



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** District of Columbia Zoning Commission

**FROM:** Jennifer Steingasser, <sup>JLS</sup> Deputy Director

**DATE:** January 17, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Zoning Commission Case No. 08-34E: **Setdown Report** for a Modification to an Approved Consolidated Planned Unit Development in Square 564 – Capitol Crossing

### **I. APPLICATION**

Center Place Holdings, LLC and Property Group Partners (collectively, the “Applicant”) submitted an application to the Zoning Commission (“Commission”) for a modification to a Consolidated Planned Unit Development (“PUD”) for development of the North Block as approved in Order No. 08-34 (2011). The approved PUD and map amendment call for the construction of a high density office building with ground floor retail in the North Block of this expansive 3 block project. The approved design split the building roughly in two (hereinafter, the “East Wing” and “West Wing”) flanking a central pedestrian walkway (hereinafter, the “Pedestrian Way”). It would contain 957,700 square feet of gross floor area, or 8.91 FAR, and rise to 130' in height. The Applicant now requests several modifications to the project’s North Block, including the following:

- A new elevated pedestrian bridge crossing the Pedestrian Way;
- Relocation of a parking garage entrance from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NW to G Street NW;
- Redesign of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street pedestrian entrance and lobby; and
- Other design refinements.

Of note, the Applicant has not requested any changes to building height, floor area ratio, uses, overall massing, or project amenities.

### **II. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends that the requested modification application be setdown for public hearing. If setdown, OP requests that the Applicant provide additional information as noted in sections V and VI of this report prior to a public hearing

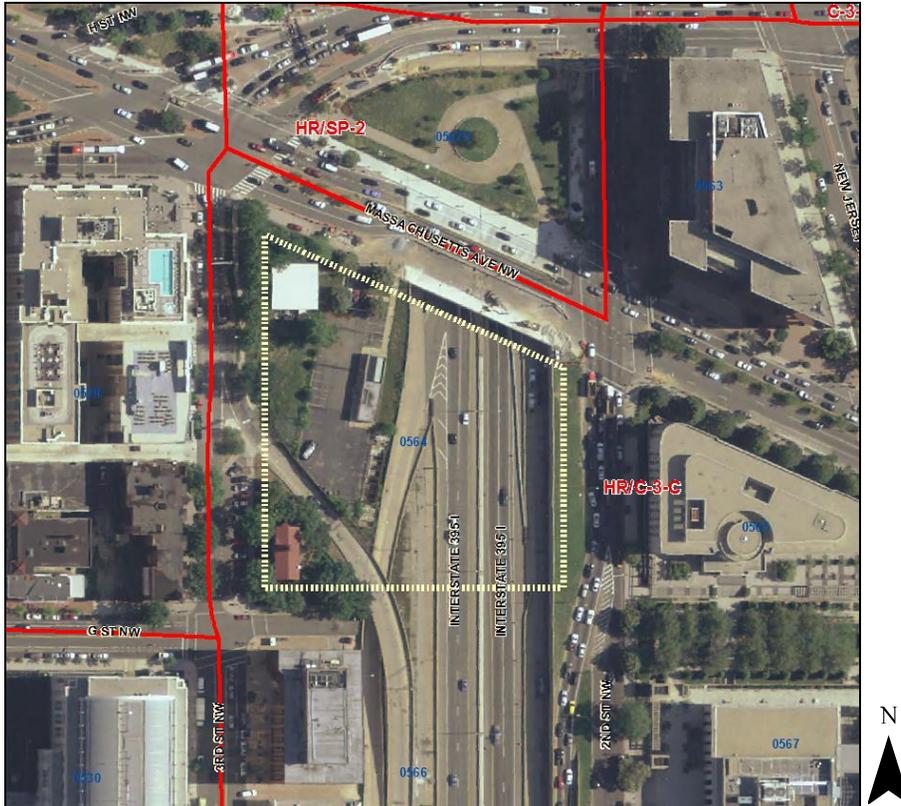
### **III. SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION**

The subject site (Lots 858 and 859, which comprise Record Lot 59 in Square 564, hereinafter the “Site” or “North Block”) is the northern component of a far-reaching proposal known as Capitol Crossing. Capitol Crossing consists of three new blocks of development (labeled as the North, Center, and South Blocks) which would occupy terra firma and the air rights above the sunken I-395 freeway between Massachusetts Avenue NW and E Street NW.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the North Block consists of approximately 107,506 square feet of terra firma and air rights. It is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue to the north, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW to the east, the reconstituted G Street right of way to the south, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to the west.

