 22nd.