

**The Office of Planning Should Recommend
That JBG's PUD Applications Not Be Set Down**

Neither application is worthy of Zoning Commission consideration.

Phase I (#16-14)

1. The proposal is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

First, we don't have to guess what the Council had in mind for this property — the Plan expressly tells us:

"Action RCW-2.1.B: Large Hotel Sites. Carefully monitor future proposals for the Omni-Shoreham and Marriott Wardman Park hotels to ensure compliance with the Zone regulations and prevent adverse effects on the adjacent residential community."

JBG's applications are requests that it be excused from "compliance with the Zone regulations," precisely what the Plan says should not be permitted.

Second, the Generalized Policy Map classifies this property as a Neighborhood Conservation Area. As such:

"Maintenance of existing land uses and community character is anticipated over the next 20 years. Where change occurs, it will be modest in scale and will consist primarily of scattered site infill housing, public facilities, and institutional uses. Major changes in density over current (2005) conditions are not expected but some new development and reuse opportunities are anticipated." Comp Plan at 2-28.

Furthermore,

"The guiding philosophy in Neighborhood Conservation Areas is to conserve and enhance established neighborhoods. Limited development and redevelopment opportunities do exist within these areas but they are small in scale. The diversity of land uses and building types in these areas should be maintained and new development and alterations should be compatible." *Id.*

JBG's proposed Building 1 is hardly "modest in scale" or "scattered site infill housing" and cannot be characterized as "limited development" or "small in scale." It would not "conserve and enhance [an] established neighborhood" and would result in a "major change in density." It is exactly the sort of development that is inconsistent with the Plan.

Third, Building 1 is inconsistent with the Future Land Use Map. The FLUM is not a detailed zoning map, but is "a generalized depiction "to be "interpreted broadly." Comp Plan 2-37. The map generally provides that high density residential is appropriate along Calvert Street and medium density is appropriate along Woodley Road to 29th Street. It further recognizes the existence of the high density, historically protected Wardman Tower at Woodley and Connecticut and roughly draws a diagonal line across the property to include the Tower in the high density area. It should not be interpreted to change the land use on the rest of the Woodley Road side of the property.

In addition, the proposals are inconsistent with other Plan policies:

LU-1.3.1: Station Areas as Neighborhood Centers. This policy [to encourage development near Metros as neighborhood centers] should not be interpreted to outweigh other land use policies which call for neighborhood conservation. Each Metro station area is unique and must be treated as such in planning and development decisions. The Future Land Use Map expresses the desired intensity and mix of uses around each station, and the Area Elements (and in some cases Small Area Plans) provide more detailed direction for each station area

- JBG is basing its request for increased density largely on the proximity to a Metro station. But this policy makes it clear that proximity to Metro does not automatically translate into greater density. The property adjoins a historic rowhouse neighborhood and a low density commercial strip. The buildings proposed by JBG would be incompatible with these surroundings.

LU-1.3.7: TOD Boundaries. Tailor the reach of transit-oriented development (TOD) policies and associated development regulations to reflect the specific conditions at each Metrorail station and along each transit corridor. The presence of historic districts and conservation areas should be a significant consideration as these policies are applied.

- The specific conditions here include the area being a Neighborhood Conservation Area, both the commercial and nearby residential areas being part of a historic district, and the Wardman Tower being a historic landmark. They all argue against the massive development proposed by JBG.

LU-1.4.3: Zoning of Infill Sites. Ensure that the zoning of vacant infill sites is compatible with the prevailing development pattern in surrounding neighborhoods. This is particularly important in single family and row house neighborhoods that are currently zoned for multi-family development.

- JBG claims that this is infill development (WPCA disagrees with that characterization). If it is, however, it must be "compatible with the prevailing development pattern in surrounding neighborhoods," which it plainly is not.

T-3.1.3: Car Sharing. Encourage the expansion of car-sharing services as an alternative to private vehicle ownership.

- The applications do not mention car sharing. And the presence of 197 new garage spaces (to a garage that can already accommodate 250 vehicles) will certainly not discourage vehicle ownership. (Phase II would add 910 to 950 more.)

H-1.2.2: Production Targets. Consistent with the Comprehensive Housing Strategy, work toward a goal that one-third of the new housing built in the city over the next 20 years should be affordable to persons earning 80 percent or less of the areawide median income (AMI).

- JBG's proposal falls well short of this target.

UD-2.2.4: Transitions in Buildings Intensity. Establish gradual transitions between large-scale and small-scale development. The relationship between taller, more visually prominent buildings and lower, smaller buildings (such as single family or row houses) can be made more pleasing when the transition is gradual rather than abrupt. The relationship can be further

improved by designing larger buildings to reduce their apparent size and recessing the upper floors of the building to relate to the lower scale of the surrounding neighborhood.

- The top of Building 1's penthouse will be more than 120 feet above Woodley Road, hardly a gradual transition to the three-story houses on the other side.

UD-2.3.2: Large Site Scale and Block Patterns. Establish a development scale on large sites that is in keeping with surrounding areas. "Superblocks" (e.g., oversized tracts of land with no through-streets) should generally be avoided in favor of a finer-grained street grid that is more compatible with the texture of Washington's neighborhoods. This also allows for more appropriately scaled development and avoids large internalized complexes or oversized structures (see Figure 9.16).

- JBG's plan perpetuates the existing superblock, roughly the size of three typical neighborhood blocks. Redevelopment of this property should be an opportunity to remedy this fact.

