



# Potomac River Generating Station Design Excellence Narrative

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*Design Excellence* is the convergence of best practices and technologies in the design of sites and structures, exceeding the standard requirements of the *Old Town North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines*. *Design Excellence* implements an urban framework consistent with the Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTN SAP) and Coordinated Development District (CDD) Plan. It informs building volumes, forms and materials to create a dynamic street wall and screen utilitarian uses that distract from overall visual quality and the pedestrian environment, while implementing and integrating exceptional design, high quality materials and high performing technologies. Below grade parking allows for building volume to be used for an active mix of uses (retail, office, residential, hospitality, arts and innovation) as well as the maximization of grade level open space and multi-modal streets.

*Design Excellence* considers the environmental impacts of sites and structures. It utilizes high performing technologies to meet or exceed the City of Alexandria's standards for environmental sustainability and serve as a model of sustainable design.

*Design Excellence is dynamic.* The district encompasses a hierarchy of uses and all buildings reflect the hierarchy and the unique nature and character of the district. It applies to "iconic" buildings that stand out in their surroundings as well as "contextual" buildings that comprise the urban fabric. It is adaptable to site-specific challenges and characteristics; it understands that no two buildings or spaces are identical. It is inclusive and encourages use by all people.

*Design Excellence* can create a thriving community and an innovative place that is desirable for people to live, work and visit. It is achieved through application of the following Design Excellence Prerequisites and Criteria.

### Purpose

*The Design Excellence Pre-Requisites and Criteria* permit an Applicant a much greater degree of design flexibility and creativity than that permitted by the *PRGS - Old Town North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (PRGS-OTN UDS&G)* in exchange for implementing exemplary building design, massing, detailing, materials and energy conservation that result in noteworthy landmark buildings and urban spaces that define the development as a premier expression of design excellence and sustainability on the Alexandria Waterfront.

### Process

In order to be considered for the *Design Excellence* path, a building or group of buildings within the PRGS development must include all of the following pre-requisites outlined below and employ the following criteria convincingly and consistently, in such a way as to create a superior visual, user, or community experience that surpasses what could be achieved through the application of the *PRGS-OTN UDS&G* alone.

If pursued by the Applicant, the *Design Excellence Pre-Requisites & Criteria* would be reviewed in lieu of the *PRGS-OTN UDS&G* and made applicable to new development within the PRGS site that requires a DSP or DSUP. Upon verification by staff that the *Design Excellence Pre-requisites* have been met, the *Design Excellence Criteria* are intended to facilitate the Urban Design Advisory Committee's (UDAC) review of properties which fall within its geographically designated review area. UDAC is advisory to City staff to ensure compliance with the *Design Excellence Criteria*. For DSPs and DSUPs, UDAC will provide a written recommendation to the Planning Commission prior to public hearings. The Department of Planning and Zoning, the Planning Commission and the City Council will give consideration to the recommendations of UDAC on urban design aspects of public and private development applications.

## Design Excellence | Prerequisites

An individual Structures and Sites Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) application must first meet all of the following *Design Excellence Prerequisites* to be eligible to apply the *Design Excellence Criteria*. City Staff will review the application for consistency with the following:

### P1: Superior Urban Form

Within an individual DSUP application, a building or group of two or more buildings, which, as a composition, create a unique and memorable urban place, through a combination of their spatial relationships, public spaces, exterior design, materiality, and massing. Blocks are planned with a mix of uses and developed and designed with site-wide consideration of individual buildings and spaces. Buildings or spaces in a prominent location or with a prominent use are designed to reflect their contextual importance, including key locations such as the North Fairfax and Slater's Lane gateways, and the central plaza.





## P2: Environmental Innovation Leader

Environmental Sustainability is integrated into the design of infrastructure, open spaces, and buildings. The Applicant will demonstrate an integrated approach to building design, open space and infrastructure to meet or exceed the sustainability goals as outlined in the Coordinated Sustainability Strategy. A building or group of buildings and site design must demonstrate a high level of commitment to environmental stewardship and responsibility using innovative technology and a holistic environmental response. This may include visible environmental measures for educational and demonstrative purposes. The project will demonstrate, implement or meet the goals and targets established by the site's Coordinated Sustainability Strategy, OTN SAP, and voluntary Carbon Neutrality Analysis (CNA).



