

# URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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TO: **Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee**

SUBJECT: Minutes of July Meeting

DATE: 18 July 2014

FINAL

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The Urban Design Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, July 16 at 9:00am at City Hall. The following members were in attendance at the meeting:

Marie McKenney Tavernini  
Roger Waud  
Bruce Machanic, co-chair  
Daniel Straub, co-chair

The following Staff, representatives for the Applicants, and citizen representatives were also in attendance:

Tom Canfield	P&Z
Maya Contreras	P&Z
Dirk Geratz	P&Z
Robert Kerns	P&Z
Jessica McVary	P&Z
John Carr	City Interests
Chris Furlong	City Interests
Mike Hickok	Hickok Cole Architects
B Devon Perkins	Hickok Cole Architects
Walter Ploskon	Hickok Cole Architects
Ignacio Bunster	WRT
Ken Wire	Attorney at Law, McGuire Woods

## **INTRODUCTION**

- The meeting was called to order at 8:50am as the Quarterly Meeting of UDAC. The purpose of the meeting was to a) review the Stage 2-Concept Design for 500-501 North Union, previously identified as Robinson Terminal North (RTN), b) discuss the proposed checklist for UDAC submissions, and c) formally vote on the design principles proposed for the WMATA Royal Street Bus Garage RFP.

## **NEW BUSINESS: PROJECT PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION**

- **500-501 North Union (Robinson Terminal North - RTN).** Since the building mass and scale for this project were established by the Waterfront Small Area Plan, the committee did not address this aspect of the project. Additionally, since the Applicant previously presented an initial design concept for the project, and had forwarded a package of the updated Stage2-Concept Design to the committee, this meeting discussion focused on aspects of the building/architecture and the public/private open space of the project. The Applicant was complimented on the substance of the submission and the inclusion of a project model for evaluation. After the Applicant's presentation, discussion followed on these items:

### **General:**

1. The Applicant identified how the development goals and guidelines for this project are directed toward meeting the goals of the Waterfront Small Area Plan (Sheet A-7).
2. The project is identified as a "west building" that is of the "city grid", and an "east building with a pavilion" that is described as a "building in a park". These two proposed buildings share a streetscape along Union Street and therefore interact with each other along the corridor. In addition, the design of the project is intended to preclude viewing the height of the west building from the public spaces and pier on the Potomac River (Sheet A-9).
3. The public/private open spaces include streetscape spaces along Union, Oronoco and Pendleton Streets, extensions of Oronoco and Pendleton Street viewsheds to the River, outdoor spaces adjacent to the east building, and outdoor spaces and plazas adjacent to Oronoco Bay and the Potomac River.

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**West Building:**

1. As noted above, the committee did not discuss the bulk, scale and mass of this building as it was established and approved by the SAP.
2. The proposed location and layout of the service area and loading docks in conjunction with the residential parking entries was recognized and appreciated.
3. The appropriateness of residential “blocks” on the north and south ends of the building with the proposed hotel located along on the long center section of the building was recognized and discussed. In addition, the corner of the first floor of the southern residential block will probably be designed as a retail-restaurant space to be designed to interact with a planned retail-restaurant space on the adjacent east building, and the location of the hotel entry/lobby section will be adjusted to maximize the potential of the streetscape on Union Street.
4. The appropriateness of the building layout and footprint that incorporates canted building faces along Union Street to maximize streetscape space and views along Union Street combined with saw-tooth windows above to maximize views from hotel rooms was recognized and discussed.
5. The maximum building height of 66feet for living spaces was recognized. In addition, the Applicant indicated that a mechanical “penthouse” of approximately 14feet will be required in order to accommodate elevator shafts and mechanical equipment.
6. The proposed setback of the hotel rooms from the western property line was recognized and discussed. The Applicant indicated that an outdoor space above the first floor will probably be reserved for the hotel.
7. The Applicant indicated the need for a short “cheek wall” at the corner of Oronoco and Union in order to accommodate the existing topography. Comments were made about the possibility of using this potential opportunity to unify the streetscape and landscape elements of the project.
8. The building elevations and renderings were discussed and the proposed materials of brick masonry (reddish in color), metal (possibly bronze), and a significant amount of glass were recognized and discussed. Comments were offered about the need for a stronger stone base (and cornice) for the building. A rusticated stone base of at least 3-4feet (vs the apparent finished stone base of 12inches from the renderings) was recommended in order to help identify the water table and to make the building more compatible with the vocabulary for larger buildings along the Old Town waterfront. Other comments were offered that this building seems to be appropriate at this stage of the planning/design process. The Applicant indicated that portions of the building elevation along Union Street have been, and will continue to be, adjusted and altered as the design is refined.

