

City of Alexandria

## ***Old Town North***

# ***Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC)***

**January 2022 Meeting Notes**

**[ FINAL ]**

Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

VIRTUAL – Recording Link: <https://alexandriava.gov/video/5333>

*Date of Draft: February 16, 2022*

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

Stephen Kulinski, Chair (SK)

Thomas Soapes, Vice Chair (TS)

Abbey Oklak, Secretary (AO)

Katherine Bingler (KB)

Theresa del Ninno (TN)

**City Staff in Attendance:**

Michael Swidrak P&Z

Catherine Miliaras P&Z

Daniel Welles P&Z

**Applicant Team Members in Attendance:**

Megan Rappolt Wire Gill (attorney rep.)

Ken Wire (KW) Wire Gill (attorney rep.)

Austin Flajser (AF) Carr Companies (applicant)

Abed Benzina (AB) SK+I Architects

Yavuz Goncu (YG) SK+I Architects

Trini Rodriguez (TR) Parker Rodriguez Landscape Architects

Suhang Liu Parker Rodriguez Landscape Architects

**Community Members in Attendance:**

Mace Carpenter Community Member

Agnes Artemel Community Member

Karen Branding (KB1) Community Member

Ann Shack (AS) Community Member

Rhonda Wilson Community Member

Ann Malcolm Community Member

Kathryn Ansell Community Member

Christina Mindrup Alexandria Economic Development Partnership

Barbara Neely Community Member

## **INTRODUCTION & OLD BUSINESS**

- The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:02 a.m. as the January 2022 meeting of UDAC.
- The Committee considered a draft of the notes for the November 2021 meeting. SK offered a minor technical edit to the draft meeting notes. TS moved to adopt the meeting notes with the amendment, and KB seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved 5-0.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Third Presentation of development proposal at 901 N. Pitt Street**

*Note: Presentation materials on the project are located at [alexandriava.gov/69556](http://alexandriava.gov/69556)*

- KW reintroduced the applicant team and provided an overview of the project process to date, with a focus on recent changes to the proposal.
- The applicant team provided updates to the open space and landscape plan. The highlighted the design of the linear open space at the north end of the site that was previously supported by the Committee. The applicant noted that the design was influenced by the need to save trees, distance from the underground garage extent and the placement of the walkway. KW noted that the fencing on at the northern property line will match that of the adjacent Watergate development. KW added that the seating locations are also finalized with the updated design.
- SK asked the applicant if there were any additional questions from Watergate residents in regards to the pathway in the linear open space. AF noted that neighborhood comments generally regarded the size and plantings in the open space. AF noted that the applicant pulled the building back southward and provided additional landscape plantings to address neighborhood comments, and that any existing trees to be saved will be replanted if they do not survive construction. TS noted that the applicant’s changes to the design have been responsive to Watergate resident questions. KW added that there are significant stormwater management vaults located under the open space that also impact the design.
- AB noted the applicant’s building changes, including more window glazing for the ground-level commercial spaces and the changes to townhouse-style units in the north elevation. YG confirmed the more bluish hues in the townhouse expression and that there is more glass on the storefront by the arts anchor space on N. Royal Street. YG also noted the corrugated metal panel located at the fourth-floor hyphen on top of the townhouse expression. KW added that the window and door expression for the arts anchor space could convert to garage door openings based on the future arts anchor tenant.
- TS asked the applicant to clarify details of the streetscape design based on community comments. KW stated that the sidewalk/streetscape has curb bumpouts and building

setbacks to increase sidewalk areas with a small portion of sidewalk located within the applicant's property line.

- AO noted that the site plan shows a 6-foot-wide sidewalk on Montgomery with an additional 4 feet of sidewalk directly adjacent within the applicant's property line as opposed to the 6 feet of public street sidewalk and an additional adjacent 6 feet of sidewalk within the property line per the relevant street section within the Old Town North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (OTNUDSG). AO wanted Committee feedback on the proposed Montgomery Street sidewalk width.
- TN noted concern with the proposed Montgomery Street sidewalk width and wanted additional information on the reason for the proposed condition. YG stated that the applicant provided generally more than 6 feet of sidewalk width within the property line on the Montgomery Street frontage when the push and pull of the building face articulation is taken into consideration.
- AO asked the applicant about the amount of walkable area between the parking lane and the adjacent tree wells on the sidewalks around the site. TR stated that the applicant is working with staff on a "step-off" area between the proposed tree wells and the adjacent parking lane for safe access from the sidewalk to any adjacent parked cars.
- KB stated that the applicant's changes have improved the proposal. KB asked the applicant for an update on the proposed arts anchor tenant. AF stated that the applicant is reviewing a few options for an arts anchor tenant, and that potentially a local nonprofit dance company could be the lead anchor tenant.
- TN asked about the proposal's adherence to the City's Green Building Policy. KW stated that the applicant will meet the City's Green Building Policy requirements (including LEED Silver or equivalent certification), and focused on the proposal's green design and infrastructure elements. KW stated that the applicant will likely buy green energy credits and make the rooftop ready for the installation of solar photovoltaic panels in the future.
- SK stated that the proposed building will serve as a good background building in the City and stated his support of the proposal. SK specifically noted the applicant's coordination with the adjacent neighbors on the site design. SK added that the applicant should further develop the proposal's pedestrian-sidewalk connections and green building elements.
- **AO motioned to vote stating that the proposal meets the OTNUDSG. KB seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.**
- TS stated his appreciation of the applicant's work with Watergate on project, which began in advance of any site plan submission to the City.

- KB1 asked the applicant to clarify the applicant’s proposal to narrow the roadway width and expand the sidewalk widths adjacent to the site. KW stated that the applicant worked with City staff on the proposed streetscape dimensions adjacent to the proposed building, consistent with the Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTNSAP). SK stated that the proposed streetscape and roadway dimensions are the result of the applicant working with City staff, and that the Planning Commission will also provide feedback on the right-of-way dimensions.
- Ann Shack asked about the removing of parking spaces for additional sidewalk. KW stated that the proposed bumpouts do not affect driving lanes and that on-street parking spaces would not be affected. TS stated that there may be a loss of one parking space at north end of N. Pitt Street by the proposed garage and loading entries and that Montgomery Street may lose a parking space per the location of a proposed DASH bus stop.

#### **Other New Business**

- CM mentioned to the Committee about upcoming community and City meetings for the power plant (PRGS) redevelopment. CM also mentioned that the redevelopment of Montgomery Center will likely be the next project for UDAC to review.

*The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:48 a.m.*