



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

DATE: February 28, 2020

TO: Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee (PYDAC)

FROM: Planning & Zoning Staff

SUBJECT: North Potomac Yard, Phase 1 Development – Group 2 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 2 development for North Potomac Yard Group 1 buildings and has comments in the following categories:

- Site Design;
- Building Design; and
- Sitewide Elements in Phase 2.

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:

- 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.
- Continue to develop the design and visual representation of Metro Plaza to ensure it serves as a vibrant meeting and transition place for visitors and residents of the Innovation District. The site will serve as a critical location for transportation connections and community gathering and acts as the gateway to the neighborhood from the new Metrorail Station.

Building Design:

The following comments are for each building in Group 2 of Phase 1 development.

Building 15: Hord Coplan Macht Architects (Multi-Family Residential)

Building 15 is proposed as a residential multi-family building at the northeast intersection of New Street A and Evans Lane, directly north of the proposed Metro Plaza. Building 15 will have a strong presence along the future North Potomac Yard Park and New Street A, along with frontage on Evans Lane to the south and Silver Meteor Lane to the North. The overall massing for the seven-story residential building is defined as a rectangular shape with deep cut outs on the east and west sides of the building to create outdoor terraces for residential uses. The proposed terraces are on the second floor of the building to overlook park and pedestrian activity along New Street A. The southeast corner of the building, closest to the future Metro Pavilion, appears as a glassy, floating box, which is lifted several stories from the ground and creates a unique ground floor space underneath the suspended building mass. The future relationship between Building 15, the Metro Plaza and Building 18 will be integral to the overall site design.

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

- Staff appreciates the dynamic building massing which utilizes deep notches to create a variety of open spaces such as terraces and balconies for residential use.
- The creation of two front doors, along both New Street A and New Street B, to encourage pedestrian porosity through the building.
- A long-linear balcony along the future North Potomac Yard Park to reinforce a strong relationship between the building and the park.

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

- The simplification of the building materials, such as the removal of the floating frame along the eastern building wall.
- Explore a similar design language between the building expression and the recently finalized design for the Metro Station Pavilion, especially as it relates to the floating roof design (See **Attachment 2** for renderings of the approved Metro Station Pavilion).
- Ensure the ground floor retail uses, closest to the Metro Station, remain a required retail use.
- Explore options to increase the perception of the visual height of the southeast portion of the roof (seen as the lighter grey area in renderings).
- Ensure that the absolute height of the building structure (per FAA regulations) includes any necessary height for rooftop mechanical equipment and elevator penthouses.

Building 18: Hickock Cole Architects (Office)

Building 18 is proposed as an office building at the southeast intersection of New Street A and Evans Lane and sits on the proposed Metro Plaza. The office building will utilize a north-south

orientation, with the shorter ends of the building facing Metro Plaza on the north and a stormwater retention pond on the south; the longer lengths of the office building will run parallel to the adjacent Metro rails and New Street A. With the building's prominent location on Metro Plaza and a designated signature façade location, high visibility as the southern-most building in North Potomac Yard, highly visible to passengers riding rail and approaching from the south along Potomac Avenue, the building's design will need to achieve a strong architectural presence from many viewpoints. The initial building massing shows a six-story office building with a horizontal emphasis as the building height is limited given its location within the FAA's flight path to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The design shows a limited weaving of floors, pulling some floors in and out from the building plane to create variation along the building façade.

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

- Overall building siting which allows for space to create a dynamic and active public plaza for the Metro Pavilion.

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

- Explore more dramatic building gestures to continue evolving the building design, such as increasing the extrusion lateral displacement of floors to increase the depth of projections or recesses.
- Continue to refine the southern portion of the building as it relates to New Street A to ensure that the “back of house” functions of the building, such as the loading dock, are integrated into the building design and comply with the Design Excellence Standards. Consider options to share loading and unloading functions with Building 20, or other strategies, to reduce the number of curb cuts and loading areas.
- Consider options for dramatic projections at the north and/or south ends of the building to create signature facades. For instance, consider pulling out the upper floors of the building along the northern building façade to project over Metro Plaza, while projecting the lower floors of the southern end of the building to create a series of terraces towards the south. The north and south ends should be independently architecturally significant but achieve an overall tension and balance between the two ends of the building.
- Explore additional dimensionality along the eastern building face, which runs parallel to the Metrorail lines, through the weaving of floor depths or canting the building face.
- See **Attachment 3** for examples of building facades which achieve a strong level of sculpting and dimensionality.

Building 19: Hord Coplan Macht Architects (Residential)

Building 19 is proposed as a residential building at the northeast corner of the intersection of Evans Lane and Potomac Avenue. The building massing shows a rectangular shape with long building faces along Potomac Avenue and New Street A with shorter building faces along Evans Lane and Silver Meteor Lane. Deep vertical notches are shown along New Street A to create three residential terraces for building residents which produces a building shape that resembles the letter “E” when seen from above. When viewing the building from ground-level at New

Street A, a prominent residential terrace faces Metro Plaza and three residential tower-like structures rise over a shared building base. Along Potomac Avenue, the building design utilizes smaller recessed notches to break up the building massing and create visual interest. The overall building massing is unified with a high percentage of glass and a series of residential balconies.

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

- The orientation of the building’s southeast corner which embraces the nearby Metro Plaza with prominent building uses, such as a terrace and potential retail space, which overlook the future activity in the Plaza.
- Genuine variation in building depth, using notches, to create variety in building expression and provide opportunities for a variety of outdoor space for residents through the terraces and balconies.
- Selection of precedent images which show dynamic and interesting patterning of high-quality materials.

