DESIGN REVIEW BOARD – SPECIAL HEARING

Design Review Board Case # 2021-0001
Block 23 – 2121 and 2111 Eisenhower Avenue

Application	**General Data**	
Project Name: Block 23 **Location:** Southern Portion of Block 23 – Eisenhower East/CDD **Applicant:** Mid-Atlantic Realty Partners c/o Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley and Walsh, P.C.	**DRB Date:**	June 17, 2021
	Site Area:	Block P – Carlyle CDD
	Existing Zone:	OCM 100
	Proposed Zone:	CDD #2
	Existing Use:	Office (x2)
	Proposed Use:	Multi-Family Residential
	Gross Floor Area:	473,864 square feet

Purpose of Application: Conceptual design review for the redevelopment of a portion of Block 23 in Eisenhower East.

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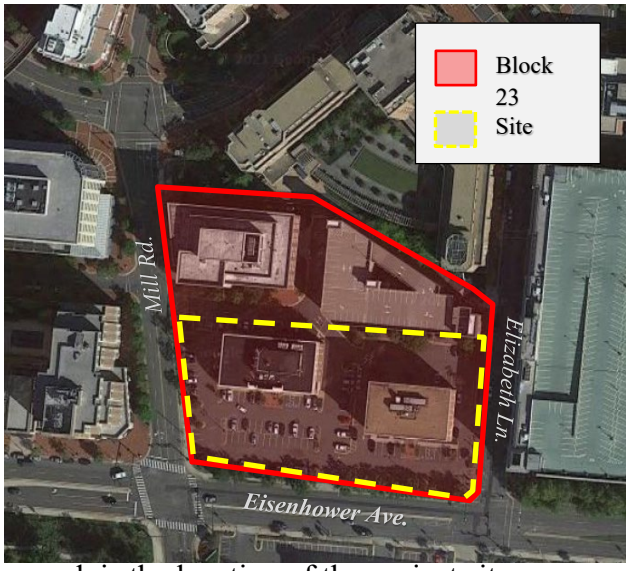
JUNE 17TH SPECIAL HEARING ACTION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW:
Following a presentation by the Applicant, the board voted unanimously **to approve** the conceptual design (i.e., form, height, massing, scale and general character) with a vote of 5-0. The Board's comments followed a presentation by Applicant on the conceptual massing, form and expression of the project, as proposed. The Board agreed with the overall changes to the massing strategy based on Staff's recommendation. They however emphasized that the Applicant should work to simply the façade systems, particularly for the first phase, and suggested introducing secondary and tertiary expressions. The Board also expressed simplification of the block in its entirety and for less brutal facades along the new east/west service road in the rear. The Board supported bringing the tower architecture to the pedestrian realm as well as improving connections to the active "people functions" beginning on the ground level. The Board also desired more activated roof/terrace level space, given the grandeur and scale of the project. The Applicant's Attorney concurred and clarified that these design details (i.e., related to roof-level activation) were actively being considered. The Board also emphasized the need for heightened attention to detail at the pedestrian scale while simplifying the overall façade expressions. The concept submission was approved as regards mass, height, scale and general architectural character unanimously (5-0) by the board subject to exploring the recommendations outlined in the Staff Report.

I. Block 23 – DRB Concept Review

Background



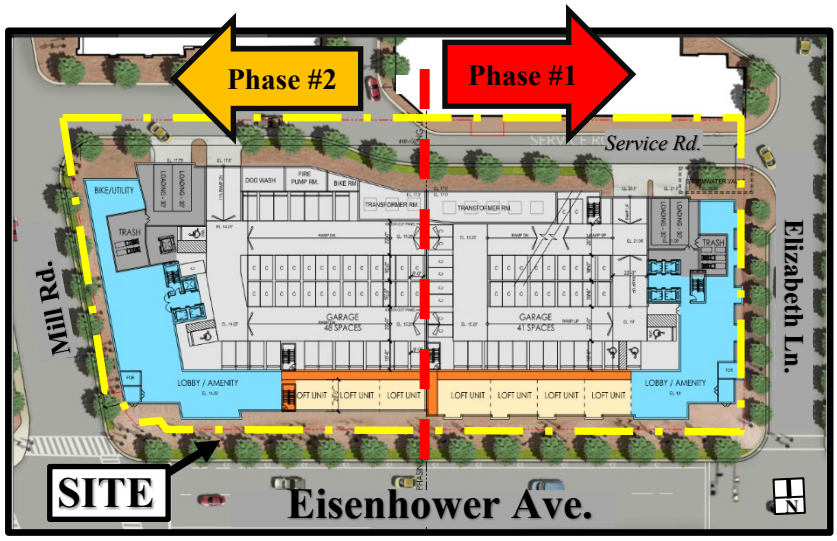
Block 23 is a development site located in Eisenhower East that is bounded by Eisenhower Avenue to the south, Mill Road to the west, Elizabeth Lane to the east, and the Albert V. Brian United States Federal Courthouse and parking garage, as well as a small office building constructed in 2010 to the north. There is a serpentine service road which bisects the block from east to west, creating an alley-like condition in between the northern portion of the block, and the subject site to the south. This southern portion of the block, south of the service road, is the location of the project site.

