



Design Review Board Case #2012-0001
Park Meridian (Block 19 Residential Building)

Application	General Data	
<p>Project Name: Park Meridian (Block 19 Residential Building)</p> <p>Location: 2250 Mill Road</p> <p>Applicant: Paradigm Development Company, represented by Bud Hart and Mary Catherine Gibbs, attorneys, and Architects Collaborative Inc., architects</p>	DRB Date:	November 19, 2012
	Site Area:	2.97 acres (129,383 sf)
	Zone:	CDD#2
	Proposed Use:	Residential
	Gross Floor Area:	505,000 sf
<p>Purpose of Application:</p>		
<p>Concept design review of revised proposal for residential building on Block 19.</p>		
<p>Staff Reviewers: Thomas H. Canfield, AIA tom.canfield@alexandriava.gov Gwen Wright, gwen.wright@alexandriava.gov Gary Wagner, RLA, gary.wagner@alexandriava.gov Katie North, AICP, LEED AP katie.north@alexandriava.gov</p>		
<p>DRB ACTION, SEPTEMBER 20, 2012: The DRB reviewed the initial concept for this block and provided feedback on the building massing, the parking area, the ground floor layout and the tower element. The next meeting, the DRB will continue to review the plans for this development.</p>		

I. OVERVIEW

The applicant continues to refine the development proposal previously reviewed by the DRB in September for the residential building on Block 19. As noted in September, this would replace previous approvals for this block. At the September DRB meeting, the design team presented their concept for the building and received feedback on the building massing, the parking area, the ground floor layout, and the tower element. At this meeting, the applicant will present their updated plans for DRB comment. The DRB will continue to review this development over the coming months to refine the design prior to Planning Commission and City Council review, which is currently anticipated to be in May or June 2013.

II. BACKGROUND

Project Evolution

Block 19 has been approved for two different development concepts. The first concept, approved in 2006, was for a building with two towers over a four story base. The second concept, approved in 2009, was a combined residential and office development with Block 20 to the south. This concept had two residential towers and two office towers. No development activity has occurred since the 2009 approval and the new owner of the site has requested and received an extension of the site plan approval for an additional three years. Paradigm Development Company intends to purchase the residential portion of the property (Block 19) and has proposed a new concept for the building. Since this is a significant change from the original approval, this will require DRB review and new approvals from the Planning Commission and City Council.

Site Context

Block 19 is located south of Eisenhower Avenue, east of the Eisenhower Metro Station, and west of Mill Road. The block is north of Block 20, which is the site of the existing American Trucking Association (ATA) building, immediately west of the Hoffman development on Blocks 11 and 12, and south of the Mill Race development north of Eisenhower Avenue. The Eisenhower Avenue frontage consists of a Resource Protection Area (RPA), which is the western beginning of the Eisenhower Park. The future Dock Lane connection will separate Blocks 19 and 20 and the future Port Street will be constructed along the western boundary. The total area for this block is nearly 3 acres, although approximately a third of this is RPA.

Project Description

Although the building massing has not significantly changed since the previous DRB meeting, the total floor area and unit count has increased from 474,000 sf to 505,000 sf and 477 units to 491 units. This is mainly due to the additional floor area and units that will be created in the tower element on floors 21-24. Other than this change, the project remains similar to what was previously presented in that it is a residential building with three levels of underground parking. The building is approximately 250 feet tall at the western end (closest to the Metro Station and Hoffman development) and steps down in height towards the east to 197 feet in the center and 92 feet along the eastern edge. The building is U-shaped with a street wall along Dock Lane to the south and an opening to the north facing the RPA and park. Given the curved shape of the RPA, the eastern wing of the building projects further north than the western wing. The entrance to the

below grade parking garage and loading dock is on Dock Lane. A small drive court/parking area is proposed at the west end of the site which would be accessed from Port Street and would provide short term parking for drop-off/pick-up and leasing activities.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Significant progress has been made on this development since the last DRB meeting. The following is a list of issues that the DRB should continue reviewing and providing feedback on.

- ***Floor area/Occupied Tower:*** At the last meeting, the applicant explained that due to limitations on maximum floor area and building code issues the tower element on the west side would not be occupied space. The DRB and staff expressed significant concerns with having a shell element at the top of the building that would only be decorative and not functional. The applicant has since addressed the building code issues to provide the necessary access to the top floors and is showing units on all four floors of this element.

