

Zoning Commission Case No. 22-06
Applicant's Prehearing Statement
Tab G

Evaluation of Consistency with Southwest Small Area Plan

The following supplemental information is provided in support of the 801 Maine Ave SW PJV, LLC's proposed Planned Unit Development ("PUD") and related map amendment to MU-9A for property located at 899 Maine Avenue, SW, Washington, DC (the "Project"). The information specifically addresses the Project's consistency with the Southwest Neighborhood [Small Area] Plan (the "SW Plan").

Small Area Plans supplement the Comprehensive Plan by providing detailed direction for areas ranging in size from a few city blocks to entire neighborhoods or corridors. 10A DCMR § 104.8. Small Area Plans are prepared with community input, to provide more detailed planning guidance, and typically are approved by resolution of the Council. Unless a Small Area Plan has been made binding on the Zoning Commission through its enactment as part of a Comprehensive Plan amendment, a Small Area Plan provides only supplemental guidance to the Zoning Commission and it does so only to the extent it does not conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. 10A DCMR § 224.5.

The SW Plan was adopted by the D.C. Council on July 14, 2015, pursuant to Resolution PR21-0127. The SW Plan was designed to shape the future of its planning area. Its development involved a community planning process that was shaped by neighborhood leadership through Advisory Neighborhood Commissions ("ANCs") and representatives from civic organizations, homeowner and tenant associations, community groups, and businesses. As a result, the SW Plan reflects community aspirations, District-wide goals, and market opportunities. It is intended to enhance parks and public spaces, improve pedestrian and street connections, bolster retail, integrate community amenities, enhance transportation choices, and accommodate and guide the direction of future growth in the Southwest neighborhood. (SW Plan, p. 2).

During the development of the SW Plan, a number of key concerns were identified by the community, which the plan addresses through several recommendations. These concerns included, among others, (i) the need for varied housing choices, (ii) enhancement of neighborhood-serving retail, (iii) preservation of park-like neighborhood character, (iv) maintaining economic and racial diversity, and (v) promotion of the area's unique development pattern and architectural legacy. (SW Plan, p. 4.). To address these concerns, the SW Plan contains recommendations that are organized into the following seven core concepts:

- Model Community
- Modernist Gem
- Green Oasis
- Arts and Cultural Destination
- Thriving Town Center
- Optimized District Parcels
- Vibrant Connections

As demonstrated below, **overall the Project is consistent with applicable recommendations of the SW Plan, including those relating to building height and design.** The Applicant's thorough review did not reveal any overt inconsistencies with the SW Plan recommendations that are applicable to the Project. Rather, the following sections provide a summary of how the Project is fully consistent with said recommendations.

MODEL COMMUNITY

- ***SW Plan Recommendation MC.4: Retain the neighborhood's 19% subsidized units by establishing targets that exceed IZ thresholds for future development on publicly owned land and in future PUDs.***

The Project devotes 15% of residential gross floor area ("GFA") to IZ units for households earning no more than 60% MFI (50% MFI for any penthouse generated IZ set aside). Consistent with this recommendation, this amount of IZ far exceeds regular IZ set asides that would be required under the existing MU-12 zoning.

- ***SW Plan Recommendation MC.6: As part of the PUD process, prioritize affordable units that exceed IZ requirement or fewer affordable units, but larger in size to better serve families.***

While this particular recommendation encourages the provision of greater amounts of IZ or less IZ with larger units, the Project is providing both. As noted above, the Project exceeds regular IZ requirements through its 15% affordable housing proffer, which will amount to approximately 75 IZ units). In addition, the Project provides eight (8) three-bedroom IZ units, which encompasses all of the three-bedroom units within the Project.

- ***SW Plan Recommendation MC.11: Increase number of benches along sidewalks throughout Southwest to better serve residents of all ages and abilities.***

The Project provides significant new landscaping and seating around the perimeter of the site. Most notably, the adjacent public space along Maine Avenue will be improved with substantial landscaping with integrated seating, public art, and other areas for café seating.

MODERNIST GEM

- ***SW Plan Recommendation MG.7: Apply the Design Guidelines contained in the Plan to all new development achieved through the PUD process.***

- ❖ **Principle 1: Encourage a mix of building heights.**

In describing Southwest's existing urban design and neighborhood character, the SW Plan comments on the area's unique juxtaposition of neighboring high- and low-rise buildings. In fact, the SW Plan describes this development pattern as something that "exemplifies another de-fining urban design feature of Southwest that contributes to the neighborhood's physical character." See SW Plan at p. 25.

