

City of Alexandria

# ***Urban Design Advisory Committee***

**October 2017 Meeting Notes**                      **[ FINAL ]**  
Wednesday, October 4 at 9:00am  
City Hall, Room 3008

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

Stephen Kulinski (SK)  
Marie McKenney Tavernini (MT)  
Roger Waud (RW)  
Engin Artemel (EA)  
Abbey Oklak (AO)

**City Staff in Attendance:**

Michael Swidrak (MS)              P&Z  
Heba ElGawish (HE)              P&Z

**Applicant Team in Attendance:**

Ken Wire (KW)                      McGuire Woods  
Jerry Simon (JS)                    Lessard Design  
Allison Paul (AP)                    Lessard Design  
Trini Rodriguez (TR)                Parker Rodriguez  
Whitney Smith (WS)                Carr City Centers  
Austin Flajser (AF)                Carr City Centers  
Matt Buhts (MB)                    Carr City Centers

**Community Members in Attendance:**

Tom Soapes (TS)                    President of NOTICe  
Bruce Machanic (BM)                Local Business Owner, former UDAC member

## **INTRODUCTION**

- The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:05am as the October meeting of UDAC.
- SK introduced the members of UDAC to those in attendance. SK and MS noted the addition of EA, who joined UDAC since the last meeting.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- The Committee considered a draft of the notes for the March meeting that staff distributed to the Committee.
- MS offered an amendment that the document previously identified as “meeting minutes” be labeled as “meeting notes.”
- MT moved to adopt the meeting notes with the above change included, and AO seconded the motion. **The meeting minutes were approved 5-0.**

## NEW BUSINESS

### Discussion of Committee Elections

- MS discussed with the Committee that yearly elections should take place for Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. The election should be held at the beginning of the next Committee meeting.

### Presentation of DSUP proposal at Crowne Plaza Site (901 N. Fairfax Street)

*Note: A Fact Sheet on the project is located at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/69556>*

- KW introduced the project and the applicant team, and gave an overview of the design challenges that have been identified (townhouse layout, an adaptive reuse of an existing building, new construction on an existing parking garage) by the applicant team during the design process.
- AF continued with a more specific overview of the project, and mentioned the architecture and landscape design, which has been evolving through the process.
- JS and AF presented the site layout, including the layout of the townhouses and the site challenges to the layout. JS also went into detail about the proposed art center, and its “jewel box” glass structure that fronts N. Fairfax Street.
- KW added that the process of adding an arts-related use to the site was guided by the Old Town North Small Area Planning process that encourages sites in the N. Fairfax Street Arts Corridor additional floor area in exchange for the arts use on site. *(Note: The Zoning Ordinance text amendment outlining the density bonus will be presented to Planning Commission and City Council in the coming months).*
- JS gave an overview of the redevelopment of the hotel building, which will be “reskinned” with new materials on top of the concrete superstructure. AF added that the site redevelopment is constrained by the location of structural columns, including in the proposed art center.
- EA asked a follow-up question to JS about the structural elements of the art center.
- JS discussed the rooftop open space located on the top floor at the east side of the tower. KW added that the multifamily tower will be lined with balconies.

