

City of Alexandria

Old Town North

Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC)

February 2023 Meeting Notes

Wednesday, February 1 at 9:00 a.m.

Hybrid: City Hall, Room 2000 and via Zoom

Recording Link: https://alexandria.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=29&coa_view_id=29&coa_clip_id=5650

Committee Members in Attendance

Stephen Kulinski, Chair (SK)

Thomas Soapes, Vice Chair (TS)

Katherine Bingler (KB)

Zaira Suarez (ZS)

Abbey Oklak (AO)

City Staff in Attendance

Michael Swidrak (MS) P&Z

Daniel Welles (DW) P&Z

Catherine Miliaras (CM) P&Z *Via Zoom*

Stephanie Sample (RL) P&Z *Via Zoom*

Applicant Members in Attendance

Ken Wire (KW) Wire Gill (Representing Montgomery Center)

Austin Flajser (AF) Carr (Montgomery Center)

Wish Carr (WC) Carr (Montgomery Center)

Rob Uhrin (RU) Cooper Carry (Montgomery Center)

Mary Catherine Gibbs (MG) Wire Gill (Representing PRGS)

Melissa Schrock (MS1) Hilco Redevelopment Partners (PRGS)

Michelle Beaman Chang (MC) Hilco Redevelopment Partners (PRGS)

Siobhan Steen (SS1) Hilco Redevelopment Partners (PRGS)

Rodney Dew (RD) Hilco Redevelopment Partners (PRGS)

Daniel Solomon (DS) Gorove Slade

Simon Beer (SB) OJB Landscape Architecture

Jared Krieger (JK) Gensler Architects

Kevin Washington (KW) Christopher Consultants

Community Members in Attendance (in Person or Virtual only if a Question was asked)

Susan Amber Gordon (SG)

Diane Harmon (DH)
Martha Harris (MH)
Melissa Kuennen (MK)

INTRODUCTION & OLD BUSINESS

- The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:03 a.m. as the February 2023 meeting of UDAC.
- KB motioned to approve the November 2022 Meeting Notes; TS provided a second. **The motion passed for the approval of the Meeting Notes 5-0**

NEW BUSINESS

Note: Presentation materials on the below items are located at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/boards-and-commissions/urban-design-advisory-committee-serving-old-town-north>

Presentation of the draft endorsement letter at Montgomery Center

- The updated endorsement letter was shared via Zoom by MS.
- SK asked KW to provide the committee with an update on the current plan regarding the parking concerns that were expressed in the letter concerning the site not providing any designated parking spaces for the arts and cultural anchor. SK acknowledged that not all parking constraints would be solved.
- KW
- KB acknowledged that the Old Town North arts district is moving slower than intended and asked if
- TS made a motion to approve the endorsement letter, seconded by KB.

Presentation of the Infrastructure DSP (IDSP) at the Potomac River Generating Station

- MG (Mary Catherine Gibbs) introduced herself and the project team, Hilco Partners.
- MG restated the project's 3 main priority points, noting that a 4th one was added to provide a Coordinated Sustainability Strategy per the CDD Conditions and Design Guidelines to exceed the City's green building requirements.
- MG outlined the project process to date and noted that the Concept II application is aimed to be submitted in March.
- MG introduced the IDSP, which provides details on new roads and blocks that will be constructed on the site. MG explained that the IDSP only needs to go to Planning Commission for approval. The project is on track to go to Planning Commission in June.
- MG noted that the IDSP presentation and plan shows proposed utilities as well. There is a transmission line easement remaining due to the location of the Pepco substation. The applicant cannot put structures in the area around the Pepco substation but can put in

underground utilities. AO asked for this area to be shown and identified, specifically along southern and western borders.

