

URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

SUBJECT: Minutes of January 7, 2015 Meeting

DATE: 09 January 2015

FINAL

The Urban Design Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, January 7 at 9:00am at City Hall. The following members were in attendance at the meeting:

Steve Kulinski, non-voting guest
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:

Maya Contreras	P&Z
Brandon Lenk	Cooper Carry Architects
Rory Byrnes	CAS Riegler
Robin Bettarel	CAS Riegler
B Devon Perkins	Hickok Cole Architects
Walter Ploskon	Hickok Cole Architects
Yuri Blazar	City Interests
Ken Wire	McGuire Woods

INTRODUCTION

- The meeting was called to order at 9:00am as the quarterly meeting of UDAC. The purpose of the meeting was 1) to review the status and progress of the revised conceptual design for the proposed annex for the 515 North Washington (The Old Cotton Building) project, and 2) to review the status of the revised conceptual design for the 500-501 North Union Street (The Robinson Terminal North) project especially with respect to three aspects of this project, i.e. the Site Plan, the west elevation of the West Building, and the overall design of the East Building and the Pavilion.

NEW BUSINESS: PROJECT PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

- **515 North Washington Street (The Old Cotton Building).**
This project is being proposed as a renovation and re-use of the original Cotton Factory Building for residential purposes along with the development of a proposed adjacent annex building, which will require a Development Special Use Plan (DSUP). The DSUP will include a request to build additional residential units on the site and a request for a reduction in parking for the site. The DSUP will require UDAC and Historic District BAR review prior to Planning Commission and City Council hearings. The project was originally presented to UDAC in January with a follow-up presentation in November (see year 2014 minutes). The committee prepared a letter of support for the preservation and re-use of the existing building, the general footprint for a proposed annex building, and the proposed concept design for the 'garden space' along Washington Street. The Applicant was encouraged to return to the committee when the conceptual design for the annex building is more carefully refined and resolved and when they have resolved how the composition of the overall project works in harmony to enhance the character of Washington Street and the adjacent community.

This presentation focused on the two concept design options for the proposed annex building. The Applicant described the existing building precedents on Washington Street that they would like to use for the annex building and their attempts to make this proposed building a more contemporary industrial-style building that is also compatible with the existing building. The committee complemented the Applicant on the obvious improvement of the design of the project but also had questions about a) how the proposed annex building, and overall project, is compatible with the Washington Street Design Guidelines since the submitted narrative is inadequate in describing and explaining this requirement, and b) whether the proposed roof and masonry fenestration of the proposed annex building is compatible with the guidelines and with the neighborhood. The Applicant indicated that they will return to the committee as the concept plan is refined.

URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of January 2015 Meeting

- **500-501 North Union Street (The Robinson Terminal North site).** This project was previously presented at the April, July and December meetings of UDAC (see year 2014 minutes). The committee has not addressed the building mass and scale of this project since they have been established by the Settlement Agreement (SA) and the Waterfront Small Area Plan (WSAP). This presentation was intended to address the concerns raised at the last meeting, and to describe and explain the current refinement of the project.

The presentation and discussion followed on the following subjects:

Site Plan/Landscape:

1. The Applicant is continuing to work with Staff and community groups on the best way to incorporate historical/cultural interpretation and environmental data into the project.

West Building:

1. It appears that this building is closest to being considered compatible, and appropriate, with the character of Old Town at this stage of the planning/design process. Previous comments were offered about the need for a stronger base, possibly a rusticated stone base, and possibly a stronger cornice line for the building. In response to previous questions about the west elevation of this building, the Applicant walked the committee through the current revisions to this elevation of this building.

East Building and Pavilion:

1. For the purposes of historical record, the following item was included in the July and December minutes: 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-conceived urban design concept). 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 progress and will continue to evolve and change as the community responds and the design is refined.
2. The Applicant walked the committee through the current total revision of the design of the East Building and described how this current revision is more reflective of the architectural and building vocabulary of Alexandria and the adjacent communities while also being compatible with the proposed West Building. For example, the current design concept breaks away from the previous monotonous uniform roof line to provide a much more interesting building roofline/cornice edge; provides intermittent setbacks at the top floor; provides for a variety of distinct mass volumes and tightened window bay relationships along the west and south elevations; provides a unique north elevation for the building that responds to Old Town North; and begins to establish a relationship of masonry and stone materials that is distinct, yet compatible, with the West Building (this last element is on the agenda for discussion with Staff and the BAR).
3. The Applicant also walked the committee through the current design options for the Pavilion Building that will be reviewed in more detail with Staff and the BAR.

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 Pavilion Building, an overall parking and transportation management plan, stormwater management, and waterfront-oriented connectivity.

Discussion:

The committee enthusiastically complemented the Applicant on the progress they have made on the concept design for the many aspects of this project. The committee also encouraged the Applicant to return for a final presentation when the overall concept design plan has been refined and finalized.

OLD BUSINESS

- **No Old Business.**

ADJOURNMENT

- The Committee adjourned at approximately 10:30am.