

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 20, 2024

TO: GLORIA SITTON
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK AND CLERK OF COUNCIL

THRU: KARL W. MORITZ, DIRECTOR
PLANNING & ZONING

FROM: STEPHEN W. KULINSKI, CHAIR
OLD TOWN NORTH URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (UDAC)
FY 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

This is the annual report for the Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC) for Fiscal Year 2024, as required by City Code Section 2-4-7(i)(l).

UDAC “review[s] applications to the City for Site Plan approval and Special Use Permits for compliance with the urban design guidelines for Old Town North when such guidelines are adopted by City Council” per section 6-505 of the Zoning Ordinance. UDAC provides guidance to staff and makes formal recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council on new development proposals that are located within the Old Town North Small Area Plan boundary for project sites that are not also within the City’s Old and Historic Alexandria District.

The guiding document for UDAC is the Urban Standards & Guidelines for Old Town North (UDSG), adopted by Ordinance on September 16, 2017 by City Council. The standards and guidelines in the UDSG are “intended to provide requirements and guidance in written and graphic form to implement the vision” of the Old Town North Small Area Plan. Additional guiding documents for the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) site, the PRGS Urban Design Standards and Guidelines addendum and PRGS Design Excellence Prerequisites and Criteria addendum, were approved by City Council on July 5, 2022.

Website:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/boards-and-commissions/urban-design-advisory-committee-serving-old-town-north>

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Policy and Membership Accomplishments

The Committee is comprised of five (5) members, each permitted to serve two (2)-year terms. Membership of UDAC consists of the following categories:

- Two (2) representatives of the Old Town North business community
- Two (2) residents representing the Old Town North residential community
- One (1) qualified professional skilled in urban design, architecture or landscape architecture

FY2022 Committee Members:

Member	Representation	First Appointed	Term End
Katherine Bingler	Resident	04.09.19	04.30.25
Thomas Soapes (Vice Chair)	Resident	10.05.18	10.31.24
Stephen Kulinski, AIA (Chair)	Business Community	02.10.15	02.28.25
Abbey Oklak, AIA, AICP, LEED AP (Secretary)	Design Professional	09.13.16	12.31.24
Zaira Suarez	Business Community	11.09.22	11.30.24

Staff Liaison:

Daniel Welles, Planning and Zoning, served as the staff liaison to UDAC for the entirety of the Fiscal Year 2024.

Membership and Leadership

Committee membership was remained unchanged over the course of the year. Stephen Kulinski, Thomas Soapes and Abbey Oklak were re-elected as Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, respectively, at the April 11, 2023 City Council Legislative Meeting.

Meetings

UDAC meets monthly at its most frequent, but only meets as needed if no applications have been submitted for review. Additionally, extra meetings may be scheduled as needed. Meetings are generally scheduled for the first or second Wednesday of a given month at 9:00 a.m. in the City Hall Chet and Sabra Avery Conference Room, Room 2000.

UDAC held seven (7) meetings in FY2024, which includes a walking tour of the Old Town North on November 8, 2023. The meetings were scheduled as “hybrid” meetings in City Hall, with most members attending in person but also providing a virtual option to facilitate online viewing and participation in the meetings. Steve Kulinski was excused from the July 2023 meeting, where Tom Soapes acted as Chair of the Committee. Tom Soapes had an excused absence for the September 2023 meeting. Abbey Oklak attended virtually at the July 2023 meeting via Zoom.

The proceedings are summarized below. The full meeting notes for each meeting are located on the UDAC website:

July 26, 2023:

- The applicant for the Ladrey Apartments redevelopment site presented to UDAC for the first time. The applicant and design team introduced the components of the proposal to the Committee and emphasized that the current residents of the existing building which includes a mix of affordable units and senior affordable units were not to be displaced from the new project. The Committee and applicant discussion focused on the proposed pocket park and maintaining sufficient plantings on site to reduce the heat island effect.