The site is situated at a transitional location between two developments of contrasting urban character: (i) the mixed-use, high-rise scale of The Wharf along Maine Avenue; and (ii) the residential, low-rise scale of the Capitol Square townhome community along G Street. Consequently, the proposed design now introduces a mix of building heights intended to achieve maximum compatibility with these uniquely varied conditions. As originally submitted, the Project proposed a consistent 110-foot building height, as permitted under a MU-9A PUD. In response to comments, the height and massing of the Project were substantially modified. Specifically, the massing of the Project was shifted south toward Maine Avenue and the Wharf, and the height of the northern block of the Project was reduced. Now, the 120- and 130-foot heights of the building along Maine Avenue work in tandem with the corresponding heights at The Wharf to create an urban “gateway” condition into the Southwest neighborhood. At the north end of the site, the height of the building transitions down to 90 feet to create a complementary relationship with the low-rise townhome community.

This dynamic is consistent with the development pattern of the surrounding neighborhood. "A variety of high and low building heights is unique to Southwest" and "an intentional mix of townhouses and high-rise towers" is recognized by the SW Plan as a "defining feature of Southwest [that] is valued by the community." *See* SW Plan at p. 33. In an effort to further enhance the building's relationship with the townhome community, the base of the building along the 9th Street frontage closest to G Street is expressed as attached rowhouses, with porches, stoops, and landscaping that activate the pedestrian environment. Thus, the massing of the building complements and upholds the current mixture of high-rise and low-rise buildings surrounding the site.

❖ Principle 2: Achieve design excellence for high quality and timeless development.

The proposed building achieves design excellence at the urban and pedestrian scales, taking cues from the existing patterns of architecture and development in Southwest. The site’s geometry and gateway location create opportunities to develop a unique identity for the primary faces and corners of the building, while ensuring that the design of the Project remains cohesive. As such, the aesthetic of the Project successfully relates to the unique architectural character of the Southwest neighborhood while establishing its own high-quality presence that will stand the test of time. The use of durable materials that are distinguished in both color and detailing also contributes to the design excellence of the Project.

❖ Principle 3: Promote variation in building frontages along streets with continuous massing.

The triangular geometry of the PUD Site establishes three primary corners and three primary frontages that each address different urban conditions. In light of these opportunities, the proposed design creates a unique character informed by each urban condition, yet simultaneously composes a cohesive overall design.

The proposed design creates variation in massing, scale, and façade articulation along each of the development’s frontages. At the massing scale, the introduction of a landscaped entry courtyard at the street level reduces the length of the building along 9th Street. The entry court visually divides the building into two primary masses, and the variation in height on either side of the court reinforces the reduction in scale. The lower levels of the building north of the entry court on 9th Street are articulated as two-story rowhouses with porches, stoops, and landscaping. Along Maine Avenue, a continuous retail frontage at the base of the building is activated with retail entrances and storefronts. The mass of the building above the ground floor retail is articulated with an elevated, south-facing amenity terrace. The elevated terrace reduces the building's overall scale and preserves a continuous edge at the pedestrian level.

❖ Principle 4: Enhance green space through landscaped perimeters and internal green or amenity spaces.

The proposed design supports and enhances the vibrant green character of Southwest. Within private space, the building’s massing is strategically carved back from the site’s boundaries to create opportunities for landscaped amenity spaces that are publicly visible. The proposed design for the public spaces and streetscape along 9th Street account for new pedestrian and bicycle connections that result from the Applicant's proposed reconfiguration (of 9th Street). New landscaping improvements along the building perimeter will accentuate the residential character of the Project and foster a safer, more vibrant pedestrian experience. Along Maine Avenue, the public space design also contemplates enhanced landscaping that will accentuate the ground-floor retail frontage and a public art installation.

❖ Principle 5: Incorporate sustainable building and site design.

The Applicant has employed a holistic approach to design a sustainable, high-performance building, which has included an analysis of building life-cycle impacts, careful consideration of building massing and fenestration, indoor and outdoor water use reduction, optimization of energy performance, incorporation of highly efficient building systems, and a focus on indoor environmental quality.

