



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director

DATE: January 14, 2011

SUBJECT: Public Hearing Report for ZC #10-21
Marina Place
Zoning Commission Design Review Under the Capitol Gateway Overlay

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) is very supportive of the overall project and anticipates being able to recommend approval of the application once more information is submitted that addresses the issues raised in this report.

II. APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

Location: Square 667S, Lots 4,5,6 and 804 Ward 6, ANC 6D

Applicant: Buzzards Point, LLC

Current Zoning: CG / W-2 (Capitol Gateway Overlay / Waterfront)

Proposed Development: The application proposes an 86.5 foot tall, 5.82 FAR mixed use building. The Office of Planning notes that the occupiable rooms on the penthouse level appear to constitute an additional floor, and therefore would count toward building height and FAR.

Relief and Zoning: If the design continues to include the occupiable rooms at the penthouse level, the following relief would be required:

1. Variance from the setback of rooftop structures (§ 936);
2. Special exception for varying heights of rooftop structures (§ 936);
3. Variance from FAR limit (§§ 1601.1 and 1603.4);
4. Variance from loading requirements (§ 2201);
5. The current design would require that the Zoning Commission grant 1.0 additional FAR pursuant to § 1603.4, and 6.5 additional feet of height pursuant to the same section;

6. The applicant also requests two feet of height flexibility to accommodate potential impacts to the design from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain regulations.

III. SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject property is located on the south side of V Street, SW between Half Street and 1st Streets, in the neighborhood known as Buzzard Point. Please refer to the vicinity map in Attachment 1. The property is currently used as trailer storage for boats at the marina next door. The site and most surrounding properties are zoned CG / W-2, but the property to the northwest is zoned CG / CR (Capitol Gateway / Commercial-Residential). The abutting streets have the following right-of-way (ROW) widths:

V Street – 80' ROW
1st Street – 90' ROW
Water Street (Half Street) – 60' ROW

The property is bounded on the south by the Buzzard Point Marina, a National Park Service (NPS) property. The Coast Guard Headquarters is located across 1st Street to the west in an eight story building. The Coast Guard's security checkpoint blocks public vehicular access on 1st Street south of V. A Pepco power generation facility is located across V Street to the north. The wider neighborhood is characterized by industrial uses, though the zoning allows high density mixed use. Ft. McNair is located along the western edge of Buzzard Point.

The subject site is located within the 100 year flood plain, as adopted by FEMA in September 2010. The elevation of the 100 year base flood elevation is 11 feet above sea level, and the subject site varies from 7.7 feet to 11.7 feet above sea level. Although the elevation of part of the site goes above 11 feet, the entire site is mapped within the flood plain. The applicant is considering design options to address the flood plain and related regulations. Please see the Section VIII of this report, Agency Comments, for further discussion of the flood plain issue.

IV. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is seeking Zoning Commission design review approval pursuant to 11 DCMR Chapter 16, the Capitol Gateway Overlay District (CG Overlay), in order to construct a residential building with ground floor retail. No PUD or rezoning approval is required. The main entrance to the residential part of the building would be located on V Street. Entrances to five two-story "rowhouse" units would also be on V Street. The 97 proposed units range from studios to two-bedrooms, and the application requests flexibility to vary the total number of units between 75 and 110. Entrances to the approximately 2,000 square foot retail area are proposed for both V and 1st Streets.

Building Layout and Design

The shape of the building takes advantage of the unusually shaped lot. A semi-circular footprint utilizes the wider, western portion of the lot. A narrow wing extends to the east toward Half Street. OP supports the unique building form which creatively responds to the site and context.

The ground floor of the building would have a retail space at the corner of 1st and V Streets. The remainder of the ground floor would be dedicated to the residential use, including lobby space, a fitness room, utility room, trash area, and residential units. The rowhouse units along V Street would have direct access from the street, and most ground floor units would have outdoor terraces. The ground floor would also include a ramp to below grade parking and a loading bay. The design has been revised to combine the parking and loading access into one curb cut on 1st Street. The applicant has verbally stated that the southern property line, adjacent to the NPS property, would be marked by a masonry wall, though that has not been denoted on the plans. The applicant should provide design details about that structure including its size and materials.

