

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Energy and Environment



MEMORANDUM

TO: Anthony J. Hood,
Chairman, DC Zoning Commission

FROM: Jay Wilson, DDOE
Green Building Program Analyst

DATE: June 09, 2016

SUBJECT: 15-15 Eckington Yards – LEED and Green Building criteria – Post-hearing Submission

The objective of this memorandum is to respond to concerns raised by the Zoning Commission, and applicant response, regarding the level of commitment to LEED certification and sustainable building strategies for the design review application for 15-15, the Eckington Yards development.

This response follows the Post-hearing submission filed on June 2nd and received by DOEE on June 7th.

While DOEE recognizes that some progress was made by the applicant toward a greater commitment to sustainability, and especially appreciates their commitment to both affordable apartment units and manufacturing space, this project remains below the threshold that we would like to see for a new construction project of this scale. As discussed with the Zoning Commission in this and previous cases, we view LEED Gold as a minimum threshold for several reasons; largest among them is that the greater LEED commitment requires projects to integrate strategies that would maximize energy efficiency. The District is currently working on strengthening our building codes and will be releasing both the Climate Ready DC Plan and Comprehensive Energy Plan for public comment this summer, decreasing energy use has emerged as a top priority. Higher performing new construction buildings not only help the District reach our Sustainable DC goals but more importantly they also ensure that these projects will remain competitive in this evolving market environment and allow for lower utility costs for tenants. The latter is especially important when considering overall housing affordability.

We recommend that the project commit to achieving a LEED NC v2009 Gold certification or, pursue the newest version of LEED, v4 and achieve at least Silver certification under that rating system. While the additional cost indicated for LEED Gold is considerable, it does seem high given industry standards for the mechanical system upgrades that were investigated. However, it also seems to be around 5% of the building's construction cost which is within the variance experienced industry wide. There are often ways to reduce these costs through design synergies given additional investigation and the District's PACE program can pay for any upgrades that

help this project exceed the baseline building code. Finally, we understand that within the short timeframe since the hearing, it may not have been possible to investigate all design options that would increase efficiency. Some strategies such as heat pump hot water heaters, less glazing, or higher performance glazing.

Additional LEED points may also be granted for incorporation of renewable energy technologies, including geothermal heating and cooling and increasing the District's solar canopy. The commitment of 5,000 square feet of solar panels is low for a project with a footprint of nearly 100,000 square feet. If the project is unable to attain LEED Gold certification, we would ask that the applicant substantially increase the quantity of solar panels. All projects are urged to take advantage of the strong financials for solar power in DC (less than a 3-5 year return on investment), the DC PACE program.

Finally, the applicant stated that they are unable to incorporate permeable paving or other strategies to increase stormwater retention due to the parking garage. There are many strategies that could allow capture or filtration of stormwater while not sacrificing the waterproofing of the garage. The simplest example is a green roof or paving strategy with space below to capture stormwater.

In conclusion, if the District is going to meet our Sustainable DC goals including reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 50%, increase in energy efficiency by 50%, and increasing renewable energy to make up 50% of the District's energy use, it is going to require a commitment from both the public and private sectors. Research shows that minimal upfront investment can make these goals a reality and tools like the DC PACE program can alleviate the burden of this cost from the private sector. DOEE is glad to be a technical resource as the project continues forward.