The portion of the block north of the existing service road is known as Eisenhower Center III and was developed under DSUP#20004-0041. It is improved by an office building and free-standing parking garage which is adjacent to and serves the Federal Courthouse. The subject site highlighted above in yellow is 4 blocks east of the Eisenhower Metro Station and improved by two medical-office buildings (circa 1984) which are set back from the street amidst a large surface parking lot. The property is Zoned *OCM(100) – Office Commercial Medium (100) –* and located in the Eisenhower East SAP.

Approval Process

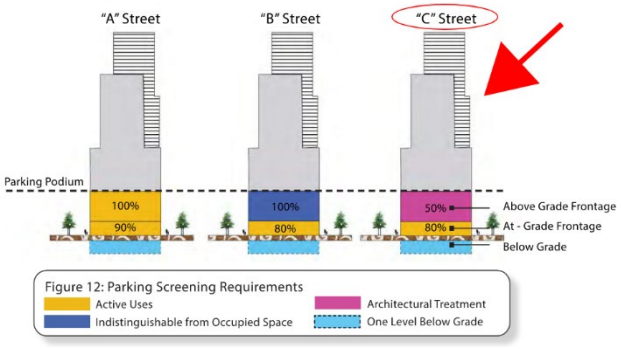
In addition to the DRB, the Applicant must also receive approval from City Council for a Development Special Use Permit with Site Plan (DSUP). At the time of this Hearing, Staff have completed their review of the project's Concept Stage #2 Submission. The project's land use approval also includes a rezoning from OCM(100) to CDD#2 (Eisenhower East), a Transportation Management Plan SUP, modifications to the height/setback ratio, and a SUP to increase the height of the mechanical penthouse.

Proposal



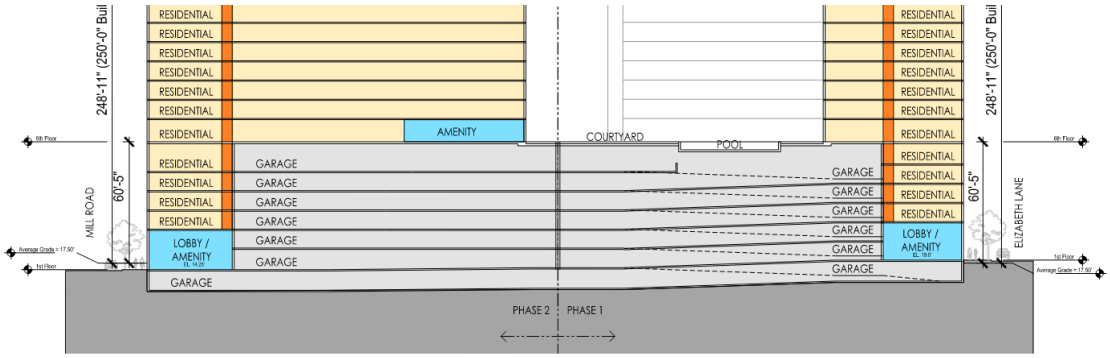
The Applicant, MRP Realty, proposes to redevelop the portion of Block 23 south of the service road with a two-phased multi-family residential high-rise building – to be known as 2121 Eisenhower Avenue. Each phase consists of two L-shaped towers conjoined by a common six level podium. The Applicant will construct the eastern tower and podium portion as Phase #1 and the remaining portions as part of Phase #2. The entire project will deliver 788 units –364 units in Phase #1 and 424 units in Phase #2. Both buildings, as proposed, will be 250 feet tall, with approximately ½ of an acre of activated open-space at the terrace level of the 6-story garage podium.

- *Site Access & Parking*



The site is located 4 blocks east of the Eisenhower Avenue Metrorail station, on Eisenhower Avenue. The Applicant has located vehicular access to the garage in the rear, along the Level C service street – which is the only allowable location for vehicular access, as per the updated EESAP. The Applicant is requesting a garage entrance at each end of the building, which is in keeping with the project's phased approach. The entrances provide access to the vertical garage –which has one level fully below grade. The garage which has storage capacity for 775 vehicles and an undetermined number of bicycles. The garage portion constructed under Phase #1 will include a knock-out panel in anticipation of the second phase.

The EESAP requires one level of parking below grade, which the Applicant provided following the first concept plan submission. However, the total number of vehicle storage spaces has increased since the initial concept submission from 684 to 745.



The service lane which provides access to the garage will also be partially reconstructed as part of the block's redevelopment to include a mid-block crossing, narrower lanes, wider sidewalks (between 6 and 17-feet) and curb work adjacent to the parking garage associated with Eisenhower Center III to the north. The remaining streets which surround the site (Mill, Elizabeth and Eisenhower) will have new sidewalk widths ranging from 14 to 25-feet (curb to building), which are in concert with the recommendation from the Updated EESAP. It should be noted that the improvements specifically along Eisenhower Avenue will be completed by VDOT, as a part of the Eisenhower Avenue reconstruction, currently underway.

