

City of Alexandria

## ***Old Town North***

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

**November 2022 Meeting Notes [FINAL]**

Wednesday, November 16 at 10:00 a.m.

Hybrid: City Hall, Room 1101 and via Zoom

Recording Link: [https://alexandria.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=29&coa\\_view\\_id=29&coa\\_clip\\_id=5650](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) *Via Zoom*

### **City Staff in Attendance**

Michael Swidrak (MS) P&Z

Stephanie Sample (SS) P&Z

Catherine Miliaras (CM) P&Z

Richard Lawrence (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) Grove 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 10:02 a.m. as the November 2022 meeting of UDAC.
- SK introduced ZS to the Committee as a newly appointed Old Town North Business Representative. SK highlighted her work as an architect in Alexandria in welcoming ZS to the Committee.
- KB motioned to approve the July 2022 Meeting Notes; TS provided a second. **The motion passed for the approval of the Meeting Notes 3-0, with ZS abstaining.**

## 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 (Third) of development proposal at Montgomery Center**

- Applicant presented updates for this third visit to UDAC. The layout stayed largely the same, with a lower height at the Fairfax/Madison Street corner and rooftop amenity space in this area and allowing for more light/views at the corner.
- The SE building corner will integrate a sign introducing the Old Town North Arts District.
- The majority of the Old Town North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (OTNUDSG) were met, with some relief sought in three areas due to the layout of site. These include building setbacks and retail, the 40% transparency requirement at the arts building solely, and open space/ground level access – specifically with individual building setbacks from the street.
- The entrance to the residential building was moved to the other side of the paseo to allow for more light.
- TS inquired about the lighting in the arts space at night that were discussed at the previous UDAC meeting, asking what changes have been made to address the issue. The applicant highlighted new skylights and additional glass windows added to both ends of the paseo shown in their presentation. The lighting continues to develop to guarantee safety without introducing too much brightness.

- DH asked the applicant to address parking issues, in which the applicant confirmed they are meeting the parking ordinance. The parking reduction was still being worked out.
- MH inquired about the private open space on the rooftop, stating that it shouldn't be counted as public open space. The applicant clarified where the open space was public and where it was designated to be private to building residents.
- MH noted that a lot of the open space was not impervious material and what signage would be available. The applicant clarified that the project both meets and exceeds City stormwater requirements. Signage would be discussed later as the project develops.
- ZS noted wanting to look further at the quality of the proposed open space and solar orientation – specifically the wind and sun patterns.
- ZS complimented the proposed lighting and the incorporation of art installations and may have additional comments going forward.
- KB was satisfied with the revisions and made no comments.
- TS was not prepared to approve the project based on the unresolved parking issues as well as the lack of an arts anchor user. Many of the approved arts anchors are empty boxes, thus believes the project is not yet sufficiently developed and is incomplete. The applicant responded giving a timeframe of when these questions would be answered.
- TS noted that the committee needed to carefully draft the comment/endorsement to the Planning Commission to incorporate their parking and concerns about an arts user.
- SK agreed that the project needs an arts anchor user identified and that the parking as currently proposed is an issue that will need to be addressed.
- SK posed a question about the committee's ability to add conditions to the endorsement based on the items of concern discussed.
- A separate endorsement letter is to be drafted that will be reviewed at a future UDAC meeting for public view.
- CM offered the project to return to UDAC in January to review and discuss the separate endorsement letter. KW did not want the project to give an additional presentation.
- Applicant team recommended dismissal from UDAC and that the next meeting could be just for updates on parking and the arts anchor. The final endorsement is subject to these issues being addressed.
- AF gave feedback regarding the arts anchor user, indicating the applicant team is considering two options – either a musical performance space or a collective with maker and class space. This would not be confirmed until the project develops in the future.

- AF agreed to receive the endorsement with the subsequent letter at a future meeting.
- SK gave a motion to endorse the project for the design and compliance with the OTNUDSG; subject to future endorsement for parking issues and the arts use. TS provided a second; **The motion passed with approval of 3-0 for further endorsement to come regarding parking and the arts and cultural anchor.** ZS was unable to vote on the motion due to leaving early for a scheduling conflict.

**Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) staff presentation on the Urban Design Standards & Guidelines Addendum (UDSGA) and Design Excellence Prerequisites and Criteria (DEPC)**

- MS provided a brief presentation that outlined the two pathways for design review for projects that UDAC will be reviewing pertaining to the PRGS site. These pathways include the UDSGA, which is based on the OTNUDSG and the DEPC, which require innovative and sustainable building and site design but have less prescriptive standards. If the applicant selects the DEPC approach for a given project, staff will review the project against prerequisites that must be met for the project to be reviewed by the Committee as a DEPC project.
- MS stated that both the DEPC and UDSGA have corresponding matrices that staff created and will be filled out by the applicant for each project.
- Based on a question from SK, MS stated that each building or block as submitted to the City as a separate development special use permit (DSUP) could be reviewed and approved under either the DEPC and UDSGA.
- KB asked staff if there is a map where landmark/iconic structures should be located in the DEPC. Staff notes that there is a map identifying gateway locations in the UDSGA.
- KB confirmed with the applicant that different architects have been selected for the Concept 1 DSUPs submitted to the City for Blocks A, B and C. MG noted that the applicant has maintained Gensler as the master plan architect for Block A, and selected other firms to design blocks B and C.

**Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) Infrastructure Development Site Plan (IDSP) presentation from applicant (First Presentation)**

- The applicant highlighted the general planning related to land use and site design, transportation and open space elements for the CDD site in the presentation. The presentation also highlighted the CDD approval process and the upcoming DSUP review process.

- MG noted that the IDSP includes the general street and public realm layout, though that details on sidewalk and open space materials will be forthcoming with the upcoming building and open space DSUPs.
- DS presented on the PRGS road network as refined in the IDSP. DS highlighted the delineation of streets for more general traffic and transit (Road A) and the pedestrian friendly design of the woonerf on N. Fairfax Street. TS asked DS how the woonerf will be design to discourage vehicle through traffic. DS stated that vehicular access points to each building will be kept off of N. Fairfax Street and aspects of the woonerf design (including specialty pavers and raised entry) will further discourage through traffic.
- SB outlined the comprehensive open space plan, which is part of the IDSP submission. SB outlined the plans for active and passive open spaces throughout the site, and proposed connections to the Mount Vernon Trail.
- JK outlined the site phasing plan and aspects of the IDSP. KB asked the applicant for more clarification on phasing. MG and JK added that the first phase of building construction, including the construction of temporary and some final streets will commence in mid-2024. MS1 added that Road A will be constructed as a temporary street from Slaters Lane to the Old Town North street network as part of Phase 1.
- KB noted that there may be neighborhood concern about queueing of construction vehicles on Slaters Lane. MS1 and MS noted that a construction management plan is to come after IDSP approval.
- A community member (SG) asked the applicant via Zoom about the overall project cost. MG could not provide a general figure.
- A community member (MK) asked the applicant via Zoom why architects from outside the region were selected for the design of blocks A, B and C. MS1 responded that the applicant conducted a thorough selection process to identify the project architects while retaining the Washington, DC office of Gensler as the master site architect.
- MK also asked about the potential traffic impacts to the area, citing concerns. DS and MG responded that the applicant worked on the traffic modeling scoping with the City and is using best industry practices to analyze the future traffic impacts and suggest mitigation. TS added that the community has significant concerns on the traffic impacts to Slaters Lane and the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which is often at capacity at rush hours. MS1 added that the development of the CDD encourages multimodal transportation and will add connections from Slaters Lane southward through the site into Old Town North. KB added that addition of the east-west road connection to the parkway could also mitigate the impacts.
- A community member asked the applicant via Zoom Q&A why Block A was a standalone block instead of being combined with Block B. MG and MS1 responded that the Block A shape is influenced by the City's request for the alignment of N. Fairfax Street to continue

from the Old Town North street grid and by the restrictions on development on the waterfront side of the CDD site.

- A community member commented via Zoom Q&A that the 5 acres of open space provided by the applicant is inadequate for community use. MC responded that the applicant is developing additional open space belonging to other property owners not counted in the 5 acres, including improvements to National Park Service property and the future City Linear Park.
- MK asked via Zoom Q&A if an east-west road connection to the GW Memorial Parkway if the Pepco substation adjacent to the PRGS site is reduced in size. MC stated that the substation will not be partially or wholly redeveloped with the PRGS development. MS added that an east-west road connection is still to be studied as the development submissions continue and would be located to the south of the Pepco substation.
- Based on a question from MH, staff and the applicant confirmed that initial concept layouts for PRGS blocks A, B and C will be located on the City's PRGS page.
- MH asked the applicant to clarify if site remediation and demolition will occur concurrent with block/building construction. MS1 noted that the applicant is working with the Commonwealth through the voluntary remediation program and is coordinating with the City on a remediation and demolition plan (to be approved after Planning Commission approval of the Infrastructure DSP). MS1 confirmed that site remediation will happen concurrently with construction and excavation activities. MH noted that there may be community concern regarding concurrent construction and remediation.
- MH asked the applicant via Zoom their plan for the securing tenants for the proposed arts anchor spaces. MS1 stated that the development process is in the early stages though said that a variety of arts and innovation tenants and organizations will be located on the CDD site.
- A community member via Zoom Q&A asked if the City could consider acquiring Block A for additional park space.
- KB asked how the applicant will accommodate kayak launch proposed for the Waterfront Park. SB and MS1 responded that the applicant has designed short-term on-street parking spaces adjacent to the proposed kayak launch that would facilitate the transporting of kayaks to the waterfront.

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