On upper floors all units are accessed from an interior hallway, and many have balconies. Units on the 8th floor have access to the roof and private rooftop decks. Stairs from those units lead to rooms housing mechanical equipment, but because those rooms are larger than needed to simply provide circulation and access, OP considers them to be a 9th floor on the building. Please see more information about the rooftop rooms in the section “Height and FAR”, below. The rooftop plan (sheet A-8 of the plan set) provides some dimensions on the elevation of rooftop structures and the distance of those structures from the outside wall of the building. As designed, those structures would require setback relief. Sheet A-8, together with the elevation drawings, seem to indicate a canopy or some other embellishment near the top of the rooftop rooms. The applicant should provide more detail about the design of that structure.

The application materials do not include a LEED checklist, as required by § 1610.3(f) of the Capitol Gateway Overlay, though the applicant has stated that one would be forthcoming.

Public Space

Although the public realm is normally not a zoning matter, understanding what could happen in public space is important for a review under the Capitol Gateway Overlay, as the Overlay seeks to create a vibrant pedestrian environment through the interaction of buildings and the street. The applicant’s revised public space design addresses an issue raised by OP; Planters are now shown in front of the rowhouse units, providing some separation between the sidewalk and the interior of the unit. Another improvement for the rowhouse units would be to raise the ground floor above the surrounding grade, in a fashion similar to historic rowhouses in the District. This would further increase the privacy of the residents. OP also appreciates the continuous planting strips next to the curb on V and 1st Streets, though the strips seem to be only four feet wide. A six foot wide planting strip would provide better growth potential for street trees. On the 1st Street side the design proposes a raised planting bed in public space. The planting bed separates the sidewalk from the ramp down to the underground parking. The Half Street ground floor has some fenestration into the residential unit, but otherwise has a blank façade on the street. OP

also commends the location of the Pepco vaults on private property in the loading area. However, the applicant should provide information on the depth of the utility vaults, as they are not shown in the plan for underground garage. A comprehensive review of the streetscape will be conducted as part of DDOT's public space review. OP does not anticipate that that review will result in significant changes to the design of the building itself.

Materials

Façade materials would include brick and metal panels on the bulk of the building, and from the elevation drawings the retail façade appears to include a significant amount of glass, which OP supports. OP asked the applicant to submit more detailed material and architectural drawings, especially for the ground floor façade. Material colors seem to include a variety of browns and tans. OP supports the general direction chosen in the color palette and in the materials. The subject property would be visible from all sides and, from the south and the water, from long distances. Materials and design on all sides of the building, therefore, are very important.

Parking and Loading

Parking and loading entrances are proposed on V and 1st Streets, respectively. The design shows 69 parking spaces for the 97 units, a ratio of 0.7 spaces per unit. The written statement indicates that the applicant is going to pursue the construction of additional parking in vault space in order to achieve a 1-to-1 parking ratio. Given this project's lack of transit access – the site is just over one mile from Metrorail, and the only nearby bus line is the 71, a weekday-only, rush-hour-only service – OP does not object to a higher than normal parking ratio. But OP defers to DDOT on the appropriateness of vault parking in this location, given the width of the sidewalk and the location of future tree boxes. The applicant should also provide more information about how the parking and loading will be accessed given the Coast Guard's security barrier on 1st Street. The written statement assumes residents would be permitted to use that gate. Though the Coast Guard will eventually relocate their headquarters to St. Elizabeths, the date of that move could be five years or more in the future.

Height and FAR

The application's stated building height of 80 feet is measured from the ground to the top of the main parapet above the 8th floor of the building. (The height allowed in the W-2 zone is 60 feet, and the bonus for providing inclusionary zoning (IZ) units is 20 additional feet.) The residential units on the 8th floor would have access to the roof via staircases from the 8th floor up to rooms on the level above. The proposed "rooftop" rooms are larger than simple foyers to access the staircases and appear to constitute occupiable space, thereby creating a 9th floor on the building which would count toward height and FAR.

