



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

Application	General Data	
Project Name: Park Meridian (Block 19 Residential Building) Location: 2250 Mill Road Applicant: Paradigm Development Company, represented by Bud Hart and Mary Catherine Gibbs, attorneys, and Architects Collaborative Inc., architects	DRB Date:	September 20, 2012
	Site Area:	2.97 acres (129,383 sf)
	Zone:	CDD#2
	Proposed Use:	Residential
	Gross Floor Area:	474,000 sf
Purpose of Application:		
Concept design review of revised proposal for residential building on Block 19.		
Staff Reviewers: Tom 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		

I. OVERVIEW

A new development proposal has been submitted for the residential building on Block 19 which would replace previous approvals for this block. Paradigm Development Company has proposed a residential building of 474,000 sf which includes bonus density for affordable housing. At this first DRB meeting, the design team will present their concept for the building and seek feedback prior to moving forward. The DRB will continue to review this development over the coming months to refine the design prior to Planning Commission and City Council review.

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 is requesting 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

The proposed project is one 474,000 sf residential building with three levels of underground parking. The building is a maximum of 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 93 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 extent 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. An eight space 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

Since this meeting will be used to introduce the project to the DRB and get preliminary feedback on the design direction, staff has not prepared a full review of compliance with the Eisenhower East Design Guidelines. However, the following items should be considered with this initial review:

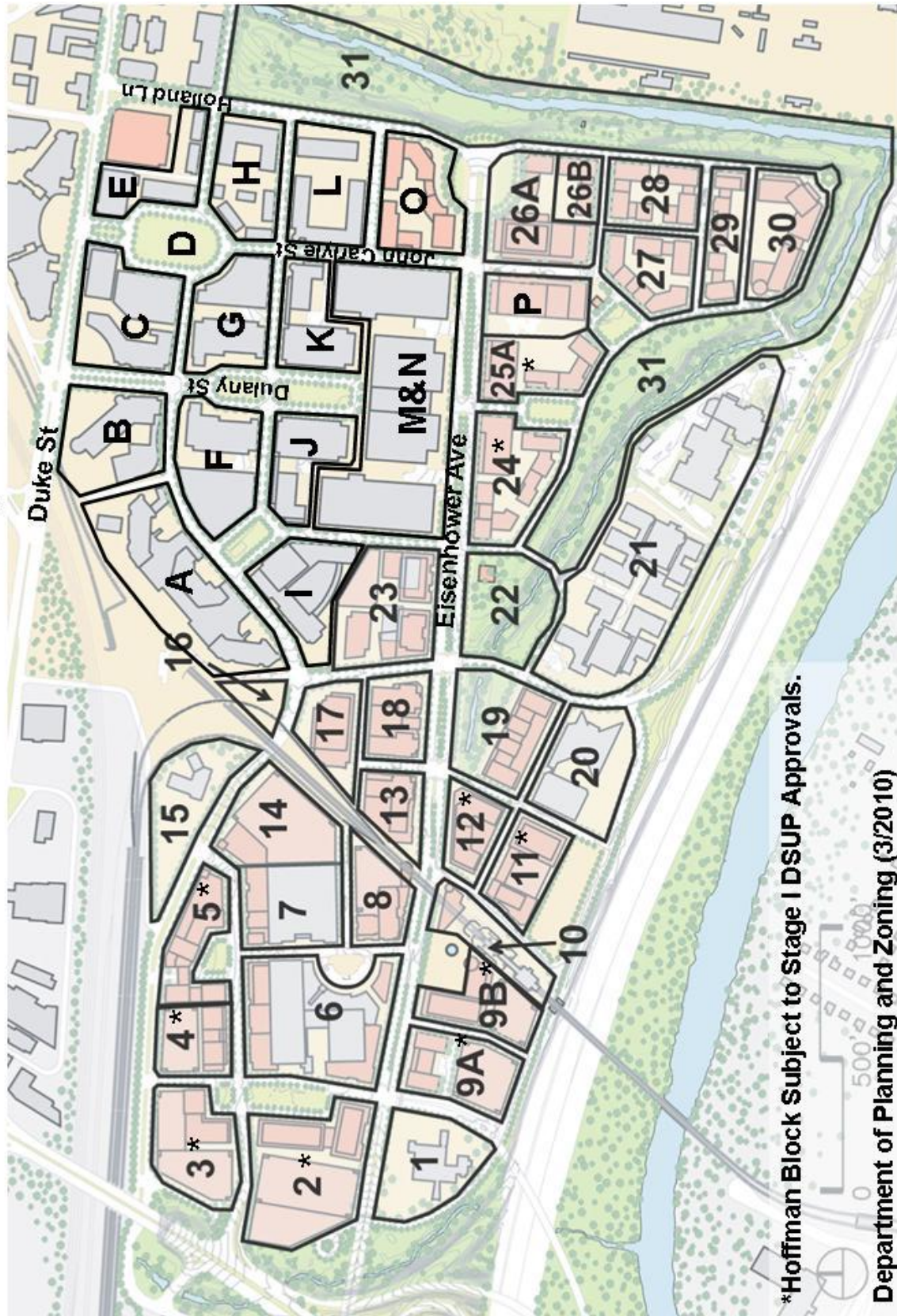
- *Overall massing:* The two previous concepts included two separate towers to break up the overall length of this building and this was considered a successful approach in both previous cases. This application has proposed one building with three changes of height to provide the appearance of distinct towers and building breaks. Additionally, instead of a rectangular footprint, the applicant has proposed a U-shaped building with projecting wings at both ends. Finally, with the parking area at the west end, the overall length of the building is shortened from the original concepts. The DRB should consider whether the proposed massing and siting ideas noted above sufficiently address the need to mitigate the length and height of this very large building.
- *Changes in height:* The towers in the 2006 approval had a 40 foot height difference, while the towers in the 2009 approval were essentially the same height. This concept proposes a change in height of 50 feet at the west end and an additional 100 feet at the east end. This builds off of the concept of height stepping down from the Metro Station, which was discussed during the Hoffman Blocks 11 and 12 review. The three towers on Blocks 11 and 12 range in height from 270 to 370 feet. This building will be 250 feet at the tallest point next to Block 12, stepping down to 200 feet in the center and 100 feet at the east end along Mill Road.
- *Drop-off/parking area along Port Street:* The 2006 and 2009 approvals included a parking area at the northeast corner of the site, fronting the RPA, which was accessed from Mill Road. This concept proposes a drop-off area with eight parking spaces at the west end of the site which would be accessed from Port Street. The east side of Port Street is listed as an “A” street frontage, while the west side is listed as a “B” street where loading docks are proposed for the Hoffman Block 12 development. The Design Guidelines recommend no curb cuts for parking along “A” streets. However, there are a few instances of drop-off/parking areas in Eisenhower East and Carlyle (Carlyle Towers and the high-rises along Holland Lane). The DRB should consider whether this is an appropriate feature for this site and if it could it be reconfigured as a curved drop-off with parallel parking rather than a standard parking lot. Would this provide a more appropriate image and approach to a major residential address?
- *Streetwall and Build-to-Line:* This project has a strong streetwall along Dock Lane and Mill Road, but less so along Port Street due to the location of the parking court. The Design Guidelines recommend that a minimum of 90% of the building facades along “A” street frontage meet the Build-to-Line. However, an argument can be made that this street segment functions more as a “B” street due to the loading dock location to the west. The DRB should consider whether it is appropriate for the building not to meet the build-to-line along Port Street.

