

City of Alexandria

Urban Design Advisory Committee

August 2018 Meeting Notes

[FINAL]

Wednesday, August 8, 2018 at 9:00 a.m.

City Hall, Room 1101

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
Gary Wagner (GW) P&Z

Applicant Team in Attendance:

Ken Wire (KW) McGuire Woods
Whitney Smith (WS) Carr City Centers
Austin Flajser (AF) Carr City Centers
Ari Belmonte (AB) Carr City Centers
Abed Benzima (AB1) SK + I Architects
Andrew Czajowski (AC) SK + I Architects
Trini Rodriguez (TR) Parker Rodriguez

Others in Attendance:

Dan Straub (DS) Resident, former UDAC member
Jim Dillon (JD) Printers Row resident, business owner
David Vondle (DV) Printers Row resident
Joe Teague (JT) Printers Row resident
Margo Mehoke (MM) Printers Row resident
Maria Wasowski (MW) Planning Commissioner
John T. Long (JL) Alexandria House resident
Tom Soapes (TS) North Old Town Independent Citizens' Association (NOTICE)

INTRODUCTION & OLD BUSINESS

- The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:02 a.m. as the August meeting of UDAC.

- The Committee considered a draft of the notes for the June meeting. MT moved to adopt the meeting notes with the above change included, and AO seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

First Presentation of development proposal at the Craddock Site (1201 N. Royal Street)

Note: A fact sheet on the project is located at alexandriava.gov/69556

- Prior to the applicant presentation, SK asked KW if the applicant has presented directly to the neighborhood. KW noted that the applicant presenter to the Printers Row HOA, and plans to present again to the community, including on August 13 to NOTICE.
- KW asked the project team to provide introductions, and community members in attendance also introduced themselves to the Committee.
- The applicant outlined the presentation, which included the presentation of brick and metal cladding samples and a more in-depth project overview, including how the proposal meets the Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (UDSG) for Old Town North. KW noted that the applicant plans to seek an endorsement of the Committee with a more detailed submission of how the proposal meets the UDSG at the applicant's next UDAC presentation.
- AC began the presentation with a look at the site context. He noted that the applicant studied the tower originally as an "L"-shape, with more frontage on Third and Royal Streets, however this scheme limited the river views to the northeast. The building iteration that was submitted for review to the City and UDAC features the tower at the rear of the triangle-shaped site with four-story building shoulders and a "jewel box" that front the street, and the creation of the arts walk between the tower and jewel box. The applicant has placed the service areas (on street loading and the parking garage) at the northwest of the site.
- AC noted the issues with planting trees at the rear of the property adjacent to the Mount Vernon Trail due to the extent of the underground garage. There are still plantings planned for this edge, in addition to the garden/patio terraces at the rear of the building that connect residents to the trail.
- TR noted the focus on site porosity with strong edges to the street. She further discussed the plan to provide activity on the adjacent trail section with the patios and the "plinth of green" at the property line. TR also talked about proposed enhancements to the site facing the trail, including a bike stop and art to be placed on the transformer wall.
- TR continued discussing the site design, including the replacement of street trees along the street frontages. N. Royal Street will have BMP tree pits with bioretention and Third Street will have a mixture of tree pits and green strips. The trees have been placed to avoid conflicts with utilities and allow for those who park on Third Street to access the sidewalk. The southeast portion of the site features a green area where the City will ask for a future dedication for the northward expansion of N. Fairfax Street. The applicant has proposed

tree plantings in this area, some of which could be future street trees once the right-of-way is constructed. TR also talked about the furniture in the arts walk, which is envisioned as flexible space for seating or displaying art.

- KW noted that the applicant is working with Dominion Power on coordinating the placement of undergrounded utilities at the northwest corner of the site.
- JD expressed concerns about reducing on-street parking along north side of Third Street. KW and TR answered that they will work with the City on the right-of-way design and on-street parking locations.
- MT asked about the paving material for the arts walk. TR replied that they are looking at a unit paver. Additionally, the pavers will not be porous due to the location below of the underground garage.
- DV asked if there are any issues with placing street trees by the parking garage entrance. TR noted that the applicant studied the location of the trees in relation to the entrance, and those leaving the garage should have adequate visual clearance.
- Community members asked about the bike lanes on N. Royal Street. City staff and TS responded that the lanes were discussed during City planning processes and are separate from the development application for the Craddock site.
- TS asked the applicant about the lighting plan. The applicant later showed that in addition to street lights, the arts walk will feature catenary lights.
- AC discussed the roof plan for the tower, including stair popups for units located below. He also pointed out the club room, amenity space and screen walls. The applicant is also looking at placing open space terraces on the roofs of the building shoulders.
- EA – view at the corner? AF- still left view at corner unobstructed
- AC showed graphics that demonstrated building height compared to neighboring properties. He pointed out the generally consistent roofline between the Printers Row townhouses along N. Royal and Third Streets compared to the tower shoulders which are four stories at the property line. He also noted the tower in comparison the office building at 1199 N. Fairfax Street, which is 10 stories.
- AC highlighted the varied building heights per the UDSG, and also the change in materials between buildings, creating an ensemble of buildings on site.
- There was a question related to the depth of the building shoulder stepbacks and the building setback to the curb of Third and N. Royal Streets. The applicant stated that both the stepback and building to curb setback are approximately 18 feet. KW added that the building meets the City’s height to street centerline setback (which is no more than 2 feet in building height for 1 linear foot between building and centerline).
- AC talked about the southeast building corner as dynamic gateway element with views to the river that helped to frame river views for those looking east on Third Street. AC also discussed how the ground-floor residential design met the UDSG in terms of at-grade residential standards.