According to the plans, the top of the 9th floor has a maximum zoning height 86.5 feet. The maximum ceiling height of the 9th floor appears to be ten feet. The Zoning Commission, pursuant to § 1603.4, may grant 10 extra feet of height in addition to any IZ bonus, giving a total

permissible height of 90 feet. The 9th floor, as designed, would be within that limit. Please note that the architectural plans give height in feet above sea level, not zoning height.

OP estimates that the rooms would add approximately 1,400 square feet to the total floor area, currently shown as 110,902 square feet. That would cause the building to exceed the maximum permissible FAR of 5.8 by 437 square feet. In order to meet the FAR maximum, OP recommends that the rooms be reduced in size. Please see the table below for more information.

Item	Section	CG / W-2	Proposed	Relief
Lot Area	n/a	n/a	19,287 sf	n/a
Residential Units	n/a	n/a	97	Flexibility for 75 – 110 units requested
Height	930 1601.1 1603.4	60' max. 80' max. (IZ) 90' max. (ZC Flex.)	80' 86.5'	ZC Flexibility Required
FAR	931 1601.1 1603.4	4.0 max. 4.8 max. (IZ) 5.8 max. (111,865 sf) (ZC Flex.)	5.82 (112,302 sf)	ZC Flexibility and Variance Required
Lot Occupancy	932	75% (14,465 sf)	75% (14,465 sf)	Conforming
Rear Yard	933	3" / ft. of height (20')	22' 6" avg.	Conforming
Side Yard	934	None required If provided, 8' min.	None provided	Conforming
Rooftop Structures	936	Equal height of walls, 1-to-1 setback	Setbacks not 1-to-1; Various heights	Required
River Setback	1603.3	75' from bulkhead	90' approx.	Conforming
Parking	2101	1 per 3 dwelling units (32 spaces)	69	Conforming
Loading	2201	one 55' berth one 20' delivery space one 200 sf platform	55' berth 20' delivery space No platform	Required

Inclusionary Zoning

OP notes that the property is subject to Inclusionary Zoning (IZ). The application has been revised to include the proper amount of floor area dedicated to IZ units, but the ratio of one bedroom units to two bedroom units is still not proportional, as the design proposes seven one-bedroom and two two-bedroom units. The ratio of IZ one-bedrooms to all IZ units cannot be higher than the ratio of market rate one-bedrooms to all market rate units (§ 2605.2). The written statement conflates one-bedroom-plus-den units with two bedroom units, but because dens are not considered legal bedrooms, those units must be counted together with the regular one bedroom units. The ratio of one bedroom to two bedroom market rate units is 51% to 49%. Currently the same ratio for IZ units is 78% to 22%. OP advises that the issue will need to be resolved prior to the building permit stage.

V. CRITERIA OF THE CAPITOL GATEWAY OVERLAY

The subject site is zoned CG / W-2 (Capitol Gateway Overlay / Waterfront). The W District encourages a diversity of compatible land uses at various densities, including combinations of residential, offices, retail, recreational, arts and cultural, and other miscellaneous uses (§900.4). The Capitol Gateway Overlay is intended to encourage a mix of uses while creating a pedestrian-friendly environment. The overlay has a number of objectives and provides specific criteria for proposed developments. The following is OP's analysis of the relevant standards as applied to the application. (Criteria not relevant to this site have been omitted.)

Purposes of the CG Overlay

1600.2 The purposes of the CG Overlay District are to:

- (a) Assure development of the area with a mixture of residential and commercial uses, and a suitable height, bulk and design of buildings, as generally indicated in the Comprehensive Plan and recommended by planning studies of the area;**

The proposal for residential uses would contribute to the overall mix of uses in the area. Residential uses are highly encouraged in the CG Overlay, and the proposed development would be the first such use in Buzzard Point. The use would begin to increase pedestrian activity in the area. The proposed height of 86.5 feet is within the limit permissible in this zone. The proposed FAR of 5.82 is greater than the FAR allowed in this zone, but the design of the rooftop rooms could be modified to come into compliance with the limit of 5.8. Overall, however, the design shown by the application is innovative in its massing, takes advantage of an unusually shaped site, and provides an attractive face to the waterfront. Generally speaking, the height and massing are appropriate given the location in an area slated to redevelop with a mix of medium and high density uses.

