



Meeting Summary  
February 3, 2016

**Attendance**

Panel Members:

Hank Alinger, Chair  
Don Taylor, Vice Chair  
Phil Engelke  
Bob Gorman  
Julie Wilson

DPZ Staff:

Kristin O'Connor, Kate Bolinger, Raj Kudchadkar, Valdis Lazdins

**Laurel Park Station – Phase 2 #16-03**

Owner/Developer: MI Developments (Maryland), Inc.

Architect: Walter E. Lynch, AIA, PLLC

Engineer: Robert H. Vogel Engineering, Inc.

1. **Call to Order** – DAP Chair Hank Alinger opened the meeting at 7:35 pm.
2. **Review of Laurel Park Station – #16 -02** – Walter Lynch, Architect, began the presentation by noting that an overview of the entire project (Laurel Park Station) was provided at the previous week's Design Advisory Panel (DAP) meeting. He specified that the project phase being presented (during the February 3 meeting) was limited to one apartment building (identified as Phase 2 of the project). He distributed a supplemental packet providing additional information on the Phase 2 building to the DAP members (in addition to the submission packet provided prior to the meeting).

Mr. Lynch described the apartment building as having frontage on the project's proposed main street. He noted the building will wrap an internal parking structure, and will feature several wings. While most of the building does not feature direct frontage along Route 1, it will be visible from the Route 1 roadway. He noted that in addition to residential units, the building would feature a first-floor health club.

In terms of site plan features, Mr. Lynch described a proposed brick sidewalk that will be located along the apartment building's front façade. He noted that the brick sidewalk also will extend along the back of the portion of the building closest to Route 1, and then connect to an internal amenity area.

Mr. Lynch indicated the location of an existing wetland area northeast of the proposed building, which divides the building from existing businesses fronting along Route 1. He further noted that easements running through the parcel in part dictated the proposed shape of the apartment building. Mr. Lynch described how a fence would be constructed along the wetland area in order to enclose the private amenity area.

Mr. Lynch described vertical elements of the building. He noted the building would feature multiple towers, some of which would be used for light and others as elevators to access the roof. He noted that the building would be five stories tall, except the portion of the building fronting Route 1, where it would be four stories tall (and 60 feet in height, in accordance with the Route 1 manual). Mr. Lynch described how the building's roof is designed as a green roof.

In terms of materials, Mr. Lynch described how the building's facades would be a brick scored with brown and deep red tint. He noted that window panels would be bronze aluminum, and cornice panels precast concrete. Project logos would be incorporated into precast panels.

Mr. Alinger directed Ms. Kristin O'Connor, Division Chief with the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), to give her staff presentation on the project. Ms. O'Connor described eight staff comments relating to the *Route 1 Manual*. The first comment related to setbacks, specifically that buildings taller than 60 feet shall be set back from the street one foot for every two feet of height above 60 feet in the TOD District. The applicant confirmed the height on Route 1 was limited to 60 feet and the building was set back in accordance with the *Route 1 Manual*.

Ms. O'Connor's second comment related to reflective glass; the Route 1 Manual recommends that buildings avoid large expanses of highly reflective surface and mirror glass exterior walls. The applicant shared samples of bronze aluminum plates in response to this comment.

The third staff comment requested additional detail on pedestrian light fixtures. Mr. Lynch indicated the fixtures along Route 1 would be acorn style, while the fixtures internal to the site would feature arms and downlights. The fourth staff comment requested detail regarding the location of street furniture and pedestrian amenities. Mr. Lynch provided a supplemental packet to the DAP which included locations of trees, bicycle storage, and benches.

Ms. O'Connor's fifth staff comment noted that space should be provided for a bus stop or bus shelter along Route 1. Mr. Lynch indicated the project will include this space, and the location was indicated in the supplemental packet. The sixth staff comment noted the open space and pedestrian amenity area requirements of the *Route 1 Manual* (10% of the net acreage must be open space designed as an amenity open to the public). The applicant responded that the overall project meets the requirement.

