



Alexandria Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

November 18, 2014

Mayor William D. Euille
Vice Mayor Allison Silberberg
Councilman John Taylor Chapman
Councilman Timothy B. Lovain
Councilwoman Redella S. Pepper
Councilman Paul C. Smedberg
Councilman Justin M. Wilson

Re: 500/501 North Union Street (Robinson Terminal North)

Honorable Mayor and members of City Council,

At the Alexandria Waterfront Commission's October 21 meeting, the Commission established an ad hoc subcommittee to review that day's presentation of the 500/501 North Union Street (formerly Robinson Terminal North) development proposal. The subcommittee was tasked with drafting a position to be forwarded to the full Commission at its next regular meeting. Following is the report submitted to the Commission on November 18, 2014.

The Committee reviewed the proposal in light of the 6 Development Goals and 15 Development Guidelines set forth for that area in the Alexandria Waterfront Small Area Plan (the Plan) (see attached document stating those goals and guidelines).

While the Committee found that most goals and guidelines had been addressed by the current proposal in a broad sense, there is a need to develop specificity in the proposal with regard to several key issues. Therefore, we regard this document as an **Interim Report** pending the provision of more information. We recognize that the proposal is a work in progress and not yet complete, which leaves the Commission without sufficient information to specifically recommend approval of the plan as is. Below, we enumerate those areas where we believe more detail is required for the proposal to be deemed complete. The Commission also requests more clarity regarding the development schedule. As planning for this development evolves and changes occur, we ask the developer to continue to bring forward in a timely manner all modifications to the proposal for the Waterfront Commission's consideration.

Meeting the Goals:

1. The Plan provides for mixed use and the design encourages activity in the proposed development, but we believe the use of the proposed 8,000 square feet of space set aside

on the ground floor of the East building is not adequately defined. The guidelines require “active uses” that are “open and welcoming to the public” during normal business hours. A community meeting space, performance space, or museum – all desired by the community – are in keeping with the guidelines of the Plan, but the proposal needs to clarify in specific terms how it will meet this goal in both a programmatic and economically viable manner.

2. Goal two is fully met.
3. Goal three is substantially met. See Guideline 3 note below.
4. The proposal calls for “moving” West’s Point in recognizing its historic importance. While the committee accepts that West’s Point itself has moved over the period of Alexandria’s Waterfront History and is therefore subject to continued moving as usage evolves, we do not agree with simply “moving” the historic signage and designating a new West’s Point north of the new East Building. If this new location for West’s Point is designated, we believe signage and other historical markers should be placed at the earlier and current locations of West’s Point as well. The Plan states that “particular attention should be given to” this site, which “...represents the origins of Alexandria.”
5. Some Commission members continue to find the mass and scale of the buildings too large in relationship to the adjacent housing. Others believe they fit with adjoining commercial uses and are acceptable under the new zoning approved by Council.
6. Goal six, maximizing of views, is achieved.

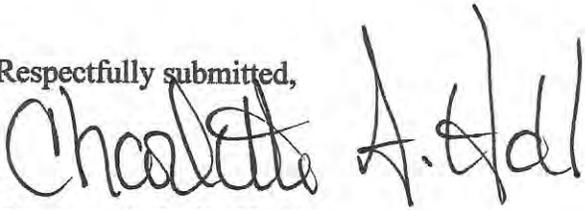
Meeting the 15 guidelines:

- Guidelines 1 and 2 regarding the encouragement of active public spaces are partly addressed – for example, there is a hotel in the West building. But the potential uses described for the ground floor of the East Building are far too vague. We understand the developer is searching for a viable commercial venture such as a restaurant. We further encourage the developer to actively search for and recruit community and financial support for a specific use such as a performance space or museum for the “community space,” just as they do for a private commercial use. It is critical to the success of the development and the Waterfront Plan that this area not become dead space.
- Guideline 3 is met, though several members believe there should not be residential uses at all in the East building, as this could limit the active use of the ground floor spaces due to concerns about noise and other activities.
- Guideline 4 is met.

- Guideline 5: Regarding enhanced street scape, the Olin plan is developing the details of landscaping, paving, light fixtures and other public amenities along the entire waterfront, and the final details of the public spaces of the 500/501 North Union Street Development should conform to those specifications.
- Guideline 6: Again, specific detail is lacking. The developer should seek to follow the Waterfront Small Area Plan Art and History Appendices as well as the approved Phase I Design pertaining to this site. Those developing the proposal's details should work with the established Council appointed Commissions as well as through community input processes to ensure conformance with regard to both public art and historic markers and signage.
- Guideline 7: The proposal meets the requirement for keeping the historic east-west orientation of buildings, alleys and wharves. The Committee does not believe the design of the East Building meets the guideline "to encourage modern design inspired by historic precedent (such as 18th century warehouse architecture." The current design is neither compatible with nearby residential neighborhoods nor of sufficiently striking high quality modern design to outweigh the lack of compatibility.
- Guideline 8 is met.
- Guideline 9 on parking is met with regard to the hotel, restaurants, and residences. The committee has concerns whether there is enough parking for a large cultural event in the proposed community space. We believe that in addition to the stacked parking proposed for the below-ground parking, valet parking requirements should be considered for this development project.
- Guidelines 10, 11, and 12 are met. We recommend that the developer work closely with City staff and the Environmental Policy Commission regarding Guideline 12.
- Guideline 13 is met.
- Guideline 14: Most of these bulleted items are met, but the requirement for inclusion of public art is vaguely defined. Again, we recommend that the developer adhere to the guidelines of the Art and History recommendations within the Plan and the approved Phase I design consistent with the Art and History Waterfront Report and work closely with the Commissions and their public processes to flesh out the details of their proposal to include public art in the 500/501 North Union development area. Additionally, more specific detail is needed with respect to the public open spaces, including the pier, and how these spaces would be programmed and operated for active public uses.
- Guideline 15 is met.

