

DRB #2015-0001

**Carlyle/Eisenhower East Design Review Board
July 16, 2015**

REQUEST: Approval for design revisions, including materials and treatment.

LOCATION: Carlyle Plaza, 765 John Carlyle Street (Block P)

APPLICANT: JM Zell Partnership, by Elizabeth Wilcox

STAFF: Thomas Canfield, City Architect, Planning & Zoning
Gary Wagner, Principal Planner, Planning & Zoning

I. HISTORY AND PREVIOUS APPROVALS

This project was previously heard by the DRB at the January 18th and April 27th 2006 meetings (Design Guideline Revisions), and then on November 30th, 2006 and again on the February 8th, March 14th, and May 9th 2007 meetings, at which the project received approval for Design Concept with a number of conditions. Additional approvals were voted: on July 17th, 2007 for final design of materials with conditions, and on September 18th 2007 for treatment of parking garage and building top.

Following the September 2007 DRB approval, the applicant returned to propose several design revisions and refinements to the building, triggering an additional DRB review. A number of these revisions were approved by the DRB on March 27th 2008, including changes to the precast colors, the addition of vertical fluting and other scaling devices to the precast, and adjustments to increase the expressed height of the retail glass on the north and south elevations. These changes, as approved by DRB, are reflected in the current approvals, and reflected in the final approved Mylar documents and elevations, dated June 18th, 2008.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

The applicant returned for a work session with the DRB on May 21st, 2015, requesting approval of a series of additional design modifications, some of which were felt to have a substantial impact on the appearance of the proposed building, and some of which were admittedly more minor in nature. In general, there was a desire shown to move away from some of the strongly decorative surface treatments that had characterized this proposal – for example in the rich detail of the garage screens, the use of translucent onyx panels in the monumental lobby wall, the scoring and fluting of the precast verticals, the use of glass “fin” extensions in the curtainwall to create a sense of lightness and dematerialization, and the elimination of the GreenScreen along

the south and west garage elevations. The following summarizes the reactions of Staff and the DRB at the May 21st, 2015 work session, and comments to the proposed revisions received June 19, 2015 for the July 16, 2015 DRB hearing:

1. **All Elevations:** applicant is proposing to simplify the grillwork that partially conceals the above-grade parking levels (page 12 of submission booklet).

Staff and the DRB felt that simplification of these elements is reasonable, as long as the strong, asymmetrical approach, a reasonable degree of complexity, and the judicious use of gaps are maintained, and could yield a solution that retains the elegance of the approved design, while still reducing cost.

2. **All Elevations:** applicant is proposing to do away with the vertical fluting that was introduced in the March, 2008 approved revisions and to replace the green granite spandrel panels with an unspecified material.

Staff and the DRB felt that if the currently approved version is to be revised, that it should retain some degree of the asymmetrical detailing that emphasizes the verticality of the piers. Applicant has done this in the current submission, and Staff is supportive of this simplification.

3. **East Elevation:**
 - a. Replace green granite retail base with precast concrete
 - b. Redesign light sconces (reduced height)
 - c. Replace translucent onyx panels in entrance with fritted glass

Staff and DRB felt that, if given sufficient richness in surface treatment and detailing, the idea of replacing the green granite with a comparable color of precast would be acceptable, but noted that the subtle slate green color which was woven throughout the building (since it also appeared in the spandrels) added a layer of richness and interest to the overall building, and should be retained in those locations. Applicant has responded accordingly. Staff and DRB had no objection to the reduction in size for the light sconces, and similarly to the replacement of the thin-cut onyx with an art glass treatment for the lobby wall, using fritted glass; however, staff noted that additional detail studies should be provided for these three items to allow for better understanding and a more thorough review by staff and DRB. The current submission provides some additional detail in this regard.

4. **North Elevation:**
 - a. Refine glass design at garage levels
 - b. Reduce the expressed height of retail glass (reversal of March 2008 change)

Regarding the above, staff expressed concerns regarding the proposed change to the expressed height of the retail glass: applicant stated that this appearance was due to a rendering error, and that the section and height of the retail glass will remain as approved.

5. South and West Elevations:

- a. Remove GreenScreen and replace with redesigned grilles

As noted in 1) above, staff and DRB support some degree of redesign/simplification in the garage grillework, and on the west and south, removal of the GreenScreen, but noted a negative side effect of this change: the removal of the strong projecting precast ledges that previously wrapped around the west and south sides of the south tower resulted in the south elevation appearing stark and unbalanced: there was too great an extent of plain, exposed garage facing south, and the glass corner accent at the southwest corner now seemed too short. In further discussion, it was suggested that the glass feature at the southwest corner may now be superfluous, and that applicant should study removing it, as long as there are other elements in place to balance the façade visually. The current submission proposes to address this issue with four projecting horizontal precast bands; staff feels that this is a step in the right direction, but that the projection needs to be more substantial for the gesture to be in scale overall – more on the order of two feet than the six inches currently shown.

6. South Elevation:

- a. Lower buttresses at building top
- b. Remove eyebrow forms at building top
- c. Remove horizontal fins from tower top (N.B.: various representations of this condition exist)

Staff and DRB were unanimous in not supporting these proposed changes, feeling that they stripped the iconic south “tower” of its memorable details, and with its high visibility from the Capital Beltway, it is important to preserve. Applicant has agreed to retain this strong element as approved, as is shown in the current submission.

7. Penthouses:

- a. Expansion of penthouses for mechanical equipment on both the north and south towers

There was discussion about the material and visibility of these penthouse elements; DRB commented that they may be visible from farther away, and that these views should be studied; to the degree that they can be seen, these elements deserve to receive the same high level of finish and detailing as the remainder of the building. The DRB asked to see exhibits that would show the degree of visibility of these elements.

Summary

Staff feels that applicant, in the current submission, has addressed the principal issues with which staff and/or the DRB identified at the May work session, and supports DRB approval of these design revisions. Staff looks forward to receiving detailed input from the DRB on all of the above issues, leading up to a vote at the upcoming meeting on July 16th, 2015.