Developer’s Preliminary Proposal for Square 54 – Town Center Concept

Based on its preliminary site study work, the Boston Properties/KSI Services, Inc. developer team has proposed a potential option for the redevelopment of Square 54. The developer team’s preliminary proposal puts forth a town center concept comprised of office, residential, and retail uses. Commercial development of the site is based on the premise that GW can accommodate its future academic and housing needs on campus - provided the University receives increased density on campus – without the use of the Square 54 site.

Town Center Design. The preliminary proposal set forth by the developer team for the redevelopment of Square 54 centers on a mixed-use design that draws on and responds to the site’s location at the northwest corner of the Foggy Bottom campus, its proximity to the Central Business District (CBD) and Pennsylvania Avenue Corridor area, the Foggy Bottom/GWU Metro stop, historic Foggy Bottom, and the institutional and financial area.

Influenced by Surrounding Neighborhoods. Through careful location of buildings and uses, BP/KSI’s proposed design for Square 54 seeks to strengthen the surrounding streets and create an active mixed-use neighborhood. The proposal is shaped by two distinct and important influences. The first is a consideration for context, addressing the unique shape, slope, location, and orientation of the site and the neighborhoods that border the perimeter of the site. The second is a mixed-use program – including office, residential, and retail components – that the developer team proposes to be accommodated within the boundaries of Square 54. These elements together are intended to complement the uses bordering the site and create a new retail area along I Street near the Metro stop, while allowing Pennsylvania Avenue to remain an important travel artery.

Relationships Between Addresses and Functions. The proposed strategy seeks to create relationships between the specific street addresses of the site and the functions of the buildings. On the north side of the site, the proposed office building acknowledges the frontage on Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington Circle, and 23rd Street.

On the south side of the site, bordering 23rd, I and 22nd Streets, and scaling down from the office building component, two proposed residential buildings reinforce the neighboring residential and campus scales. Collectively, on the interior of the block the buildings shape and enclose a courtyard that sits on the second floor so as to allow ground floor loading to be largely internal to the block as well as a paved plaza area. On the exterior, building heights scale (in floor to floor heights) and transition from north to south. Although the surrounding neighborhood comprises many disparate components, the Square 54 design concept allows these differing elements to be utilized and recognized effectively.

The Office Building. The proposed office building would likely locate primary entrances on Pennsylvania Avenue and Washington Circle. The building could be radial
in form, reinforcing the strong form of Washington Circle while still giving a clear front to Pennsylvania Avenue with potentially a secondary, lower, office bar extending partially down 22nd Street. The character of the design could be developed to give depth and sculptural relief in the façade, responding in a contemporary way to the richness and variety of the nearby architecture.

The Residential Building. The proposed residential building is a broken U-shape structure. It encloses and defines an open interior courtyard and paved plaza and it is set back from I Street along the southern edge to create a wider pedestrian zone. As with the office component of the project, the façade expression will be contemporary and sympathetic to the surrounding context.

The Central Courtyard. At the center of the site the developer team has proposed a raised, landscaped courtyard visible from I Street and 23rd Street as well as a paved plaza area adjacent to, and directly behind, the office building. The buildings that surround the courtyard have been separated at two critical locations to allow views into and out of the inner courtyard and plaza area. This is to allow a greater amount of light and air into the space than a typical courtyard building and also to help break the scale of the overall development into smaller elements that transition to the scale of the University and neighboring buildings. While the courtyard could provide an inner green space and central common space, the paved plaza area could serve as a pedestrian walkway with space animated by outdoor tables and retail activity.

The Retail Area. A mixture of neighborhood serving retail, a grocery store, and potentially a civic use are proposed to occupy the street level spaces along most of the perimeter of the site, servicing both the neighborhood and the University populations, and predominately organized to have entries directly visible from the Metro stop. An entry to a grocery store is suggested to anchor the corner of 22nd and I Street, though most of the store could be located below-grade and accessed by escalators and elevators. Additional retail oriented toward neighborhood uses could be located at the southwest corner of the site along 23rd and I Streets. A generous setback could help to establish this corner and I Street as an inviting pedestrian corridor, drawing activity from the Metrorail stop. Throughout the day and week, it is anticipated that the retail uses will attract a mixture of office workers, university users and local residents — making the area an active center for a diverse population.

Service and Parking access to the site is proposed from 22nd Street. Also, the University and the developer team are exploring the feasibility of including additional parking on Square 54 to replace or consolidate some existing GW on-campus parking. This strategy is being considered to allow the potential redevelopment of existing GW parking facilities for University academic or housing uses.

Other Amenities could include landscaping, and hardscape and garden areas. Plans are still being developed as to how these outdoor spaces might function.