

City of Alexandria

# ***Urban Design Advisory Committee***

## **December 2017 Meeting Notes**

**[FINAL]**

Wednesday, December 13, 2017 at 9:00am

City Hall, Room 2000

Date of Draft: December 14, 2017

### **Committee Members in Attendance:**

Stephen Kulinski, Chair (SK)

Marie McKenney Tavernini, Vice Chair (MT)

Roger Waud (RW)

Engin Artemel (EA)

Abbey Oklak, Secretary (AO)

### **City Staff in Attendance:**

Michael Swidrak (MS) P&Z

Heba ElGawish (HE) P&Z

Robert Kerns (RK) P&Z

### **Applicant Team in Attendance:**

Ken Wire (KW) McGuire Woods

Allison Paul (AP) Lessard Design

Jerry Simon (JS) Lessard Design

Chris Boone (CB) Lessard Design

Suhang Liu (SL) Parker Rodriguez

Whitney Smith (WS) Carr City Centers

Austin Flajser (AF) Carr City Centers

Matthew Buhts (MB) Carr City Centers

### **Community Members in Attendance:**

Maria Wasowski (MW) Planning Commission, Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group Chair

Dan Straub (DS) Old Town North resident, former UDAC member

## **INTRODUCTION**

- The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:03am as the December meeting of UDAC.
- SK introduced the members of UDAC to those in attendance.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- The Committee considered a draft of the notes for the November meeting that staff distributed to the Committee.
- MT offered the following changes on pages 2 and 3:
  - MT moved to nominate SK to remain as Chair of the Committee. EA seconded. Motion carried 3-0 (SK abstained).
  - SK moved to nominate MT to remain as Vice Chair of the Committee. EA seconded. Motion carried 3-0 (MT abstained).
  - MT moved to nominate AO to remain as Secretary of the Committee. EA seconded. Motion carried 4-0.
  - EA asked about installing brick sidewalks along the frontage on Montgomery Street and Canal Center Plaza. KW and MS noted that these blocks are identified in the Urban Design Guidelines for Old Town North as concrete. EA requested that staff look into sidewalk options.
- MT moved to adopt the meeting notes with the above change included, and EA seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved 5-0.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Third Presentation of development 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 reintroduced the project to the Committee. KW noted that most of the design changes from the applicant team have been focused on refining the townhouse facades.
- AF discussed the design rationale behind the townhouses. AF acknowledged that the site is not located in an area of Old Town North where “traditional” townhouses are sited, though real estate brokers have advised the applicant that traditional-style townhouses sell in this area more than townhouses with more contemporary façade elements. AF added that the applicant team has received input from City staff to include more contemporary elements in the townhouse designs, and the design team has worked to incorporate the suggested elements.
- AP gave an overview of the changes to the townhouse elevations, including changes that were presented in the packet sent to UDAC prior to the meeting, and changes that have been made based on recent staff comments and were added to the presentation. The latter changes were marked as “Option A” or “Option B” and were shown in a separate presentation document. These updated townhouse elevations include:
  - Increasing variations in the roofline of townhouse rows, including altering the location (back vs. front) of the fourth-floor penthouses

- Studying more contemporary cornice elements
- Anchoring the end units of townhouse rows with a parapet above the warehouse-style windows
- Studying the use darker trim colors as an accent transition between the brick and windows
- KW asked the Committee if it supported townhouse rows that appeared more as one unified building or rows of unique townhouse units. EA said he felt the townhouse units should read differently from one another.
- EA asked about the design of the rear and side facades of the townhouses. KW said that side facades of each end of a townhouse row will be designed with the same materials as the front facades. The rear facades will have brick on the first floor and the upper floors will have materials that relate to the fourth floor penthouses. SK asked the applicant study the view of the sides of the townhouses coming into the site on the alley that is accessed from Montgomery Street (and is parallel to N. Fairfax Street), since this will be a portion of the site visible from the public right-of-way.
- EA asked if the first floor of the townhouse units facing N. Fairfax Street could contain retail uses. KW answered that the applicant is open to any kind of small commercial or arts-related uses in these spaces, though AF noted that the buildings will be built to residential and not commercial code standards. MT also noted that the future condominium association would have to be amenable to commercial uses.
- SK said that he likes the height variations shown on the new townhouse schemes, though is looking for more “push-pull” in the townhouse row facades.
- AP went over the elevations for the interior strings of townhouses to the south of the tower, which were studied with variations to the third and fourth floors. AO commented that the original designs for these interior townhouse rows are successful because the grouping of the fourth floor terraces encourages neighbor interaction. AP responded that the terraces are still grouped, though in smaller strings.
- AO noted she likes the smaller windows and rusticated based on the first floor of the interior townhouse rows.
- KW gave an overview of the changes to the tower. JS mentioned that the two-story cast stone base wraps the tower and is carried into the art center.
- KW discussed the status of the open space portion of the site that abuts the Mount Vernon Trail. The applicant has provided two schemes – one where the open space is separated from the trail, and a scheme there is direct trail access from the open space are behind the tower, and where the townhouses at the northeast corner of the site are pushed eastward to have front-door access to the trail. The second scheme is dependent upon the status of determining ownership of portions of the Mount Vernon Trail and working with Norfolk Southern Railway.
- SK asked KW if the second scheme would allow for easier loading access at the rear of the tower. KW confirmed this. MW also noted her support for having stair access from the site into the Mount Vernon Trail if possible. KW noted that the location of the

underground garage limits creates issues for stair access to the trail unless the stairs would be located beyond the property limits of the site.

- The applicant also discussed plans to cover the exposed portion of the garage wall along the trail with mural art, which would be facilitated with the City if the project is approved.
- EA asked if the sidewalk could be brick along Montgomery Street. KW mentioned the applicant is open to the idea of brick sidewalks, though SK and KW noted that decisions on the placement of brick sidewalks is dependent on guidance from City staff (T&ES and P&Z). SK noted that the Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (UDSG) include a street section of Canal Center Plaza that shows brick sidewalks.
- MT asked if the project complies with the building height transition noted on page 15 of the UDSG for the southern portion of the site facing Montgomery Street. KW noted that the project meets this building transition based on the lower heights of the townhouses (which vary up to 42 feet) at the Montgomery Street frontage.
- KW noted the applicant plans to come back to the Committee in January to finalize the townhouse façade elements and palette, and in the hope of receiving an endorsement from the Committee.
- SK said that the project is ready for some form of endorsement based on its adherence to the UDSG, and looks forward to the refinements that will be shown in the next submission.
- EA noted his support of the architectural refinements in the current submission and presentation, and will look for elevations of the rears of the townhouses and the implementation of brick sidewalks with the next submission.

**Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:52 am.**