However, this additional floor area puts the development above the maximum floor area allowed for this site, even with the density bonus for affordable housing. Staff is supportive of this additional floor area for the purpose of creating an interesting and articulated roofline for the building. There may also be other public benefits to the project, such as improvements to the RPA that we handle stormwater from other sites in the area. We are exploring zoning options to permit an additional bonus for architectural features at the roof or for other public benefits, which would likely require a master plan amendment. At this time the DRB should continue to review the massing and design of the building under the assumption a solution can be found for the floor area.

- ***Drop-off area:*** A lot of discussion at the last DRB meeting focused on the design of the drop-off area/drive court on the west side of the building. Surface parking lots are typically not acceptable in Eisenhower East but the applicant feels very strongly that a short term parking area is needed to accommodate leasing and residential functions for the building. An effort has been made to create a more urban design for this space with parking spaces tucked into landscaped areas and a decorative paving pattern used throughout. Two changes from the previous layout are the relocation of the entrance and exits and the dispersal of the parking spaces.

Staff is still concerned that the layout of this space seems very vehicular oriented and atypical of an Eisenhower East block. As an alternative, staff recommends creating an “L” shaped drive in front of the building that would have entrances and exits on both Port Street and Dock Lane. Parallel parking along this drive could be added on one or both sides to provide the short term parking spaces the applicant is looking for. This configuration is more akin to a standard street with on-street parking than a surface lot with head-in parking spaces. Additionally, under this configuration, the southwest corner could be developed into a fairly large sized open space area to anchor this important

corner, to provide an additional amenity for the residents, and to tie in with the building and the larger open space to the north.

- ***Tower Element:*** As noted above, the addition of occupiable units to the tower on floors 21-24 is a significant improvement to the overall concept. Staff likes the direction of the design for the tower, particularly the north façade and the tapered connection to the ground floor. In reviewing this submission, staff has two recommendations. First, the applicant should explore ways to add units to the south side of the tower to capitalize on the south facing views and maximize the premium upper level units. Second, the applicant should consider further stepping back of these top floors to provide additional tapering at the tower. This could be done for the whole element or just at the two corners of the north façade.
- ***Ground Floor Layout:*** The DRB also discussed the layout of the ground floor level. There were some concerns about cutting off the views through the building to the open space and the configuration of the corridor along the long north face of the building. The applicant has refined this space and provided indoor and outdoor perspectives of the area. Overall, staff is pleased with the direction this space is headed and believes the additional space, visibility, and connection to the open space significantly enhances this area.

At the previous meeting the location of the fitness area at the northwest corner and the three units along Dock Lane were discussed. To address the fitness area comment, the applicant has relocated that amenity space to the 20th floor and shifted the lobby to the north. This provides great visibility through the main lobby and into the central open space. With regard to the three units along Dock Lane, staff is not entirely satisfied with this location, but accepts this location if the applicant feels these units are necessary and viable. One option to consider is to keep this space flexible so that it could possibly be converted to a retail use in the future if a demand ever arose.

One additional change that was made to the ground floor layout that staff does not support is the addition of a unit at the southwest corner of the building between the management office and the mail room. This will be a very visible corner for pedestrians coming from the metro station or grocery store via Dock Lane and staff is concerned that having a residential unit will create a less active frontage. Additionally, the unit is cut off from the remainder of the residential units which creates an awkward layout. Staff recommends eliminating this unit and replacing the area with additional amenity space or a retail use for the residents, such as a market. Given the additional units added to the upper floors, this one unit should not be necessary to meet the overall unit count needed for the building.

- ***Dock Lane façade:*** The southern façade facing Dock Lane will be fairly visible from the Capital Beltway, particularly while the existing ATA building on Block 20 remains. This is also the longest building side since the two wings face north. Careful detailing of this façade is needed to break up the building mass into smaller elements. The applicant has started to do that with material and plane changes. Staff recommends further review of this façade and the exploration of additional ways to break up the overall façade. It