The proposed building will be designed to achieve LEED Platinum level certification, and will integrate a variety of sustainable measures to foster a healthy and sustainable living environment. The location of the site also enables activity without the use of automobiles, as it is located in close proximity to transit, retail and other amenities. To promote pedestrian activity and environmentally-friendly transit, the Project involves various streetscape and landscaping improvements around the site, as well as facilities that will support bicycle and electric vehicle usage.

❖ Principle 6: Ensure parking is not a detractor.

All vehicle parking is located underground and entrances are strategically located on the east edge of the site to avoid the interruption of street-facing building fronts.

❖ Principle 7: Maximize transparency and viability of ground floor uses along key commercial corridors.

Along Maine Avenue, the Applicant proposes continuous retail frontage at the base of the building. Transparent storefronts will maximize the viability of these ground-floor uses and encourage activity along the abutting streetscape. The enhanced landscaping and proposed public art component will further promote a pedestrian-orientated environment. North of the entry court on 9th Street, the lower levels of the building are articulated as two-story rowhouses with porches, stoops, and landscaping that are also intended to generate street-level activity around the site.

❖ Principle 8: Encourage connectivity for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicular access, including transit where feasible.

The design of the building encourages connectivity for pedestrians by strategically locating the primary building entrance along 9th Street. Doing so will provide adequate access to points of interest to the north and to the south of the PUD Site. Bicycle storage and maintenance facilities are located with convenient access from inside and outside the building to promote bicycle usage. The site is also located near existing Capital Bikeshare (CaBi) facilities. With the proposed curb cuts along Maine Avenue and G Street and utilization of the proposed private alley, vehicular access is optimized within the geometric and locational constraints of the site, and maximizes uninterrupted street frontages.

GREEN OASIS

- ***SW Plan Recommendation GO.14:*** Encourage the installation of electric vehicle-charging stations and set aside electric vehicle-only parking spaces in the garages of future buildings, constructed under PUDs as a community amenity.

The Project's below-grade parking garage will contain approximately 16 EV charging stations.

ARTS AND CULTURAL DESTINATION

- ***SW Plan Recommendation:*** *The Southwest neighborhood can reinforce its identity as an arts and culture destination by manifesting the arts in the public realm.* (p. 95)

As part of the Project's proffered benefits and amenities package, the Applicant will \$75,000 toward the design and installation of public art that will be part of the substantial public realm improvements proposed along Maine Avenue. Further, the Applicant also intends to incorporate a significant art installation along the east façade of the building, across from Jefferson recreation fields.

VIBRANT CONNECTIONS

- ***SW Plan Recommendation VC.2:*** Enhance neighborhood edges and gateways by improving crosswalks, signage, lighting and/or streetscapes.

The proffered benefits and amenities package for the Project includes a significant redesign / reconfiguration of 9th Street between Maine Avenue and G Street. These improvements include reduction of travel lanes to accommodate wider sidewalks and the addition of a PUDO zone in front of the main entrance to the building. The slip lane that currently provides access from northbound 9th Street to eastbound g Street will also be removed, which will aid in reducing vehicle speeds, accommodate additional landscaping, and simplify pedestrian crossings across 9th Street.

- ***SW Plan Recommendation VC.4:*** Link bike routes across Southwest by extending dedicated bicycle lanes.

A bike lane has been incorporated into the above-described reconfiguration of 9th Street which will improve bicycle circulation between the 10th Street promenade / Banneker Overlook and the cycle track along Maine Avenue next to The Wharf.

- ***SW Plan Recommendation VC.8:*** Improve streetscapes and pedestrian infrastructure along Maine Avenue to create a complete street in alignment with plans depicted for The Wharf.

The Project will significantly enhance the public space along Maine Avenue, through installation of new sidewalks, planter beds, tree boxes, bike racks, benches, and space for café seating. The improvements also include installation of public art that will add visual interest and vibrancy to the pedestrian experience, particularly given the site's location at a prominent pedestrian crossing along Maine Avenue. The linear node of seating, landscaping, and public art along Maine Avenue will complement the energy and activity of The Wharf across Maine Avenue, and has also been coordinate with a similar node that is proposed at the intersection of Maine Avenue and 7th Street.