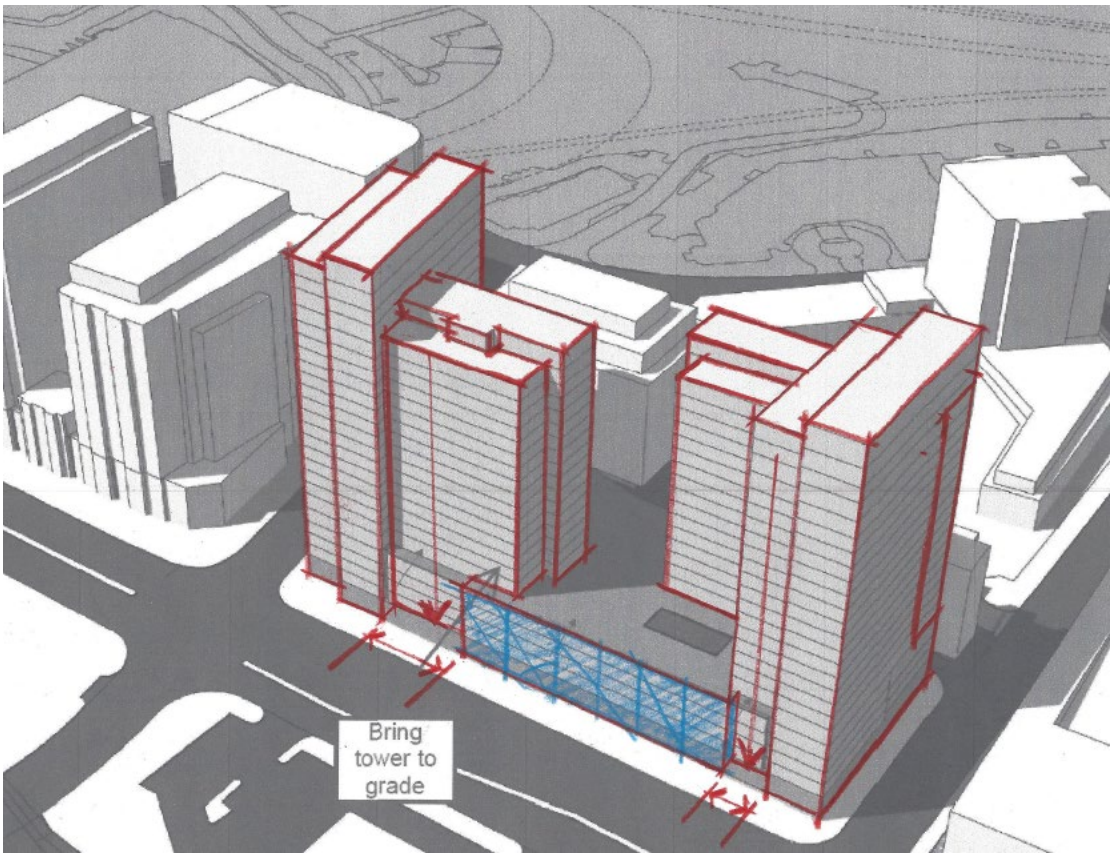
- *Eisenhower East Design Guidelines*
  The project is located in the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan and will therefore need to comply with the Eisenhower East Design Guidelines. It should be noted that the Design Guidelines are currently being reviewed and discussed by the City for an update in the near future.

  Notable design principals from the plan include:

  - Structured parking façades shall be in architectural harmony with the overall building design
  - Parking levels facing A or B streets shall be fully screened with active uses
  - Use of high-quality materials
  - Pronounced entryways with canopies
  - Articulation of top, body, and base

- *Design Evolution to Date*

  The first concept discussed with Staff incorporated two parallel towers, each with its primary mass oriented north-south and perpendicular to Eisenhower Avenue, with a secondary wing at ninety degrees, parallel to Eisenhower. Staff felt that this resulted in a "twin towers" or "bookends" effect, did not reflect an appropriate level of distinction between the two phases, and was also too similar to the parallelism already present in the Paradigm development to the immediate west of the project site.



Above: Applicant's initial massing proposal, showing parallel tall sections aligned N-S

Staff encouraged the Applicant's design team to explore placing the buildings in a rotated relationship, to create a richer combination of forms – specifically, to let the dominant bar of one remain oriented north-south, while flipping the dominant bar of the other tower to an east-west alignment. Staff further encouraged applicant to develop strongly differentiated skin treatments for each tower, to carry tower architecture all the way to the ground wherever appropriate, and to use the portion of the screened garage that fronts on Eisenhower Avenue to create an element that reads as strongly different from the two towers (for example, horizontal in emphasis, and possibly much more glassy in terms of cladding) with the goal of further emphasizing the dramatic height of the two new residential towers. Applicant has incorporated these comments in their DRB submission, which will be reviewed in this hearing.

As a general design goal when dealing with multiple towers on a single parcel, Staff has also been working with the applicant to explore strategies to create an actual or perceived difference in height between the two towers – of course, an actual height differential of at least two floors would be preferable. This is also supported by the updated EESAP goal of achieving a "*varied skyline*." While the affordable housing height/density bonus option did not appear to work for this situation, an option spelled out in the updated EESAP appears to offer a possible strategy. As stated in the plan: *"In support of a varied skyline, the Plan supports flexibility for increasing the maximum height limit for blocks that propose taller buildings and a smaller building footprint, as long as they are consistent*

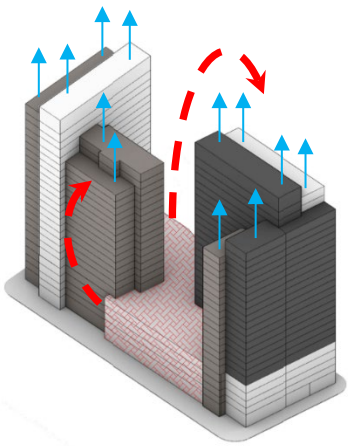
with the building volume recommended by the Plan and impact to the streetwall is limited and/or mitigated." (EESAP, Page 29).

