



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

DATE: February 21, 2020

TO: Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee (PYDAC)

FROM: Planning & Zoning Staff

SUBJECT: North Potomac Yard, Phase 1 Development – Group 1 Buildings

Introduction

The applicant, CPYR Theater, LLC CPYR Shopping Center, LLC and Virginia Tech Foundation Inc, are requesting approval to construct Phase 1 of the North Potomac Yard redevelopment; consisting of seven buildings and one pump station on an 817,853 square foot (18.7 acre) site. Phase 1 of North Potomac Yard is bounded by Potomac Avenue to the west, Four Mile Run to the north, WMATA rail lines to the east and Potomac Yard Park to the south. The redevelopment of North Potomac Yard will include the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus along with new office, retail and residential uses adjacent to the forthcoming Potomac Yard Metrorail Station.

In conjunction with the building DSUPs, the applicant team is working on a series of amendments to existing planning documents to ensure the Small Area Plan, CDD Concept Plan, Zoning and other guiding documents are inclusive of the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus, including:

- **Master Plan Amendment, Subdivision, and update to the North Potomac Yard Design Guidelines:** The various requests, expected to go to hearing in March 2020, will update the Master Plan to account for the inclusion of the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus. The Subdivision will permit the division of land needed for Virginia Tech to take ownership of the site for the campus.
- **CDD Concept Plan Amendment and Preliminary Infrastructure Development Site Plan:** The CDD Concept Plan amendment, expected to go to hearings in summer 2020, will update the underlying CDD Zone for consistency with the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan. The Preliminary Infrastructure Site Plan will provide the road alignments and location of critical infrastructure in Phase 1 to allow the applicant to begin site work.
- **Development Special Use Permits:** expected in fall 2020, each proposed building in Phase 1 will go through a full development review process. Building design will be reviewed by the Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee for consistency with the

Design Guidelines, in addition to public hearings. Buildings will come before PYDAC over a series of months to allow for review by the committee.

Background

The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan designates the area for a mix of uses, including office, multi-family, hotel, academic, and community facilities. The plan includes information on maximum building heights, land uses, and street alignments and the applicants' current proposal is consistent with the vision in the Small Area Plan.

As part of PYDAC's review process, staff has phased building review into the following stages:

- March 2020: Initial review of building mass, height, scale and architectural character;
- April 2020: Review of building architecture; and
- May/June 2020: Review of building architecture.

Each stage of the review will break the eight buildings into two groups; Group 1 and Group 2 (See Attachment 1 for a diagram of Group 1 and Group 2). The smaller grouping of buildings will permit PYDAC to have a focused review and discussion of four buildings at a time.

Staff has reviewed the applicant's initial overview of the mass, height, scale and architectural character of Phase 1 development for North Potomac Yard Group 1 buildings and has comments in the following categories:

- Site Design;
- Building Design; and
- Sitewide Elements in Phase 1.

Site Design:

Staff finds the overall site design is consistent with the Small Area Plan and proposed amended CDD Concept Plan and looks forward to seeing the continued evolution and design of sitewide design elements and design of the public realm.

Staff would encourage further refinement and exploration of the following areas:

- The building geometries of Building 10 and 14 as they relate to ground floor open space, the Virginia Tech Greens and Building 7W (See Attachment 2 for a diagram of potential open space designs). Continue to explore the design of the northern ends of Buildings 10 and 14 and how they interact with the ground plane and shape the open space. Consider adjusting the northern tower of Building 10 and reconfigure the plaza area to define and better connect the public and academic open spaces. Explore options to project a portion the northern end of Building 14 to create a stronger emphasis on the indoor garden area while ensuring the terminating vista of Building 10 is preserved.
- Explore a dialogue between Buildings 10 and 14 to ensure the exterior facades, patterns and materials are complementary in nature and reinforce the spatial connection to the Virginia Tech Campus Green.