- (b) Encourage a variety of support and visitor-related uses, such as retail, service, entertainment, cultural and hotel or inn uses;**

The proposed residential use would introduce an entirely new use type to the immediate vicinity. Though not visitor-related, the residential building would increase pedestrian activity and add eyes on the street. Residents would support non-residential uses in the area. The ground floor retail would serve as a walkable destination for residents of this building as well as nearby office workers.

- (c) Allow for continuation of existing industrial uses, which are important economic assets to the city, during the extended period projected for redevelopment;**

The subject property is currently vacant, though at times used for storage of boating-related equipment. That intermittent use would likely continue until construction of the project commences.

- (d) Provide for a reduced height and bulk of buildings along the Anacostia riverfront in the interest of ensuring views over and around waterfront buildings, and provide for continuous public open space along the waterfront with frequent public access points;**

The height proposed by the application is within that allowed in this zone, and the overall bulk of the building is appropriate. The application includes renderings which show that the building will still allow views to the river. The building is surrounded on three sides by public rights-of-way, and on the fourth side by NPS property. The proposed building would not obstruct public access points, and in fact would contribute to the walkability of the vicinity through increased pedestrian activity and an improved public space.

Specific Criteria for the CG / W-2 District

1603 Buildings, Structures and Uses in the CG / W-2 District

1603.1 The following provisions apply to new buildings, structures, or uses within the CG/W-2 District.

1603.2 No private driveway to any parking or loading berth areas in or adjacent to a building or structure constructed after January 7, 2005 shall directly face the waterfront.

The proposed entrances to parking and loading for the building do not face the waterfront. The revised design combines the parking and loading entrances into one curb cut on 1st Street. OP supports that design modification, which will significantly improve the public space experience.

1603.3 All buildings or structures constructed after January 7, 2005 on a lot that faces or abuts the Anacostia River shall be set back by no less than seventy-five (75) feet from the bulkhead, unless the Zoning Commission finds that such setback creates an undue economic hardship for the owner of the lot and in no case less than fifty (50) feet from the bulkhead.

The subject site does not abut the Anacostia River, but it does face and is in very close proximity to the river. The building design maintains a setback of approximately 90 feet from the bulkhead, with the NPS land separating it from the waterfront.

1603.4 In the CG/W-2 District, the Zoning Commission, at its discretion, may grant bonus density for residential development in a building or a combined lot development, using a guideline of 1.0 FAR in excess of the normally-allowed

maximum of 4.0 FAR and an additional ten (10) feet in excess of the normally-allowed maximum height of sixty (60) feet; provided that:

- (a) The building or combined lot development shall include at least 2.0 FAR of residential development;**

A total allowable FAR of 5.8 is calculated by adding the maximum matter-of-right FAR of 4.0, the IZ bonus FAR of 0.8, and the 1.0 FAR bonus granted by this subsection. Should the Commission grant the additional 1.0 FAR, the proposed building would have 5.64 FAR of residential development and 0.18 FAR dedicated to non-residential uses.

OP recommends that the Commission grant the extra 1.0 FAR. OP also recommends that the Commission grant 6.5 extra feet of height as allowed by this section.

- (b) The Zoning Commission, at its discretion, may allow construction of such bonus density on the property zoned CG/W-2 or may allow only for the bonus density to be transferred off-site to a lot or lots zoned CG/CR; and**

The applicant proposes to use the additional 1.0 FAR on-site.

1603.5 The Zoning Commission, at its discretion, may also provide for additional on-site or off-site bonus density to be earned for setbacks required under this section, based on the land area of the setback and the proposed features for public open space uses.

The required 75 foot setback does not impact the subject property.

