



Meeting Summary October 10, 2018

Attendance

Panel Members: Don Taylor, Chair
Bob Gorman, Vice Chair
Ethan Marchant
Larry Quarrick
Sujit Mishra

DPZ Staff: Valdis Lazdins, Nick Haines, Randy Clay

1. **Call to Order** – DAP chair Don Taylor opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Review of Plan No. 18-14: Riverwatch II** – Elkridge, MD

Owner/Developer: VBH LLC / J Kirby Development
Architect/Engineer: Studio K Architecture / Robert H. Vogel Engineering Inc.

Background

The 3.1 acre site, zoned CAC-CLI, is located on multiple parcels at 5635 Furnace Avenue. The CAC (Corridor Activity Center) zone accommodates pedestrian oriented, urban activity centers with a mix of uses. Riverwatch I, completed in 2017, includes 84 residential units distributed over ten buildings. The DAP reviewed Riverwatch I in December 2013 and again in May 2014. The DAP is currently reviewing phase II of the development.

Applicant Presentation

The project team gave a multimedia overview of the project and described it as a mixed-use development of 28, three story townhomes; each split into two separate units. It also includes a three-story community center with amenities on the first floor, commercial space on the second floor, and two apartment units on the third floor. The mixed-use building is served by surface parking with primary access off Furnace Avenue, via the proposed entry drive which connects to Riverwatch I.

Ryan Homes plans three townhome models that range from 16-20' wide, with rear loaded garages, including some tandem garages. Exterior materials vary and include brick and siding, with optional features such as covered entries and bump-out windows. Amenity areas include green space, a perimeter pathway, tot lot, gazebo, and seating around a stormwater management facility.

Staff Presentation

Staff requested the DAP evaluate the concept plan and provide recommendations on site design, layout and configuration, amenity spaces, landscaping, pedestrian connections, sustainability, and architecture. Written comments from the public were received in advance of the meeting and provided to the panel and applicant.

DAP Questions and Comments

Site Design

While the DAP praised the road connection between phases I and II, they stated that the relocated dumpster presented a poor image at the project entrance. They also indicated that the clubhouse/commercial building was not distinguished from the surrounding residential buildings. They recommended a more distinct commercial look and that the ground floor façade should vary from the upper floors to clearly identify the change in uses.

When asked about parking ratios and guest parking, the applicant responded that parking meets development regulations, all townhomes will have full length driveways to accommodate parked vehicles, and additional spaces are provided on the street. DAP asked if the large bioretention facility, located in a common space between units, could be moved adjacent to the river. This would preserve the area for recreation. The applicant responded that grading issues prevent this and that a similar arrangement has become a popular gathering area for residents at another project.

The DAP commented that phase I lacked landscaping in alleys and that phase II was repeating this. They suggested adding medium size trees and landscaping to soften views. The applicant responded that they would accommodate trees and shrubs where possible and add a low wall to screen views into alleys. DAP stated that if landscaping was not possible that pavers be used in alleys to provide a more interesting hardscape.

The DAP stated that the view from the entrance into phase II is focused on parked cars and suggested relocating a planting island there to add green space. They further suggested adding trees along property edges, thereby creating shaded sitting areas. DAP also said that shade trees should be provided along the northwest property to frame the project and provide shading along the alley. The DAP commented that the expansive entrance drive curb radii on Furnace Road be reduced and a crosswalk be added to allow pedestrians an easier crossing.

Architecture

The DAP noted that front building canopies were too small and recommended expanding or combining them to better define entrances and make them more inviting. They also suggested painting doors a color other than white and to add windows. The DAP recommended that the architecture along Furnace Avenue incorporate horizontal and vertical breaks and reflect features from phase I to improve continuity between projects. They also commented that rooflines should not be long and monolithic and were concerned about the lack of shade trees.

They also suggested simplifying the building design and colors, since each floor applies three different materials. The change would create a more uniform palette, better blend the units and create more inviting entrances.

DAP Motions for Recommendations

DAP member Larry Quarrick made the following motion:

1. That shade trees be added to better define alleyways, walkways, and courtyards, where possible, and along pedestrian and vehicular circulation routes. Seconded by DAP member Sujit Mishra.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP Vice Chair Bob Gorman made the following motion:

2. Plant trees or add substantial landscaping between alley driveways. Seconded by DAP Member Ethan Marchant.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Ethan Marchant made the following motion:

3. Shift parking islands along the triangular courtyard to create better views from the entrance. Seconded by DAP Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP Vice Chair Bob Gorman made the following motion:

4. Reduce the curb radii, install a crosswalk, and provide landscaping at the front entrance drive. Seconded by DAP member Larry Quarrick.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP Chair Don Taylor made the following motion:

5. Revise the façade and roof lines of the mixed use building to include architectural features that are more typical of a commercial structure. Seconded by DAP member Ethan Marchant.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP Chair Don Taylor made the following motion:

5. Revise the paired residential building entrances by changing the design of the canopies to create more inviting and distinctive entrances. Seconded by DAP member Ethan Marchant.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

3. Other Business and Informational Items

A) There will be a meeting on October 24, 2018.

4. Call to Adjourn

DAP chair Don Taylor adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m.