- Develop a narrative and information on the ground plane or building elements, especially along New Street A to the Metro Plaza, to define and brand the Innovation District. Provide information on design treatments and visual cues that will identify the neighborhood and knit the Innovation Campus into the community. Also develop programmatic strategies along New Street A to bring the Innovation District idea to life.

Building Design:

The following comments are for each building in Group 1 of Phase 1 development.

Building 7W: SmithGroup Architects (Academic)

Building 7W will be the first of three buildings of the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus and will be situated at the northeast intersection of E. Reed Avenue and Potomac Avenue; two additional buildings, located to the east and north of 7W will be constructed per future funding. Building 7W will have frontage along E. Reed Avenue, Potomac Avenue, and an internal campus green space. The overall site plan for the three buildings in the Innovation Campus shows a dynamic ground floor relationship between Building 7W and future buildings; creating a series of individual open spaces which work cohesively to create a unique open space experience on site. The initial massing of the building shows an approximately 9-10 story structure with a geometric massing which has been situated to maximize solar exposure along with a series of outdoor terraces.

Staff finds the overall building form and organization successful in the following areas:

- A building design which reflects both environmental sustainability and usability.
- The relationship of Building 7W to future campus buildings- Staff appreciates the compression and expansion of space between adjacent buildings to create a series of outdoor rooms that can create unique spaces which meet the needs of diverse users.
- The unique “Gem-like” shape of the initial building design which should remain a core element of the overall building expression. A unique design will ensure the delivery of a signature primary building in the overall site composition and balance of buildings in Phase 1.
- Differentiation in building height across the structure.
- A series of terraces which provide multiple opportunities for open space.
- Identification of high-quality and sustainable building façade materials.

Staff would encourage further refinement and exploration of the following areas:

- The applicant has indicated the use of an integrated photovoltaic skin, which may utilize a series of patterns within the cells or by grouping the cells. Staff encourages the exploration of this building skin but encourages application of the cells as a complementary element to the overall building massing to preserve and enhance the expression of the building’s faceted “Gem-like” design.

- Preserving a transparent building façade along the ground floor of southern portion of the building (facing E. Reed Street) to create an inviting view for pedestrians walking towards the building from the future Potomac Yard Metrorail Station.
- Ensure the ground floor building façade along Potomac Avenue creates an active frontage.

Building 10: Hickok Cole Architects (Office and Innovation)

Building 10 will be located at the southeast intersection of E. Reed Avenue and New Street B (Park Road) and will have frontages along New Street A, E. Reed Avenue, New Street B and Silver Meteor Avenue. Vehicular access into the underground parking garage is shown on E. Reed Avenue and Silver Meteor Avenue. The building massing is shown as two towers with a connected base; a northern tower of approximately 115 feet and a southern tower of approximately 95 feet. The northern tower is pulled back from New Street A, creating a linear ground floor plaza which interacts with ground floor open space at the Innovation Campus and the proposed Market Green open space in front of Building 14, to the south. The southern building tower is set along the proposed street wall and both buildings show a transparent and glassy base which will likely be predominately retail uses, or a similarly active and dynamic space.

The northern tower sits at an identified “terminating vista” at the end of E. Reed Avenue and will be a prominent visual icon in the emerging North Potomac Yard neighborhood. Per the Small Area Plan, the design of the northern corner element of the building was identified as a location to achieve architectural significance. The building massing shows a generally rectangular building with an upper floor terrace and the use of an externally applied lattice, or “veil,” structure to create visual interest along the north and west facades of the north tower. The southern tower is a rectangular building with a pattern of glass and metal or terracotta skin. The southern tower utilizes a series of terraces which provide open space access along the park frontage.

Staff finds the overall building form and organization successful in the following areas:

- Differentiation between the two building towers while establishing a common building element using materials.
- Identification of high-quality building façade materials.

