

SITE PLAN REVIEW ADVISORY BOARD

NOTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING Wednesday, June 19, 2013 PRINCETON MUNICIPAL BUILDING Main Meeting Room –7:30 P.M. Princeton, New Jersey

PRESENT: James Begin, Alyce Bush, Robert Cerutti, Harry Cooke, Wendy Kaczerski, Holly Nelson, Lydia Robinson, William Wolfe

ABSENT: No One

ALSO PRESENT: Jack West, Land Use Engineer; Derek Bridger, Zoning Officer; Kerry A. Philip, Secretary

Chairman Wolfe called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. reading the Opening Statement as required by the Open Public Meetings Act, acknowledging that notice of this meeting was issued on the 13th Day of June, 2013.

MINUTES

a) May 15, 2013 (postponed to next meeting)

APPLICATIONS

a) AvalonBay Communities, Inc. (continued from 6/12/13)
Prelim/Final Major Site Plan w/variances
Witherspoon Street
Block 21.02, Lot 1 and Block 7101, Lots 8-14
File #P1313-047P

Representatives for the applicant: Jon Vogel, applicant; Jonathan Metz, Perkins Eastman; Stuart Lachs, Perkins Eastman; Tom Carman, Melillo & Bauer; Jeremy Lange, Maser Consulting.

W. Wolfe stated that the applicant brought in materials in response to our request at the last meeting. Jonathan Metz, architect for the applicant, presented the material boards. The bottom stone material is a manufactured stone; the color of the stone may deviate slightly from what is being presented. It will be similar to a limestone in color but the material will be textured. Bricks for Buildings 1 and 2 will be a pink/red tone and a darker brick will be used on the townhomes. The siding will be a mix of hardyplank board with a wood texture or a smooth texture in creams and grays. Shingles are also proposed for the upper gables of Buildings 1 and 2. White trim is proposed on the building, around the windows and the decks. The doors will be accented in variations of red and gray. The proposed asphalt roof shingles were presented and Mr. Metz stated that standing seam roofs are proposed in some areas.

H. Cooke asked that the colors be toned down and not be as dominant. Chairman Wolfe concurred and pertaining to the roof shingles he prefers a highly reflective shingle to reduce heat gain. The balcony railings are proposed to be white and Chairman Wolfe suggested that the applicant consider a cream color. H. Nelson asked that larger drawings be presented to the

Planning Board with this detail. Mr. Metz stated that they will be preparing a power point presentation for the Planning Board and this detail will be included. Chairman Wolfe advised that there are some corners that have clapboard siding on one side and brick on the other side at the same level and the materials should be the same.

Mr. Carman then described the landscaping, retaining walls and guardrails proposed throughout the site. One change to the plan relates to the elimination of two private terraces for Building 2 along the entry drive. R. Cerutti asked if there are any other changes to the drawings that were provided to the Board. Mr. Metz stated that a stone base was originally proposed for the northwest corner of Building 2 but the base is being dropped down in relation to the slope of the street and will step up again towards the entrance drive and around the building. Revised renderings were presented.

Mr. Metz then discussed the Board's request for a single pedestrian entrance on Witherspoon Street and due to the interior changes needed for this the applicant is not considering this. Mr. Lachs stated that additional floor plans will be presented to the Planning Board as this had been requested. He then discussed the two rooms designated for bike storage and stated that sketches of the space have been prepared. They anticipate a total number of 54 bicycles between the two rooms. W. Kaczerski questioned this because at the previous meeting the applicant indicated that approximately 70 to 100 bikes could be stored. Chairman Wolfe stated that the parking deck should have some space for bike parking. Mr. Metz stated that they can be parked in the corners of the garage. W. Kaczerski asked the applicant to continue thinking about how more bike storage space could be provided.