**East Building:**

1. As noted above, the committee did not discuss the bulk, scale and mass of this building as it was established and approved by the SAP.
2. The proposed location and layout of the service area and loading docks in conjunction with the residential entry for parking was recognized and appreciated.
3. The appropriateness of a residential entry/lobby with adjacent retail-restaurant space on Union Street that wraps around to the river side (and a potential “pavilion” cultural space) was recognized and discussed. As noted above (Item 2), the proposed retail-restaurant space is intended to be designed to interact with the planned retail-restaurant space on the adjacent west building.
4. The appropriateness of the building layout and footprint that incorporates canted faces on Union and Oronoco Streets and on the river side was recognized and discussed. In addition, the use of an internal service corridor for the retail portion of the building along with open internal courtyards on the residential portion of the building was recognized and discussed.
5. The maximum height of 45feet for this building with a lower “butterfly roof” that ranges from 25feet-8inches to 30feet for the river side pavilion section of the building was recognized. In addition, the Applicant indicated that these roofs will probably be designed as “green roofs” and that the main building roof will probably have elevator/mechanical unit penetrations.
6. The building elevations and renderings were discussed and the proposed limited list of materials that includes stone (light in color), some brick masonry (light in color), metal (light in color, or tbd), and a significant amount of glass was recognized and discussed. Comments were offered that this building appears to be “too modernist” in character, and that the renderings appear to make this building too divergent from the design of the west building (instead of presenting a well-thought out building parti). Other comments were offered that this building does not reflect the character, or style, of Old Town Alexandria (and that it appears to be more reflective of either LeCorbusier-style modernist buildings, or the residential mid-rises that were built in Southwest Washington DC in the early 1970-80’s period. Several members were supportive of a more contemporary design for this building as long as it reflected some level of connectedness to, or compatibility with, Old Town. The Applicant explained how the proposed building reflects aspects and details of the west building that are not apparent in the proposed renderings. The Applicant also indicated that the design of this building and the pavilion is a work in

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progress and will continue to evolve and change as the community responds and the design is refined.

7. The view of this building from Oronoco Park and from Old Town North was also discussed and recommendations were offered that the northern elevation needs additional work.

#### **Landscape Elements:**

1. The proposed layout of landscape spaces to maximize potential views from the existing streets toward the Potomac River was recognized and discussed. The extension of Oronoco Street is intended to end in a potential "bio-retention" (stormwater management) garden space with a potential pedestrian bridge connecting the proposed promenade to Founder's Park. The extension of Pendleton Street is intended to end in a potential linear "sculptural" garden and playground space that will also incorporate the proposed screen wall for the service area of the east building.
2. The proposed layout and design of the streetscape along Union Street was recognized and discussed. The Applicant proposed that the sidewalk space and the vertical dimension to the first 20feet of building elevation are critical and will be addressed more carefully in the next stage of the design process.
3. The proposed layout and design of the promenade and outdoor plaza adjacent to the east building was recognized and discussed. Questions were raised about the design of the tilted lawn panel, the proposed grades and need for seat walls, and the proposed paving materials. The Applicant indicated that the design of the plaza and landscape is a work in progress and will continue to evolve and change as the community responds.
4. The proposed layout of the pier space was recognized and discussed. Questions were raised about the need for a direct pedestrian path from Oronoco Park to the proposed floating pier (vs an indirect path that would minimize the obstruction to the tidal flow in the Potomac River while also maximizing opportunities for transient boat moorings. Questions were also raised about the need for railings and other safety measures at the water's edge. The Applicant indicated that the design of the pier is very preliminary at this point and is contingent on compatibility with the SAP, building codes, and review by various Federal agencies.

#### **Other Planning and Urban Design Elements:**

1. The Applicant indicated that they are continuing to work with Staff on other planning and urban design issues such as potential cultural and retail uses for the east building, overall parking and transportation management, stormwater management, and waterfront-oriented connectivity.
  2. The Applicant indicated that they will return to make another presentation after all comments from various groups and committees are evaluated.
- **Integrated Urban Design Concept Plans / UDAC Checklist.** Staff presented the updated version of the new checklist to be used for projects to be submitted to the UDAC in order to address the need for "integrated urban design concept plans". Discussion followed and all agreed that the checklist will provide a good outline for project review and evaluation.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

- **WMATA Royal Street Bus Garage.** Staff gave a summary description of the community planning process used by the AdHoc Advisory Committee to prepare the recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council that can be forwarded to WMATA for the preparation of the RFP for the project. Discussion about the proposed Design Guidelines followed, and specific questions were raised about a) the proposed maximum FAR that can be used, and b) the proposed maximum building height. The chair called for a vote and the Design Guidelines were approved unanimously.

#### **STAFF UPDATES**

- **Small Area Plan (SAP) Update.** Staff indicated that they will make a formal presentation of the status of the proposed update of the SAP at the next meeting of the committee.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

- The Committee adjourned at approximately 10:15am.