September 6, 2023:

- The applicant for the Ladrey Apartments redevelopment site presented to UDAC for the second time. The Committee and applicant discussion focused on how the project has evolved, with more detailed street sections and architectural drawings which were praised by the Committee. The applicant provided additional feedback, requesting that a pickup and drop-off layby be incorporated into the site design.

October 11, 2023:

- The applicant for the Ladrey Apartments redevelopment presented to UDAC for the third time. The Committee and applicant discussion focused on refinements to the South building along North Fairfax Street as well as the accessibility features on Wythe Street and in the parking garage. The Committee endorsed the project on a 5-0 vote in support.
- The applicant for the redevelopment at PRGS site presented the overview and design approach for the DSUPs for Blocks A, B, and C to the Committee. For Block A, the Committee provided feedback requesting the design be revised to include better variation in height and design of the overall façade plane.
- For Block B, the Committee and applicant discussion focused on open space and site design. The Committee requested that revise the site design to create more of an urban feel and provide more information on the proposed open space areas.
- For Block C, the Committee and applicant discussion focused on how the proposed buildings for Block C interact with the surrounding context of Old Town North and the Waterfront.
- The Committee and Staff reviewed the walking tour route for the annual UDAC walking tour scheduled on November 8, 2023.

November 8, 2023:

- The November 2023 UDAC meeting was when the annual walking tour of Old Town North took place. Staff, the Committee, and members of the public met at St. Elmo's Coffee. Development sites visited included the Gables, 500 Montgomery Street, the Muse, the Venue, and the Alexan Florence.

February 7, 2024:

- The applicant for the Robinson Terminal North redevelopment presented to UDAC for the first time. The Committee and applicant discussion focused on the inclusion of historic

interpretive elements within the proposal as well as how the proposal will meet the Old Town North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (OTNUDSG) as it develops.

March 6, 2024:

- The applicant for the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) Open Space DSUP to UDAC for the first time. The Committee and applicant discussion focused on incorporating open space elements related to the waterfront, such as a kayak launch area and elements for fishing. The applicant received additional input from the Committee requesting the inclusion of more spaces for recreational activity and urged the applicant not to make the open space areas too similar to the nearby waterfront parks.
- UDAC held its annual election, where all five members reprised their current role for another term.

June 12, 2024:

- The applicant for the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) Open Space DSUP to UDAC for the second time. The Committee and applicant discussion focused on how the proposal addresses flood mitigation issues, refinements to the proposed open space and drop-off area at the east end of the site near Oronoco Street, and if the applicant has coordinated with AlexRenew.

GOALS FOR THE COMING YEAR

1. Continue to standardize the UDAC process for hybrid meetings that prioritize in-person meetings but allow for an adequate virtual participation option.
2. Prepare UDAC members for review of projects tied to the PRGS site, including the utilization of the UDSG Addendum and Design Excellence Standards for each project as applicable.
3. Continue to plan a yearly walking tour of previous UDAC-reviewed development sites.
4. Discuss, present and share ideas on urban design principles with UDAC members, including at Committee meetings.

ATTACHMENTS

1. FY2024 Attendance Sheet

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING ATTENDANCE REPORT**

JULY 1, 2023 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2024

CHAIRPERSON: STEPHEN W. KULINSKI, AIA

MEMBER'S NAME	July 2023	September 2023	October 2023	November 2023	February 2024	March 2024	June 2024
Abbey Oklak	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zaira Suarez	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Thomas Soapes	X	E	X	X	X	X	X
Katherine Auth Binger	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stephen Kulinski	E	X	X	X	X	X	X

INDICATE: X - FOR PRESENT

E - FOR EXCUSED

U - FOR UNEXCUSED

LIST OF THOSE WHO DID NOT ATTEND 75% OF MEETINGS:

N/A

**FORM MUST BE SIGNED BY CHAIRPERSON
(APPROVED)**

Stephen Kulinski (Chairperson)