Zoning Commission Review Criteria

1610 Zoning Commission Review of Buildings, Structures and Uses

1610.1 The following provisions apply to properties located:

- (a) Within the CG/W-2 District;**

1610.2 With respect to those properties described in § 1610.1, all proposed uses, buildings, and structures, or any proposed exterior renovation to any existing buildings or structures that would result in an alteration of the exterior design, shall be subject to review and approval by the Zoning Commission in accordance with the following provisions.

1610.3 In addition to proving that the proposed use, building, or structure meets the standards set forth in § 3104, an applicant requesting approval under this section must prove that the proposed building or structure, including the

siting, architectural design, site plan, landscaping, sidewalk treatment, and operation, will:

(a) Help achieve the objectives of the CG Overlay District as set forth in § 1600.2;

As noted above, the proposed use would help to achieve that desired mix by bringing a residential component to a neighborhood that is today entirely commercial and industrial.

The residential use would also begin to create an active streetscape at the southern tip of Buzzard Point. The design of the proposed building would improve public space and provide street-enlivening uses such as retail and rowhouse-style units. Including the Pepco vaults on private property further enhance the pedestrian experience.

(b) Help achieve the desired mix of uses in the CG Overlay District as set forth in §§ 1600.2(a) and (b), with the identified preferred uses specifically being residential, hotel or inn, cultural, entertainment, retail, or service uses;

The CG Overlay encourages development of the area with a mix of uses, especially residential uses. The proposed use would help to achieve that desired mix by bringing a residential component to a neighborhood that is today entirely commercial and industrial. One of the purposes of an increase in residential uses is to increase street activity. The design of the project furthers that goal by placing some residential units directly on the street.

(c) Be in context with the surrounding neighborhood and street patterns;

The proposed design is not out of character with the scale of existing surrounding development, or with potential new development as permitted by zoning. The Coast Guard headquarters, the PEPCO generating station and the office building along Water Street are all of a height similar to that proposed in the current application. The mass of all those buildings, however, is considerably larger. In the future, the Comprehensive Plan calls for a mix of high density uses in the surrounding area, and the proposal would be in context with that future development. The use and building would reinforce the local street pattern. Pedestrian activity on V Street would increase and the presence of the structure near the street would help to visually define the V and 1st Street corridors.

(d) Minimize conflict between vehicles and pedestrians;

The design would greatly enhance the pedestrian environment through construction of a sidewalk, planting of street trees and other landscaping, lighting in public space and on private property, and the introduction of street-activating uses. The parking entrance, once proposed for V Street, has been relocated in the new design to 1st Street to share a curb cut with the loading. Combination of the two entrances would further enhance the pedestrian environment.

- (e) **Minimize unarticulated blank walls adjacent to public spaces through facade articulation; and**

Preliminary reviews of the design indicate that blank walls would be minimized, and the building is designed to have no “rear” elevation. OP is encouraged by the architectural drawings submitted to date, but has requested more detailed drawings better showing the material selections, especially along the ground floor. To be commended are the residential units opening directly onto the sidewalk. These types of units greatly enhance the walkability of a street and increase eyes on the street.

- (f) **Minimize impact on the environment, as demonstrated through the provision of an evaluation of the proposal against LEED certification standards.**

As of this writing OP has not received an evaluation of this proposal against LEED standards. OP has requested this from the applicant.

1610.4 With respect to a building or structure to be constructed on a lot within the CG/W-2 District:

- (a) **The building or structure shall provide suitably designed public open space along the waterfront;**

This property is not directly on the waterfront, though is in close proximity to it. The regulations require a 75 foot setback from the bulkhead line, and the design provides a setback of at least 90 feet. The applicant reported meeting with the National Park Service (NPS), owners of the adjacent Buzzard Point Marina. According to the applicant NPS requested that a solid wall be constructed between the subject property and the marina site. The design, therefore, incorporates a masonry wall along the property line. The design of the project will greatly improve the overall public space around it. The building will add definition to the street wall, and construction will create sidewalks where today none exist.

- (b) **A plan shall be included in the application for suitable open space treatment of the setback area for such uses as walkway and bikeway, passive or active recreational use, and including provisions assuring private maintenance of the space, convenient and permanent public access to the space, and suitable connections to adjacent public space along the waterfront; and**

This property is not directly on the waterfront. Rather, the property directly on the water is owned by NPS.