The seventh staff comment related to designing internal landscaped areas, and Ms. O'Connor noted that the applicant identified landscaping and screening in the presentation. Finally, the eighth comment noted the Route 1 Manual recommendation regarding bicycle parking, and the applicant noted the location of a proposed bike rack next to a bus stop on Route 1 and stated that the apartment building would offer bicycle storage.

DAP members asked the applicant a number of clarifying questions about the building's planned uses and amenity area. Mr. Lynch stated that the apartment building would include 350 residential units, with a health club on the first floor near the project entrance, and individual retail spaces in other parts of the first floor. Mr. Lynch noted the health club is currently planned for residents use only, but could eventually be made open to the public. The pool is planned as an indoor, internally sited amenity space for residents' private use. Mr. Lynch described how the retail spaces are arranged so they can be open to the entire development or specific to the building. The outdoor seating areas are arranged to give flexibility to different retail tenants.

Mr. Lynch described features of the internal amenity area to include the pool, rock climbing wall, and bocce court. He noted that a wing of the apartment building adjoining the internal amenity area will feature two-story loft apartments with separate entrances. These entrances open to a walkway that leads to the amenity area. Mr. Lynch stated that the pool is a visual feature, which when viewed through the lobby would appear as a long canal backed by a rock wall. He added that active fountains are planned within the pool.

DAP members and the applicant discussed the appearance of the building from the Route 1 corridor. Mr. Lynch noted that most of the building does not front Route 1, and is divided from Route 1 by a wetland area and existing businesses that front the roadway. He described how the building has been purposefully designed so the back of the building (which backs to the wetland area and is seen from Route 1) does not appear as the back but rather another front of the building.

He stated such design anticipates that Route 1 uses will change over time, and that in the future it could be desirable to add pedestrian connections from the apartment building to future Route 1 frontage uses. With such future connections in mind, Mr. Lynch noted the design team is considering three fencing options for the site's perimeter adjoining the wetland area and Route 1 existing businesses: iron picket, brick, and wood stockade. He indicated the team is leaning towards iron for the potential to add pedestrian connections in the future, and that the fencing would have heavy landscaping on the side facing the apartment building. DAP members discussed the fencing options, expressing preference for a more solid wall.

DAP members reviewed streetscape elements, including trees proposed along the sidewalk, and suggested full size shade trees be used.

The DAP discussion turned to the building's architecture. Mr. Lynch described the design intent to make the building appear as if it had been there for a long time, and to incorporate art deco features in a way that avoids a fantasy look. DAP members discussed the building's many towers, and noted that the entrance towers from Route 1 and the towers marking the entrance to the lobby are most impactful. Mr. Lynch stated that the towers are functional, with many providing access to the green roof (an additional amenity area for residents). DAP members raised the idea of integrating rooftop seating into some of the towers, and noted the cornice on the towers seemed heavy in contrast to the smaller scale of the towers themselves.

**Pursuant to each motion duly made and seconded, DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning.**

DAP member Phil Engelke offered the following motion:

1. "That rear boundary wall of the property that faces Route 1 – on the Route 1 side – to do a study to see how much of it could be solid maybe with openings or places where in the future you could have gateways. I think the project could be a lot more successful, even from the Route 1 side, if it sits in its own space and perhaps picks up some of the same brick colors that you have in the building."  
Seconded by DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor offered the following motion:

2. "That the applicant reconsider the scale of the cornice on the towers." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

DAP Chair Hank Alinger offered the following motion:

3. "That the applicant look at the streetscape to make sure that the street trees are the proper scale – large scale shade trees – and that they work well with the pedestrian circulation and the parking."  
Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

**3. Other Business and Informational Items** – Vote on Director’s Amendments to the DAP Rules of Procedure: DAP Chair Hank Alinger requested that Ms. O’Connor, DPZ Division Chief, describe a petition from the Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning to amend the DAP rules and procedures.