The Alexandria Waterfront Commission voted to accept the above report and is forwarding it to City Council effective November 18, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlotte A. Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charlotte A. Hall, Chair
Alexandria Waterfront Commission

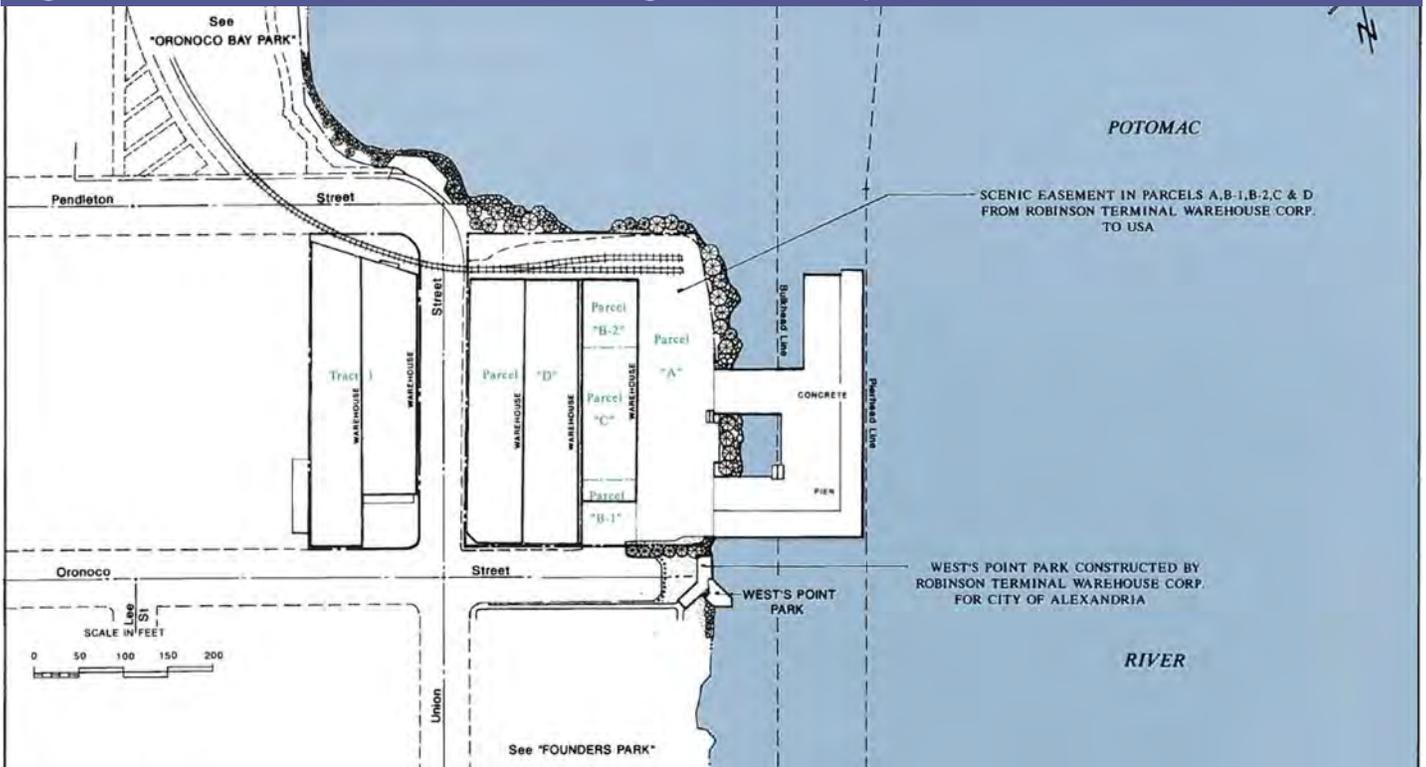
Attached: Robinson Terminal North Development Goals and Guidelines

cc: Planning Commission
Board of Architectural Review
Waterfront Commission
Karl Moritz, Acting Director, Planning & Zoning
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
Emily Baker, Director, Project Implementation
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

Robinson Terminal North

The W-1 zone is more restrictive than the federal government settlement agreement in terms of density and height. The settlement agreement allows a square footage of 238,816 square feet on three development parcels with a total buildable lot area of 91,814 square feet, resulting in an effective Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.69. Under existing zoning, a total of 195,296 square feet is permitted with an SUP (1.38 FAR). The proposed maximum density in this Plan constitutes a 43,520 square foot increase over the existing W-1 zoning, but does not exceed the settlement allowances. Tract 1, or the parcel of property on this site located west of North Union Street, is limited to 66 feet in height and heights east of North Union Street are limited to 45 feet on Parcel D and 30 feet on Parcel C, as described in the settlement agreement.