Staff would encourage further refinement and exploration of the following areas:

- Please see the comment and accompanying diagram under, “Site Design” regarding the location and design of the open space as it relates to the northern tower.
- Explore a change to the northern building wall to introduce a curve or similar shape to redefine the ground floor open space as it relates to the intersection.
- Active programming and intentional design of the ground floor plaza to ensure it has a unique identity.

- The design and execution of the proposed lattice along the northern tower appears disproportionate as it relates to the underlying building structure. Explore options to resize the scale and application of the lattice to balance with the building.
- Explore options to create greater depth and texture to the proposed lattice along the northern tower; staff would encourage a lattice that buckles or protrudes at key locations to create visual depth.
- Consider design treatments to balance the use of an exterior lattice treatment at the adjacent Building 14.
- Along the park façade, explore design treatments which acknowledge the buildings' presence along the park. Staff would encourage the base of the buildings to acknowledge the park using materials and design.
- Along the park façade, explore options to differentiate and further define the southern and northern towers as separate entities. Staff would encourage:
 - The lowering of the northern tower's base datum line while preserving the height of the southern datum line to create more perceived variety in heights between the two towers;
 - Explore the option of a mid-building terrace in the northern tower which plays off the height of the terrace in the southern tower.

Building 14: Cook Fox Architects (Office)

Building 14 will be located at the southeast corner of the intersection of E. Reed Avenue and Potomac Avenue and will have frontages along Potomac Avenue, E. Reed Avenue, New Street A, and Silver Meteor Avenue. Vehicular access into the underground parking garage is shown on Silver Meteor Avenue while pedestrian access to the building is shown from each frontage. The building massing is a rectangular design with a uniform building height of 115 feet and the primarily glass building is wrapped on the west, south and east facades with passive solar shading employing vertical or horizontal external fixed fins. The building's long north-south façade is broken into three bays of exterior lattice work which are separated by vertical columns of glass. Ground floor entryways are centered on each lattice bay.

The unifying design theme for the structure is the use of gardens and green spaces which connect the building to the adjacent open space. The northern end of the building is anchored by the Market Lawn Park, and the applicant is showing an internal green "garden room" adjacent to the exterior open space. Recessed balconies and terraces have been integrated into the building façade at various floors to provide green spaces with plantings and a rooftop terrace is shown at the southern end of the building.

Staff finds the overall building form and organization successful in the following areas:

- A calm yet dynamic building design which expresses a modern office use using an exterior lattice skin. Continue to refine the application of the proposed lattice.
- Integration of open space throughout the building design.
- A building design which responds to sustainability and solar elements.

Staff would encourage further refinement and exploration of the following areas:

- Please see the comment and accompanying diagram under, “Site Design” regarding Building 14’s relationship to buildings 7W and 10 and the ground floor open space.
- With the next iteration of the design, ensure the materials read more authentically and accurately convey the proposed materials and color.
- Along the north-south building facades facing Potomac Avenue and New Street A, explore shifting the ground floor building entrances to align with the vertical glass columns; also explore recessing these more deeply (+/- 5 feet) to create more corner office opportunities.
- Ensure a welcome and open base to encourage pedestrian porosity through the building and connect people from Potomac Avenue to New Street A.
- Staff would encourage a cool and modern building expression through the selection of exterior materials and colors such as white and light greys.
- Continue to explore the design of the “garden room” at the northern end of the building. Explore ways to emphasize the space through increasing the height of the space, pulling the indoor garden further into the exterior space or other design treatments to highlight the space.
- Explore options to break down the linear massing of the building to create stronger visual interest.
- Consider design treatments to better relate to the exterior lattice treatment at the adjacent Building 10.

Pump Station: Hickok Cole Architects

To provide adequate sewer capacity to treat expected levels of development in North Potomac Yard, the applicant team will be constructing a new pump station in North Potomac Yard in the northernmost portion of Potomac Yard Park. Most of the building infrastructure will be located below grade, housing the required mechanical apparatus, but a single-story structure will be visible in the park.

