

*Minutes*  
Baltimore County Design Review Panel  
February 11, 2015

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Minutes – January 8, 2015 Meeting, as approved

*Minutes*  
Baltimore County **Design Review Panel**  
February 11, 2015

**Call to order**

Chair, John DiMenna, called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Baltimore County **Design Review Panel** to order at 6:00 p.m. The following panel members were:

**Present**

Mr. John DiMenna  
Mr. Mitch Kellman  
Mr. Ed Hord  
Mr. David Martin  
Mr. Richard Jones  
Ms. Julie Kirsch  
Ms. Melanie Moser

**Not Present**

Mr. Bill Monk

County staff present included:

Andrea Van Arsdale, Jeff Mayhew, Lynn Lanham, Krystle Patchak, Jenifer Nugent, Laurie Hay

**Minutes of the January 14, 2015 Meeting**

Mr. Hord moved the acceptance of the January 14, 2015 draft minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Martin and passed by acclamation at 6:01 p.m.

The approved minutes are filed as Appendix B.

## **ITEM 1**

**PROJECT NAME:** Towson Row

**DRP PROJECT #:** 564 (PAI# 9-851)

**PROJECT TYPE:** Concept Plan & Design Guidelines

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Andrea Van Arsdale, Director for the Department of Planning, briefed the Board on the current direction of development in Towson. She stated that Towson is becoming a high density, mixed use urban center. There have been various plans and studies of the area over the years which have expressed different views on what Towson development should be. To become a high density urban center it is important to look at the design and quality of development. Towson Row is located in the exemption area of Towson, which makes it subject to an advisory review by the DRP.

Chris Mudd, of Venable LLP, presented the project team to the Panel which included Steve Warfield of Matis Warfield, Arthur Adler of Caves Valley Partners, and Matt D'Amico of Design Collective. Mr. Mudd stated that the development plan will need approval from the DRP but at this time it has not been submitted. A concept plan has been filed and was distributed to the Panel. The design guidelines are being presented for approval. The approval of the design guidelines as well as the development plan, when granted, will be recommended to the Hearing Officer. In the future, Planning will review the individual buildings and forward them to the DRP for approval as required.

Matt D'Amico, of Design Collective, presented the Panel with a fly-through video to show an overview of the project. He then proceeded to walk through the project details. The applicant proposes a mixed-use development project to include 212,344 square feet of office space on the top seven floors of a proposed 17-story building, a 54,000 square foot grocery at the ground level, 29,000 square feet of general retail proposed throughout the site at the street level, 29,000 square feet of restaurant space at the street level, a 170-room hotel proposed, 374 rental apartment units within a 24-story building and 900 beds of student housing in a second 24-story building. Parking is proposed for the entire site at 1,435 total parking spaces with 360 spaces located subsurface and the remaining spaces located above ground on seven levels of structured parking within the proposed 17-story office building. There are also parallel parking spaces proposed throughout the site. A plaza/drop off area and other streetscape amenities are proposed throughout the site. Ingress and egress is proposed along Towsontown Boulevard with removal of the existing median to allow for turning movements into and out of the site. A traffic signal is being proposed for the main entry point off of Towsontown Boulevard. Other vehicular access points are located along Chesapeake and Washington Avenues. Main pedestrian access is proposed near the corner of York Road and Towsontown Boulevard as well as the entry located along Towsontown Boulevard and Chesapeake Avenue. Loading and service areas are proposed along designated points interior to the development site.

An overview of the design guidelines was also presented to the Panel. All aspects of the development will have to comply with the guidelines once approved. The guidelines are split into four major areas including: Framework, Streetscape, Architecture & Signage.

*Framework* – Describes street types, parking, sidewalk widths, frontage types, and height restrictions

*Streetscape* – Recommends components such as street furniture, lighting and landscaping (all of which are keyed to different street types throughout the site)

*Architecture* – Describes sustainable building techniques to be used as well as detailing on form, elements and materials for the different uses proposed

*Signage* – Provides parameters for types of signage to be used on the site (ID, Directional, Building Mounted, Banners)

The guidelines will be used as a framework for the development as it moves along in its various stages.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

David Marks, Councilman for the Towson area, commented on Caves Valley Partners and their engagement in Towson. He explained that a lot of things are happening in Towson at the time and he is working with his constituents to develop new open space fees as well as looking at new transportation alternatives for downtown Towson.

Fred Hiser, of West Towson, was concerned with the amount of open space for the project and in downtown Towson as a whole. He suggested making Towson Row a limited access road. Mr. Hiser was also concerned with the parking counts for the project and the placement of student housing at the gateway to Towson.

John Ruffo was in agreement with Mr. Hiser.

Carol Currotto, a design professional and resident of West Towson, suggested that the developer look at more green roof alternatives on the site. She also suggested that green space and traffic need to be studied in Towson.

Mike Ertel, President of the GTCCA, stated that the main concern at the community input meeting was the plaza area and what it would actually look like and be used for. He stated that it is very important that this area is used to bring people together and keep them there. He also stated that the surrounding communities had concerns with signage and lighting and the possible interference they may place on the neighborhoods. He stated that this could be a really great project if done correctly.

