

May 17, 2023

Re: 301 N Fairfax Project – Opposed to Demolition request and Concept Plan

BAR#2023-00161 OHAD

Request for demolition/encapsulation at 301 N Fairfax Street Applicant: 301 N Fairfax Project Owner LLC

BAR#2023-00162 OHAD Request for concept review at 301 N Fairfax Street Applicant: 301 N Fairfax Project Owner LLC

Dear Mr. Spencer and Members of the BAR:

I am writing to express my opposition to both the demolition of the existing building at 301 N Fairfax St. and the proposed replacement concept plan.

I disagree with the conclusion of the BAR staff that the existing building, which was approved in 1975, has no inherent value to the Old and Historic Alexandria District. I believe that an argument can be made that the building, due to its smaller and less intrusive nature, helps protect the historic and residential character of the town. By being less massive, it contributes to preserving the historic character of the town (see #5 and #6 Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B)).

Although the building itself may not be architecturally unique, the BAR approved its design and construction in 1975 as it was then deemed to fit well within the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

Building demolition is a highly destructive process and may not align with the goals of creating an Eco-City. I find it highly improper to approve any demolition permit before a concept plan has been approved. While I understand that the decisions are currently separate, I believe that the concept plan should be approved first.

However, what concerns me even more than demolition is the submitted design concept for the new building that would replace the current one. The proposed building appears to be a massive, monolithic structure that would overshadow the adjacent residential neighborhoods. As far as I can tell, there are no open spaces, courtyards, or shaded setbacks along the streets to soften its impact on the surrounding area. Three stories were considered high enough in 1975, and it should still be the appropriate height today.

Without more detailed models showing the actual elevations, density, and floor area ratio (FAR), it is difficult to **fully** comprehend how this building will impact the neighborhood and the historic district. However, based on a very incomplete staff report, it is evident that this proposed building is not appropriately scaled for the existing residential areas surrounding it. There are of course many other issues of concern to the community beyond just its architectural appearance and size.

Over the past few years, I have grown extremely disappointed in the BAR's approach to historic preservation. [It appears that the BAR feels politically compelled to approve large, massive structures with no green space.](#) The focus on expanding the town's tax

base seems to have overtaken the importance of preserving the historic character of Parker Gray and the Old and Historic Alexandria Districts. [The BAR's failure to actively defend the preservation of garden-style apartments, which are emblematic of many of our older public housing communities is also very unfortunate.](#)

While there were indeed warehouses in Colonial Alexandria, their prior existence should not serve as a justification for building taller and more massive structures like the one proposed for 301 N Fairfax St.

I believe that the BAR staff needs to work much more closely with the community before bringing concepts, such as the one offered by the applicant for 301 N Fairfax Street, before the Board for their initial review. The proposed concept plan lacks the support of the community for many reasons, which you will hear more about tonight.

In closing, I urge the BAR not to approve this poorly developed concept plan and instead send it back to the staff with instructions to work closely with the community to develop a much more acceptable concept that better aligns with the town's lower skyline, residential neighborhoods, and history.

Sincerely,

Andrew Macdonald
Chair, Environmental Council of Alexandria (ECA)
Former Vice Mayor, Alexandria
217 N Columbus St
Alexandria, VA 22314

From: [Scott Corzine](#)
To: [Lanning J Blaser](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Fwd: Concerned Citizens' Position Paper for Tonight's BAR Meeting
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 1:34:34 PM
Attachments: [Position Paper of Old Town Neighbors to the BAR.pdf](#)

You don't often get email from scorzine54@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Lanning, thank you for arranging for the attached submission to be distributed to BAR members and staff prior to tonight's BAR meeting. We understand that it will be made part of the public record in the 301 N. Fairfax matter.

Do you mind confirming receipt of this email?

Thanks so much!

Scott Corzine
Old Town Neighbors

DISCLAIMER: This message was sent from outside the City of Alexandria email system. DO NOT CLICK any links or download attachments unless the contents are from a trusted source.