Mr. Metz presented a height to setback ratio diagram for the townhomes. Chairman Wolfe asked for a design that is compatible with the adjacent two story neighbors. Jeremy Lange, planning and engineering consultant for the applicant, spoke about the issue of the height to setback ratio. He stated that this is needed to control the height of the front façade and not the sides which is the intent of the ordinance. Mr. Bridger disagreed and advised that the ordinance pertains to residential construction. Mr. Lange stated that they have decided to move the trash area from the rear to the southern location so they can install landscaping and fencing as a screen. The bins would be moved out to the intersection of the mews and the access drive the morning of the scheduled pick up. Chairman Wolfe suggested that the residential lots encumbered by the parking deck, driveway turn-around, or other non-residential uses should be subdivided to preserve the integrity of the single family zone, and to enable potential future sales.

Because SPRAB is not in receipt of the usual staff reports at the time of this meeting, the board could not provide an opinion on the many technical issues including, but not limited to, storm water management, utilities, grading, traffic volumes and flow, environmental remediation, missing landscaping details, planning, fire safety, etc. SPRAB has no choice but to defer to the forthcoming unseen staff reports as to these issues.

Based upon the foregoing, a motion was made by Mr. Cerutti, seconded by Ms. Nelson and carried by a vote of six ayes and one abstention to classify this application as a major site plan, endorse the memorandum from the Princeton Environmental Commission dated June 19, 2013 and recommend approval to the Planning Board with the following recommendations and conditions of approval:

VARIANCES

1. To minimize the extent of the substantial variance requested of the setback/height ratio, the height of the four townhouses proposed as three stories should be reduced by one story as a condition of approval. Two story townhouses are acceptable as being more complimentary with the neighboring Harris Road houses. SPRAB recommends that the setback variance requested should be approved, but only for two story townhouses.
2. SPRAB recommends the Planning Board grant a variance to the building separation requirement to allow 23 ft. separation between the three groups of townhouses.
3. The variance for the two-sided AVALON sign at the entrance on Witherspoon Street should be approved. It makes sense that it be perpendicular to traffic.

ZONING ISSUE

4. The adjacent properties on Harris Road should remain zoned for single family residential. The snow chutes, fuel tanks, and oxygen tanks should be removed with this application, as a condition of approval. Also as a condition of approval, the residential lots remaining encumbered by the parking deck, driveway turn-around, or other non-residential uses should be subdivided by the applicant, to preserve the integrity of the single family zone, and to enable potential future sales.

DISPOSITION OF AFFORDABLE UNITS

5. A condition of approval should be that affordable units should be redistributed more equally and evenly throughout the complex to avoid clusters or identifiable differences, which support social separations. Individual affordable units should be located on all floors and orientations of both apartment buildings to the extent possible.
6. SPRAB recommends that different unit types and sizes should be included in both market rate and affordable categories in about the same 4 to 1 ratio. The applicant has proposed smaller two bedroom units with one bathroom, whereas most of the market rate 2BR units are proposed with two bathrooms. It's fine to have less expensive 2BR units with one shared bathroom, but they should be allocated at close to the same 4 to 1 ratio of market rate to affordable.

COMMUNITY GREEN VALUES and GREEN BUILDING

7. Bicycle Storage Capacity: As a condition of approval, AvalonBay should significantly increase its internal storage capacity to at least 200 bicycles. The applicant should also increase its planned number of outside bicycle racks from 12 bicycles to at least 50 bicycles. Additional bike storage can be accomplished by utilizing corners of parking runs and turning areas and excess parking spaces in the garage. The applicant should also demonstrate that additional space for resident bicycle storage can be made available should demand be greater than the minimums proposed for the current plan.
8. Food waste composting: SPRAB recommends that food waste composting should be included as part of AvalonBay's waste management operations, as a condition of approval. Food is the single largest and least recovered waste stream in the U.S. Princeton is conducting New Jersey's first municipal food waste composting program. The USEPA and the USDA issued "Food Waste Challenge" on June 4, to divert food away from landfills in order to reduce

methane gas, a key contributor to climate change, and to use compost to enrich the nation's depleting top soils. New York City's June 17 launch of a food waste recycling program is expected to become required in five years, and reportedly expected to have more than 100 high rises participating voluntarily by next year, as well as 150,000 single family homes and more than 600 schools.

