

City of Alexandria

## ***Old Town North***

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

**October Meeting Notes**

**[FINAL]**

Wednesday, October 2 at 9:00 a.m.

Hybrid: City Hall, Room 2000 and via Zoom

Recording Link:

[https://alexandria.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=29&clip\\_id=6287](https://alexandria.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=29&clip_id=6287)

### **Committee Members in Attendance**

Steve Kulinski, Chair (SK)

Katherine Bingler (KB)

Zaira Suarez (ZS)

Abbey Oklak (AO)

### **Committee Members with Excused Absence**

Tom Soapes (TS)

### **City Staff in Attendance**

Daniel Welles (DW) P&Z

Michael Swidrak (MS) P&Z

Catherine Miliaras (CM) P&Z

Nathan Imm (NI) P&Z

### **Applicant Members in Attendance**

Ken Wire (KW) Wire-Gill

Megan Rappolt (MR) Wire-Gill

Greg Hoffman (GH) Rooney Properties

Christian Baylor (CB) MA/Architects

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

Ann Shack (AS)

## **INTRODUCTION & OLD BUSINESS**

- The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:04 a.m. as the October 2, 2024 meeting of UDAC.

- The June 2024 UDAC Meeting Notes were approved with one amendment to correct a project site that was erroneously referenced.

## **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>*

### **Third Presentation of the proposed development at the Robin Terminal North site**

- KW, representing the applicant, provided introductions and an overview to the changes the applicant has made to the proposal since the last UDAC presentation.
- Changes to the east block open space, including the addition of a continuous path along the waterfront from Oronoco Street to the RiverRenew Plaza past the north end of the block, and the potential of adding food kiosks to the program, likely by the RiverRenew Plaza.
- KW noted that the existing pier will be removed under a separate permit in 2025 for contamination treatment after AlexRenew is finished with construction of the RiverRenew Plaza.
- KW stated that the applicant is working with the City on the delineation of areas to be dedicated to the City versus public access easement and private ownership for the east block open space, and on the design of the waterfront edge related to maintenance.
- KW noted that access to the circular east block restaurant space will now also be facilitated from the main N. Union Street building entrance based on discussions with City staff.
- CB discussed architecture design updates. CB showed changes of the east side restaurant based on UDAC comments from previous meeting, including the arched metal structure framing the outdoor dining area.
- KW presented the applicant requests for relief from specific standards and guidelines in the Old Town North Urban Design Standards & Guidelines (OTNUDSG):
  - The applicant asked for additional setback for the east building (more than 2-10 feet) based on the location and elevation of the underground garage (Guideline).
  - The applicant asked for relief from the distance of bicycle parking (more than 100 feet from the main east and west building entrances (Guideline).
  - The applicant asked for relief from the minimum required floor-to-ceiling height of the ground-floor restaurant spaces – the applicant asked for relief of 1 foot on the west restaurant spaces due the height limit and to minimize blocked views for

residents in the east building by asking for more than 3 feet of relief for the east restaurant space (Standard).

- The applicant asked for relief from the minimum retail depth of 35 feet for the northern restaurant in the west building due to the location of the loading dock and back-of-house spaces, and the restaurant in the east building due to the need for a back-of-house area and outdoor dining (Standard).
- The applicant requested relief from the minimum 70-percent glazing on the frontage for the west building in front of the restaurant spaces, noting the brick-warehouse design that is carried to the ground level, but also the open, glassy entrances that are inset from the building frontage (Standard).
- The applicant requests 3’6” fences (above the 3-foot maximum) for east building units fronting N. Union Street based on building code requirements (Standard).
- After SK asked for public comment, AS noted her concerns regarding raising the grade of the streets surrounding development and concern for impacts on flooding around adjacent townhouses. AS provided information to staff about floodways.
- KW responded that the applicant is working with FEMA on regrading, and through the redevelopment will be improving stormwater runoff for both sites, especially on the east block with the replacement of the now-demolished warehouse with landscape areas and the proposed building. KW also noted that N. Union Street will be raised up to a foot, but southern corners will remain due to storm drain locations.
- AS also noted concerns about pickup and drop-off areas for the development, which will happen at the mid-block of N. Union Street adjacent to the buildings.
- KW responded to AS, stating that parking will be available in the east building garage for the three restaurants on the east and west and that up to eight pickup and drop-off spaces will be available at the mid-block table between the two buildings on N. Union Street.
- AS also noted potential environmental concerns with site excavations.
- ZS noted her support of the proposed architectural details and improvements to the east restaurant space since the last presentation to UDAC.
- KB noted her largest concern was flooding, asked about insurance or flooding concerns for the redevelopment.
- KW responded to KB, noting that the applicant is lifting the east block out of the floodplain with the base elevation “remapped” in a process requiring FEMA approval.
- AO asked about the east building property setback. KW noted that the applicant requested relief from the OTNUDSG guideline as the applicant interpreted the 2 to 10-

foot setback as an acceptable range, and was setting the east building back generally about 12 feet back from N. Union Street.

- AO noted that she had no issues with the setbacks request and said that the balconies and terraces in front of the N. Union Street-facing units are in the required setback area and that no formal relief from the guideline was needed.
- AO noted she had no issues with the requested bicycle parking to front entrance distance.
- AO noted concern about ground-floor restaurant heights. AO said that she believes the northern restaurant in the west building did not need relief from the requisite standard since due to a second-story, and that the southern restaurant space has a double floor-height entry.
- AO said that the 11-to-12-foot ceiling height for the circular east restaurant space is too short and that the ceiling height limits the future use of the space to a restaurant. AO suggested coordination with mechanical engineers to minimize the clearance needed at the ceiling for utilities.
- AO agrees that open space on the east block is a community benefit, meeting the Old Town North Small Area Plan and OTNUDSG recommendations.
- AO noted that she had no issues with the proposed fence height based on building code requirements.
- AO asked City staff to consider the replacement of motorcoach layby parking and free street parking utilized by service industry workers that will be lost with the redevelopment and redesign of N. Union and Oronoco streets.
- SK said that ideally the east restaurant space would have a taller ceiling, seconding AO's concerns about limiting the future use of the space and the need for coordination with mechanical engineers about maintaining minimal utilities below the ceiling. SK noted that he understood the issue with ramping from second story hyphen space upward to the open space roof deck above the restaurant space reserved for residents.
- CB noted that the east restaurant will be 11'10" from floor to ceiling and that the architecture team will work on minimizing mechanical/electrical at the ceiling level.
- SK asked about 14-foot floor-to-ceiling height for the ground-floor restaurant spaces in the west building. GH said that the applicant that design constraints in terms of permitted building height limit the ground-floor height, and also that the applicant was providing a second story/partial mezzanine at the northern restaurant.
- SK noted that he had no issues with the amount of glass in front of the restaurant spaces of the west building, noting the glass inset entrances to the restaurants at their north and south entrances, respectively.

- AO motioned support for an endorsement of the project, KB seconded. The Committee voted in support of the endorsement letter on a vote of 4-0, with TS not present for this meeting.

**Confirmation of sites to visit for November 2024 walking tour**

- City Staff and the Committee confirmed interest in doing the annual walking tour of Old Town North for the November 2024 meeting, which will take place Wednesday, November 13, 2024 at 9:00 am. Meeting place will be at St. Elmo’s Coffee Shop in the Gables development site in Old Town North.

***The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:01 a.m.***