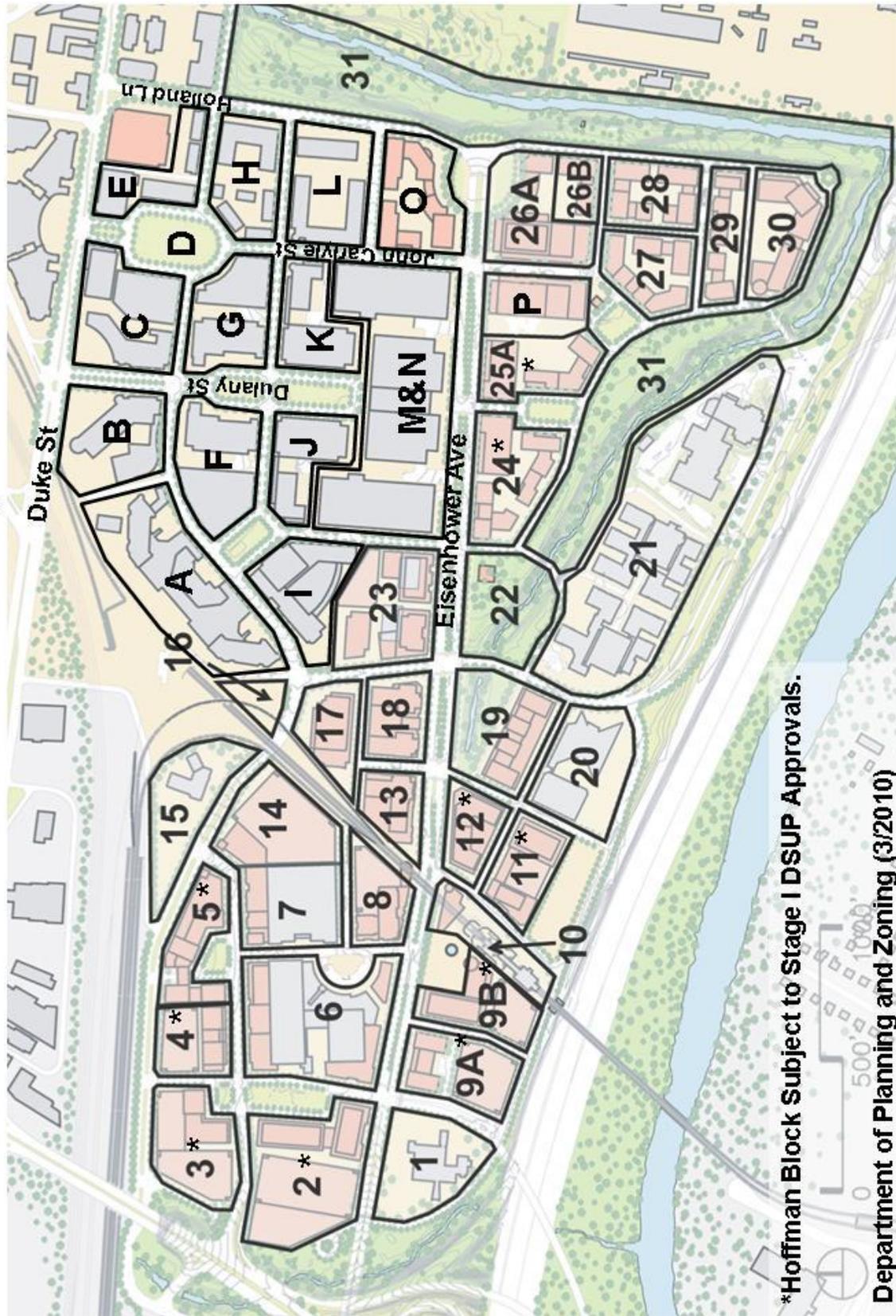
appears from the massing studies in the submittal that there is an echo in the Dock Lane façade of the main north-facing tower element, but staff also feels that this could be made stronger.

- ***Open Space:*** The open space north of the building continues to be refined. An important point to note is the possibility of a stormwater treatment area in this location. The applicant is working with the City Office of Environmental Quality (OEQ) on the engineering and design for this area, which if constructed would remove the RPA on this property and allow the underground garage to be constructed in the proposed location. While staff is supportive of the applicant exploring ways to provide a stormwater treatment area, the design of this area will need to be carefully reviewed to ensure it fits well within the urban context. A traditional stormwater treatment pond will not be acceptable in this location and staff encourages the applicant to explore alternative and innovative solutions that accomplish the same stormwater management goals, while also creating an attractive landscape feature that can be enjoyed by residents and the general public alike.

IV. CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the DRB continue to provide feedback on the building design and layout and review the proposal at future meetings.

Eisenhower East / Carlyle Blocks



*Hoffman Block Subject to Stage I DSUP Approvals.

Department of Planning and Zoning (3/2010)