DRB #2008-0004

Carlyle/Eisenhower East Design Review Board
March 27, 2008

REQUEST:	Review of a revised design concept for the residential building and general massing and architectural character for the commercial building.
LOCATION:	2100 and 2203 Mill Road (Block 19 – Echelon and Block 20)
APPLICANT:	Lane Development, LLC by Thomas Andrews
STAFF:	Thomas Canfield, City Architect, Planning & Zoning Natalie Sun, Urban Planner, Planning & Zoning

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BOARD ACTION – MARCH 27, 2008: The Eisenhower East Design Review Board voted to defer the application for restudy and to hold a work session with the applicant and staff to discuss design issues. Mr. McKinney was absent. The Board requested the following additional information from staff and the applicant: a large-scale, dimensioned ground-level plan showing publicly accessible areas, the concept plan for Blocks 11 and 12, and short-range/long-range photos of the physical model.

Reason: The Board agreed with the staff analysis that the design warranted further restudy to continue to address issues of urban design, including massing and scale, architectural style, and top expression.

Speakers:

James Wright, project architect, gave an overview of the design evolution for both projects.

Jonathan Rak, representing the applicant, provided background on the DSUP Stage 1 approval for Hoffman Blocks 11 and 12.

Michael Lane, applicant, provided background on the development proposal.

I. REQUEST

Lane Development, LLC has requested DRB approval of the building concept design of four proposed residential and office buildings at 2100 and 2203 Mill Road, respectively. This application is being brought forward in conjunction with applications for a DSUP extension for the residential project and a DSUP for the office development. The residential building was previously approved by the DRB at the April 27, 2006 hearing but requires reconsideration by the Board due to proposed major design changes.

II. PROJECT FACTS AND FIGURES

Project Location

The residential building will be located on a 2.83-acre currently vacant site bounded by Eisenhower Avenue to the north, Mill Road to the east, Dock Lane to the south and Port Street to the west. Directly across Dock Lane from the proposed office buildings will be located on a 2.85-acre site currently occupied by a smaller office building that will be demolished. The site for the new office development is bounded on the south by Southern Street, high-tension power lines and the Capital Beltway. Both project sites are one block east of the Eisenhower Metro Station.

Project Details

The June 2006 DSUP approval for the residential buildings expired in December 2007. The applicant is currently proposing a revised design to the residential project due to market and financial constraints. The proposed building consists of two connected towers on top of a three- and four-story expressed base with designated active use space on the ground floor. The east and west towers are 19- and 22-stories high, respectively. The buildings read as two brick- and precast-clad vertical slabs with a modulated precast base. A variety of vertical fenestration is used throughout the building.

The office development consists of 13- and 15 -story buildings separated by an at-grade courtyard that is central to the development. Both buildings are predominantly masonry and metal-clad, but glass accents are proposed on the Southern Street façade and on the west building, rising up from the corner entrance. A curved wall along the Mill Road façade of the east building steps up to an embedded cylindrical feature, intended as the accent skyline feature for the project as seen from the Capital Beltway.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Residential towers

Since several major design changes have been proposed, the residential project is regarded as a concept review, even though the urban design and general site plan components will remain as previously approved by the DRB. The proposed changes – the removal of the building top crown features, the adjustment of the tower heights, the removal of upper-level stepbacks, and the removal of precast concrete screens – constitute major design modifications that alter the fundamental design concept of the building.

Building massing and expression

The basic form of the towers is expressed as a series of vertical brick and beige precast forms, with strong vertical emphasis created by alternating vertically proportioned windows and brick piers, with horizontal divisions between windows are kept to a minimum. Although the current proposal contains several desirable elements such as vertical fins, window variation, and precast detailing – the

overall expression of the building because of the symmetrical colors reads as a mega project rather than a collection of buildings, which is the intent of the Design Guidelines and what adds to the visual and pedestrian experience within Eisenhower East. While staff supports the approach of visually breaking each building into two elements, staff believes that each element needs to appear less symmetrical than the current approach. In order to avoid the appearance of a mega project, the building façade treatment should be further studied to visually break down building mass and scale, and reduce the symmetrical appearance of the towers.