May 17, 2023

To: Members and Staff of the Board of Architectural Review

From: Old Town Neighbors (over 50 concerned citizens living in and around Old Town)

Subject: 301 N Fairfax Demolition Permit and Concept Plan
 Old and Historic Alexandria District
 CD: Commercial Downtown

In addition to comments that will be made by some of our members at the May 17 BAR Meeting, our group respectfully offers the BAR this summary of our concerns about and opposition to the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and the proposed Concept design for 301 N. Fairfax Street. We request that this be entered into the public record for consideration, as appropriate, by the Board of Architectural Review, Transportation Commission, Environmental Policy Commission, Planning Commission, City Council, and any other relevant government bodies.

[Docket # 15, BAR #2023-00161, Permit to Demolish/Capsulate](#)

Incorrect Application of Standards

The BAR staff recommends approval of the demolition request as submitted by the applicant, as outlined in Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B). On page 5, the staff report summarizes their assessment of the ordinance and states that none of the standards for denying demolition were met, and therefore, the building can be demolished. We disagree. The current building at 301 N. Fairfax was considered by the BAR in 1975 when it was built to meet at least parts of conditions #5 and #6 below:

(5)	Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?	No
(6)	Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?	No

Has the BAR reviewed the BAR hearing notes from that time to see what changes were made to the plan then to gain BAR approval? While it may not be historically significant, the current building was approved because it was deemed "compatible" in 1975 with the character and

scale of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. On these grounds, we urge the BAR to deny a demolition permit.

Due Process Problem with Demolition Decision

From the staff report: “III. ANALYSIS

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing office building on the site and replace it with a new multi-family building which the BAR will review during the Concept Review. As a reminder, the BAR should not consider the potential replacement building when evaluating the criteria for a Permit to Demolish.”

We believe the BAR should have to consider the potential replacement before approving a demolition permit. Demolishing the current building without first considering the proposed replacement concept is wrong. We challenge this, understanding that there is either an ordinance or administrative practice stating otherwise. It is in this context that we argue that the demolition docket item be deferred until a concept plan has been fully approved by the BAR. Regardless of how the BAR is technically approaching this, all development decisions in Alexandria are ultimately political in nature. Thus, projects like this should be approved in a process that values the views of the affected community.

Ten (10) Grounds for the BAR to Oppose Demolition Until Reasonable Conditions are Met

1. We urge the BAR to not exacerbate the poor city planning in 1975 with equally poor 2023 planning. While we agree that the existing building is unattractive and currently unsuited to our Old Town Historic neighborhood, the BAR can be courageous and correct the 1977 zoning mistake that led to its construction and reverse the failed zoning policies of the 70s’ by not repeating them in 2023/25 with a new, even less appropriate building of the massive scale proposed. We ask that demolition be opposed until this conundrum is reviewed and considered.
2. The BAR should oppose the developer’s request for a zoning change to residential mixed use from commercial, as it seems to be the intended basis for building to a Floor Area Ratio of 2.5 instead of the current 1.5 FAR, enabling the developer to “cram” a building mass far too large for either the lot or the Historic old Town neighborhood. Residents plan to oppose this variance at each opportunity throughout the civic process.
3. The BAR should oppose demolition until it compels the developer to submit an Environmental Impact Statement addressing asbestos, sewer/stormwater, vermin, and other environmental impacts of demolition.
4. The BAR should oppose demolition until the developer submits an acceptable plan for enshrouding/encapsulating the site to baffle that noise, because sustained levels of very loud noise will be created from demolition and pile driving. We who work professionally from our homes will be dramatically affected for months.
5. The BAR should oppose demolition due to the vibrations that will damage our 18th, 19th and 20th century foundations, walls, roofs, until the developer posts a bond

appropriate in size to pay for widespread structural, functional, and facade damage that will result from massive subterranean excavation, pile-driving, etc.