To the north of the Site is a convergence of Massachusetts Avenue, a small park, and H Street NW. On the Site’s east side is the Georgetown University Law Center campus. G Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and New Jersey Avenue NW is owned by Georgetown University and functions as a plaza. To the west of the Site are

<sup>1</sup> Capitol Crossing is generally bounded by Massachusetts Avenue to the north, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the east, E Street to the south, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to the west, and includes all lots except 43 in Square 568.

residential apartment buildings. To the south of the Site would be G Street extended, the eight-story Judiciary Square Federal Building, Archdiocese of Washington buildings, and approved Center Block building sites. The Judiciary Square Federal Building and its below-grade parking garage, along with parking access, are located within a portion of the G Street right-of-way.



View of the site as highlighted

#### IV. BACKGROUND

Order No. 08-34 approved a First-Stage PUD, a Consolidated PUD, and a related map amendment to C-4 zoning for the three block project to be constructed above the Center Leg Freeway. The following elements were approved as part of the Consolidated PUD: (1) construction of the entire platform and base infrastructure; (2) the mix of uses, the height and density of each block; (3) the North Block; (4) the construction of all below-grade parking, concourse, and service levels; and (5) the proposed landscaping and streetscape design for the Overall Project. Subsequent Commission consideration of project elements included: 1) Order No. 08-34A which approved a Second-Stage PUD for a development in the South Block; and 2) Order No. 08-34B which approved an extension of the timeframe for a portion of the Consolidated PUD in Order No. 08-34. Case No. 08-34C, a Second-Stage PUD proposal to develop new Holy Rosary Church facilities, is scheduled for Final Action consideration by the Commission at the January 27, 2014 public meeting. A setdown in Case No. 08-34D, a request for a modification related to the Holy Rosary Church application (08-34C), was dismissed by the Commission.

#### V. PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

The Applicant proposes the following project modifications:

##### 1. Pedestrian Bridge

The approved plans call for a 30-foot wide ground-level “solid glass and steel canopy connecting the entrance lobbies across the Pedestrian Way.”<sup>2</sup> The Applicant proposes to modify the connection between the East and West Wings. In place of the canopy, an enclosed pedestrian bridge would cross the Pedestrian Way at the second level and would be “a transparent glass and stainless steel structure using advanced engineering technology.” The bridge would be 15' wide (expanding to 30' wide where it joins the building) with a 9'7" clearance above the ground. An “illuminated translucent floor” would provide light within the bridge and below. The application stresses that the bridge would improve pedestrian circulation from the below-grade parking garage beneath the West Wing to the East Wing, which would be located above the freeway and have no direct connection to underground parking.<sup>3</sup>

While OP generally recognizes the operational challenges that the pedestrian bridge aims to address, namely providing a sheltered route from the parking garage to the East Wing, OP nevertheless urges the Applicant to further describe how the bridge’s design would: 1) not detract from the desired dynamism of the Pedestrian Way and its associated retail space; and 2) not diminish the project’s visual appeal by introducing this conspicuous feature.

## **2. Relocated Parking Garage Entrance**

The application describes how the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”)/Environmental Assessment process has altered the location of portals to the sunken freeway.<sup>4</sup> Of particular consequence is the shift of the entrance portal to the freeway from southbound 3<sup>rd</sup> Street just south of Massachusetts Avenue to eastbound Massachusetts Avenue between 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets. The application indicates that the relocation created an opportunity to redesign and enhance the prominence of the building’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Street entryway and to improve the pedestrian experience along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. As part of the redesign, the North Block parking entrance is proposed to be relocated from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to G Street.<sup>5</sup> According to the application, the new parking entrance location would improve parking and garage circulation while also enhancing 3<sup>rd</sup> Street’s streetscape. The new entry also would be located in a short road stub within the G Street right of way already accommodating access to parking within the Judiciary Square Federal Building (which encroaches into the right of way).<sup>6</sup> OP is very supportive of the Applicant’s intent to create a more pedestrian friendly condition along the building’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Street front. OP also understands that the Applicant’s traffic consultant will provide additional information on the impact of the proposed relocation.

## **3. Redesign the Entry and Lobby Along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Facade**

As noted, the application proposes a more prominent building entry point along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The entry would be located within the four-story connector in the West Wing and lead to an enlarged multi-story lobby. The entry would be set back 10 feet from the property line and would be further emphasized with a glass canopy. Changes to the glass and column design of the building facade can be seen in renderings on pages 2.22, 2.22A, and 3.5 of the application.

## **4. Other Project Refinements**

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<sup>2</sup> Order No. 08-34, page 9. The connection also served as the physical connection between the buildings to create a single building for zoning purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Application, pages 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> The Applicant has indicated that discussions are ongoing concerning the pedestrian crossing at G and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets in light of the location shift of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street freeway portal.