Green roofs



Integrated stormwater strategies at street level



On-site photovoltaic



Balanced hardscape and landscape

# Design Excellence | Prerequisites

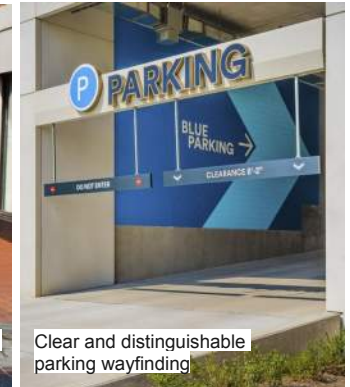
## P3: Quality + Durable Building Materials are Specified

Exterior building materials will be limited to natural or engineered stone, metal, porcelain tile, terra cotta, brick, wood, concrete, photo-voltaic panels, glass or materials of equal quality, performance, and longevity.



### P4: Off-Street Parking is Located Below Grade

Off-street parking will be provided entirely below grade. Adequate soil depth above the below-grade parking must be provided to support canopy trees, surface paving materials, and innovative water management strategies at key locations. These features will be integrated into the site design and will be provided at-grade. Creative integration of parking and service functions enhances the public realm (e.g., combined parking and loading across the site with no on-street maneuvering, etc.).





**P5: Exceptional Site Response**

A building or group of buildings that captures or enhances its setting in creative ways. This could include the integration of waterfront and city views with circulation, the relationship and engagement with public open space, and the creation of unique amenities within or on top of a structure, or subsurface structure with usable roof (such as the Pump House or other infrastructure).



Activation of building roofs as a 'fifth elevation'



Building forms that frame open space and waterfront views



Framing waterfront views



Enhanced amenities at roof level



Green space at many heights



## Design Excellence | Criteria

An individual DSUP application must first meet all of the *Design Excellence Prerequisites* to be eligible to apply the *Design Excellence Criteria*. The DSUP application must incorporate the following *Design Excellence Criteria*:

### **C1: Architectural Excellence**

Architectural excellence should be achieved using one of the two following paths: Landmark/Iconic Structure; or Contextual Character.

**C1A: Landmark/Iconic Structure  
(where identified)**

A single building that, through its architectural expression, unique massing, strong roof form or other element, solar response, or exterior cladding of exceptional quality, becomes a place-defining element for the site.



Interesting and responsive forms



Dynamic integrated signage



Jewel-box elements at ground level

## C1B: Contextual Character

A building or group of buildings whose design responds to its contextual location to create a meaningful place through its spatial relationships within the site and response to aerial views, waterfront views, and views from and to Old Town North.





### C2: A Variety of Open Spaces/High Quality Open Spaces

A variety of open spaces on, within, or adjacent to the site which contribute to the regional open space network, are provided. The site includes public and/or private open spaces that support a variety of active, social, and passive uses in a mix of urban plazas, lawns, shared streets, rooftop open spaces, and recreational areas.



### C3: An Active Public Realm

The public realm dynamically engages the pedestrian experience and ground floors of buildings include active uses, interior-exterior visibility, and high-quality architecture. A dynamic public realm will create street-level vibrancy through the design of differentiated and unique storefronts with a higher level of design detailing and quality of materials, innovative lighting, high-quality sign design, frequent building entries, and the potential integration of art into building façades.

Streetscape design incorporates the City's Complete Streets Design Guidelines, with amenities and infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit. Site design incorporates high quality paving materials, site furnishings, and lighting. Service areas will be designed to be compatible with the public realm and pedestrian experience while remaining as unobtrusive as possible.





**C4: Inclusive Design of Buildings and Open Spaces**

Building and open space design responds to the needs of diverse users and meets or exceeds the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Across the site, buildings and open spaces invite users of different ages, interests, and abilities to engage with the spaces.