It should be noted that Staff received an updated analysis of this design option from Applicant following the formal DRB submission and have included them as an addendum to this report. If deemed appropriate, Staff hope to include this in their discussion with the DRB.

- *Staff Analysis and Recommendation – Current Proposal*

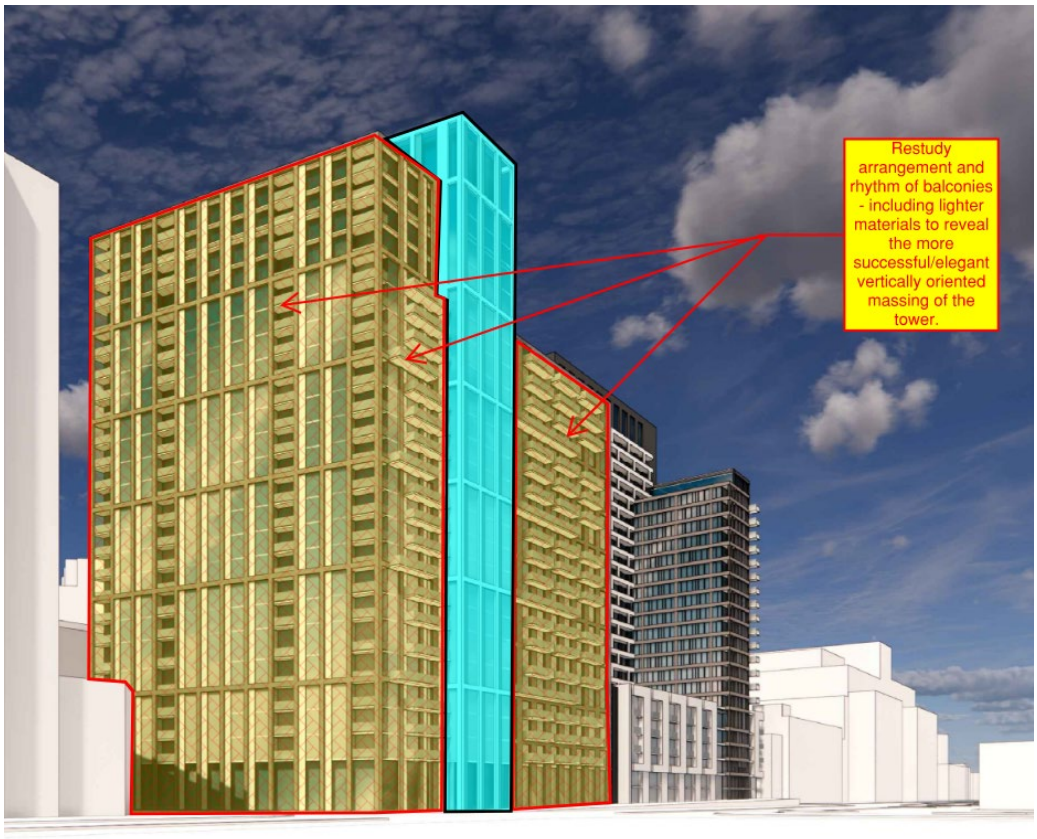
Overall, Staff are pleased with the evolution to date of the general form and scale of the towers. However, additional development of the design are needed to further differentiate the height, massing and character of each phase, and to avoid the creation of "twin towers." Staff are also requesting Board discussion of the architectural comments elaborated upon below:

  - Explore ways in which to make the towers more slender by "trimming" massing from the podium or the tower footprints where feasible – The massing can be transferred vertically to make the towers taller, which in-turn breaks up the bulk/massing of each phase.



  - Explore creative solutions to achieve integral environmental/solar response while creating a maximum variety of expression between the east and west towers.

  - The pattern/rhythm created by the arrangement of balconies on Phase #2 should be restudied to include lighter materials (such as glass) and to detract less from the more successful, vertically oriented massing of the underlying tower fabric.



- Explore ways to further individualize the mid-rise connector piece along Eisenhower Avenue by studying the following design strategies:

    - Consider an alternate skin strategy: the current approach emulates a townhouse rhythm on a large scale; this piece might be more successful and visually striking if conceived as a predominantly glass volume, which would provide a strong contrast to the necessarily heavier expression of the two towers.
    - Using combined residential entries (in 2s or 3's) to avoid the scale clash of townhouse-rhythm entries with the larger urban scale of Eisenhower Avenue.
    - These changes would likely better differentiate the lower-scale facade along Eisenhower from the one currently shown along Elizabeth Lane – which as currently rendered, seems to emphasize the presence of the garage podium mass.

- Simplify the design along Elizabeth Lane by continuing the architectural vocabulary of the tower down to the ceiling level of the double-height amenity space.

- To create a more elegant presence at the corner of Eisenhower and Elizabeth, open-up lobby level of the building with more glazing and eliminating/minimizing the heavy expression of the architecture above.