In addition, the "tops" of the building have been removed from each of the buildings in part because of cost but also because of some of the height restrictions that became apparent during the preparation of the final engineering and architectural documents. Although, staff is not opposed to evaluating another design approach for the buildings, because of the future park to the north, the top and expression of these buildings will be visible from long vantage points and therefore, must be very high quality and appropriately expressed for this visually prominent location. Although the applicant has received all of the necessary approvals by the City for the residential buildings, because of the extensive nature of the changes, the revised proposal will require review by the Board and subsequent approval by City Council.

In the redesign process for the residential towers, the number of floors in the taller tower was reduced, contributing to less noticeable height differentiation between both towers and resulting in unresolved massing issues. Together with the introduction of more horizontal forms or "caps" along the building skyline, the removal of the crowns further accentuated this equalization. Some of the building redesign efforts reflected in the current scheme were driven by the need to resolve the overall building expression, which, to a large degree was previously influenced by the integrated vertical crown elements.

Furthermore, the removal of these prominent vertical structures also resulted in a need to enhance the façade expression to make the towers more distinctive. Although the addition of another color to the project could help accomplish this goal, the chosen application for the third color creates a symmetry that only contributes to the sense of a massive complex.

Building top expression

Due to cost and height constraints, the applicant has reduced the height of the building top architectural features by approximately 55 feet, resulting in a truncated expression of the building top. The proposed tower elements create a minimal top expression, whereas the previous DRB approved concept included highly articulated crowns at the center of each tower. The previously approved proposal successfully resolved the vertical expression of the towers, balancing it with two open metal structures.

Given the new constraints created by reducing overall building height and eliminating upper-floor setbacks, a new design strategy is needed to avoid having the two residential buildings look like utilitarian structures. First, the expression of the walls needs to be stronger and more deliberate, in terms of vertical and horizontal accents and skyline treatment; second, the building top expression required by the Eisenhower East Design Guidelines, the DRB, and City Council may have to be

created at the face of the buildings, given the similar and reduced overall heights of the two structures, in order to achieve a dramatic skyline profile.

In short, the challenge in the current proposal is to design the building with a strong top expression within restrictive height limitations. One solution may be to evolve a top design that is an extension of the building wall, rather than a volume central to the building mass. The vertical fins at the top of the building could be further accentuated and lengthened to create a more dramatic top, without significantly increasing the height of the wall.

In summary, staff recommends further study of the building design to resolve the perceived scale of the building mass, reduce the symmetrical appearance of the towers, and enhance the vertical expression and materials of the buildings.

Office buildings

The underlying architectural design strategy for this proposal appears to favor a unified, homogeneous appearance to both buildings. However, the *EESAPDG* advocates vibrant, distinctive architectural expression; in this respect, individual building designs should be unique but still complement each other. Staff suggests that, in order to fulfill the intention of the *EESAPDG*, the design concept be revisited to incorporate varied materials and top expressions and to create a project that appears as an organic collection of buildings. Although the general building design concept needs reconsideration, the urban design and site planning issues are, in general, well-resolved.

Urban design and site planning issues

C streets – streets designated by the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan Design Guidelines (EESAPDG) as tertiary streets on which service uses may be placed, surround the office block on three sides. The Mill Road façade is classified as a B street, which is defined as a secondary street serving a neighborhood. Locating the service and parking access on Southern Road is appropriate, consolidating these uses in an area where there will be less pedestrian activity.