Figure 29: Terminal North settlement agreement Map



Robinson Terminal North

DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

1. Employ a land use mix and design which invites the public and encourages activity within the proposed development and in the adjacent public spaces.
2. Provide extensive public amenities and free access to and along the water's edge.
3. Improve access by extending Pendleton Street as a pedestrian connection to an improved public pier.
4. Pay homage to historic West's Point through public space design and interpretive features
5. Maintain a building scale compatible with existing fabric to the south and west.
6. Maximize water views from buildings, streets and rooftop open spaces.

Figure 30: Robinson Terminal North Conceptual Massing Model



Robinson Terminal North

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES:

1. Active uses should be part of any development and should constitute the predominant ground floor uses. Active ground floor uses shall be generally located as depicted in the Public Space and Active Frontages Diagram (Figure 31), and shall consist of uses that are open and welcoming to the public during normal business hours, such as lobbies, restaurants, retail, civic or cultural uses.
2. The preferred use on the site is mixed use, emphasizing arts, history and culture (including a museum) and including vibrant commercial uses (such as hotel).
3. Residential use and design should be compatible with a high level of public activity and located away from the water.
4. Residential use should not be the primary use of the site. The location, design and specific type of residential use proposed must coexist well with the other planned uses on the site and planned public activity in the public spaces adjacent to the residential development. Ground floor residential units are not permitted.
5. The streetscape and pedestrian experience along North Union Street should be enhanced; in addition to undergrounding utilities, providing street trees and appropriate light fixtures, Union Street should present an obvious continuation of pedestrian access between open space areas to the north and south and be improved with, at minimum, wide sidewalks, landscaping and special street paving.
6. Historic interpretation, consistent with the recommendations of the History Plan, should inform every aspect of the design of the redevelopment and adjacent public spaces, with particular attention given to the West's Point site which is the area which extends from the water west up Oronoco Street to Union Street, and represents the origins of Alexandria.
7. Encourage modern design inspired by historic precedent (such as 18th century Alexandria warehouse architecture) while maintaining compatibility with nearby residential neighborhoods and ensuring compliance with the Potomac River Vicinity Height District regulations. Reflect historic east-west orientation of buildings, alleys and wharves.

Figure 31: Robinson Terminal North Proposed Public Space and Active Frontages



DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES CONTINUED:

8. Redevelopment proposals shall require review on an advisory basis by the Old and Historic District Board of Architectural Review prior to being considered by the Planning Commission and City Council prior to approval.
9. Parking for new buildings should be accommodated on site and below grade. Although the Plan anticipates low parking ratios, the applied ratio must be consistent with industry norms for similar hotels.
10. The bulk and scale of the buildings should be stepped down from Union Street toward the water.
11. Curb cuts should not be located on any building and/or block frontages facing the water or North Union Street, and should be minimized if facing open space along Oronoco Street.
12. Shoreline treatment at Robinson Terminal North should include native plantings and naturalization where possible.
13. Redevelopment should be compatible with any biosparging technology, or other bioremediation, being employed by the City in treatment of the Oronoco Outfall-Alexandria Town Gas site located at the eastern end of Oronoco Street.
14. As part of redevelopment, on and off site public amenities shall be provided by the developer of the site. The specific amenities to be provided will be determined during the development review process. Desirable public amenities include:
 - Public art as a prominent feature of the public realm, both on public and private property. The recommendations of the Art Plan should be incorporated, to the greatest extent possible, in the design for the redeveloped warehouses, pier, and public spaces.
 - Open spaces with public access easements and/or dedications, provided as generally reflected in the Proposed Public Space and Active Frontages (Figure 31). The Plan encourages new open space to be provided on an improved pier, consistent with the federal settlement agreement. Riverside open space widths of less than 100 feet are acceptable only if it is found that an alternative site design better meets the objectives of this Plan.
 - Retention of the Robinson Terminal pier, repaired and expanded to be used as a public space and incorporated into the public space/pedestrian concept for the Plan as a whole. The Plan encourages retaining the pier's ability to accommodate larger ships visiting Alexandria. Use of the pier should be active and welcoming to the general public, and should advance the goal of the uninterrupted public pedestrian walkway along the water's edge. Examples of potential uses include water features, river watching, bocce, horseshoes, shuffleboard, plant and sculpture gardens, or outdoor cafes. Any structure erected on the pier should be temporary in nature, such as a tensile structure, fabric awning, or prefabricated, demountable, glass pavilion. The responsibility for the design, construction, maintenance and programming of the pier and public space will be determined in the future; the Plan recommends close coordination between the City and the developer on all of these issues.
 - Environmental amenities, above and beyond the minimum required.
15. The maximum FAR and floor area allowed is included on the chart at page 105.