- (c) **The application shall include a view analysis that assesses openness of waterfront views and vistas, and views and vistas toward the Capitol**

**Dome, other federal monumental buildings, existing neighborhoods,
South Capitol Street, and the Frederick Douglass Bridge.**

The application materials include renderings showing views toward the property and the waterfront. Because of this project's location, construction would not impact views on the ground toward the Capitol, South Capitol Street or the Douglass Bridge. From the water, however, this building would improve the views of the neighborhood and the overall waterfront. It would be a contrast to the current views in this vicinity which consist mostly of office or industrial uses.

1610.7 The Commission may hear and decide any additional requests for special exception or variance relief needed for the subject property. Such requests shall be advertised, heard, and decided together with the application for Zoning Commission review and approval.

The applicant's proposal requires relief from the specific zoning regulations listed below. OP's analysis of each request follows.

1. Variance from rooftop structure setback requirements (§ 936)

The rooftop plans indicate that at the V Street façade, above the main entrance, rooftop structures will encroach within the required one-to-one setback. The object in question appears to be somewhat of an architectural embellishment, though the structure, labeled as a "roof" on sheet A-8 of the plans, is primarily horizontal in nature. OP does not object to the overall design of the building and could support setback relief. A complete analysis would be helped by the provision of additional detail on the appearance of the rooftop structures. It is also possible that the structure in question is simply an extension of the 9th floor ceiling, in which case the one-to-one setback would not be required, but the plans are not clear on that point.

2. Special exception for varying heights of rooftop structures (§ 936)

The rooftop plans seem to indicate varying heights for rooftop structures. The rooftop structures do not rise to the maximum level allowed under zoning, and OP appreciates the design variability provided by a non-uniform rooftop structure. OP supports the required relief.

3. Variance from FAR limit (§§ 1601.1 and 1603.4)

The current design shows an FAR of approximately 5.82, or 112,302 sf, which is greater than the 5.8 FAR, or 111,865 sf, permitted in this zone. OP cannot recommend approval of a variance to achieve the requested FAR. The building could easily be redesigned to comply with the regulations. There are no unique or exceptional features about the property that would require the greater floor area.

4. Variance from loading requirements (§ 2201);

The revised design eliminated the required 200 square foot delivery platform. This resulted from the relocation of the parking entrance to share a curb cut with the loading area. The area needed to access the parking ramp pushed the loading berth further to the east, eliminating the loading platform. Because the design change results in a consolidated curb cut and a much improved public space design, OP can support the variance to eliminate the delivery platform.

General Special Exception Criteria

3104 Special Exceptions

As stated in § 1610.3, the proposed building and use must meet the special exception criteria of § 3104:

The special exception will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map;

Approval of this application would generally be in harmony with the intent of the Zoning Regulations. The regulations for this neighborhood intend to facilitate a transition from a mainly industrial area to one with a mix of uses, including residential. The zoning also encourages a walkable environment. The proposed development would further both of those objectives. The building would not be out of character with the scale of the surrounding community, both existing and proposed. The specific FAR, however, could be made conforming through minor changes to the design. Granting approval pursuant to §1610 will not adversely affect neighboring properties.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

The proposed development does not require PUD or rezoning approval, and is generally consistent with most aspects of the zoning regulations. The proposal would also generally further the objectives of the CG Overlay, which when approved was deemed compatible with the Comprehensive Plan.

The application would further major policies from various elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use Element encourages infill development, provided that the infill project is compatible in scale with its surroundings (§ 307.2). The Plan also notes that infill development can fill gaps in the streetwall and create more attractive neighborhoods (ibid.). The Land Use element encourages project that “improve the visual quality of the District’s neighborhoods, including landscaping and tree planting...[and] street and sidewalk repair” (Policy LU-2.2.4). The applicant’s plans would improve the appearance of this square. Policy T-1.2.3 of the Transportation Element discourages auto-oriented uses and curb cuts. The proposed design put emphasis on activating the street, and a revised design that combines the parking and loading access would minimize pedestrian / vehicle conflict points. The Lower Anacostia Waterfront /

Near Southwest Area Element supports the long-term redevelopment of Buzzard Point (Policy AW-2.2.7), and the creation of new mixed use neighborhoods on vacant lands (Policy AW-1.1.2).