Theresa McAllister, of Southland Hills, stressed the importance of the DRP to pay close attention to all of the details throughout the life of the project. She was also concerned with light pollution from signage and lighting on the site impacting the adjacent neighborhoods as well as making the plaza a safe area for pedestrians.

Wendy Jacobs, a member of the West Towson board, suggested that the developer look at ways to intensify green and sustainability on the site either by green roofs, alternative energy sources, or an urban linear park.

Paul Hartman was in support of all the previous comments made.

Tim Anderson, of East Towson, stressed the importance of more green and open space in Towson as a whole. The area is already underserved.

David Witherspoon, of West Towson, stated his support for the project as a whole. He feels that it will be a benefit to Towson. He echoed the comments on traffic and green space and stressed the need for more green space countywide.

**DESIGN REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS:**

Mr. Martin commented on the next steps in the development process. It was noted that if the design guidelines are approved, the next step would be to approve the development plan which will be brought before the DRP in the coming months. The concept plan was presented but the development plan will be more refined to address some changes due to building shifting and grade changes. Mr. Martin praised the applicant on the guidelines.

Ms. Moser was concerned with the new intersection of Towson Row and Towsontown Boulevard being so close to the York Road intersection. The applicants stated that they will use synchronized traffic signals and will need to get approvals. She also suggested that green roofs get used wherever possible. Ms. Moser was also concerned with the street furniture proposed on the site, she suggested allowing for some more modern designs to be used on the interior of the site. She also suggested widening the sidewalks and providing a wider minimum in the overall guidelines for the project.

Mr. Jones suggested that the applicants look at new products that are being used to help address storm water management on sites with difficulties such as this one. He also suggested that the applicants look at providing standards for the loading/service areas to ensure consistent quality of the project. He stated that landscaping spacing should be studied. Mr. Jones also suggested that soil volumes be addressed to allow for the viability of the plantings throughout the project.

Mr. Kellman expressed his support for the guidelines.

Mr. DiMenna questioned the applicant on the maximum heights presented and what their thoughts were as to what will actually be built. It was noted that they do not have any specific interests as of yet to determine the actual heights that will be used. Mr. DiMenna also questioned the Planning staff on the lobby entrances and the canopies presented. It was noted by staff that regulations have been modified to address more modern designs. Mr. DiMenna praised the applicants on their adherence to the various UDAT and studies in Towson.

Mr. Hord commented on the project as a whole. He liked the mix of pedestrian and vehicular access throughout the site, which he feels is important for success. Mr. Hord also suggested that the applicant wrap the garage with residential units to give it better street appeal.

Ms. Kirsch commented on the importance of the service areas of the various buildings. She suggested that the applicants look at a standard for move in/move out times for the student housing building similar to the standard times for trash/service at the other sites.

**DISPOSITION:**

Mr.Hord made a motion to approve the guidelines with the following revisions to be made:

1. Update the Plaza area on all plan views to reflect recent changes specifically the dimensions of the plaza and a more balanced relationship between pedestrian only and valet area.

2. Correct typo errors:
  - a. Pg. 54 – 28 story height maximum for student housing, text says 68 stories
  - b. Pg. 65 – Incomplete sentence
3. Loading/Service Areas – Provide more specific detailing on dimensions of these areas as well as landscaping specifics (tree spacing). Clearly define the treatments of landscaping and plant spacing along the loading/service areas. The intent and treatment in these zones should be consistent with the streetscape in non-loading/service zones so that hardscape and landscape treatments along the entire street are consistent and evenly distributed. It will be important to note the max spacing for tree plantings along a street.
4. Streetscape Details – Enforce continuity and connectivity in design layout, materials, and limits throughout the entire site (outside of what is in Towson Amenity Open Space streetscape detailing). Overall width of “sidewalk zone” as diagrammed in the guidelines will be reviewed on a street by street basis when the Development Plan submission is reviewed by the DRP. This should also be reflected on the landscape plan.
5. A statement should be provided in the guidelines as to soil volumes relative to the site landscaping and what minimum parameters they will be held to. The appropriate soil depths for plant materials on top of a paved structure is important for plant survival.
6. Define list of specific landscape species that will be able to withstand the challenges that arise with height and scope of proposed buildings. A sub-species list should also be provided if SWM design will be utilizing flow-thru planters which will require species and material that can withstand increased water environs.
7. A statement should be provided in the guidelines as to how the move in/out and loading/unloading of the student housing component will be controlled as well as restrictions on service access during business hours.
8. Wrapping the above-ground garage with residential units along Towson Row should be encouraged.
9. Distinguish Towson street furniture and lighting palette between interior and exterior streetscapes.

The revised guidelines are to be submitted to the Department of Planning for review. They will then be distributed to the Panel members for final DRP review and approval. The development plan will be reviewed at a future DRP meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Moser and approved by acclamation at 7:51 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

**Code Statement:** Section 32 – 4 – 203 (i) (2) of the Baltimore County Code states, *The Panel’s recommendation is binding on the Hearing Officer, and on the agencies under subsection (1), (Directors of the Department of Planning, the Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections and the Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability), unless the Hearing Officer or agencies find that the Panel’s actions constitute an abuse of its discretion or are unsupported by the documentation and evidence presented.*

Approved as of April 8, 2015