

Minutes of Carlyle/Eisenhower East Design Review Board (DRB) Meeting

April 10, 2025, 7:30 pm

Alexandria City Hall - City Council Workroom

Board Members in Attendance:

Chair: Eric Colbert

Vice Chair: Tom Canfield

Councilman Kirk McPike

Charles Paul

Siti Abdul-Rahman

City Staff:

Nathan Randall, P&Z

Leon Vignes, P&Z

Alexa Powell, P&Z

Julian Swierczek, P&Z

Luke Cowan, P&Z

Applicants In Attendance:

Ken Wire, Wire – Gill, attorney

Megan Rappolt, Wire – Gill, attorney

Adam Peters, Red Fox Development

Steve Smith, Cooper Carry Architects

Sam Guenin, Cooper Carry Architects

Alysha Buck, Cooper Carry Architects

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order/Introductions

Tom Canfield, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:31pm.

2. Re-Appointment of Architect Appointees

On a motion by Vice Chair Tom Canfield, seconded by Charles Paul, the Board voted to re-appoint the two architectural appointees (Eric Colbert and Siti Abdul-Rahman). The vote was 3-0 (unanimous among the non-architect appointees on the DRB).

3. Re-Adoption of the Electronic Attendance Policy

On a motion by Charles Paul and seconded by Vice Chair Tom Canfield, the board voted to Re-Adopt the Electronic Attendance Policy. The vote was unanimously approved.

4. Concept Review – Eisenhower Block 3 (2425 Mill Road)

The Board was given a brief introduction and general overview of the project by Julian Swierczek, an Urban Planner with the Department of Planning & Zoning. This was then followed by an introduction of the development team and a presentation from Steve Smith, the primary project architect. This presentation covered the design process, how they evaluated aspects of the building design like overall height, and how the proposed building height compares to other buildings in the neighborhood and the City overall. Mr. Smith also noted how the massing of the building prompted them to look at creative ways to break up the façade to not be so monolithic.

The Board generally found the massing and scale of the proposed building to be successful in meeting the goals and intent of the Eisenhower East Design Guidelines and Eisenhower East Small Area Plan (EESAP). It noted, for example, the inclusion of various building step backs as a successful element of the building's proposed massing, and that the Eisenhower East neighborhood lends itself to taller buildings in order to achieve density near mass transit. The Board supported the proposed building height being in excess of the maximum 250-foot building height recommended in the EESAP and approved in the existing CDD Conceptual Design Plan. The Board also expressed interest in the following items being addressed in the next submission:

1. A flexible approach toward implementing the garage screening requirements would involve only the following sections of façade adhering to the screening recommendations of a “B Street” in the EESAP:
 - The eastern half of Pershing Avenue (south façade)
 - All of Stovall Street (east façade)
 - The eastern half of Mill Road (north façade)
2. The above noted sections of garage screening façade will still need to comply with the EESAP recommendation of being “indistinguishable from occupied space.” The Board was not wholly convinced that the currently proposed metal panels and lighting scheme would meet this standard and consequently provided several examples of glass with ventilation as alternatives. The applicant should provide further details of the planned garage screening elements and/or look to revise these sections of the façade to be glass.
3. Revise building design to adhere to the recommendation for an “architecturally significant” feature at the southwest corner of the building site at the intersection of Pershing Avenue and Telegraph Road. Specifically, the Board has recommended that the design team look at the stair tower already proposed for this location and explore ways to enhance it architecturally perhaps through the use of glass and lighting, and increasing its height.
4. The design of the tower façade seemed to the Board to be somewhat complicated, particularly regarding its glass “zipper” elements, which are used both vertically and horizontally, and disrupt the dominant precast verticals. These breaks in the façade elements seems to work well when done vertically but reduces the vertical impact of the tower when implemented horizontally. The applicant should therefore look at ways to minimizing the horizontal breaks in the façade, particularly at the midpoint of the tower.

5. The Board recommended that the applicant explore modulating the spacing between the pre-cast elements on the tower portion of the façade to provide further variety and dynamism in the overall composition.
6. Relative to the scale of the building height and massing, there seems to be too many façade elements overall. Look to simplify the “skin” of the building, as well as enhance the verticality of the building design. Possible ways of doing this would be to change the ratio of metal vs. pre-cast panels, or by making the metal panel sections feel more vertical, possibly through multi-window grouping strategies or alternate coloration.
7. Explore alternate formats to the currently proposed building slab as relates to the ground floor retail. As shown, the slab includes a “fold” to accommodate the significant slope along the Stovall Street frontage of the site. While this may be sufficient for a single, larger tenant, the Board is concerned that this will restrict flexibility with the retail space in the future to accommodate a potential need for multiple tenants along Stovall Street.

5. Concept Review – Carlyle Block B (2051 Jamieson)

Alexa Powell, Planning & Zoning staff, began with a brief introduction of the project, highlighting specifically that the proposal is for the conversion of an existing office building on Carlyle Block B into a 187-unit residential building, which includes a new 4-story addition. Ms. Powell noted that the applicant plans to request amendments to the design standards that apply to this block, which focus primarily on floor area, height, and massing with only minor emphasis on design elements and features, such as recommendations for building step backs and architectural expression lines. Ms. Powell shared with the Board that because the already established building will not change and revisions to the standards themselves are requested, the design-related items under review for this case are more limited in scope. She encouraged the Board to provide more general guidance to the applicant for their consideration.

The applicant team, led by architect Steve Smith, cited ongoing office market softness and long-term vacancy as the reason for the conversion and explained the need to expand the structure to achieve operational efficiency. Mr. Smith began by discussing the challenges of adding floors to the existing six-story base and the proposed solution of using the same masonry vernacular on the first floor of the addition as well as architectural articulation to reduce the perceived mass. The top three floors of the proposed addition were described as providing some visual relief from the heavy brick below, with dark charcoal painted steel and glass offering a modern contrast. The applicant also proposes to paint the building to a lighter cream color to distinguish it from other buildings in the neighborhood. Finally, section drawings were presented to illustrate the height in relation to other buildings in the area.

The Board generally found the massing, scale, and architecture of the proposed building addition to be successful. Some concern was voiced about whether the changes to the color of the building would fit in with the neighborhood character of the Carlyle area, which is primarily red brick, but acknowledged the DRB had limited purview on this issue given the applicable standards for Block

B. Overall, the Board expressed it was likely to endorse the architecture in the future, but would like to see the following matters addressed as part of a new submission:

- Provide a color-study that includes a lighter color for the top addition, with less contrast and better integration with the structure below.
- Provide clarification about the location and materials associated with venting for dryers, kitchens, and bathrooms.
- Demonstrate how the applicant plans to conceal mechanical equipment between floors for stories with only steel and glass.

6. Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

7. Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

8. Motion to Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Charles Paul and seconded by Tom Canfield, and the vote was unanimous in favor of adjournment. Meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:20 pm.