Staff finds the overall building proposal successful in the following areas:

- Staff appreciates the dynamic opportunities for the space to host public art or a design which invites the user to enter the building and learn about the mechanical functions and engages the community.

Staff would encourage further refinement and exploration of the following areas:

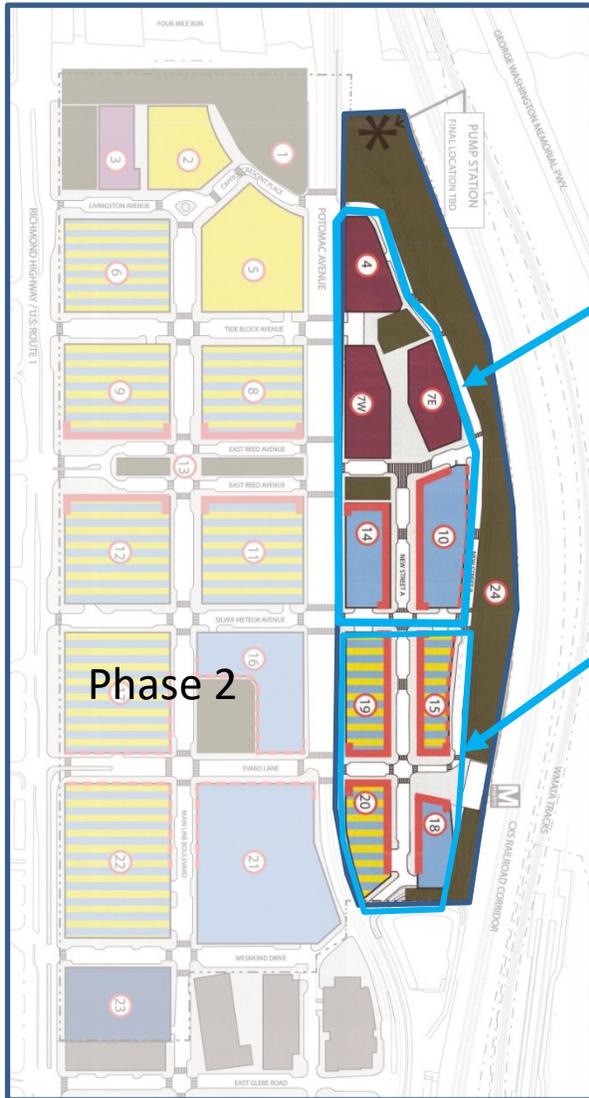
- Explore opportunities to provide a rooftop viewing platform to provide views of the Potomac River.
- Explore building design which expresses the building’s intent and provides educational opportunities.

Sitewide Elements in Phase 1:

Staff finds the initial overview of the building mass, height, scale and architectural character is a good beginning to meet the intent of the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan, the proposed amendments to the CDD Concept Plan, North Potomac Yard Urban Design Standards and Guidelines, and the North Potomac Yard Design Excellence Standards. As the overall site design and building concepts continue to evolve, staff encourages additional detail and refinement to the following sitewide conditions:

- Further identification and integration of sitewide sustainability features in individual buildings and within the site area of Phase 1.
- Further identification and integration of elements of an, “Innovation District” into the building design and site features.
- Increased variation and differentiation in building heights across Phase 1 to ensure a varied and dynamic roofline.
- Architecturally significant building design at terminating vistas.
- Diversification of application of façade materials to ensure a diverse and rich combination of building design through materials, color palettes and visual patterns.

Attachment 1: Diagram of Building Groups 1 and Group 2 in North Potomac Yard Phase 1 Development



Group 1: Northern
Portion of North
Potomac Yard (Phase 1)

Group 2: Southern
Portion of North
Potomac Yard (Phase 1)

Phase 2

Attachment 2: Diagram of Potential Open Space and Building Design between Buildings 7W, 10, and 14.