9. Fiberglass over vinyl windows recommendation: SPRAB recommends that the applicant consider using more durable and energy efficient fiberglass windows in lieu of vinyl windows, and use thermally broken aluminum storefront window frames in lieu of such windows without a thermal break. The proposed vinyl material expands and contracts at a very different rate than glass, a condition that leads to degradation and energy loss. Aluminum storefront frames without a thermal break readily transfer energy so that on a cold day, they conduct heat from the inside of a building to the outside, causing significant energy loss.

10. Envelope R values should not be dependent on state reimbursement: SPRAB asks the Planning Board to ensure that the applicant succeeds in building an Energy Star v3 certified project by making this a condition of approval, whether or not incentive funds remain available from the State of New Jersey. The applicant should pursue the certifications without incentives, given its focus on sustainable building. SPRAB notes that although the applicant's proposed envelope energy performance values exceed the standards of 2009 IECC, which are currently enforced in NJ, they meet but do not exceed the 2012 IECC minimum standards.

11. Sustainable Energy: The applicant has stated that they cannot take advantage of the 30% Federal tax credit for sustainable energy installation because they do not pay Federal income tax. This, in addition to the current reduction in New Jersey's underpinning of the SREC price, prolongs the payback for a photovoltaic system. SPRAB recommends that the applicant be asked to pursue a contract with one of the many third party solar installers who currently install PV systems at their own expense, receive the IRS credit, and offer building owners or residents reduced electric rates. Flat and south facing sloped roofs should be kept clear for photovoltaic installation, or the feasibility of Solar PV shade covers on top of the parking deck should be confirmed by the applicant under such a contract or for future installation.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION AND PARKING

12. SPRAB recommends that the new street from Henry Street to Franklin Street in front of the leasing office become a two-way thoroughfare. When tenants drop off people or baggage at the front door, they should not have to go around the block to reach the garage. The municipal engineer agrees that the proposed twenty foot wide road is adequate to convey two-way traffic.

13. As a condition of approval, SPRAB recommends that the applicant organize garage parking spaces to eliminate spillage onto neighboring residential streets. It is especially important to reduce spillage onto Birch, Leigh, and John Streets where many homes do not have driveways and rely on curbside parking. In light of the approximately 107 spaces that exceed the ordinance, the applicant should coordinate garage visitor use with the two medical buildings, which will not require many spaces in the evenings, weekends, or holidays. Therefore, a minimum of 50 of the 185 medical spaces on the ground floor should be held for visitor parking at night when the medical offices are closed. These spaces should be visible from the garage entry because visitors might not enter the garage if they feel they may not find an open space. AB must ascertain that the guest parking system will be easy to use during the day when the

Leasing office is open and at night when it is closed. Visitor access to the garage must be neither burdensome nor costly, so as to avoid the use of neighboring streets.

If possible under the consent agreement, AB should provide parking lot data from one of their complexes to the Planning Board, showing ingress/egress patterns and proportion of visitors to residents, to support their proposed plan for organizing visitor parking.

14. For noise and safety reasons, it is not acceptable for garbage trucks to back up the length of the service drive. The applicant should either relocate the Building 1 trash pickup points, or provide a turnaround area at the bottom of the drive, in the area behind the house where oxygen tanks were located. The applicant has stated that they would like to pursue the turnaround alternative, if the Planning Board agrees.

15. AB stated that short-term visitors can use the loading zone spaces by the front door.

16. The municipality should put overnight parking restrictions in place on Henry Avenue.

STREETSCAPE AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

17. In keeping with the creation of a neighborhood street, SPRAB recommends requiring the extension of a continuous pedestrian sidewalk through to Harris Road, either along the garage or on the other side of the access drive, by moving the curb to eliminate the drop-off area in cooperation with the office property owner.

