

SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Pentagon Centre, 1201 S. Hayes Street and 1200 S. Fern Street (SP #297)

SPRC Meeting #2

March 16, 2015

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Steve Sockwell, Chair; Steve Cole; Christopher Forinash;
Nancy Iacomini; Jane Siegel

MEETING AGENDA

This was the second SPRC meeting for SP #297, Pentagon Centre. The SPRC Chair for this item, Steve Sockwell, opened the meeting, which was preceded by an optional walking tour of the site. Staff gave a presentation on the remaining guiding principles. The applicant gave a presentation on the current request, highlighting the changes requested from the original approval as well as the changes made since the last SPRC meeting. Following the presentations, the SPRC discussed the following topics.

SPRC DISCUSSION

Streetscape and Site Circulation

- Applicant clarified that streetscape would be provided for full length of S. Hayes, 12th Street South, and 15th Street South in Phase 1
- Breezeway proposed would pass through Building C, at grade, to provide covered access through to the mall to the Metro station entrance. Area would be 10-15' wide and would not, as shown on the drawings, be immediately adjacent to the parking/loading area in Building A.
- Proposed western half of 14th Street South would utilize materials to clearly separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic and paths
- Consider an outdoor, perhaps elevated, connection to the mall
- Provide more trees, making sure they would be sustainable and well maintained

Mix of Uses

- About 580 square feet of retail, likely service oriented, would be located at the corner of 12th and S. Hayes Street
- Concern expressed about the amount of retail proposed and varying opinions about its potential for success on the interior vs. exterior streets.
- The amount of retail proposed may take a while to fill up, as was the case with the early phases of Metropolitan Park. Should consider if there other community uses that would be welcome here.

- Proposed change in project phasing to include residential instead of office received mixed results. Some members expressed concern the loss of office use and a desire to maintain an appropriate balance of land uses. Other members expressed support for the shift, which would result in more residents in the area than commuters.

Open Space

- Good to see open space being added in Phase I
- Proposed location on S. Fern Street is favorable because it is easy to view and access by the public. Interesting to have open space on the edge
- Need to be able to clearly communicate that the open lawn area is available for use by the public
- Concern that it will be difficult to attract people to the upper level public open space. Perhaps adding a restaurant up there will be a draw.
- Don't conflate open space with above grade space, particularly with how they are represented on the drawings. Break down the difference between at grade public open space and other green spaces or plaza areas.
- Support expressed for the increase in passive open space here since existing open space nearby (Highland Park) is very programmed.

Building and Site Design

- Will the buildings get any closer to the Metro entrance, perhaps to provide some additional coverage?
 - This area is controlled by WMATA and not within the applicant's property
- Support expressed for proposed massing and step down in heights as you move from north to south.

Parking & Traffic

- Upper levels of Building D would likely be devoted to employee parking
- Does the applicant have to comply with the recently adopted commercial parking policy?
 - PDSP was approved with a minimum and maximum ratio for office parking but condition language also references the County's "then current policy" at the time of final site plan approval, which would apply.
- Buildings A & C will contain their own parking
- Is parking on site underutilized now?
 - No, mostly due to Costco customers
- How is flow of traffic through the site going to limit bottlenecks caused by Costco? 15th Street South is a major access route to Pentagon City and to Route 1, so adding a signal on this street may not be a good idea.
 - Potential for a new signal would have to be studied further.
 - Costco parking operation planned to be upgraded soon to improve efficiency and reduce waiting times.
 - Under new proposal access to parking area would function similar as it does today. Access would be controlled and there would be a charge for parking. Controlled access points would shift in Phase II.

Sustainability

- Building a parking structure that you plan to tear down is NOT sustainable. Why not dig down additional levels now to provide additional below grade parking capacity and avoid having to tear down Building D in the future?
 - Not financially smart to try and reuse Building D for a hotel; will have to be demolished and redeveloped in Phase III regardless.

Phasing

- Delivery of S. Grant Street occurs in Phase II; will include provision of all travel lanes and sidewalk and parking lane on the west side of the street. In Phase III, the full sidewalk width and parking lane would be added on the east side of the street.

General Comments

- Proposal is inconsistent with the way other large projects have been developed. Project is focused inwardly instead of on its surrounding context. Not enough attention has been paid to S. Fern Street.
- Changes made are headed in the right direction, especially those made in response to concerns raised by the community.
- Not much in the way of community benefits until Costco leaves; however, generally happy that Costco will remain for a while.
- Community is pleased that development will occur soon.

NEXT STEPS

- Discussion of the Phase 1 Site Plan request will begin at the next SPRC meeting. The date has not been set.
- Staff and/or applicant to provide additional information and policy guidance with regard to sustainability/community energy, LEED bonus density, and the amount and location of proposed retail uses.