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

- Review the building rooflines of Building 15 and Building 19 to that of the approved Metro Pavilion building to ensure the rooflines of the three buildings provide an appropriate degree of differentiation while creating a harmonious composition (See **Attachment 2** for the final Metro Pavilion design).
- Continue refining the application of the floating building “frames” to ensure the frames read as genuine portions of the building design. Consider design which either remove some of the frames or thicken their depth to ensure they read as an integrated building element.
- Please see **Attachment 4** for a diagram to convey the following comments:
 - Consider options to differentiate building materials to create the appearance of two buildings; a “northern building” and a “southern building.”
 - Explore changes to the “southern building” façade to create two uniform building towers which stand over the prominent residential terrace and face the Metro Plaza.
 - Explore changes in the “northern building” exterior façade materials to allow a uniform application of the materials from the ground floor to the top of the building, without the change in materials which is currently seen at the top floor to strengthen the impression of varied building heights.
- Ensure that the ground floor building design and presence, such as building lobbies and retail bays, along Potomac Avenue incorporate the future location of the Bus Rapid Transit stop.

Building 20: Elkus Manfredi Architects (Office)

Building 20 is shown as a six-story office building at the southeast intersection of Potomac Avenue and Evans Lane. The building massing shows two geometric forms which are connected by a recessed notch in the middle and at the top of the building by a large shared penthouse structure. The two geometric forms share a pattern of large rectangular bays that span floor-to-floor. Pedestrian entrances are shown on the Potomac Avenue and New Street A building

frontages to create a through lobby which encourages pedestrian porosity through the building. The future DASH bus station stops will be located along the building frontage of New Street A and three curb cuts for parking garage entrances and loading and unloading functions are shown at the southern end of the building along New Street A.

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

- Permeability of the building by providing a shared lobby with formal pedestrian entrances on both New Street A and Potomac Avenue.
- The initial break down of building massing by creating two geometric forms.

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

- Further differentiation between the two proposed geometric forms through either variation in building height or differentiation in the building façade materials and/or patterning.
- Incorporate the rooftop penthouse design so it reads as a portion of the building to give the impression of two different building heights and to ensure compliance with the Design Excellence Standards.
- The southern end of the building, which faces South Potomac Yard will be visually prominent to travelers going north along Potomac Avenue. Explore options to increase the visual interest of this building façade, such as:
 - Consider extruding the southern end of the building to match the triangular parcel shape instead of the current flat end to the building.
 - Explore a series of stepped terraces along the south end of the building which fan out from the building and create open space with views to the south for building occupants.
 - Potential rooftop open space.
- Continue to refine the southern portion of the building as it relates to New Street A to ensure that the “back of house” functions of the building, such as the loading dock, are integrated into the building design and comply with the Design Excellence Standards. Consider options to share loading and unloading functions with Building 18, or other strategies, to reduce the number of curb cuts and loading areas.

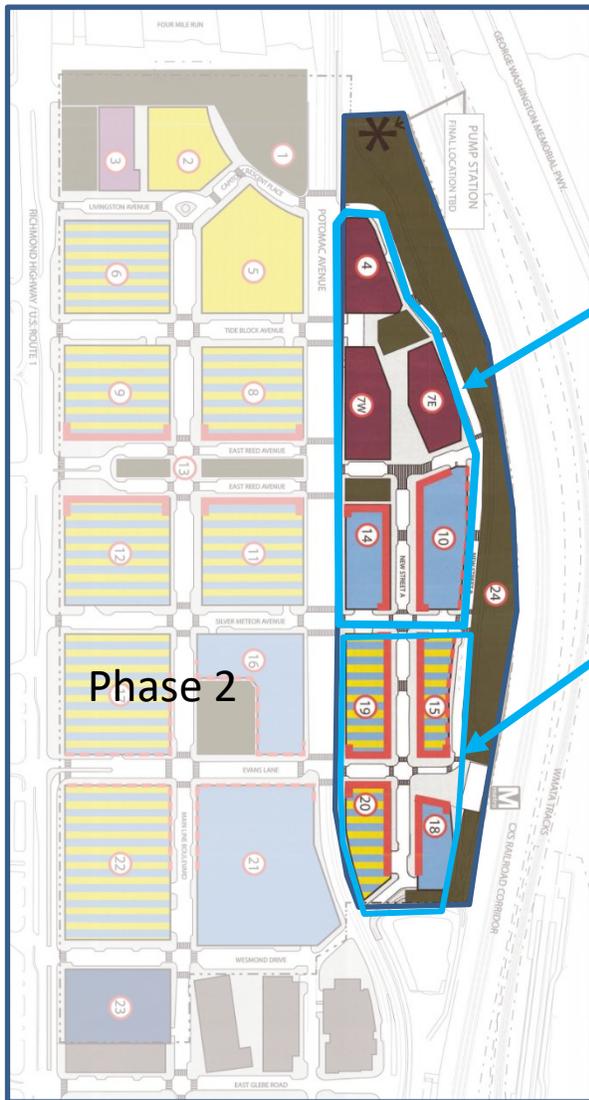
Sitewide Elements in Phase 1:

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)

Attachment 2: Renderings of the Approved Metrorail Station Pavilion Design.

Rendering of Entrance – Main Approach



Rendering of East Façade



Rendering of East Façade



Attachment 3: Building Examples of Strong Façade Dimensionality

StudioGang: [University of Chicago Campus North Commons](#)



StudioGang: [Vista Tower](#) (Rotated for a horizontal orientation)



StudioGang: [Aqua Tower](#)



Photo: Steve Hall © Hedrich Blessing

Attachment 4: Proposed Building Massing Diagram for Building 19

