

City of Alexandria

Urban Design Advisory Committee

January 2018 Meeting Notes

[FINAL]

Wednesday, January 10, 2018 at 9:00am

City Hall, Room 2000

Committee Members in Attendance:

Stephen Kulinski, Chair (SK)
Marie McKenney Tavernini, Vice Chair (MT)
Roger Waud (RW)
Engin Artemel (EA)
Abbey Oklak, Secretary (AO)

City Staff in Attendance:

Michael Swidrak (MS) P&Z
Heba ElGawish (HE) P&Z
Gary Wagner (GW) P&Z

Applicant Team in Attendance:

Ken Wire (KW) McGuire Woods
Chris Boone (CB) Lessard Design
Whitney Smith (WS) Carr City Centers
Austin Flajser (AF) Carr City Centers
Matthew Buhts (MB) Carr City Centers

Others in Attendance:

Dan Straub (DS) Old Town North resident, former UDAC member
Carolyn Griffin (CG) MetroStage
Andrew Vinisky (AV) Toll Brothers Urban

INTRODUCTION

- The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:03am as the January meeting of UDAC.
- SK introduced the members of UDAC to those in attendance.

OLD BUSINESS

- The Committee considered a draft of the notes for the December meeting that staff distributed to the Committee.

- MT moved to adopt the meeting notes, and EA seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Third Presentation of development proposal at Crowne Plaza Site (901 N. Fairfax Street)

Note: A Fact Sheet on the project is located at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/69556>

- KW reintroduced the project to the Committee, and gave an overview of the presentation, which focused on refinements to the townhouse elevations, review of the tower and site design, and how the project meets the Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (UDSG) for Old Town North. KW also mentioned that the project was presented to NOTICE on January 9.
- KW mentioned that the project meets most of the applicable guidelines and standards in the UDSG, though some standards and guidelines cannot be met. For instance, page 32 asks for compliance with a standard that mandates a two (2) to 10-foot setback for residential uses at grade for the allowance of plantings. This standard cannot be met in this proposal because the townhouses are being constructed on top of the existing parking structure, which is nearly coterminous with the property line. Additionally, KW said that there are not many relevant guidelines or standards related to the reskinning of the hotel tower.
- KW discussed the location of the fourth floor penthouses on the townhouse-style units, and said that staff has accepted allowing the fourth-floor decks on the N. Fairfax Street row face Montgomery Park. The fourth floor decks are set back generally 10 to 12 feet from the front (or rear) of each townhouse.
- KW showed the Committee a sample of the rear elevations of the townhouse rows, noting that utilities will not be visible at grade, and will be located in the parking structure underneath. Additionally, the end units of most townhouse rows will be wrapped in brick on all three sides.
- KW gave an overview of the tower architecture, noting that the applicant is asking for a height map amendment to the Old Town North Small Area Plan, which will allow for the proposed renovated building to have a 13th floor that is reconstructed on the top of the building. The massing as appearing from the street level will be shifting from the eastern side of the building, where the Crowne Plaza sign is located, to the western portion of the building. The applicant team has focused on keeping the materials light in color with large areas of glass, and placing ground floor units with private patios on the sides of the tower to relate to the adjacent townhouses.
- KW gave an overview of the art center. The applicant will work with City staff to craft conditions of DSUP approval that allow for only arts-related uses in the arts center.
- EA asked if the applicant will furnish the interior of the art center. KW and AF answered that the developer will leave the center as a “shell” that will be fitted out by the end user

of the space. MT asked who the end user is planned to be. AF noted that MetroStage is the prospective owner of the art center, and that the applicant has been working with MetroStage on the development of the space. Any end user of the art center would be included in the condominium agreements for the development.

- CG added that MetroStage has been working with architects and development professionals to plan for the utilization of the art center space.
- KW discussed general site improvements, noting that before construction of the project, the applicant must strengthen the existing concrete deck, which could add 12 to 18 inches to the height of the deck. The applicant will also work with staff to ensure that the adjusted sidewalk alignments around the site (the curb is being moved forward on three frontages) will match the sidewalk placement across each intersection. There was also discussion of the importance of lighting on the future arts center as an important visual for the community, as well as the importance of expanding the sidewalk and pushing the curb outward in front of the arts center.
- Again discussing the townhouses, KW mentioned working with City staff to refine the townhouse designs. This has include calming the change between townhouses by maintaining identical window patterns between groups of two townhouses. The applicant will work with staff during the Final Site Plan stage on the brick color choices of the townhouse rows.
- EA said that he liked the variation of features between townhouses, and asked the applicant to study using lighter colors at the end of townhouse rows. EA also stated that he likes the use of tall (6-foot) windows on the front facades of the rows.
- SK said that he prefers the Montgomery Street string of townhouses depicted on presentation page A22 over the one depicted on page A22a.
- MT said she likes the variation in front door treatments of adjacent townhouses.
- AO liked the use of dark colors for the window mullions.
- RW asked the applicant to study further color variations, including the variation of the colors of the garage doors at the rear of the townhouse rows.
- SK stated that he was comfortable with the applicant working with staff to refine the color scheme of the townhouse units, and the project was ready for an endorsement vote from the Committee.
- DS asked the applicant if a green roof will be placed on top of the art center. KW answered that there will be a green roof above the art center, and will be a roof with vegetation and no resident or visitor access.
- **EA moved that UDAC endorse the 901 N. Fairfax Street submission, AO seconded. The submission was endorsed 5-0.**

OTHER BUSINESS

- MS told the Committee that the next potential project for UDAC to review would be the redevelopment of 1201 N. Royal Street, the current location of MetroStage. AF added

that Carr will submit to UDAC after staff provides an initial review of the redevelopment based on compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

- MT asked MS if there were any updates on the conversion of the 801 N. Fairfax Street office building. MS answered that the City met with the property owner recently, who is exploring options for the site, and that he will report back to the Committee when the developer determines its redevelopment direction.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:34 am.