RCW-1.1.1: Neighborhood Conservation. Protect the low density, stable residential neighborhoods west of Rock Creek Park and recognize the contribution they make to the character, economy, and fiscal stability of the District of Columbia. Future development in both residential and commercial areas must be carefully managed to address infrastructure constraints and protect and enhance the existing scale, function, and character of these neighborhoods.

- The proposed development will not "protect and enhance the existing scale, function, and character of these neighborhoods."
- In addition, JBG's plan for Building 1 would create a new infrastructure constraint by combining Hotel and Building 1 traffic on a single driveway off Woodley Road.

2. This building is not appropriate in this location. Woodley Road is a narrow street, with two travel and one parking lane. Zoned RA-2, building height is limited to 50 feet. The buildings on other side of the street — zoned R-3 and limited to 40 feet and three stories — are of the scale that characterizes this historic rowhouse neighborhood.

Proposed Building 1 would rise 110 feet above grade to the top of the penthouse on the Woodley Road side. And grade is 9.5 feet above street level, making it loom even larger over the street.

3. JBG offers no significant public benefits or amenities in exchange.

Its application says that it will "1) bring new market rate and affordable housing to the neighborhood, 2) provide residential units that are larger than typical, 3) promote the goal of infill development and concentration of housing close to a Metrorail station, and 4) create high quality publicly-available open space." Application 14-15. This is even less than meets the eye.

The 10% of GFA promised for affordable housing on in Building 1 is only 2% more than is required for a matter-of-right project.

This building is hardly the sort of "of scattered site infill housing" contemplated by the Comp Plan.

The existing open space along Woodley Road is twice as big as that proposed by JBG. Its plan is, therefore, a public detriment.¹

In defending a previous round of development of this property, JBG pointed to the park it would create for the neighborhood:

"Sasaki is a landscape architect. You haven't heard much about them up to now. But Sasaki is designing the park that will sit atop the garage structure. And while the picture you saw may not look very pretty right now, the soil will be restored across the top of the garage structure, trees will be planted there, grass will be planted there in that area that the community has historically seen as its property, despite the fact that it is a privately owned property, will continue to be available to be used by members of the community. In fact, the park will be designed by a nationally renowned landscape architect that's currently working on a similar project, the park that will atop the Visitor's Center at the U.S. Capitol. So this will be a wonderful asset in the neighborhood." BZA Tr. 320-21 (Dec. 12, 2006)

It likewise told the Public Space Committee:

"JBG put thought not just into our needs but into the needs of the community.***Another example is the open space on the site itself. While it certainly would have been within our rights to do so, JBG has never considered eliminating the public's access to Wardman Park itself. In fact, the new park, which will be constructed over the below-grade garage which is currently under construction, which by the way, way replaces an existing above-ground garage, is designed by the renowned landscape architecture firm Sasaki and the amount of usable green space will ultimately increase over what existed on the site at the time we acquired it." Rec. Tr. 1:48-3:05 (Aug. 24, 2006).

JBG's proposal would make most of this area no longer "available to be used by members of the community." Moreover, this diminished green space would often be in the shade cast by Building 1. JBG has repeatedly said that it is maxed out on this lot — that it can build nothing more on it (unless the hotel is demolished). Therefore, in the absence of a PUD, the existing large open area will remain. True, it is private property, and JBG could close it to the public even though it represented that "JBG has never considered eliminating the public's access to Wardman Park itself." But the hotel front yard open has been kept open through many different owners for almost a century; there would be no reason (other than spite) for JBG to close it off now.

Finally a handful of larger-than-typical units is a trivial benefit.

¹ We suspect that the amount of open space will shrink further. JBG proposes to eliminate the existing hotel entrance driveway and to use the existing exit driveway for two-way traffic for both the hotel and Building 1. This will not be permitted. As JBG told the Public Space Committee ten years ago, "And to take a hotel use and add a condominium use onto one point of entry and one point of exit is not a recipe for success." Rec. Tr. 1:30:11-:19 (Aug. 24, 2006).

The Commission recently indicated that a far more robust array of public benefits was inadequate. Those offered here by JBG are not nearly sufficient to support having a hearing on this proposal.

Phase II (#16-15)

This proposal is so speculative and far in the future that the Zoning Commission should not waste its time on it now.

JBG's management agreement with Marriott potentially runs until 2059. Marriott said this week that it expects to operate the hotel for the "foreseeable future." The Commission should not consider any proposals for this property until JBG provides a firm date when that agreement will end.

JBG proposes a construction schedule for this project that would have the last building completed some time in the 2040's. Application 14. The members of the Zoning Commission are certainly farsighted people, but I doubt that they know exactly what kind of project will be appropriate 25 years from now. JBG should come back when it can propose a project that it can deliver in the near term.

In addition, Phase II suffers from many of the same infirmities as Phase I. It is inconsistent with

Action RCW-2.1.B: Large Hotel Sites

The Generalized Policy Map

The Future Land Use Map and

The various specific policies discussed above.

Finally, JBG reveals no real public benefits. It promises "some" larger units and that it will "exceed the minimum" required number of affordable units (though page of the Application says it will just provide the minimum). Four massive buildings do not constitute "exemplary urban design." It is true that JBG would create open space where there currently is not any, but this space — slotted between tall buildings — would likely not be particularly inviting.

Phase I/Phase II

These PUDs are two phases of the redevelopment of a single large parcel of land. That redevelopment should be planned comprehensively, not in the piecemeal way proposed by JBG. A Small Area Plan would be the ideal mechanism for such planning.

8/12/16