- AC discussed the rear elevation, including the knee wall along the trail to allow for the mounding of dirt for plantings. The rear window bays have been reduced from six to four.
- AC discussed the three shades of gray to be used on the building, which is a coloration change from the last presentation. The tower would be clad in a light gray, the jewel box in a medium “pewter” gray, and the window trim and other elements on the brick shoulders would have a darker gray. The applicant also showed potential different metal color schemes for the tower and jewel box. The applicant is also looking to add glazed black brick accents at lower levels.
- EA noted the light gray is important for the larger tower building in terms of helping it disappear into the sky and background. He also noted that he prefers a lighter color for the jewel box than what is currently proposed.
- The applicant was asked if the unit count has changed with the new submission. AF and KW answered that based on market studies, the applicant is looking to place around 80 units on site, though may go as high as 90 for the DSUP approval. The average unit size is approximately 1600 square feet.
- AO noted that the mullions in the brick shoulders were successful but guided the applicant to reduce the number of mullions in the metal-clad portions of the tower. AB added that the intent for the glassy portions of the tower and jewel box are to reflect the sky in the windows, helping to soften the building appearance.
- SK asked the applicant if it is possible to support glass balconies on the tower, or if the balconies would all ultimately be metal mesh. AF said the applicant will study this, though is confident in being able to support glass balconies.
- EA noted that the site is difficult for development, though the applicant has brought forward a good proposal. He said the colors of the tower and jewel box need to be worked out, though he likes the stepback between the building shoulders and tower. Considering that UDAC does not necessarily look at density and zoning issues, he thinks the project is progressing in design.
- A community member asked when the applicant their project status. KW answered that the applicant is looking to have the DSUP application deemed “complete” (when the project is accepted to be docketed for public hearings) by October.
- MM asked the applicant to restudy the representation of the rooflines between the Printers Row townhouses to the south and the building shoulders.
- MM also asked about issues relating to the parking garage entrance and issues with the Bashford Lane and N. Royal Street intersection, echoing an earlier EA point. GW answered that staff looked extensively at the intersection and the nearby parking and loading activities. The City and the applicant plan to work on continuing refining the intersection and the adjacent trail connection.
- DS complemented the applicant on incorporating the basic criteria of the UDSG in the development of the concept plans for the project; but he also indicated his disappointment on the lack of discussion and evaluation of the basic UDSG principles of mass and scale of this project and its impact on the community with respect to density, height and

FAR. He also recommended that the applicant address the detail design for the base of the proposed buildings as they meet the ground plane. Finally, he pointed out the false dichotomy that the applicant is proposing in comparing the height of the proposed building to the height of 1199 North Fairfax which has a completely different adjacent context, land use, zoning category, setbacks, and open space criteria¹.

- DV asked the applicant if a memo or matrix showing how the project complies with the UDSG will be submitted. KW answered that the applicant will provide a memo with the next submission to UDAC.
- RW asked how the proposal would increase the net number of residential units in the plan area. City staff and the applicant answered that the project (along with the Bus Barn and Crowne Plaza) would add units to the neighborhood since they are conversions from commercial to residential. SK added that the Small Area Plan acknowledges that the neighborhood would increase in population due to redevelopment, and the plan discusses ways that the City would address these impacts. AF added that the applicant will be submitting a traffic study with the DSUP application.
- AO stated that she supports the color scheme as currently proposed by the applicant – the light gray tower and medium gray for jewel box.
- MT asked the applicant to provide a red brick color that is reminiscent of Old Town, and that browner shades of brick in the area are not the best precedents for brick color. MT added the tower says “Miami Beach,” and that the applicant should study schemes to make the elevation more contextually sensitive.
- AO and SK directed the applicant to study different patterns on the rear elevation, including the mixing light and dark materials, beltlines and/or a vertical rhythmic element.
- SK noted that the three shades of gray in the development is successful, though the tower needs more development of color on rear. He also expressed satisfaction with the current four-bay scheme on the rear compared to the previous six-bay scheme.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 10:13 a.m.

¹ Language added after Meeting Notes Draft per approval of the August Meeting Notes at the September meeting.