

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Kinsey O'Shea, AICP, Senior Town Planner KO

TITLE: CUP 23-0003- Conditional Use Permit Request for hotel use and additional height in the Downtown Commercial DC zoning district at 501 South Main Street, also known as DC Parcel #2A/B, (Tax Map No. 257-A 94C) by Balzer and Associates for Midtown Redevelopment Partners, LLC

DATE: June 16, 2023

At the April 18, 2023 Planning Commission Work Session, there was discussion regarding the application and staff report for the conditional use permit for a hotel use, and for additional height above 60' in the Downtown Commercial zoning district on Midtown DC Parcel #2. The applicant took the input received in the staff report and during the work session discussion and made substantive changes to the architecture of the building. Overall the changes make the building look less monolithic using more articulation, better first-floor differentiation, and more visual interest with different window styles. The applicant submitted a revised application dated May 25, 2023. In general, changes were made to address concerns regarding building massing and scale, concerns regarding balconies, and some improvements were made to the south-facing façade. Overall, the building has more visual interest than the previous submittal. There are mullioned windows on a portion of both facades, which are reminiscent of the industrial-style appearance that was approved with the previous architectural review by Town Council. Also of note, the applicant changed the orientation of the top floor restaurant and outdoor terrace. Now the taller portion of the building is along the north end, adjacent to Clay Court, and not the Plaza. Planning Commission may wish to compare the April 3, 2023 illustrations with the May 26, 2023 illustrations as the changes are best seen in the graphics.

Several points from the staff report and discussion are highlighted below:

- Application showed signage in excess of what would be allowed to be installed under the current regulations
 - *Application revised to state "Signage as shown hereon is conceptual only. Final signage shall be in conformance with the Midtown Special Signage District." While this addresses signage if a signage district is approved, there is currently no special signage district for the development. All signage will have to comply with Downtown Commercial signage standards until such time as a Special Signage District is approved. The note on the plans should be revised as such, and the signage condition that was recommended in the April 14, 2023 staff report has been revised to reflect this change as well.*
- Sidewalk material along South Main Street
 - *The application has been revised to show brick up to the face of the building as is typical elsewhere in Downtown.*
- The suburban-style porte-cochere and lawn facing the Commons and whether or not the Commons Loop could be closed for events as intended while still allowing the hotel to use its front entrance

- *The façade changes in this revision do make the Commons side look somewhat less suburban by better mirroring the styles and materials used on the South Main Street façade. No additional information was provided regarding the Commons Loop and whether or not it can be closed as intended in the original rezone. The applicant should provide information as to whether or not closing, or partial closing of the loop is feasible given the operation of the hotel front on the Commons side.*
- Request for information regarding square footages of uses and breakdown between hotel/commercial/office uses
 - More information was needed regarding the proportion or percentage of hotel use on the South Main Street ground floor in comparison to the commercial space. The applicant did provide square footage breakdowns of the uses by floor. *The applicant reduced the overall size of the South Main Street ground floor hotel lobby, which is now 531 square feet. The remaining ground floor commercial space is approximately 20,760 square feet, which is approximately 98% of the ground floor. Office space on the third floor above Main Street is approximately 12,812 square feet, with an elevator lobby on the Commons side ground floor.*
- Corner element/more prominent entry at ground level on the south façade
 - As noted in the staff report, the southern corner of the building interfaces with an at-grade patio area that would be ideal for outdoor dining. As shown, this space is accessed from South Main Street, with no relationship to the patio area. Considerations should be made that might include a wrapped-corner entry, if outdoor dining is utilized on the patio. This area will be visible from both the South Main Street sidewalk, as well as from northbound vehicles entering downtown, though some areas will be blocked by the grade change of the Plaza.
- Southern façade adjacent to Plaza
 - The applicant revised the layout of the hotel to provide guest rooms with windows on the south end. Previously, the façade walls were blank brick, with the corridor end windows along the face. The end/corner guest rooms will have balconies tucked into a recess in the building architecture such that they do not project beyond the building face. The windows do add visual interest to this façade, but as highly visible as it is, ***additional architectural detailing could be added to give a more distinctive look and be a more iconic feature of the hotel. This additional detail could make the hotel a distinctive visual entry point to Downtown and make the hotel readily identifiable.*** Opportunities for additional detail might be colored metal panels, different textures such as metal mesh, green wall, more glass, or other features to meet the intent for this to be a truly signature feature. *While the applicant has made changes that provide more visual interest to this façade, staff would recommend further improvements be considered to make it more prominent and have a better relationship to the Plaza. A rendering showing the full height of the façade, as well as the interaction and relationship with the Plaza would be helpful in evaluating this area.*
- Balconies along South Main Street/south façade
 - The drawings have been revised to remove the majority of the balconies from the building. As proposed, only four balconies are proposed on the southwest corner of the building. The balconies will not project beyond the main body of the building, but rather are tucked into a recess on the upper floors of the south façade.
- South Main Street awnings
 - Light-colored blade canopies with transparent or translucent covers are proposed on the South Main Street façade over the commercial storefront entries. The light colors are in keeping with other elements of the architectural materials, but the trim, storefronts, and window mullions are all dark. In addition to matching other materials, a dark canopy or dark accents may better