II. Architectural Comments

Staff requests the Board's input on the following recommendations:

a. Height

Applicant to study options for creating a more varied skyline, including through the introduction of additional height to one of the towers through the EESAP mechanism discussed above

Applicant to look for additional opportunities to create a dramatic impression of height through additional strategies, including more vertical skin expression, mechanical penthouse treatment, or other means.

b. Mass

Applicant has taken many effective steps to enhance the massing and vertical emphasis of the towers, and with the rotation of Phase 1 to create a much greater perceived variety in massing – continue to develop these aspects of the design, incorporating the feedback from the Board in this first concept review.

c. Scale

The scale of the project is appropriate for the site and greater context; staff encourages additional study in three-dimensional and photo-montage, of how this project will relate with the built environment that surrounds it.

d. Form

In addition to staff height/mass/scale comments above, Applicant is Encouraged to subsume the bulk of the above-grade parking volume into the overall design, including separating the expression of the low element facing Eisenhower from the answering form currently shown on the east face of Phase 1 fronting Elizabeth Lane, carrying the skin of the Phase 1 tower down across the north face of the garage structure from the northeast corner at Elizabeth lane west along the service drive to align with the end of the tower façade above.

e. *General Character*

i. Differentiation of the Phases + Connective Tissue
The phases, although related in their approach to massing, should be clearly differentiated in terms of their skin pattern, language, and possibly materials/color, while relating to each other in a legible way.

ii. *Skin Typology and Expression*
Staff finds the current skin design on Phase 2 to be much more successful than the approach shown for the Phase 1 tower, in that it furthers the EESAP's goal for simple, vertical expression, while still expressing variation between its several components that make up the more complex mass/form. Staff finds that the expression used for the various expressed layers on the Phase #1 tower appear to be overwhelmingly horizontal and detract from the tower's verticality.

iii. Environmental Design (Buildings)
Staff encourages the Applicant to study integral shading strategies which, in addition to their environmental benefits, could help inform a design strategy for the skin of both towers, such that they are clearly made up of many of the same elements, but put together in different ways. This approach would lead us to expect the south-facing elevations, for example, to incorporate deep overhangs (which can also serve as balconies), and east/west facing elevations to incorporate angled vertical fins, with relatively flush treatment on the north.

iv. *Garage Screening or Reduction*
With the exception of the portion of the garage north façade running from Elizabeth lane to the west end of the Phase 1 tower façade, applicant has effectively screened the above-grade parking, except as may be required by the EESAP for the remainder facing the service drive.

v. Ground Level Activation
Staff encourages Applicant to look at shifting more of the resident-focused activity spaces (such as dog wash and bike areas) closer to Mill Road, to minimize the impact of heavy service and loading activities across from

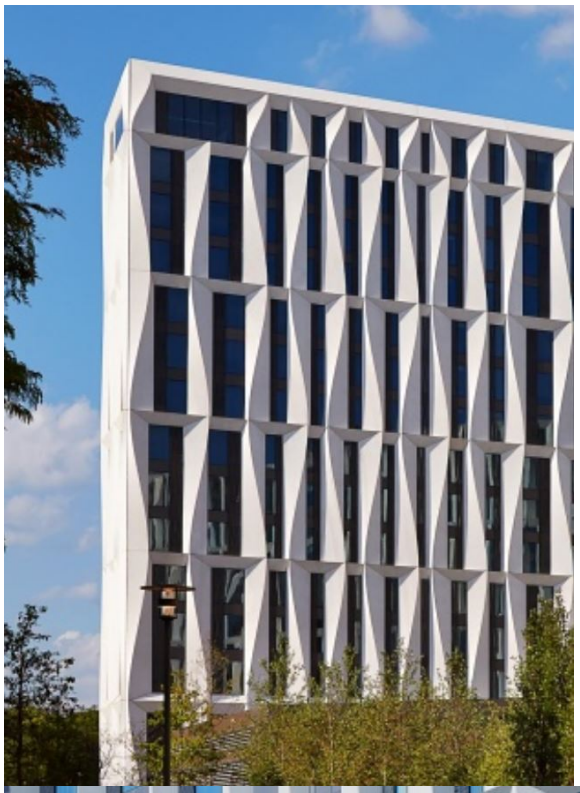
the Eisenhower Center III office building, and potentially to move the west garage entry further from Mill Road in the process.

