Introduction

The applicant, CPYR Theater, LLC, CPYR Shopping Center, LLC and the Virginia Tech Foundation Inc, have submitted their final presentation on the design of the Group 2 buildings for Phase 1 redevelopment of North Potomac Yard. The applicant team is seeking PYDAC’s recommendations for the final design of the Group 1 buildings, including Building 15, Building 18, Building 19 and Building 20. The PYDAC website contains a link to the applicant’s presentation.

In addition to the presentation on the PYDAC website, the applicant team has completed the Design Excellence Matrix for the sitewide prerequisites and the criteria for each building and their justification for each building’s compliance with the criteria. For each category, staff has responded with our confirmation that the building complies with the applicable criteria, or in areas where compliance is not clear, suggested a continued refinement for the proposed building or site design to meet the Design Excellence Criteria for North Potomac Yard.

Broadly, each building is achieving the Design Excellence Criteria and this Memorandum summarizes those areas of design where staff finds continued work on the building or site design is important to achieve the Criteria’s intent for excellence.

Sitewide Prerequisites:

Prerequisite 4.3: These features will be integrated into the site design and will be provided at-grade.

- Staff Response: Staff does not find the proposed sitewide features fully achieve a unique design or demonstrate a sustainable design approach. Sitewide features, such as lighting, benches and bollards exhibit a high-quality of material but do not evoke a unique identity as the “Innovation District” or demonstrate a commitment to technology or sustainability. Staff recognizes that this final level of design may be forthcoming but due to the previous
review schedule, has not had time to evolve. As such, staff would recommend that the interim design of Metro Plaza, the final design of the Metro Plaza, Market Lawn, Building 10 Plaza and the streetscape that connects these critical areas come back to PYDAC for another meeting to allow for additional input by PYDAC.

- Staff would encourage the continued refinement of sitewide design elements to further demonstrate sustainable or a technological approach, such as solar belly trashcans, solar lights or other unique and as yet undeveloped features that build an identity and connect the streetscape to public open space.

**Building 15:**

**Criteria C 1.2: The District includes public and private open spaces that, in concert with the regional Potomac Yard Park, support a variety of active, social, and passive uses in a mix of urban plazas, lawns, shared streets, rooftop open spaces, and recreational areas.**

- **Staff Response:** Staff finds the current proposal for the private residential balconies which overlook New Street A are too small to provide usable private open space to the building tenants. The current balconies are approximately 16 inches in depth and staff would encourage balconies with a desired width of approximately 36 inches (three feet) to provide usable open space. With 36 inches in depth, balconies can comfortably provide space for small chairs and tables.

- Staff would recommend enlarging the proposed balconies so that they extend past the face of the building and project over New Street A to provide an overall width of three feet. The additional projections from the building face will also increase the visual interest of the building architecture per Criteria 6.1 which encourages a variety of articulation. However, if projecting balconies are not feasible, staff would support balconies which are further recessed into the building to achieve the desired depth and usability for building tenants.

**Building 18:**

**Criteria 2.3: Site design incorporates high quality paving materials, site furnishings, and lighting.**

- **Staff Response:** Staff finds the current proposal for the final design of Metro Plaza does not demonstrate a design for the Plaza that is consistent with the Plaza’s role as a key civic space in North Potomac Yard. Staff recognizes that this final level of design may be forthcoming but due to the previous review schedule, has not had time to evolve. Staff would encourage further refinement of the initial design concepts, as shared with PYDAC, and the finalization of the proposed Plaza design.
Staff would recommend that an interim and final design of Metro Plaza come back to PYDAC for another meeting to allow for additional input by PYDAC. This meeting would allow the applicant team to share a final design and interim design of Metro Plaza to PYDAC and the community once the concepts have evolved. This meeting could include any updates to the streetscape elements per Prerequisite 4.3.

**Building 20:**

**Criteria 4.1:** Site and building design creatively integrates all support functions, parking garage entrances, loading docks, utility and mechanical spaces and penthouses to eliminate unsightly views and conflicts with pedestrians, and utilize creative screening where needed.

- **Staff Response:** Staff finds the use of a dark mesh perforated metal screen material to screen the mechanical penthouse on the top floor of the northern tower, creates a visual difference between the top floor of the building and the floors below which utilize glass. As Criteria 4.1 encourages creative screening to eliminate unsightly views of penthouses and other mechanical uses, staff would encourage the consistent use of glass to screen the penthouse area and ensure the top floor reads as a portion of the active office use.

- Staff would encourage replacing the perforated metal screen in the top floor of the northern tower, with a glass material to create vertical consistency between the top floor and floors below.