Given the unobstructed views of the buildings from the Capital Beltway and the new Mill Road exit ramp, the profile and gateway quality of the development is of particular importance. From a pedestrian's perspective, views from Dock Lane – focused on the west building – are also important, since Metrorail riders will experience the active, mixed-use neighborhood street both from the station platform and from standing on the street itself. The intersection of Dock Lane and Port Street thus becomes a focal point, and the placement of the office and residential lobbies at this corner is highly desirable.

The main open space and drive court is on axis with the front of the Echelon building, where the active interior space is situated. Staff supports the orientation of the courtyard towards Dock Lane because the location gives high visibility and flexibility to the space, allowing ample outdoor space for spillover activity in the event that active uses occupy the ground floors of the office buildings.

Although many of the urban design and site plan issues are considered resolved, one fundamental issue that cannot be addressed at this time is the applicant's request for additional building and penthouse height. Staff has not received a physical model for the residential and office projects and cannot determine whether the request for additional height should be considered. Thus, staff cannot recommend approval or denial of this specific request.

Overall building design

Staff recommends that the current design proposal and its underlying architectural principles be restudied. The proposal appears massive and complicated; a simpler approach to the building skin and studied modulation of color and materials could help the project read as a collection of buildings on a block, rather than a large complex. In addition, given the mass and scale of the two buildings, use of a familiar and human-scale material such as brick for the base could give a friendlier, more approachable impression from the streetscape.

The architectural "grammar" of the facades is not clear: if the buildings are to be composed of three or four predominant different material families (e.g. brick/glass, precast/glass, metal/glass, and curtain-wall) the placement of the materials needs to be purposeful, and the transition between the materials needs to be resolved. The current design proposal does not yet accomplish these goals.

Building top expression

The top expression of both buildings consists of a collection of horizontally capped forms, some of which rise from the center of the buildings at penthouse locations and others of which are extensions of the building walls. The building tops are too unified, very similar to the tops and profiles of the Echelon towers across the street, giving the four towers the appearance of a complex. These penthouses also need to be better integrated into building design and if designed properly, can give the impression of added building height and a refined, articulated building profile.

Staff recommends restudy of the current proposal to create a project that appears as an organic collection of buildings with a variety of materials and top expressions.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff is recommending deferral of the proposed concept designs for both the residential and commercial projects, with the following recommendations:

1. The general design concept of the residential building shall be restudied to articulate the mass and scale of the building, eliminate the symmetrical appearance of the tower pieces, and heighten the vertical expression of the walls and building tops.

2. A physical model of the residential and office projects shall be submitted to the City for review.

3. The general design concept of the office towers shall be restudied to incorporate varied materials, colors and top expressions and to create a project that appears as an organic collection of buildings.

*Previous DRB conditions are included in Attachment B.

ATTACHMENT A

Tables 1 and 2 show consistencies and conflicts with the *Eisenhower East Small Area Plan Design Guidelines* (EESAPDG). Staff notes that several outstanding inconsistencies exist.

Table 1. Echelon (Block 19) building design compliance with EESAPDG.

	EESAP Design Guideline or Previous Approval	Development Proposal	Consistent
Land Use	395,000 sf residential	474,000 sf AGFA residential	**No**[1]
Height	15-25 stories, 250 ft	West tower - 22 stories @236 ft 8 in; height to top of embellishment – 259.95 ft East tower - 19 stories @208 ft 8 in; height to top of embellishment – 243.95 ft	**No**
Penthouse height	24 ft[1]	Unclear – not called out on submission	**Unclear**
Open space	55,000 sf	65,197 sf[2]	Yes
Parking	maximum 526 spaces	515 spaces	Yes
Pedestrian	Pedestrian amenities	Sidewalks with street trees, benches, other street furnishings	Yes
	"A" streets - Protrusions must be 15 ft above sidewalk elevation and no larger than 4' x 12'	Drawings unclear	**Unclear**
Building design, mass and scale	North façade – 7' min setbacks at 50-75 ft height; East/West facades – 7' min at 40-60 ft height	Drawings unclear – provided tabulations do not include these required setbacks	**Unclear**
	Articulated base, middle, and top of buildings	Articulated base and middle; top not well articulated	**Partial**
	North façade – requires innovative use of materials, articulation, and increased transparency	Materials are comparable to those on other facades; removal of top compromises façade; high level of transparency provided	**Partial**
	East and West areas of building – architectural features required (towers, gateways, articulation of building massing)	Architectural expression unclear Vertical fenestration provided	**No**