- A Resident asked if the open space areas are intended to be only roads. MG indicated that roads cannot be counted as open space. The open space is near roads but is distributed all the way around the site.
- AO asked about the sidewalk cross-sections and open space (review video around 923am). MG – common elements discussion has more information.
- SB (Simon Beer – OJB Landscape Architects) (remote) – common elements to add texture, vibrancy and human scale. Common elements plan lays framework to be implemented as part of each block DSUP.
- SB Outlined hierarchy of streets. Water connections, private v public etc
- SB showed roadway materiality – pavers vs asphalt- pavers to make a slower street
- TS – asked applicant for distinction between public and private roads. MG – most roads are public access easement – just means private owned and maintained.
- Resident comment – Linear park going along busy road. MG – it’s at least 100 feet wide (linear park) plus rail corridor park. Minimum 136 feet wide. Opens up to the west toward GW Parkway.
- General streetscapes- trees sidewalk road
- SB – special streetscapes – importance to have connections between sidewalk and roadway that will allow pedestrian movement between the two.
- SB showed programming of Woonerf in presentation and deterrents of cars onto sidewalk and ability for pedestrians to cross into roadway.
- ZS – Was ever explored for the Woonerf to be purely pedestrian street? As long as they are vehicles, pedestrians are never fully safe. Could be full amenity to pedestrians and bicyclists. MG responded that the City wanted some traffic flow along waterfront for emergency. AO – would it always be closed like The Wharf? General traffic does not go down into wharf, just emergency. MG – would have to come back to Council to amend the public access easement [*staff edit – the conceptual design plan*] to not allow cars to go through. Applicant can close down Woonerf a few times a year for events. MC – going to be a node for bikes using trails. MG – waterfront DSUP will have more detail.
- AO- what are the Green Streets and what makes them special? MG – N Royal is the green street in the SAP, and connects into road B. Bike lane along Road B. SB Will have bioretention. Will be more “connected” in design?
- SB site furnishings – will be using City standard furnishings, but are working on diversifying palette to create an enhanced public realm. Hierarchy in street light heights.
- COMMENTS:
- Lady in grey sweatshirt (Martha Harris?): what is the sequence of construction for these roads? MG – Road A in temporary condition in Phase 1. Adjacent streets will coming in with each block.
- Resident – Discuss relation to abatement and construction of roads. MG – abatement takes place before deconstruction. Remediation is below grade. MC (Michelle Chang, HRP) – power plant will be removed before Road A connects to Slaters and is opened for traffic. Form of construction has not been determined.
- AO – applicant should explore personalized site furnishings. Better to have different branding in this area.

- ZS – applicant should explore introducing wood or warm materials to common elements palette
- SK – Is there a theme to the common elements palette and site design? Is it going to relate to power plant or new site identity? MC – applicant only started thinking about this. – CS (Carolyn Sponza, Gensler Architects) – started an initial inventory, including other previous uses on site other than power plant. MG- applicant saved portion of rail lines through the site for reuse.
- SK – look at site design and palette for Robinson Terminal North (2015 approval)
- AO – applicant requested letter of support (not endorsement? Review recording). **AO motion to support. KB second – motion 5-0.**

DSUP section

- MC led presentation. Blocks A and B phase 1, Block C part of phase 2. Also DSUPs for the two main open spaces to be coming, likely in 2023
- MC outlined the three architects with each block. Handel from New York (Block C), SCB (Solomon Cordwell Buenz (Block B) from Chicago and Gensler (Block A and podium of each building)
- CS – talking about massing drivers, the three blocks and the Design Excellence path
- CS talked about creating vistas, gateway elements, looking at building massing (sunpaths, relationship of massing between blocks), 15% open space per block, Block C alley
- KB – can applicant provide approximate dimensions of each block? MG – Block C is the only block close to Old Town sized block.
- CS – team thought Block C mid-block alley to be desire line and pedestrian path through site.
- CS – showed locations for activation. Resident with a blue shirt – activation? CS – gathering points, pedestrians, outdoor dining
- CS – CSS – stormwater, heat island paving
- CS – Design Excellence prerequisites – would be for all three blocks. CM – City does prereq review at Concept II. Before criteria goes to UDAC for review.
- SK – how tall is the podium? CS – still working out – Block A may not have same podium. MC – podium is for retail, lobby entrances
- AO- is all below grade parking? MC – yes. AO – has the applicant looked at parking access? MG – underground parking garage access points are to be on Road B and C.
- TS – what do you think of your environmental sustainability plan – MG – related to CSS plan. Have a reduction in energy use, embodied carbon and solar generation – to be coordinated with green roof and rooftop amenities. TS – should be very environmental Based on old use (coal fired power plant)
- ZS – rooftop PV will only get you so far. Need to look at skin/fins/other methods of generation.
- British-accent resident – anyway to bring people to the site other than cars? MG- have a multimodal plan to move bikes/peds to the site. Will be linked to the Mount Vernon Trail. Applicant has to find ways to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips.
- KB – will arts use require more parking/transportation? MC- to provide 30k throughout the site. Block A- talking to potential users.
- MG – outlined future schedule.

- MH/Martha Harris – what does first endorsement feed into? MG- that was just for infrastructure plan. Each block will need review and endorsement. MH – CSS separate approval track? MG – its not an approval but review and endorsement by CC.
- British resident- what were the approvals so far? Only CDD concept plan in City Council, there has been numerous presentations to City boards.
- Susan Amber Gordon (online) has praised project so far and the 30k in arts. MC – arts is part of activation.
- 1040 end?

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:55 a.m.