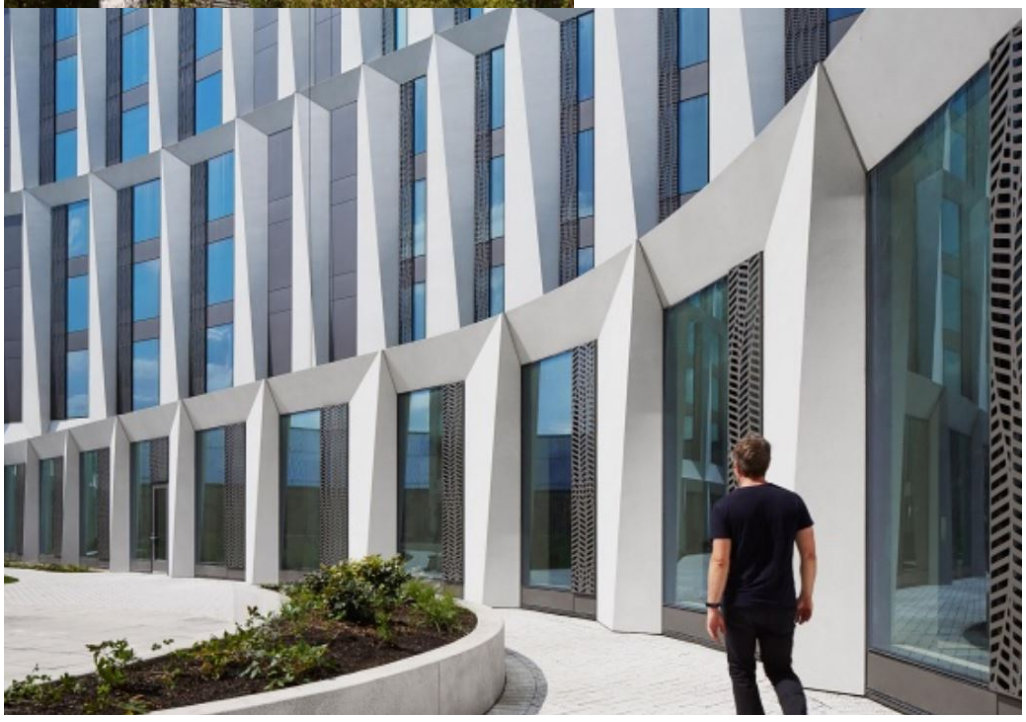
f. Suggested Changes and Improvements

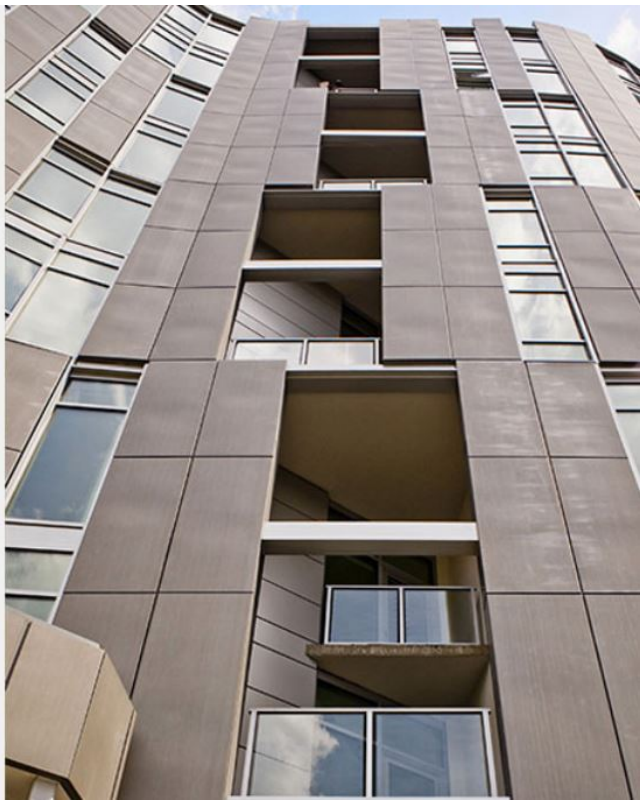
To clarify Staff's language regarding integral solar response and design approaches in which façade components are created that can be interchanged to create a variety of effects, the following examples may prove helpful in the Board's discussion or applicant's further exploration. These employ precast concrete, which could be an effective cladding system for buildings on this scale as well.

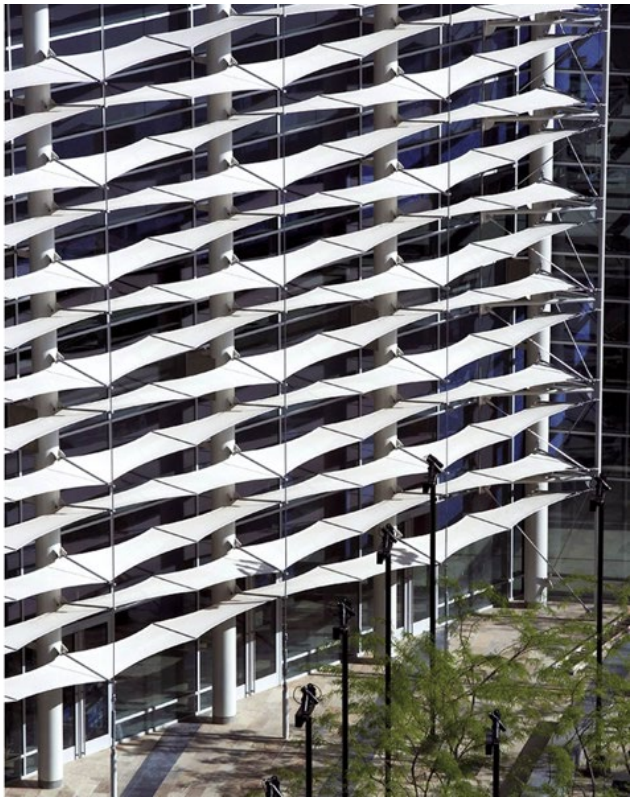
FIG 3: Inclined PV integrated glazed façade of Vocational College in Tirol, Austria

