GOV NMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COL BIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 21, 2002

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

THROUGH: Andrew Altman, Director OP
Ellen McCarthy, Deputy Director OP

FROM: David J. McGettigan, AICP

SUBJECT: Board of Zoning Adjustment Case No. 16930
Lawrence N. Brandt, Inc.
500 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Square 627 Lots 7, 12, 801 and 802

Supplemental Report

The Office of Planning is providing this supplemental report to discuss additional information provided by the applicant. The Office of Planning's report required the following additional information.

- An explanation of how the developer intends to meet the LEED certification requirements for a green building.
- A more detailed explanation of how the applicant meets the practical difficulty test, particularly in regard to FAR and height and the purchase of TDRs.
- A revised streetscape plan that addressed the Office of Planning's concerns.

The information, provided October 17th and 18th, provides additional support for the application.

Green Building Certification

The applicant has begun preparing the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System application to get the building certified as a green building. The rating system was developed by the US Green Building Council (USGBC)

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as a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. LEED™ was created to:

- Define "green building" by establishing a common standard of measurement
- Promote integrated, whole-building design practices
- Recognize environmental leadership in the building industry
- Stimulate green competition
- Raise consumer awareness of green building benefits
- Transform the building market

LEED provides a complete framework for assessing building performance and meeting sustainability goals. Based on well-founded scientific standards, LEED emphasizes state of the art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. (Source: http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED_main.asp).

The LEED system uses a 69-point rating system to create a standard of measurement for green buildings. The system has four categories:

1. Certified 26-32 points
2. Silver 33-38 points
3. Gold 39-51 points
4. Platinum 52-69 points

The points are divided between six main categories:

1. *Sustainable Sites*, which covers factors like brownfield redevelopment, alternative transportation, stormwater management, landscaping, and light pollution reduction.
2. *Water Efficiency* using water efficient landscaping, innovative wastewater technologies, and water use reduction.
3. *Energy and Atmosphere*, which includes optimizing energy performance and using alternative energy sources.
4. The *Materials and Resources* category includes recycling, construction waste management, recycled content, use of regional materials, use of rapidly renewable materials and use of certified wood.
5. *Indoor Environmental Quality* encompasses many items including air quality, daylighting of workspaces and HVAC control systems.
6. *Innovation & Design Process* allows some additional points for creative "green" solutions.

The applicant has prepared a preliminary LEED estimate, which indicates it will achieve 26 points with a possibility of achieving an additional 15 points. The addition of a green building to the Washington skyline is a commendable goal of the National Association of Realtors to lead by example.

Practical Difficulty

CarrAmerica Development, Inc., which will be the company developing the building, prepared a discussion of the practical difficulties arising from the size and configuration of the site. The three main difficulties cited are:

1. A much larger proportion of Class A, fully articulated facades as compared to usable interior square footage;
2. A much higher percentage of building core relative to usable space; and,
3. An unusually large amount of sitework and landscaping costs.

The letter provides sufficient additional information to conclude that the relatively high fixed costs of the above items create a practical difficulty in constructing any building on this site. However, the Office of Planning feels that the purpose of TDR's is to encourage redevelopment in situations like this, though it's acknowledged that TDR's could not provide all of the relief required.

The additional costs of creating a "green" building that will be a model for green building development are also substantial. Though green building design has been very successful in Europe where energy costs are much higher, green building technology is still being tested in the United States and only 28 buildings have been certified so far. (Source: https://www.usgbc.org/LEED/Project/project_list.asp) The logistics of finding the resources and materials to create a green building can also add cost and delay to a project.

Streetscape Improvements

The most important design component of this development is the enhancement of the pedestrian environment along New Jersey Avenue. The building needs to provide an attractive and lively streetscape that will contribute to the security and livability of the area. To that end the applicant proposes a retail component to the ground floor with good visibility. The initial landscape design with large planted areas between the sidewalk and the retail seemed to inhibit the interaction of the pedestrian and the retail spaces. The Office of Planning has recommended the following design elements be used in the redesign of this street frontage:

The coordination and redevelopment of the National Park Service reservation to the north is also an important component of improving the block.

Recommendations

Though the Office of Planning has expressed some reservations regarding the applicant's failure to purchase TDR's, on balance, the positive impact this development will have on the neighborhood, the "green" building design, which provides a model for the area to encourage sustainable development, outweigh these concerns. To ensure that this development remains a high quality one, the Office of Planning recommends the following conditions for approval:

1. The applicant shall obtain a "green" building rating from the US Green Building Council prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
2. The applicant shall provide the streetscape proposed in the Schematic

Streetscape/Landscape Plan prepared by Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, Inc. as modified by the following design guidelines:

a. Provide an additional entrance from the northern retail space onto the courtyard;
b. Make the planted areas more permeable to pedestrians to encourage interaction between pedestrians and the retail spaces;
c. Provide transparent glass to allow visibility of activity within the building.

3. The applicant shall construct the building in substantial conformance with the building plans prepared by Graham Gund and SMB Architects.