Ms. O’Connor cited §107 of the DAP Rules of Procedure, which states that “Amendments may be considered at any regular or special meeting, where an amendment to the Rules of Procedures has been noticed at least three days.” Ms. O’Connor confirmed such notice was provided, then further cited from §107: “Amendments must be adopted by the affirmative majority of the DAP,” and “Any adopted amendments to the Rules of Procedure shall become effective at the next, regularly scheduled Meeting, or at the time specified by the DAP.”

In terms of the petition from the Director, Ms. O’Connor described two proposed changes to §102 of the Rules of Procedure: §102.D. and §102.F.

For the first proposed change, Ms. O’Connor cited the current language of §102.D.: “Meetings are open to the public. Participation by members of the public is limited to submission of comments in writing on design issues in advance of the DAP meeting.” She then read the proposed new language for §102.D.: “Meetings are open to the public. Oral testimony by members of the public is limited to 3 minutes each and is focused exclusively on design issues.”

With regards to the second proposed change, Ms. O’Connor quoted the current language of §102.F.: “Members of the public may inspect applications, graphics, minutes, and all materials at the DPZ public service counter or by contacting the DAP Executive Secretary.” She then read the proposed new language for §102.F.: “Members of the public may inspect applications, graphics, minutes, and all materials online on the DAP website prior to the DAP meeting.”

Ms. O’Connor concluded her description of the petition by stating that it proposed “All approved amendments will become effective immediately.”

DAP member Bob Gorman, one of three new members recently appointed to the DAP, requested explanation regarding how written comments are currently received. Ms. O’Connor noted that for the three DAP meetings Mr. Gorman had attended thus far, no public written comments were received. The DAP members with experience receiving public written comments described how such comments are addressed to the panel, submitted to the DAP via DPZ staff, and provided for the information and consideration of the DAP in reviewing projects.

DAP member Phil Engelke asked DPZ staff to explain the purpose of allowing oral testimony on design issues at DAP meetings. Valdis Lazdins, Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning, described how the request for oral testimony was raised during meetings DPZ held with various citizen organizations, including the Howard County Citizens Association. During those meetings, it was stated that the DAP is the only group among the County’s Boards and Commissions that does not take public oral testimony. Mr. Lazdins noted that of all the Boards and Commissions, the DAP’s role is unusual because it is targeted to design issues, and that the DAP is not asked to determine whether a project is approved or denied. As a result, the proposed amendment requests that oral public testimony be allowed solely on design issues.

DAP member Phil Engelke described how the DAP is not a Board, but a Panel, and that the Panel’s role is advisory. He noted that all of the DAP members are design professionals. DAP member Bob Gorman added that all of the DAP members are Howard County citizens, and by nature of professions can advise applicants on how to enhance projects. He stated his preference for allowing the public to view submission materials online, and then submit written comments to the panel for consideration. Mr. Engelke echoed his preference for receiving comments in advance, noting that he has found written comments in the past to provide valuable insight.

DAP Chair Hank Alinger stated his preference to receive the public's written comments in advance, noting he has found such written comments helpful and informative. He added that during the DAP meeting, the bulk of the meeting consists of the discussion between DAP members and the applicant. Mr. Alinger added that there are many opportunities for public comment throughout the plan review process beyond the DAP.

DAP member Don Taylor expressed concern that public oral testimony would expand beyond design issues, and that given the DAP's purpose, DAP meetings are inappropriate forums for oral testimony. He reiterated that the DAP is advisory. DAP members discussed how it would be difficult to limit public testimony to design.

**Pursuant to each motion duly made and seconded, DAP adopted the following amendments to the Design Advisory Panel Rules of Procedure.**

DAP member Bob Gorman offered the following motion with regards to the requested amendment to §102.D.:

1. "That we do not open these meetings to public testimony but encourage written comments prior to meetings so comments may be taken into account because we are public representatives." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

DAP member Phil Engelke offered the following motion:

2. "That we have all materials online on the DAP website prior to the DAP meeting." Seconded by DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor offered the following motion:

1. "That these amendments become effective immediately." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

**4. Call to Adjourn** – Chair Hank Alinger adjourned the meeting at 8:50 pm.