

SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

SPRC Meeting #1

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Jane Siegel (Chair), Rosemary Ciotti, Brian Harner, James Schroll

MEETING AGENDA

This was the first Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting to a site plan proposed for the Washington Vista Apartments at 1411 Key Boulevard, a site plan for a six-story 63-unit condominium building. There is also an associated proposed General Land Use Plan (GLUP) change from "Low-Medium" Residential to "Medium" Residential.

The staff presentation concentrated on adopted County planning guidance for the site, including the Long Range Planning Committee's Special GLUP study. The applicant made a general introduction to the project, especially focusing on the architecture and the relation of the proposed building to adjacent properties.

The following was the agenda for the meeting:

- 1) Informational Presentation
 - a) Overview of Initial Approval and Requested Site Plan Amendments (Staff)
 - b) Presentation of Site Plan Proposal (Applicant)

- 2) Land Use & Zoning
 - a) Relationship of site to GLUP, sector plans, etc.
 - i) Requested changes
 - ii) Justification for requested changes
 - b) Relationship of project to existing zoning
 - i) Special site designations (historic district, etc.)
 - ii) Requested bonus density, height, etc.
 - iii) Requested modification of use regulations

- 3) Site Design and Characteristics
 - a) Allocation of uses on the site
 - b) Relationship and orientation of proposed buildings to public space and other buildings
 - c) Streetscape Improvements
 - d) View vistas through site
 - e) Visibility of site or buildings from significant neighboring perspectives
 - f) Historic status of any existing buildings on site
 - g) Compliance with adopted planning documents

SPRC DISCUSSION

Land Use and Zoning:

- Questions for applicant about the proposed on-site affordable housing, including bedroom size.
 - The applicant responded that, because this was a proposed condominium, their focus has been on larger and family-size units, for both the market-rate and affordable units. The affordable units would be for sale, which would make it the first such project in the County.
- Commissioner Siegel asked if the required Zoning ordinance-required AHIF contribution for all site plans was reduced if on-site units are offered.
 - The applicant responded that the contribution is not reduced, and staff confirmed. The applicant stated that their goal was not borrowing any AHIF funds or using any other subsidy from the County for the on-site units.
- Commissioner Schroll asked if the applicant has alternatives in case the preferred method of financing does not materialize.
 - The applicant stated that they had alternative ways to finance without using County money.
- General SPRC question of what happens when an owner of an affordable unit wishes to resell?
 - Applicant responded that it is still under discussion with Housing staff, but other jurisdictions have procedures for handling resales of affordable units.
- General discussion of policies of other jurisdictions that have had experience with for-sale affordable units.

Site Design and Characteristics:

- Commissioner Ciotti asked if the interior townhouses have natural light from more than one direction.
 - Applicant responded that the interior townhouses are a little shallower. The rears of the townhouses actually open onto the parking deck on the townhouses' second level.
- Commissioner Ciotti asked if the rear entrances are zero threshold. And suggested the architect to incorporate universal design principles.
 - Applicant responded that two of the townhouses have zero threshold entrances from North Nash Street, and all units will have level access from the parking garage. The floorplan for the townhouses has not been set yet, but the garage entrances will enter into a mudroom and corridor, with stairs to other parts of the house.
- Commissioner Siegel asked about the sites' historic status.

- Staff responded that the properties were not listed on the County's Historic Resources Inventory (HRI), but, as with all buildings more than 50 years old, may be eligible for the National Register of Historical Places.
- Commission Harner asked about fences in the rear of the property, and wanted to stress that the rear courtyard area be visible from Colonial Terrace area, similar to today. The landscaping looks very nice, but there should be a sense of openness to the community.
 - The fences the applicant proposes are not privacy fences, but are for safety purposes on top of the retaining walls. The fences do not follow the property line, but the curves of the retaining walls. The drop between the street (Colonial Terrace) and the courtyard is about 25 feet.
- Discussion about the proposed path.
 - Applicant: The proposed path is on a publically dedicated, but unbuilt 15-foot alley. The developer would construct it but the public would own it. The applicant has revised the path plan to avoid an area used for parking by a neighboring apartment complex. The new path would replace the current path which is on private property which the public uses out of custom to access central Rosslyn from Colonial Terrace.
 - Staff explained that staff supported the concept of a path, and that staff and the applicant are working on code and legal issues, including possible implications for ADA, for the path.
- Commissioner Harner asked the applicant's architect if the townhouses were meant to appear as a part of the apartment building, or as distinct buildings. Seemed to be splitting the difference, and it may make more sense to commit more one way or the other; either make the townhouses architecturally distinct from the building, or integrate them into the building.
 - The applicant stated that they had wanted some continuity between the apartment and the townhouses. The applicant stated they were open to Commissioner Harner's suggestion and might look at it again.
- Commissioner Harner also suggested that the corner townhouse at Key and Nash looked somewhat awkward. Also discussion of niches/insets in the facade. The Key Boulevard façade seems more successful in its articulation and rhythm, where the Nash Street façade looks a little too massive and could benefit from more/stronger articulation.
 - Applicant stated they would take a look at it.
- Is there a reason for the parapet to look so tall?
 - Applicant replied that the parapet is also screening the mechanical equipment.
- Is there any venting through the walls?
 - Applicant: Only the bathroom vents which cannot be vented through the roof, all other residential vents and will be in the roof.

- Staff suggested that the applicant, before the next SPRC, figure out where the bathroom vents will go and show the proposed locations on the plans. Generally make them as discreet as possible.
- Commissioner Ciotti suggested that the planting areas may be not deep enough for privacy of the occupants.
 - Applicant suggested they could take a look at it. Staff stated they would not recommend enlarging the dooryards by rearranging the streetscape.
- Question if the applicant was compliant with the Rosslyn-Ballston Streetscape Standards and Rosslyn Sector Plan.
 - Staff stated that the proposal met the R-B Streetscape Standards for this site. With regards to the Sector Plans, the most detailed sector plan is the *Rosslyn Transit Station Area Study* which labels the Colonial Terrace area, in which this site is located, as a “Conservation Area” for rehabilitation of existing housing stock and infill development compatible with existing development at a 16-36 unit/acre density. Staff also noted the Special GLUP Study which came to the conclusion that higher density (“Medium” Residential, 37-72 units/acre) at this particular site could be appropriate with use of tapering and taking advantage of the steep grade. Staff also stated that the applicant’s proposed setbacks and lot coverage seemed to be compatible with the existing community of townhomes and garden apartments.
- Commissioner Schroll stated that he felt the Nash Street and rear frontages needed to be broken up a little more. The Key façade articulation works well. The metal materials seem a little busy. Asked staff why the fire access regulations for the Ballston Oak Townhouses didn’t seem to apply here?
 - Staff responded that it was their understanding that fire access regulations are different in a condominium-style ownership.
- Commissioners Harner and Siegel stated that generally they felt the architecture was good. Commissioner Siegel stated that the next SPRC would be October 22 and the architectural discussion would pick up then.