- MT asked about parking on site. AF answered that parking is included in the existing garage for the multifamily tower and in two-car garages for the townhouse-style units. Parking for the art center will most likely be off-site at another Carr-owned property, 901 N. Pitt Street, which is located approximately one block away from the site.
- SK asked how many dwelling units are proposed in the tower. JS and KW mentioned that the number of apartments would be in the “130s.” AF added that the applicant is still studying condominiums in the tower, which would reduce the number of units.
- AP gave an overview of the architecture for the townhouse-style units, including the use of stoops, fourth-floor setbacks and decks to create visual interest. TR added that the townhouse layout is meant to encourage pedestrian porousness through the site.
- SK asked about how elevation changes around the site affect the townhouse layout. JS answered that the layout is affected by elevation, where units that are farther east in the site need stoops to enter, though units along N. Fairfax Street will have grade-level front entries.
- The applicant team discussed site sections and layout, including the proposed drop-off point behind the art center for the multifamily building. KW mentioned that the point of this layout is to focus the street prominence on the art center.
- KW added that in order to fully utilize the rooftop area for increased floor area, the proposal requires an amendment to the Old Town North Height Map in order to add any floor area above 77 feet in elevation (but below the current maximum height of the building).
- AP gave an overview of the townhouse architecture and materials, including the warehouse-style windows that relate to the former industrial uses on the site. The goal of the applicant team on designing the townhouses is balancing Old Town architectural materials with contemporary styles.
- EA noted that the applicant should supply townhouse elevations for the Montgomery Street and N. Fairfax Street frontages. KW replied that the applicant team plans on submitting these elevations for review, but wanted to solicit general design feedback on the townhouse elevations first.
- EA noted that the applicant should explore modifying the layout/design of the corner townhouse along Montgomery Street as it meets the Mt. Vernon Trail. The townhouse should either be moved to another portion of the site, oriented toward the trail or be designed to serve as a better gateway between the waterfront and the rest of the neighborhood.
- EA added that he worried that the townhouse designs were too similar to ones in the Braddock neighborhood, and that the designs should be more unique to Old Town North, and should be more modern in style. KW and AF replied that the applicant team had studied more contemporary designs, but tried to balance traditional and contemporary design based on input from the neighborhood and real estate community.
- AO commented on the proposal pertaining to the Urban Design Standards and Guidelines for Old Town North (UDSG). She commented that the townhouse roof heights were not

varied as called for in the UDSG. AF answered that the design attempts to incorporate some variation in the cornice line and balconies, though they opted on a more level approach to help frame the view of the tower.

- EA added that he does not want the townhouse layout to create the appearance of a “gated community.”
- AF discussed how the warehouse style windows on the townhouses helped to “wrap the corner” and create visual interest.
- KW addressed the issue of integrating the site with the Mt. Vernon Trail, and how the applicant team is working on the title history of the vacated portion of N. Lee Street that was conveyed as a private railroad right-of-way. The applicant needs to determine the width of the right-of-way that was vacated.
- SK commented that the architecture for the townhouses is moving in the right direction, and that the addition of lighting treatments (lanterns) will help with the site. MT added that the townhouse designs were generally attractive and appealing.
- SK noted his concern with the eight (8) townhouse units that are in a row along Montgomery Street. The applicant should study a mid-block break.
- TR outlined the landscape design of the proposed site, including how to make the site porous for pedestrians and integrate the site with the trail with the challenge of the garage wall and structure. She continued by talking about the “green spine” of the site, which is the mid-block linear green space linking the Trail with N. Fairfax Street. The green spine will be an amenity for art center patrons. Additionally, she mentioned that the internal drop-off area for the multifamily building on site is envisioned more like a plaza.
- AF mentioned that the applicant team worked to move the loading dock from facing the trail inward to the site, turning it 90 degrees.
- KW mentioned other site design improvements, including the sidewalk widening along N. Fairfax Street, and the potential to work with the owner of the Perfect Pita site in the future.
- EA noted that the glass of the multifamily building and art center relate well to Montgomery Park.
- TR continued discussing the open space amenities of the site, including making the internal alley pedestrian-friendly, and the benefits of the rooftop open space areas.
- AO asked for more information on street sections and dimensions with the next submission, including stoops and sidewalk width. The applicant should also look at the potential of more townhouses facing the trail. AF noted that shadows created by Canal Center created issues for townhouses at the southeast corner of the site.
- EA added that the multifamily building should have design elements on the lower and upper floors that relate to the townhouses. AF noted that the applicant is continuing to study materials, including panels for the tower.
- AO asked about the status of a balcony over the art center roof. AF said that the roof of the art center may need to be utilized as a green roof to treat stormwater on site.

- KW told the Committee that the applicant plans to bring back the project to UDAC next month for another review. The date of the meeting is to be determined, based on scheduling availabilities for Committee members.

### **Other New Business**

- MT asked that the developer of the 801 N. Fairfax Street residential to office conversion come to UDAC for a brief presentation on the proposed architectural reskinning of the building. EA seconded this request.
- MS provided the Committee with an update to the list of projects that UDAC has reviewed since its creation. MS will follow up with the Committee regarding posting this list on the UDAC page.
- BM asked that the Committee work with the applicant to refine the architectural details of the multifamily building in relating to the townhouse designs.
- The Committee thanked BM again for his service to the Committee over the past decade.
- MT motioned for adjournment, AO seconded, the motion carried 5-0.

**Meeting adjourned at approximately 10:10 am.**