anchor the ground floor at the pedestrian level on South Main Street. The applicant may wish to consider a different color to help bring parts of the building down to the pedestrian scale, as opposed to something light and transparent. However, on the Commons façade, the lightness of the canopies will help them to blend in and to be less obtrusive as a backdrop to events that may occur on the Commons.

- Width of the building setback
 - The staff report indicated that the dimension of the depth of the building step-backs was not provided. This measurement can help evaluate effectiveness of a step-back in reducing the appearance of height—a deeper step-back will help a building to feel less tall than a shallow step-back. *The text of the application references the depth of the setbacks in the Setbacks section of the application. It states that there is a step-back above the fourth floor that is 4'-6" deep; and another step-back above the sixth floor that is 11'-6". The Building Elevation—Southeast and Building Elevation—Southwest diagrams show the depth of the step-back.*
- Additional streetscape
 - In the April 14, 2023 staff report, staff recommended a condition that requires additional landscaping and street furnishings above and beyond what was required as a part of the overall Midtown development in order to mitigate the impact on the pedestrian environment due to the additional building height. This condition was discussed at the work session, and is consistent with the condition placed on the hotel on DC Parcel #6. The condition as proposed remains unchanged from the April 14, 2023 staff report, and is Condition #5 found at the end of this memo. The condition is worded in such a way that the additional streetscape requirement can be met with flexibility in regards to tenant spaces. While it is always best that these be shown on the CUP concept plan, these items will be required to be shown at the time of the site plan. By coordinating the location of these items now as much as possible, it ensures that the proposed conditions will work while taking into account field conditions. The applicant should consider providing a concept meeting the additional streetscape requirements in the condition.

SUMMARY

The Planning Commission and Town Council are asked to evaluate the request for a Conditional Use Permit for a Hotel Use, and for Additional Height in the Downtown Commercial zoning district in accordance with sections 1181 and 3141 of the zoning ordinance. The evaluation should consider the conformity to the comprehensive plan, the zoning ordinance, and the mitigation of adverse impacts.

STAFF RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

1. The site shall be developed in substantial conformance with the application dated March 1, 2023 and revised April 3, 2023, *and revised May 25, 2023.*
2. The maximum height of the structure shall be limited to 75' as measured from the entrance at the Old School Commons to the highest point of the structure.
3. The Hotel Use shall be limited to a limited lobby entrance on the South Main Street ground floor. No other hotel use may occur on the South Main Street ground floor.
4. Should a Special Signage District be approved for the Midtown Development, the provisions of the special signage district shall govern signage. Until such time as a Special Signage District is approved, all signage shall be in conformance with the Zoning Ordinance signage standards §§5500 et seq., and specifically the Downtown Commercial signage regulations §5533.
5. In order to mitigate the impact of the additional building height on the pedestrian environment and neighboring uses, the developer shall provide the following enhanced streetscape measures:

CUP23-0003 Midtown Hotel & Height in DC
501 South Main Street DC Parcel #2A/B
PC update memo 16 JUN 2023

- a. Additional planters/boxes/urban landscape features along the streetscape at a rate of one per every 50' of frontage along South Main Street (in addition to street trees in tree grates)
- b. Additional street furnishings such as trash cans, benches, bike racks, tables, etc. within the enhanced streetscape zone along South Main Street
- c. Additional landscaping such as planters with shrubs or trees, or a green screen wall, to soften the effect of the height on the portion of the building closest to Clay Court.
- d. Additional landscaping such as planters with shrubs or trees, or a green screen wall, at the building step-back level (above floor 2) adjacent to the Plaza

ATTACHMENTS:

- Revised application dated May 25, 2023