

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION

c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201

January 28, 2025

Honorable Takis Karantonis, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Melwood Site (750 S. 23rd Street)

Dear Chair Karantonis:

The Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2) has reviewed the application for the Melwood Site (750 S. 23rd St.). This five-story mixed-use project consists of 105 units of 100% affordable housing and approximately 18,100 sf of program space for services for people with disabilities, similar to what Melwood has been providing to the community for many years. (Also, part of the parcel is Nelly Custis Park, which will be left unchanged.)

On balance, we score this project at 70%, a fairly strong score. The Appendix contains further detail on how C2E2 has assessed this project.

Project Strengths

We applaud that the project will be all electric except for a back-up generator that should only be needed a few times a year. We also appreciate that the applicant is striving to meet the standards of several different certifications, including National Green Building Silver, Zero Energy Ready Home, and EPA Indoor AirPlus. These will be beneficial for the residents and also enable the building to operate more efficiently. Moving parking underground to make way for a courtyard for residents with planters, along with a material amount of green roof, will help with stormwater management, heat island effect, and more.

With regard to energy efficiency, while it is challenging to cross-reference the applicant's chosen certifications to those we usually work with, we understand that the high level of insulation, high performance windows, thermal envelope, and WaterSense appliances will make the building quite energy-efficient, as reflected in its planned EnergyStar score of 75 and planned-for Zero Energy Ready Home certification.

Areas for Improvement

As areas where the project could have scored higher, C2E2 recommends that in order to achieve the County's stated targets, all projects strive to achieve a Platinum rating under the standards they choose.

The applicant states that National Green Building Silver is equivalent to LEED Gold but not LEED Platinum. Further, the National Green Building certification program itself offers two levels higher than Silver, Gold and Emerald.

We also would like to see efforts to minimize the release of embodied carbon during demolition; we understand the applicant has explored this and believes it is too costly for this project. Additionally, the applicant has stated it will not be using renewable energy.

The applicant is currently only able to commit to 4% electric vehicle (EV) charging. It is seeking funding to fund 10% EV charging capacity, which if obtained, would increase its score on our checklist. C2E2 recommends that at least 10% of parking spaces with EV chargers and 50% be EV-ready, with conduits and other infrastructure installed to support the transition to electric vehicles.

Finally, we strongly recommend that the applicant look into bird-friendly glass and dark sky lighting, especially given its siting adjacent to a park and a residential neighborhood.

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In sum, we appreciate the effort of the developer to bring forward an all-electric project other than a diesel back-up generator, with strong energy efficiency features, stormwater management including a partial green roof, carefully-selected native and adapted biophilia, and other sustainability aspects. Also, the affordable housing and services for the disabled are much needed by the community.

Sincerely,



Cindy Lewin
Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission

cc: Sara Steinberger, Chair, Planning Commission
Tenley Peterson, Vice Chair, Planning Commission and SPRC Chair
Anthony Fusarelli, CPHD Director
Kevin Lam, CPHD Staff

