

DATE: April 7, 2021

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Environmental Sustainability Council, presented by Joseph Schiarizzi

SUBJECT: Founders Row II Special Exception and Rezoning

The Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC) has reviewed the application for a Special Exception and Rezoning for the upcoming "Founders Row II" project, located at 1001-1003 W Broad Street submitted on November 30, 2020. We are encouraged by the initial application content, particularly its commitments to green/sustainable design. The ESC looks forward to learning more about the proposed project's plans for achieving LEED Gold (or a more stringent environmental certification), energy use reduction, stormwater infrastructure upgrades, planned Transportation Demand Management measures, electric vehicle charging stations, and potential onsite renewable energy generation.

In all elements of design, we urge you to ensure the project supports the goals of our community, as stated in Chapter 5 "Environment for Everyone" of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Each section of the chapter outlines strategies that can be followed to support the goals:

- **Climate, Air and Energy:** Enhance livability, sustainability and resilience. Protect the community from air pollution and the effects of climate change, while reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in the City.
- **Stormwater, Streams and Natural Springs:** Protect the water resources of the City and the Chesapeake Bay from the adverse effects of pollution and climate change, reduce flooding, and improve water quality.
- **Urban Forest and Biodiversity:** Protect and enhance the network of trees, green spaces and naturalized land on public and private property throughout the City, and the plants and wildlife it supports.
- **Consumption and Waste:** Avoid waste generation and reduce the harmful pollution and financial costs of waste management and disposal.
- **Community:** Inform, educate, and engage the community in environmental action.

The ESC also endorses the comments already made by staff members Kate Walker, Environmental Programs Coordinator, and Charles Prince, Interim City Arborist.

The ESC Energy Transition Subcommittee strongly supports energy use reduction in all elements of the project, in order to meet the City's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. It also has specific recommendations for electric vehicle charging and solar energy generation:

- **Electric Vehicles:** It is essential that multifamily buildings provide sufficient infrastructure to charge electric vehicles so that future City residents are not unnecessarily discouraged from choosing EVs. The ESC expects to recommend that at least 5% of parking spaces be equipped with EV chargers at initial occupancy. Moreover, we expect to recommend that the Development and Site Plans must plan for more EVs in out-years and demonstrate how future infrastructure would be added with minimal legal, demolition, cost, and other obstacles."
- **Solar power:** If the roof is not used for green-roof plantings, and if net metering is still available from Dominion Energy, solar panels have a reasonable payback period and should be included at initial occupancy.

Individual ESC members suggested the following strategies should be included or considered for the project, which we did not have the opportunity to discuss in advance of this Town Hall. All are aligned with the community's environmental goals:

- Lower "by-right" parking requirements and grant special exception for less than 1 parking space per unit
- Increase greenery by planting things on the roof or around the building as part of its design to alleviate heat in the summer.
- Mandate provision of a bicycle sharing station. I also believe the developer should continue to financially support the sharing station beyond the proposed five-year limit.
- Whether certifying with LEED or another certification process, emphasis should be placed on earning maximum points in the Energy and Atmosphere category, which includes Enhanced Commissioning, Optimize Energy Performance, Whole Building Energy Monitoring and Reporting, Grid Harmonization, Renewable Energy, Enhanced Refrigerant Management, and Efficient Hot Water Distribution Systems.
- The certification submission should also seek maximum points for Bicycle Facilities, Reduced Parking Footprint, and Electric Vehicles.
- All units should be provided with Energy Star appliances (including clothes dryers) and light fixtures
- Full electrification of building systems (i.e. HVAC, hot water)

Energy Transition Subcommittee comments:

Electric Vehicles:

"It is essential that multifamily buildings provide sufficient infrastructure to charge electric vehicles so that future City residents are not unnecessarily discouraged from choosing EVs. The ESC expects to recommend that at least 5% of parking spaces be equipped with EV chargers at initial occupancy. Moreover, we expect to recommend that the Development and Site Plans must plan for more EVs in out-years and demonstrate how future infrastructure would be added with minimal legal, demolition, cost, and other obstacles."

Solar:

"If the roof is not used for green-roof plantings, and if net metering is still available from Dominion Energy, solar panels have a reasonable payback period and should be included at initial occupancy."