18. SPRAB questions whether any bridge across the new neighborhood street meets the design standard on streetscape 17A-193.B (c) and (d). Although the applicant has apparently felt that walking through enclosed corridors from one's unit to the parking deck is desirable, it can be argued that more direct and pleasant outdoor access is even more important. The Planning Board should consider requiring the elimination of the bridge between Buildings 1 and 2, and requiring more direct pedestrian and handicap access.

19. If the Board does not require elimination of the bridge over the street, enclosed circulation for use in stormy weather can certainly be limited to one route from each apartment to the covered portion of the deck. This can be met, as a condition of approval, with a single level enclosed bridge between Buildings 1 and 2, and a covered second floor bridge from Building 1 to the parking deck.

The single level bridge over the new street should be enclosed only by adding glass, so that much of the mass and hence the oppressive effect of the bridge can be mitigated. Any connection at the fourth floor level should have light railings and no roof. To reduce the decks to minimal horizontals, 12 feet of corridors within the buildings on each end of the bridge can be ramped to one intermediate level. To minimize intrusion into open space, the sides of both bridges should be reduced to minimal structural steel truss members designed to act with the decks below and above as a coherent tube structure spanning without added columnar supports.

The sides of the bridge to the parking deck are to be open to the air. To reduce the bridge's height, the level connecting to the deck roof should not be covered, if the parking deck remains uncovered. Access ramps at the ground should be located directly below this bridge to provide cover. The necessary landing should be located to intersect the pathway that follows the

length of the open space. Both the uncovered ramp shown, and the extra covered walk abutting the parking deck should be eliminated.

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION THROUGH BUILDING DESIGN

20. Pedestrian access paths from the parking deck, and especially from the parking deck's on-grade elevator lobby, to the first and second floor units in both apartment buildings are frustratingly long and circuitous. This is especially serious for wheelchair access. SPRAB recommends that the applicant be asked to use interior ramps to drop the corridor floor elevations along the north wings of both buildings so that accessible entries to both buildings can be placed across the new street from each other at grade, under where the bridge is shown. These would be by far the nearest entries to the parking deck elevator, and would also be near building elevators serving second through fourth floor units. In conjunction with this, dropping the level of Building 1's northern lobby across from the parking deck would also be beneficial. Dropping the poured first floor slabs closer to grade should actually save construction cost even while providing higher ceilings in the apartments.

21. To create better pedestrian access, SPRAB asked the applicant to develop one public pedestrian entryway through Building 2, connecting to the main interior plaza, in lieu of the two small entries shown, which do not provide visual or direct access to the main plaza. See item #25.

BUILDING DESIGN APPEARANCE

22. In light of design standard 17A-193 (c) (3) "Careful consideration should be given to the mass and bulk of any buildings to insure they are harmonious with their surroundings ..." SPRAB recommends the following change in appearance as a condition of approval:

The expression of large span sloped roofs at the ends of wings, whether as hips or gables, as now proposed in six locations; result in a horizontal dimension range of seventy to eighty feet. These roof shapes and related plan shapes should be reduced in dimension, as they are entirely out of scale with the traditional sloped roof forms throughout town. These existing forms, limited both by conventional framing and desire for interior daylight, range from 12 to 18 ft. from ridge to gutter. SPRAB proposes a roof width limit of 25 ft. from ridge to gutter, or an overall horizontal dimension of fifty feet. This maximum would still be about twice the scale of roof spans in the neighborhood. Reducing the size of these visible gable and hip forms will create the impression that the overall buildings are less massive.

23. The formal cast stone base at the north end of Building 2 facing Witherspoon Street appears excessively tall, making the building appear less connected to the neighborhood. We suggest that the stone base follows the grade changes, so that it is no higher than 3-4 feet above grade.

24. In the submitted drawings exterior cladding materials do not align at the corners, making the materials appear superficial. This appears at the southwest corner of Building 2, in Elevations 1 and 2 on sheet A-201. A similar corner inconsistency exists at the southeast corner of Building 1, as shown in Elevations 2 and 4 on sheet A-202. We expect the applicant will correct this for the Planning Board.