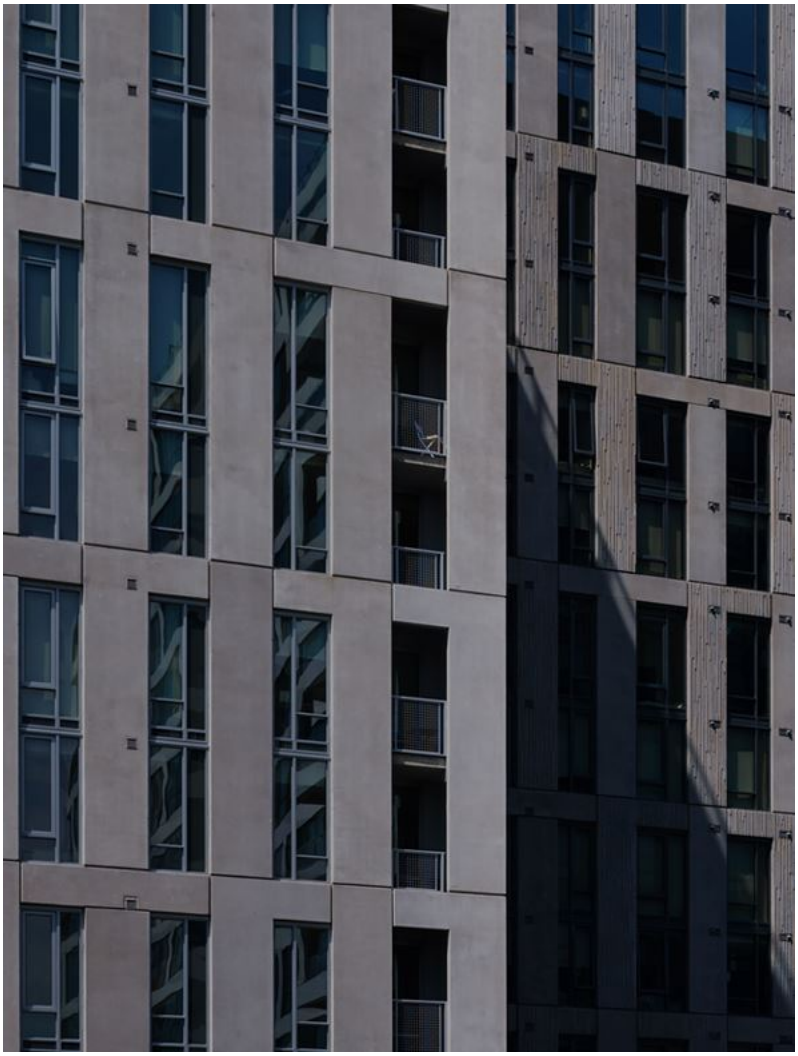
Credit: http://www.m9-architekten.at/











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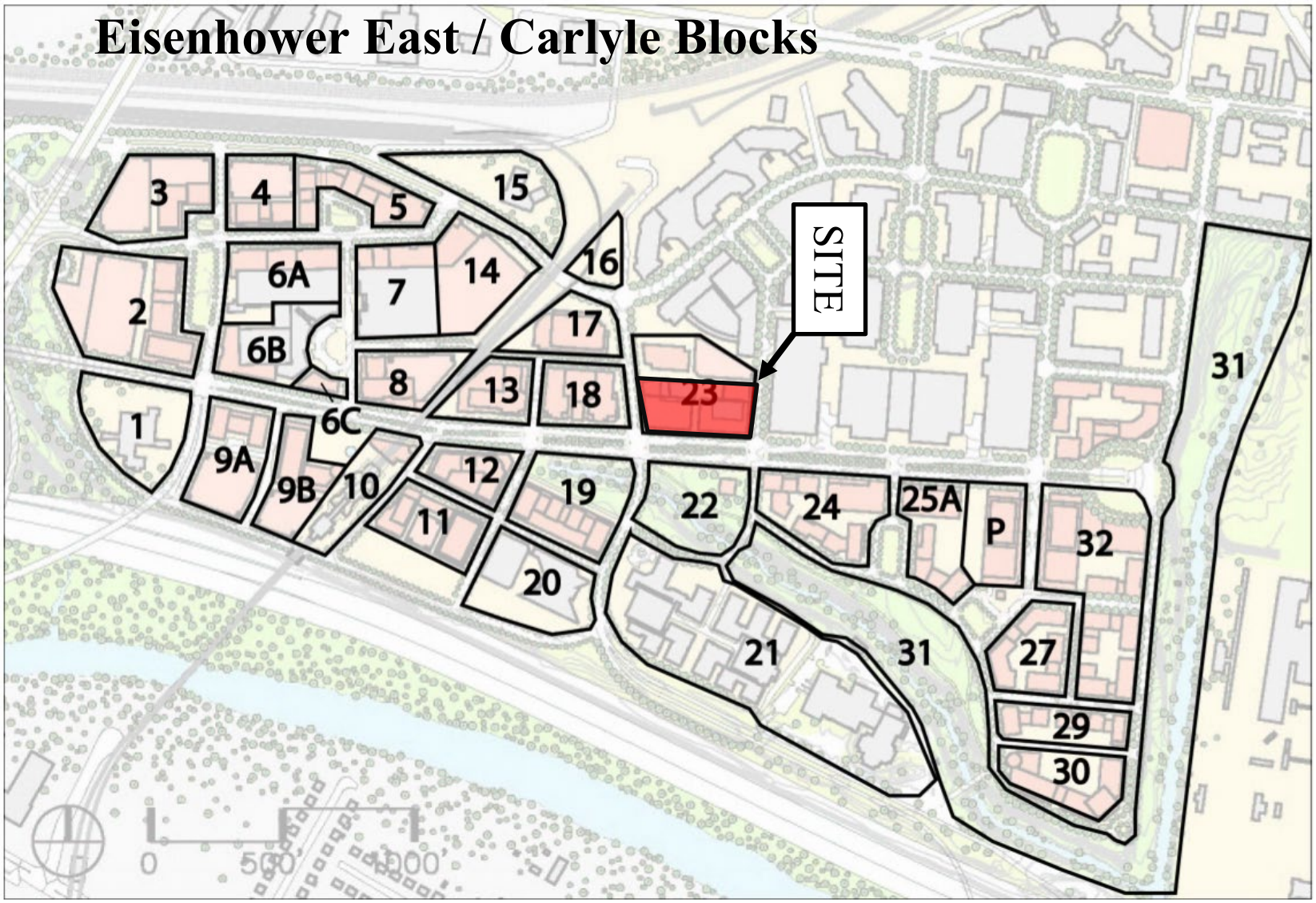
Eisenhower East / Carlyle Blocks
SITE
3
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6A
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14
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6B