	EESAP Design Guideline or Previous Approval	Development Proposal	Consistent
	Vertical fenestration	Shapes are simple, geometric	Yes
	Simple geometric shapes in plan/elevation	44% solid surface	
	"Balance in proportion of glass to wall to provide predominantly solid surface, with windows placed within the wall"	More than 50% glazing used	**No**
	Glazing not to exceed 50% of overall façade, excluding retail component	Penthouses not as well integrated into building design as compared to previous proposal	**No**
	HVAC/mechanical equipment shall be integrated in overall building design	Curtain walls not used	**No**
	Lightweight curtain wall construction as accent only		Yes
Street frontage design principles	**"A" Street Frontages – Port, Mill, North façade**		
	Building shall front the street	All "A" frontages have major entrances	Yes
	90% of building façade shall meet build-to-line	Complies	Yes
	Main pedestrian building entrances located on "A" frontages & no less than 50' apart	Entrances located on "A" frontages within 50' from each other	Yes
	No curb cuts or service alleys	One curb cut on Mill Rd previously approved	**No**[1]
	Structured parking shall be screened with active uses of at least 30' in depth from building face	n/a	n/a
	Protrusions must be 15 ft above sidewalk elevation & no larger than 4'x12'	Drawings unclear	**Unclear**
	Landscaping required	Landscaping provided	Yes
	Entry courtyards/recesses must be	Entry courtyards/recesses are landscaped	Yes

	EESAP Design Guideline or Previous Approval	Development Proposal	Consistent
	landscaped	n/a	n/a
	Active retail uses min 50' deep	Drawings unclear	**Unclear**
	"C" Street Frontages – Dock Ln 5-10' building setbacks at 40-60' building height and 30%-40% may be exempt from setback requirements	Landscaping provided	Yes
	Landscaping required	Entry courtyards/recesses are landscaped	Yes
	Entry courtyards/recesses must be landscaped		

[1]Request was previously approved under DSUP2004-0016; applicant will apply for DSUP extension.
[2]Per expired DSUP2004-0016 FSP#3 submission.

Table 2. Office project (Block 20) building design compliance with EESAPDG.

	Eisenhower East Small Area Plan Design Guideline	Development Proposal	Consistent
Land use	585,000 sf AGFA office	585,000 sf AGFA office (282,306 sf east building, 302,694 sf west building)	Yes
Height	10-15 stories, 200 ft	West tower – 15 stories @219.5 ft w/o penthouse East tower – 13 stories @189.5 ft w/o penthouse	**No**[3]
Penthouse height	15 ft	30.5 ft	**No**[3]
Open space	None	Approx. 29,600 sf[1]	n/a
Parking	Underground; Max office (long-term): 1.66/1000 GSF, 971 spaces Max office (short-term): 0.34/1000 GSF, 199 spaces Total max: 1,170 spaces	Underground with 739 spaces	Yes
Pedestrian	Pedestrian amenities	Sidewalks with street trees, no benches or other furniture shown	**No**[2]
	Curb cuts located on "C" Streets with active use depth of 50' on "B" street	Garage entrance and loading dock on "C"; active uses are generally labeled on ground floor but unclear if "B" streets (Mill Rd/SE corner of Southern St) are active use	**Partial**
Building design, mass and scale	Articulated base, middle and top of buildings	Articulated base and middle; top not well articulated	**Partial**
	No architectural feature required at Southern and Mill intersection	Proposed tower element needs further development, refinement and emphasis	Yes
	Vertical fenestration	All fenestration is vertical	Yes
	Simple geometric shapes in plan/elevation	Shapes are simple, geometric	Yes
	"Balance in proportion of glass to wall to provide predominantly solid surface, with windows	57% solid surface	Yes

