

## SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

### SPRC Meeting #3, June 22, 2015

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Erik Gutshall (Chair), Nancy Iacomini, James Schroll, Stephen Hughes

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### MEETING AGENDA

This was the third Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting to review proposed major site plan amendment SP #46, located at 4000 and 4040 Fairfax Drive. The applicant proposes a 22-story residential building on the site of the existing Carpool restaurant at 4000 Fairfax Drive.

The applicant made a presentation responding to comments from SPRC #2, including refinements to the building architecture (including the use of stone on the façade of the first two stories, moved unit vents to be less noticeable), information on how access to the residential building would be maintained during reconstruction of the Webb Building, and information on the building height. The applicant also made a presentation on open space and the project's proposed corner plaza.

The chair made an announcement that transportation would be discussed at the July 23 meeting, due to DES staff not being available. The following was the agenda for the meeting:

6. Open Space
  - a. Orientation and use of open spaces
  - b. Relationship to scenic vistas, natural features and/or adjacent public spaces
  - c. Compliance with existing planning documents and policies
  - d. Landscape plan (incl. tree preservation)
7. Community Benefits
  - a. Public Art
  - b. Affordable Housing
  - c. Underground Utilities
  - d. Historic Preservation
  - e. Other
8. Construction issues
  - a. Phasing
  - b. Vehicle staging, parking, and routing
  - c. Community Liaison

## SPRC DISCUSSION

### Architecture and follow-up questions from last time:

- Bill Gerhart: Applicant should use parking and loading off of Quincy Street, so all of the questions of phasing development can be avoided. Quincy Street already has other parking and loading facilities on it.
- Nancy Iacomini: How wide would the no-build easement be? Are building separation requirements more than 25 feet traditionally? Asked staff to follow up if there is a minimum building separation.
  - Applicant: The easement would be 25 feet wide.
- Erik Gutshall: What is the desirable tower separation and what implications would it have for Phase 2?
- Nancy Iacomini: Did the applicant take the suggestion from last time about introducing contrasting darker elements into the facade?
  - Applicant responded that they think the horizontal lines will read stronger if they stay light-colored.
- Nancy Iacomini: Not sure how the building works when placed in the context of the dark red brick buildings around it. Supports the revision to make the first two stories stone. Building has been designed in a way that leads one to the conclusion that the extra height is probably okay.
- James Schroll: Supports natural light for the bike room as applicant's revision proposes. What sort of glass does the applicant propose?
  - Applicant responded that since the wall was right on the property line, it would have to be fire-rated glass block.
- Steve Hughes: Is there a way to get a level access point to the Quincy Street sidewalk from the plaza?
  - Applicant responded that due to the grade any ramp would have to be about 20 feet long and eliminate the water feature but it was something they could take another look at.
- Nancy Iacomini: Given the amount of glass used, asked about the use of shades inside the window? Will people put things in their windows?
  - Applicant responded that the glass would have filters to darken them, or programmable shades, and the lower part of the glass might be fritted. In any case management of the building would enforce uniformity. The applicants also stated that the larger windows are living rooms, the smaller windows are bedrooms.

- Discussion among the SPRC for other precedents and a request to the applicant if they have examples in other projects they have done.
  - The applicant responded that gray two-sided shades are very discreet, as used in 800 N. Glebe.

#### Open Space

- Nancy Iacomini: Understands that the required open space can include hardscaping, but prefers the amount of actual green space in the Webb Building.
- Erik Gutshall: Did the building move back a bit from Quincy Street?
  - Applicant responded that the building moved in a bit based on the street dimension requirements for Quincy Street. Frees up a small planting zone against the building.
- Erik Gutshall: Planting areas against a building generally become pet relief areas rather than useful landscaping.
- Bill Gerhart: The special plaza paving goes into what will probably be public sidewalk. Request that the County consider grading Quincy Street so that there is no grade change.
- James Schroll: Would like to have a sense of the relative size of the plaza, don't want something too small to be usable.
- Collier Cook: Would like to see trees on Randolph Street.
  - Applicant stated that they are exploring with staff the possibility of putting Randolph on a road diet, as long as there are no utilities that would interfere with trees.
- Stephen Hughes: The terraces in the building for the residents also have value as open space too.
- Collier Cook: Is the seat wall on Fairfax Drive needed because of the grade, or for convenience?
  - Applicant responded that seat wall was not needed for grade, creates a large planting bed behind it which will also have to accommodate a traffic signal and equipment.
- Erik Gutshall: It looks like the seat wall blocks the crosswalk.
  - Applicant: The grade lowers by that point.
- Questions and discussion about the proposed water feature.
  - Applicant: The water feature will not necessarily be interactive or one that encourages wading, but is provided to provide interest to the plaza. It will not run year-round.
- Erik Gutshall: What is the plan for landscaping around the Webb Building? Requested that staff explain at the next meeting if any changes to the median are planned.
  - Applicant explained that new landscaping had been installed at the Webb Building recently and should be more filled out soon.

### Community Benefits/Phasing

- Stephen Hughes: Suggested outside air pump for the bike room
- Collier Cook: Could public art be placed at the site of the Webb Building?
- Bill Gerhart: Please keep the sidewalks open along Fairfax and Quincy Street open during construction, and will Quincy Street need to be closed at any time during construction?
  - Applicant responded that pedestrian walks will be provided along both streets, and the Quincy Street will be closed for only very short periods of time.
- Collier Cook: reiterated that pedestrian access would be important to the community during construction, as well as construction noise.
- At this point, staff stated that staff would require as a condition of the approval a plan for redevelopment of the Webb Building when the leases run out.
- Nancy Iacomini: The conditions that led to full block redevelopment 30 years ago are different today.
- James Schroll: disagrees, a consistent street wall will keep retail viable in Ballston.
- Collier Cook: The Ballston Sector Plan is outdated, Webb Building does not contribute well to the corridor.
- Erik Gutshall: Could the Webb Building be adaptively reused or does it have to be totally redeveloped? Other ways to get the streetscape we want could be by wrapping the building with retail as leases run out. That may impact parking but by then parking needs may be reduced. Staff should consider not requiring total redevelopment but a range of solutions such as reuse and expansion.
  - Applicant stated that they would not agree to conditions requiring a specific course of action.

### Wrap-Up

- Collier Cook: With the density of the Webb Building, could it be converted to residential inside the same building?
- Nancy Iacomini: Would not like to force a particular outcome for the Webb Building. About the proposed building, would like the applicant to take another look at the color palette.
- Bill Gerhart: The Penzance project in Clarendon had problems keeping the sidewalks open during construction, Reiterated that would like to see parking/loading on Quincy Street.
- Stephen Hughes: Would like applicant to reconsider accessible paths to Quincy Street around water feature
- James Schroll: Looking forward to transportation discussion and applicant's justifications for parking reduction and compact parking.
- Erik Gutshall—Likes the architectural tweaks shown, but unsure of the context ~~for the~~ for the glass block on the bike room—does it fit in? Likes improvements to the plaza.