- *Corner of Port Street and Dock Lane:* This corner has the potential to be very visible for pedestrians walking east from the Metro Station along Dock Lane and should function as a pedestrian entrance. The main entrance to the building is proposed along Port Street with lobby and leasing space wrapping the corner to Dock Lane. The DRB should consider whether this project sufficiently highlights this important corner.
- *Character of Dock Lane:* In the project to the west (Hoffman Blocks 11 and 12), Dock Lane took on a more important role as a significant pedestrian path to the Metro. The segment of Dock Lane between Blocks 19 and 20 will be constructed by this applicant. The DRB should consider whether this project continues to treat Dock Lane as a street that will have a great deal of pedestrian traffic.
- *Park/RPA frontage:* The building is proposed outside of the RPA, but a portion of the below grade parking structure falls within the RPA. The proposed top of roof elevation for covered portions of this parking structure would permit 4 to 5 feet of soil cover at all locations within the RPA. The applicant will need to discuss this further with the Office of Environmental Quality as to whether this is an acceptable structure in the RPA. If it is determined not to be, revisions to the parking structure will be necessary.
- *Architecture:* Since this is the first meeting on this revised concept, the architecture has not been fully developed. However, the design team has indicated they plan to use a more contemporary architectural vocabulary. The DRB should provide design direction to the applicant that takes into consideration how this building will fit in among the existing and proposed high-rises along Eisenhower Avenue (PTO atrium, Mill Race buildings, Hoffmans Blocks 8, 11, and 12, and Carlyle Plaza).

IV. CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the DRB provide initial feedback on the direction of the building design and continue to 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)