

URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

SUBJECT: Minutes of September 5, 2013 Meeting

DATE: 05 September 2013

FINAL

The Urban Design Advisory Committee convened for a quarterly meeting on Thursday, September 5 at 9:00am in Room 1101 at City Hall. The following members were in attendance at the meeting:

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

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

Dirk Geratz	P&Z
Maya Contreras	P&Z
Nancy Williams	P&Z
Jessica McVary	P&Z
Ken Wire	Attorney at Law, McGuire Woods
Stewart Bartley	Y12 Investments LLC
Shawn Glerum & others	Heffner Architects
Bud Hart	Attorney at Law, HCG&K
Mary Catherine Gibbs	Attorney at Law, HCG&K

INTRODUCTION

- The meeting was called to order at 9:00am. The purpose of the meeting was to update the committee on the proposed redevelopment of the Old Health Department Building, to review the 'unified urban design-streetscape concept plan' for 700-702 North Washington Street (incorporating the Travel Lodge Motel), and to review the status of planning activity with respect to the power plant site.

NEW BUSINESS

- The selected developer for the renovation of the Old Health Department Building (Y12 Investments LLC) and the architect (Heffner Architects) gave a formal presentation of the proposed design concept for this project. The concept is to preserve and renovate the entire existing building as 9 residential fee simple units and to develop 7 additional townhouse units on the remainder of the site. The Applicant was complimented on the general concept for the North Saint Asaph Street building elevation and the general layout of the site plan and shared alley. However, discussion followed on several issues with the Oronoco Street building elevations. The Applicant indicated that they will return to UDAC as the project proceeds.

OLD BUSINESS

• **700-702 North Washington Street**

This project was presented to UDAC in February and May during which the committee questioned several aspects of the design of the project and requested (May) that the Applicant prepare a 'final concept plan' submission that integrates all of the disparate design elements into one unified 'urban design submission'. The committee specifically requested that the submission should include an explanation, or narrative, of how this project meets the required standard of "...creating an attractive pedestrian environment and fostering a sense of place, arrival and community" (WSPSDG; and May minutes including Item 8). Since this is a proposed re-zoning project, the committee also encouraged Staff during both the February and May meeting to work with the Applicant with respect to possibly reducing the parking requirement for the retail aspect of the project, and making part of the residential aspect of the project designated as 'affordable housing'.

As a result of the above, the attorney for the Applicant provided an updated version of the architectural and landscape architectural drawings for the project for review. Following discussion and based the overall quality of the submission, UDAC approved and **ENDORSED the concept design** of this project submission.

- **Power Plant/OTN SAP Update**

Planning Staff (N. Williams) gave an update on the status of the activity associated with the power plant site. According to Staff, the City is working with NRG to keep the communication process open. Accordingly, NRG has accommodated the City's request to establish a website <http://www.prgsonline.org/> which will be utilized to share information about the decommissioning process and items of interest to the community. Staff also noted that the City-appointed Potomac river Generating Station (PRGS) Monitoring Group is tracking the decommissioning process and the assistance of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. A copy of the most recent communication to the Monitoring Group pertaining to the decommissioning process was handed out at today's meeting along with a copy of the homepage for the NRG website.

Concerning the planning for the PRGS site after the environmental clean-up is completed, Staff indicated that they are planning to meet with NRG in late September and at that time will seek an update on NRG's effort with respect to a timeline for the development of a planning and redevelopment process. Discussion followed about the importance of keeping the planning and redevelopment process transparent and also about concern relating to the potential divorcing of the planning process for the power plant site from the needed planning for OTN. This has become a concern since the funding for the SAP update for OTN was not approved by Council for FY14. UDAC is concerned that given the nature of the on-going activities for the power plant site, the planning process for the power plant site will gain traction and become divorced (or untracked) from the stalled planning effort for OTN. Staff assured the committee that it is the intent of P&Z to keep the planning process for the power plant closely aligned with the planning efforts for OTN, as reflected in the may 28 City Council Docket Item for the Long Range Planning and Plan implementation Work Program where the OTN Update is noted as the **Old Town North/PRGS Small Area Plan**. Pending a decision by the City to move forward with the Old Town North/PRGS Small Area Plan, Staff also indicated that NOTICE has expressed its intention to work on a draft 'vision statement' to help guide a future plan update and also to utilize those principles to evaluate any future development projects. According to Staff, the NOTICE vision principles are as follows and are available in the [NOTICE May-June 2013 newsletter](#):

1. Creating a sense of place
2. Maintain existing water views
3. Respect existing residential areas
4. Contribute to the cultural environment
5. Preserve the existing sense of walkability throughout the community.

Discussion followed on the very general nature of these vision principles, their limitations, and the need to incorporate other valuable vision principles such as the goals of mixed-use development, balanced land use/growth, and sustainable development. Staff indicated that NOTICE has scheduled a membership meeting on September 26 and would welcome UDAC attendance. NWilliams also indicated that she will concentrate on the following major tasks for the near term:

1. Keeping the lines of communication open between all parties
2. Keeping the planning process for the power plant and OTN unified and coordinated
3. Informing UDAC immediately when she perceives that the overall process has become 'unyoked', separated, or uncoordinated
4. Remind NOTICE of the importance of keeping their vision statements open for revision
5. Remind NOTICE of the importance of mixed use development, balanced land use and growth, and other planning principles such as complete streets, transit-oriented development with high quality amenities and urban design, and coordinated public/private investment.

Finally, Staff indicated again that there will be a meeting between the City and NRG later this month, and in anticipation of that meeting Staff will transmit UDAC's continued desire to see a unified planning process that incorporates parallel-track planning for both PRGS and OTN. Finally, Staff emphasized that UDAC should augment its March 5 letter to Council with another letter relative to this point.

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DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATES

- This item was tabled for future discussion based on time limitations. Discussion followed on the need to discuss the WMATA Bus Barn site soon.

UNADDRESSED OLD BUSINESS ITEM

• **Triggers for UDAC Review**

May Meeting Notes: Staff (N. Williams) gave a presentation on the status of the renovation of the Sheetmetal Building (The Oronoco) and explained that the Waterfront Committee and the developer (EYA) have indicated that a tour of the building will be scheduled as soon as the building frame is encased. Discussion followed on the meaning and extent of the term "re-skinning" of an existing building and what leverage Staff has to bring such significant "by-right" projects to UDAC for review. UDAC proposed that it may be appropriate for the City to re-visit the determination process and perhaps establish a square footage threshold for small projects to proceed with current minimal P&Z review. UDAC also proposed that certain planning and engineering terms, i.e Grading Plan and Site Plan, can probably be used help establish a trigger for more formal review. At that time, Staff indicated that they will discuss the possibility of proposing new zoning language with the City Attorney that would set a maximum square footage threshold before more formal review is required, and they will also discuss whether certain technical terms and requirements may be used to trigger a UDAC review. Staff offered to ask the City Attorney to attend the next UDAC meeting for a formal discussion of this issue.

ADJOURNMENT

- The Committee adjourned at approximately 11:00am.

Please notify the author of any additions, deletions or mistakes in this report.