	Eisenhower East Small Area Plan Design Guideline	Development Proposal	Consistent
	placed within the wall”		
	Glazing not to exceed 50% of overall façade, excluding retail component	43% glazing used	Yes
	HVAC/mechanical equipment shall be integrated in overall building design	Location of some HVAC/mechanical equipment not shown	**Unclear**
	Lightweight curtain wall construction as accent only	Curtain walls used as accent	Yes
Street frontage design principles	**“B” Street Frontages – Mill** 7-10’ building setbacks at 40-60’ building height; 30%-40% may be exempt from setback requirements	Plans show setbacks at approx 35 ft along Mill; applicant acknowledges that design will be further refined	Yes
	Main pedestrian building entries shall be located on “B” frontages, spaced no less than 25’ apart	Main entrances on Mill (“B”) and Port (“C”)	Yes
	Main pedestrian building entries at sidewalk elevation	Entries are at grade	Yes
	Parking may come to the façade above the ground floor provided that architectural treatment is used on façade to mask parking etc.	Parking levels are completely below grade	Yes
	High quality architectural façade and streetscape treatment required	Unclear on specifics of materials used	**Unclear**
	One curb cut per block face only	No curb cuts on “B” streets proposed	Yes
	Shared curb cut access allowed	No curb cuts on “B” streets proposed	Yes
	75% min of building façade (below height of required setback) shall meet build-to-line	Continuous street wall provided on Mill and Mill/Southern intersection	Yes
	Landscaping required	Landscaping provided	Yes
	Entry courtyards/recesses must be	Entry courtyards/recesses on Mill and Mill/Southern are landscaped	Yes

	Eisenhower East Small Area Plan Design Guideline	Development Proposal	Consistent
	landscaped **"C Street Frontages – Port, Dock, Southern** 5-10' building setbacks at 40-60' building height and 30%-40% may be exempt from setback requirements Landscaping required Entry courtyards/recesses must be landscaped	Plans show setbacks for various facades along Dock, Port, Southern at approx 35-50 ft; applicant acknowledges that design will be further refined Landscaping provided Entry courtyards/recesses on Dock, Port, Southern are landscaped	Yes Yes Yes

[1]Per DSUP 2007-0017 Concept #2 submission.
[2]Project currently in concept review; street furnishings to be reviewed with subsequent streetscape plan to be submitted.
[3]Applicant is requesting amendment to EESAP.

ATTACHMENT B

The following are DRB conditions from the April 27, 2006 hearing that were addressed as part of the building design associated with the DSUP 2004-0016 approval:

1. Approve the general design, layout and building massing, including the three-dimensional expression of building core elements through the use of a second brick color, to allow Applicant to move forward with the design process.

2. Applicant to simplify the vocabulary of the elevations, and work with a smaller "kit of parts" to achieve greater clarity of expression.

3. Applicant to reduce the number of add-on elements, in order to allow the body of the building to read.

4. Applicant to change building base design to create more approachable scale and tectonic expression, find opportunities to engage the tower with the base, and to bring selected tower elements closer to the ground plane for vertical drama.

5. Applicant will develop a base treatment that brings occupied space and activity to the frontal plane for greater than 75% of the visible base surface: the current treatment, in which most of the base is recessed space, reads as dark and unfriendly; not addressed.

6. Applicant to resolve conflicting vertical and horizontal expression elements.

7. Applicant to develop the design of the building skyline and crown forms, as discussed by the Board: the form must be integrated with the fabric of the building and not be treated as an "add-on"; the forms must also achieve a successful transition between the towers and the sky, and create a memorable skyline form.