



CARLYLE-EISENHOWER EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

New Eisenhower East Design Standards

Application	General Data	
Project Name: New Eisenhower East Design Standards Location: Eisenhower East Small Area Plan Applicant: City of Alexandria	DRB Date:	July 18, 2024
	Site Area:	Eisenhower East
	Existing Zone:	CDD #2
	Proposed Zone:	CDD #2
	Existing Use:	N/A
	Proposed Use:	N/A
	Gross Floor Area:	N/A
Purpose of Application: Presentation of new Design Standards to be used for development requiring Development Special Use Permit approval within the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan		
Staff Reviewers: Nathan Randall, Principal Planner nathan.randall@alexandriava.gov Michael Swidrak, AICP, Urban Planner michael.swidrak@alexandriava.gov Thomas H. Canfield, AIA, City Architect tom.canfield@alexandriava.gov Robert M. Kerns, AICP, Development Chief robert.kerns@alexandriava.gov		

DRB ACTION MAY 16, 2024 – The DRB heard a presentation from staff, who provided an overview of the eight major sections of draft Design Standards. Staff also explained that the draft standards are intended to have a narrower focus than the current Eisenhower East Design Guidelines, adopted in 2006. Mr. Paul referenced the letters the DRB received from attorneys representing Hoffman properties and Block 20 East, and inquired whether a cutoff date has been selected for when projects would be subject to the new standards. Staff replied that it is still considering what date to use. Multiple DRB members inquired about the 250-foot building break requirement, with Ms. Abdul-Rahman expressing support for its inclusion in the standards. Mr. Paul stated his support for visual building breaks rather than full building breaks. Mr. Paul also asked whether it was necessary to include a standard requiring a minimum of 30 feet of ground-level building height.

Chair Colbert asked if there was a standard regarding glazing, to which staff responded that there isn't a standard overall, but a standard has been included requiring retail bays to be comprised of

at least 70% glass. A general discussion ensued regarding whether a specific minimum percentage of glazing should be recommended for new buildings. Ms. Abdul-Rahman inquired about the meaning of “distinctive skylines” from draft Standard #3.5, and Vice Chair Canfield discussed the intent of this standard. Ms. Abdul-Rahman also asked whether a standard exists to restrict the use of fiber cement on certain portions of the building, such as preventing their use on the ground-level. Staff concurred that language should be added to the document that regulates where fiber cement could be located on a building façade. Mr. Paul expressed a preference for the draft standards to be less restrictive (using the word “should”) instead of more restrictive (using the word “shall”). Ms. Abdul-Rahman asked whether signage standards have been included here, to which Vice Chair Canfield mentioned that signage would be reviewed separately, often as part of the Development Special Use Permits for individual buildings. Chair Colbert inquired about how lighting and stormwater management are reviewed, and staff replied that these items are reviewed as part of the Development Special Use Permits for individual buildings. Ms. Abdul-Rahman asked whether the design standards should address open space programming, to which Vice Chair Canfield and staff responded that open space recommendations have been included in the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan.

Staff concluded the discussion by asking the DRB to consider the specific questions raised at the end of its staff report about the standards. The DRB responded that it found the current draft to be legible, concise, and implementable. Staff further shared that the feedback received from the DRB and from community members would be considered as new draft standards are created in the future. Ultimately, staff noted that the standards are expected to be brought forward to Planning Commission and City Council in the coming months, potentially as soon as June.

Speakers:

Ken Wire, attorney representing Hoffman-owned properties, stated his general support for the streamlined approach contained in the standards. He also expressed concern about the requirement for a building break for facades longer than 250 feet and recommended a “toolkit”-type approach toward design standards.

Mary Catherine Gibbs, attorney representing the Block 20 East project, expressed concerns about certain aspects of the current draft standards, including: the need for a building break for facades longer than 250 feet (Standard #1.1), the specific language regarding above-grade parking screening, and the timing of when the new standards would begin to apply to projects.

I. BACKGROUND

Consistent with the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan (EESAP) recommendation that new design standards be adopted for the area, staff shared a draft version of the new Eisenhower East Design Standards (EEDS) with the Carlyle-Eisenhower East Design Review Board (DRB) at its May 16th meeting. Staff reviewed the comments received from Board members at that meeting, as well as those received from community members, property owners and their representatives. It has created a new draft of the standards for DRB review that incorporates feedback from the DRB and the community and incorporates additional staff refinements.

II. UPDATES TO THE DRAFT

The updated draft EEDS can be found attached to this memo. New or significantly amended standards are shown in **orange text** in the draft document, while deleted standards have been removed from the document and only discussed in the summary below. Major refinements in the current draft include:

- Section 0 (now labeled “Introduction & Administration”) has a significant amount of new language, which is intended to clarify how the design standards will be applied and administered, where the standards will apply, and how “modifications” from the standards can be sought and endorsed by the DRB.
- Standard 1.1 is amended based on feedback from DRB and applicants to further clarify the application of the required building break.
- Standard 1.2, which required a visual building break for buildings with at least 150 feet of frontage, has been removed.
- Standard 3.5 is amended to replace language referring to “distinctive skylines” with language referring to “distinctive roof and parapet heights and forms.”
- Standard 4.1 is amended to remove reference to stucco as a permitted cladding material and to clarify where fiber cement can be utilized as a cladding material.
- Standards 6.1 and 6.2 are amended to add language tying these parking-related standards to the recommendations of the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan.
- Additionally, staff has updated some of the photo examples used to illustrate the standards.

III. RECOMMENDATION / NEXT STEPS

Staff recommends that the DRB provide additional feedback on the current draft of the Eisenhower East Design Standards (EEDS) and ultimately endorse their adoption. It also recommends that the

DRB Chair provide a letter to Planning Commission stating the DRB's position on the draft standards.

Staff anticipates creating a final draft of the EEDS, incorporating comments received from the DRB and the community, that will be forwarded for consideration at Planning Commission and City Council public hearings in September. The letter from the DRB Chair would be included as part of the package of materials forwarded to those bodies about the project.