The Comprehensive Plan's Generalized Policy Map describes this neighborhood as a Land Use Change Area. The Comprehensive Plan anticipates and encourages the redevelopment of underutilized sites in Land Use Change Areas. Plan policies promote a mix of uses in these areas as well as "exemplary site and architectural design" (Comprehensive Plan, §223.12). The plan notes that these areas have the potential to become complete mixed use communities (§223.11). The Future Land Use Map designates this area for medium density residential and commercial mixed use.

VII. ANACOSTIA WATERFRONT INITIATIVE

The subject site is within the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) area. The vision of the AWI is of a clean and vibrant waterfront with a variety of parks, recreation opportunities, and places for people to meet, relax, encounter nature and experience the heritage of the waterfront. The AWI also seeks to revitalize surrounding neighborhoods, enhance and protect park areas, improve water quality and environment, and, where appropriate, increase access to the water and maritime activities along the waterfront. While the subject site is not specifically called out in the AWI, the surrounding area is shown as suitable for mixed use development, and enhanced connections through the neighborhood are encouraged.(pp. 120-121). The AWI also encourages infill development (pg. 102).

VIII. AGENCY COMMENTS

This application was referred to several District agencies for review and comment. OP received replies from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Fire and Emergency Management Services (FEMS), and the District Department of the Environment (DDOE).

DHCD noted a discrepancy in the IZ calculation that has been resolved, as well as the mismatched ratio of the sizes of IZ units to market rate units. MPD raised concerns about security, and the applicant has addressed those issues in a written submittal. FEMS submitted a memorandum and an email to OP. After OP discussed the building plans with the Fire Marshal, he stated that a fully sprinklered building should be able to meet requisite fire codes, though a more detailed review would be undertaken at the time of building permit.

DDOE noted that the site is within the "Special Flood Hazard Area" and must meet flood hazard rules for construction. That means that residential and non-residential floor area must be constructed at least 18 inches above the base flood elevation, which in this case is 11 feet above sea level. Another option being pursued by the applicant is to grade the entire site above the elevation of 11 feet and apply to FEMA to have the site declared outside the flood plain. If that approach is successful, the ground floor would no longer need to be raised the extra 18 inches.

The current design assumes that the fill process and application to be removed from the flood plain will be successful.

The applicant, however, has requested two feet of flexibility in height in order to adjust the design of the building upwards, should the ground floor need to be raised. OP feels that the current design is appropriate, and that if the ground floor would need to be raised, that would require much more substantive design changes such as the addition of ramps and stairs, perhaps within public space. Such a redesign would greatly impact this project as it relates to the purposes and specific criteria of the CG overlay. Changes of that degree should be reviewed as a modification, rather than being allowed by flexibility in the current application, especially when the alternate design is at this point totally unknown. OP recommends that the Commission deny the requested flexibility.

As noted above, the option being pursued by the applicant, and the assumption on which the current design is based, is that the site would be filled to an elevation of 11 feet above sea level. The elevation drawings show that the top of the curb is at 10 feet above sea level. And in an email to OP, the applicant stated that four inches could be gained through the slope of the sidewalk up toward the building. That would leave an eight inch difference between the outside grade and the elevation of the ground floor. The applicant should provide, prior to the public hearing, more information about how the ground floor will meet the level of the sidewalk.

IX. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The Office of Planning has received no comments on the project from the community.

X. ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map and Aerial Photo
2. Agency Comments
 - a. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD);
 - b. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD);
 - c. Fire and Emergency Management Services (FEMS) – Memorandum;
 - d. Fire and Emergency Management Services (FEMS) – Email from the Fire Marshal;
 - e. District Department of the Environment (DDOE).

JS/mrj

ATTACHMENT 1
VICINITY MAP AND AERIAL PHOTO