25. An improved design for Building #2 has been encouraged by SPRAB. We asked that an

open arch or an accessible vestibule be inserted in the center of the Witherspoon Street façade to connect pedestrians through to the plaza and the leasing office/lobby of Building 1. Although the applicant resists actual public access, they have begun to develop a design that incorporates one large central entrance to the lobby. This makes the building appear to respond to Witherspoon Street, and we hope the applicant will bring an improved design to present to the Planning Board. We hope the side elevations of the shallow courtyard on Witherspoon Street, which were not initially shown, will be developed along with the main elevation, and that these elevations will respond to the recommendation for scale reduction of the roof forms.

26. The many different materials, and the proportions with which they are used to break down the scale of the elevations, appears a bit too chaotic or complicated. SPRAB recommends simplifying material changes and elevation composition to “calm down” the building elevations. As examples; it is good that the horizontal bands created by changing materials for base, center, and top in the elevations are broken occasionally by special features, but there seems to be more jumps in the heights of these bands than needed. The white bordered panels between windows should be replaced with panels of the same color and size as the larger fiber cement panels used elsewhere.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN:

27. As a condition of approval, a tall evergreen screen should be required along the eastern property line to transition from the MRRO to residential zones. The planting plan does not label tree species along the service drive. The Landscape architect should clearly label all plantings on the plans.

28. SPRAB recommends that some taller plantings, including evergreens, be used along the walkway between the garage and the apartments, to soften the views of the garage for both pedestrians and apartment dwellers.

29. The north-south dimension of the paved central court landscaping between buildings #1 and #2 is much too monumental. SPRAB recommends the elimination of brick perimeter paths and making the plaza hardscape smaller by changing hardscape to landscape plantings under the two northernmost trees and the two southernmost trees in the terrace area. This will reduce the central paved square by about 50 feet north to south, and reduce the crosswalk/drop-off length from 120 feet to about 73. The loss of drop-off space equal to four vehicle lengths will translate into a gain of four visitor parking lengths. No trees, tables or benches need be lost. The added green space adjacent to apartment units on the north and south wings of Building 2 should be landscaped to give those units more privacy.

30. SPRAB recommends that the applicant show sufficient and accurate information about landscape walls and safety railings, especially along public street elevations. A 5- and a 4-foot tall concrete wall are not shown on the major Witherspoon elevation, and railings are shown in the wall section engineering detail but not the building elevations. Furthermore, the applicant stated that they are not necessary, and there are some safety concerns.

31. Especially along the Witherspoon Street elevation, it is important that the Planning Board recognizes all the site structures (walls, railings, stoops, etc.). Materials should be compatible with the proposed building and with the neighborhood. The proposed 5 foot tall dry block retaining wall (shown without a footing) is a construction system commonly used for detention

basins in commercial areas (often seen along Route 1) and is not consistent with other retaining walls along Witherspoon Street in material, construction style, or height. The applicant stated that the wall material will be revised to match the building base and that most railings are to be eliminated by restricting access at these locations, for example eliminating some resident terraces. SPRAB recommends that the drawings be revised to reflect these changes. The Site Engineering details on page 13 of 14 for stair and handrail, for the concrete retaining wall, and the modular block wall should be eliminated or revised and incorporated into the landscape architect's drawings as they appear inconsistent with the design.

32. SRAB recommends that Avalon Bay replace the proposed metal industrial type open trash receptacles with more attractive closed containers that are more suitable for residential complexes to reduce the presence of flies and other insects during the summer. They should also replace the proposed metal benches with wooden benches similar to those located at the bus stop at the corner of Nassau Street and Riverside Drive. Wooden benches would be a better fit for the complex and cooler in the summer.