<sup>5</sup> An earlier application (08-34C) requested, as part of the Holy Rosary Church building design, to eliminate a third parking entry from F Street. The Applicant also indicated that the new North Block entrance is anticipated to have three vehicle lanes but could be designed with a narrower curb cut, among other design strategies, in consultation with DDOT.

<sup>6</sup> The Applicant has had discussions with GSA about the use of G Street to access the project’s parking.

- *Tech Space* – The proposed tech space would shift to the East Wing, at the corner of G Street and the Pedestrian Way, to accommodate the new G Street parking entrance. Condition No. 23 of Order No. 08-34 provided flexibility to relocate this space. The same square footage of tech space would be provided.
- *Corner Architectural Notches* – The corner notches on the building’s south façade along G Street would be eliminated. The application states that the modification would allow more efficient structural design and better public spaces at the corner of each floor. Although filled-in, the corners still would be visually differentiated with a flush, structurally glazed curtain wall. Corner notches would remain in the building’s Massachusetts Avenue frontage.
- *Modification to Pilaster Design* – Proposed changes to the pilaster design are shown in the detail on Sheet 4.10 of the application. The primary change is that a vertical reveal (9" w x 6" d) and horizontal reveal (6" x 6") have been added at the building’s cornice and base.
- *Roof structures* – The Applicant proposes to enlarge the roof structures, reflecting in part the incorporation of atrium skylights into the East Wing design and the placement of additional mechanical equipment on the building’s roofs.<sup>7</sup> No relief is requested for roof structure height (which is shown as 18'6") or setback. Although no relief is requested, OP encourages the Applicant to continue to examine whether there is additional opportunity to reduce roof structure volumes to limit any potential visual impact. The application also notes that roof structures on the four-story connector in the West Wing would now be placed on two separate levels in response to changes within the central lobby. A skylight and terrace would be located on roofs at both the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors.
- *Location of the eco-chimneys* – Application renderings show a relocation of the eco-chimneys to more centered locations within the Pedestrian Way.<sup>8</sup> The Applicant has indicated that the new placement was needed to facilitate the cleaning of the subterranean garage air. The Applicant also offered that the eco-chimneys would not be detrimental to pedestrian flow and could in fact draw more people to the Pedestrian Way. OP urges the Applicant to further address how the eco-chimneys’ locations and designs could become an appealing element of the pedestrian path.
- *Reconfiguration of ground floor office/retail space* – Although the proposed square footage of dedicated ground floor retail space has remained unchanged from the original approval, the application shows minor changes to the layout of retail spaces especially in the West Wing. Plans also show opportunity for additional retail space where flexible retail/office is designated.

## **VI. FLEXIBILITY**

The application requests similar flexibility in the areas of design, materials, and streetscape, as granted in the consolidated PUD in Order No. 08-34. Based on a discussion with the Applicant, OP notes that the removal of the word “minor” in flexibility request number 6, as is found in the related provision in Order No. 08-34, was inadvertent and would be restored.

## **VII. BENEFITS/AMENITIES**

The Applicant has not requested any changes to approved benefits and amenities for the project. Among other features, the North Block building will continue to be designed to meet LEED Platinum Core and Shell standards as required by Order No. 08-34.

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<sup>7</sup> The Applicant indicates that prospective tenant feedback has encouraged the Applicant to incorporate additional light into the building design.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Application pages 2.7 and 2.15. Also, according to Order No. 08-34, “[t]he exterior appearance of the eco-chimney will look somewhat like a greenhouse, or a contemporary glass structure with a plant wall inside. The eco-chimneys will each rise to a height of approximately 18 feet above the ground level, so that exhaust air will be released above the level of the Pedestrian Way and retail shops. The eco-chimneys are generally rectangular in shape, and each will comprise approximately 100 square feet.”

### **VIII. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Commission found during its review of the First-Stage and Consolidated PUD that the Capitol Crossing project is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan (“Comp Plan”). OP finds that the modification would not detract from the project’s relation to major tenets of the Comp Plan, including: Policy Central Washington (CW) -2.5.6: I-395 Air Rights Development, Policy LU-1.1.1: Sustaining a Strong City Center, Policy LU-1.4.1: Infill Development, Policy T-2.4.1: Pedestrian Network, Policy E-3.2.1: Support for Green Building, Policy UD-1.1.2: Reinforcing the L’Enfant and McMillan Plans, and Policy HP-2.4.3: Compatible Development, among others.

### **IX. AGENCY REFFERALS**

Subsequent to setdown for a public hearing, the application would be referred to other agencies, including DDOT, as needed.

### **X. RECOMMENDATION**

OP recommends that the requested modification application be setdown for public hearing.

JS/pg  
Case Manager: Paul Goldstein