8
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23
31
1
6C
9A
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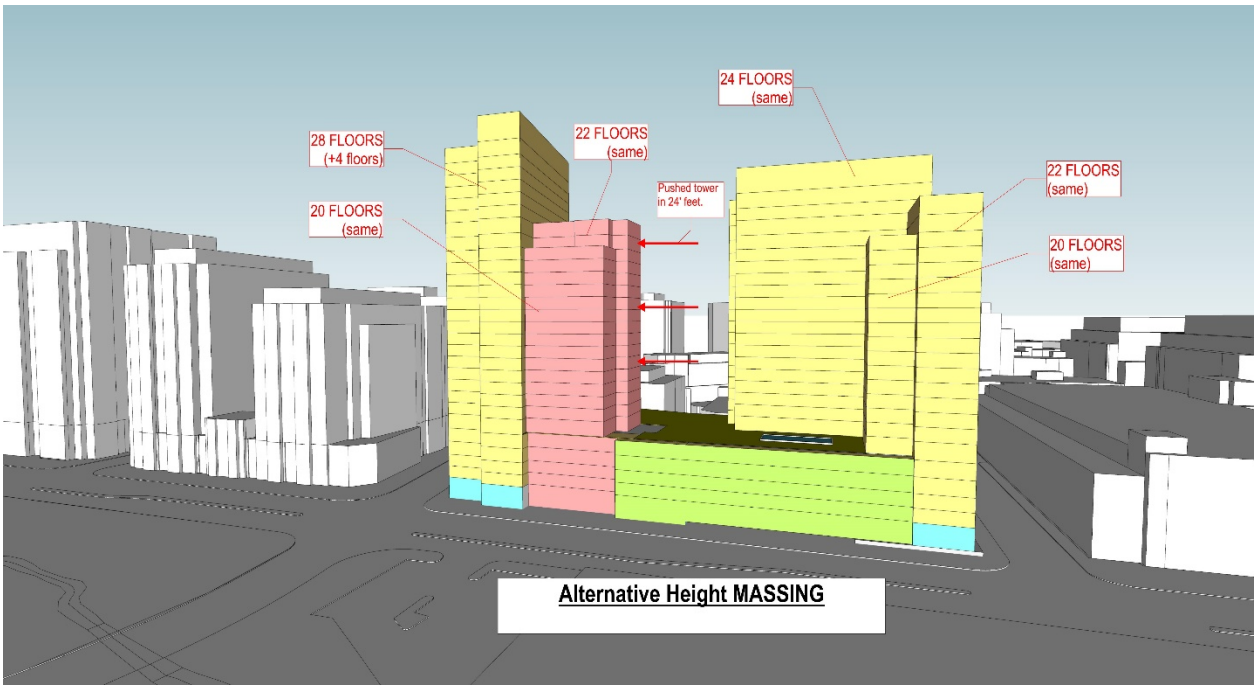
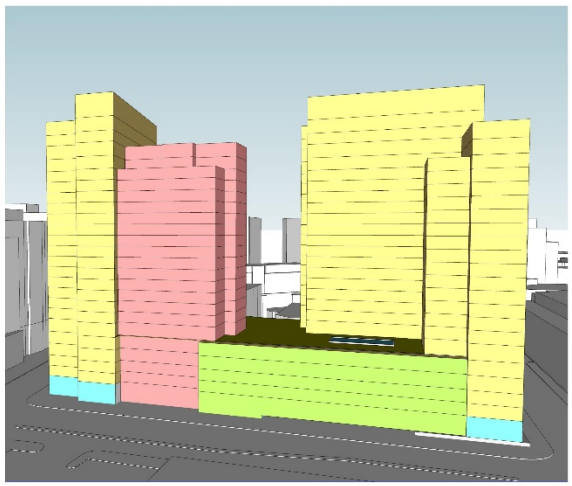
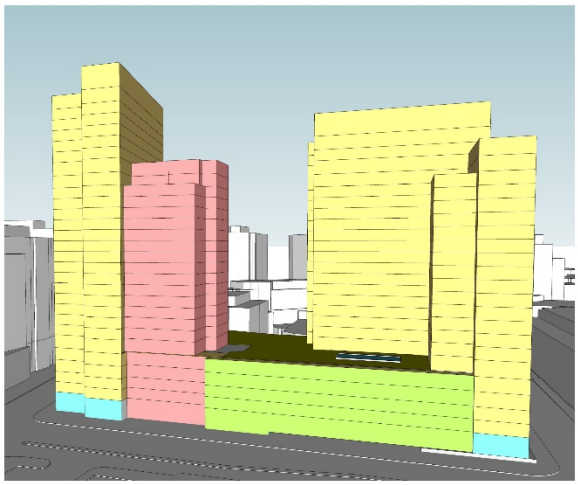
Attachment #1: Updated Massing / Height Study
Dated 6.9.2021





CONCEPT 2 MASSING



Alternative Height MASSING