NEED FOR COORDINATED MECHANICAL DESIGN

33. The building elevations show large air intake louvers through the walls of all units. However the applicant has stated that this kind of unit is not sufficiently energy efficient. SPRAB endorses the applicant's attempt to arrive at a more energy efficient solution for heating and air conditioning, however at this point the applicant has not fully developed a coordinated approach. This may have important effects on the landscape plans, and must be evaluated for noise attenuation, and appearance. On-grade heat pumps or AC condensers are shown around Building 1 to serve first floor units, but are not shown surrounding Building 2. Both buildings show rooftop AC units for remaining units but it appears that not enough are shown for Building 2. It is not clear whether thru-wall units are being used for some units despite being less energy efficient. The applicant has not stated how the common areas of the building are being heated or cooled, nor what form of supplemental heating might be required for the units. The applicant should insure that the manufacturer's required clearances around all condensers are met for efficiency of air circulation and service access. The loft level condensers appear very tightly spaced. For on-grade units the applicant should provide details showing visual screening and sound attenuation. A fully coordinated schematic mechanical system plan should be required as a condition of approval.

REQUIREMENTS for PRESENTATION to the PLANNING BOARD

34. The applicant should present a plan for snow removal to show that excess snow will not be plowed to public streets, and that existing snow cutes will be eliminated or moved so that the snow is not piled in the yards of single family homes.

35. Architectural elevations should be revised to accurately depict the view from the sidewalk or street. The elevations should show showing retaining walls, railings, and plantings, and some of the adjacent neighborhood to better depict how the project is visually and materially integrated into the neighborhood from a street level view. The proposed buildings are very large in scale; the applicant must show how these large buildings are integrated with various slopes of the site by showing multiple building sections (building sections were drawn at the midpoints and do not represent conditions at building edges).

36. As a condition of approval, the applicant should submit the missing plans for the loft level of both apartment buildings after reviewing the code requirements limiting their dimensions, necessary headroom considerations, impact of stairways on the units' lower levels, relation to dormers, and the necessary clearances around and between the AC condensers required for efficient operation and for servicing.

37. SPRAB recommends that Sheet L-5 of the Landscape Plans include a picture or diagram of the proposed seat-wall on Witherspoon Street, near the bus stop.

38. SPRAB recommends that the applicant provide an eye level rendering of Building 2 from the Witherspoon Street driveway entrance to determine if it is appropriately scaled to the pedestrian environment. As proposed, people will be walking along the sidewalk next to a 4' wall with a 3' railing on top, where apartment terraces are shown. This separation of public and private spaces seems overly severe. The applicant agreed to remove the apartment terraces and eliminate railings and should demonstrate their revised design with revised drawings. Revised drawings should also indicate how the corner next to the park, raised above mechanical and storage rooms, will be humanly scaled with walls, height of base, fenestration, etc?

39. Applicant should identify all façade materials on the drawings, including any recommended design improvements, and present actual color and material samples the Planning Board.

40. SPRAB recommends that the applicant simplify the landscape design along Witherspoon Street, where small stoops lead to small private patios, creating a jumbled street view. The applicant has agreed to plant a 3 to 4 foot high evergreen hedge between the curved sidewalk and the stoops to mitigate this condition. Subsequently, as part of a re-designed center entry on Witherspoon Street, the applicant is removing the stoops to bring grade closer to the finished floor elevation. SPRAB endorses the placement of terraces, in place of stoops, to enliven the Witherspoon Street front with human activity. New drawings should be presented to reflect these changes.

41. The applicant should provide current information on the traffic distribution resulting from this application. The addition of a proposed thoroughfare between Franklin Avenue and Henry Avenue will likely change the distribution.

42. Demolition and construction plans should be reviewed by the Princeton Engineering office. The Demolition Plan should be updated to show the removal of the buried vault on Franklin Ave.

COMMENTS

W. Wolfe stated that he was glad that the whole SPRAB Board participated so vigorously and were unanimous in recommending project approval, but with trust that the Planning Board would adopt substantial design changes as conditions of approval.

A. Bush stated that she is counting on the applicant to do their best for the community and make a real effort, in developing the project design, to understand the concerns of the town.

Vote on motion:

For: Begin, Bush, Cerutti, Cooke, Kaczerski, Nelson, Wolfe

Against: None

Abstain:

With no further business before the Board, motion was made by A. Bush and L. Robinson seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerry A. Philip
Secretary