6. The BAR should oppose demolition, which will generate massive dirt/dust clouds, until the developer proposes an acceptable dust reduction and home clean-up plan at developer's expense.
7. The BAR should oppose demolition until the developer agrees to limit work to Monday-Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM; tourism will suffer if Saturday work is permitted, as proposed.
8. The BAR should oppose demolition until the developer proposes an acceptable plan to (A) ensure workers take up NO local parking spots during the work week, and (B) route trucks and equipment in the least impactful way, since Queen is already the overcrowded route of choice for tourist and large tour bus traffic, and since Fairfax is now a Dash bus boulevard.
9. The BAR should oppose demolition until the developer submits an acceptable site safety plan with attractive perimeter barriers, rodent and cockroach control, glass and sharp metal removal, and grading/surfacing that is safe for dogs to be walked on and children to play on – these activities will be inevitable on what will be a large empty lot.
10. The BAR should oppose demolition until the developer coordinates with Xfinity, Verizon and the water/sewer authority to ensure no pipes or any underground cables, wiring or fiber will be severed or damaged during the process. Poor connectivity currently impacts those who work from home and public safety (poor/no signal strength obviates ring doorbells so we cannot see who's our doors or who is routinely stealing packages left on our front steps.) Cell-based 911 calls are routinely re-routed to MD and DC with a sketchy record of being transferred back to Alexandria Police, another public safety issue that will be exacerbated by any damage to communications from demolition.

[Docket # 16, BAR #2023-00161](#)

City of Alexandria, Virginia MEMORANDUM DATE: May 4, 2023 TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Architectural Review FROM: Historic Preservation Staff SUBJECT: Concept Review of 301 North Fairfax Street.

The BAR should reject the developer's proposal because it is wholly out of character with the very historical significance of Old Town that makes it the civic jewel that is so desirable to live in and visit; it will endanger the essence of Historic Old Town, as proposed. This is not the new "HISTORIC" Old Town that we want to retain the wonderful character of the neighborhood and attract tourists – ironically when this meeting is taking place in May, designated as *Preservation Month in Historic Alexandria!* The proposed structure does not conform with the size and architectural character of the surrounding homes, some much older than others.

The BAR should oppose the proposal because the site is the first of three sites in the block bordered by Fairfax, Queen, Lee and Princess that were terrible architectural mistakes when approved and built in the 1970's, are each currently underutilized, and are likely to meet that same fate as the 301 N. Fairfax building. This will inexorably lead to tragic hyper development of a block bordered on three side by beautiful, historic townhouses and so close to our waterfront that attracts visitors and tourists that spend money here. The Bar should oppose the proposal until a "whole-of-block plan" is developed and approved with residential and real estate input, ensuring out-of-site service access, parking and greenspace solution that "works" among each of these sites that are so tempting to developers. The currently proposed small green open space is tucked behind the proposed building out of site from neighbors. Private roof top gardens and terraces that are proposed are not publicly accessible open space and do not reduce mass.

The BAR should oppose the plan because the building scale, height, footprint, style, structure, and materials are fundamentally incompatible with the surrounding residential character and home scale. It is not an appropriate transitional solution for the Historic Old Town site – regardless of zoning changes and waivers the developer has requested (adding a 4th story in return for making only 2 affordable housing units available out of 48; poor open space and ground cover plan; and requesting a commercially zoned site re-zoned to residential mixed use in order to move from a 1.5 Floor Area Ratio to a much more crowded 2.5 FAR). Architecturally, the proposal should be unacceptable to the BAR:

- The current design changes from one style to another, right next door to each other. A good building has a central theme, not a set of disconnected themes.
- The design has no Base, Middle, or Top – an architectural test for building symmetry.
- The design has no sense of movement from top to bottom, side to side.
- None of the classical architectural features of this historical neighborhood are reflected in the design.
- The design is urban brutalism – a far cry from 18th and 19th century Old Town homes and designs.

The BAR should oppose the plan for 4 stories plus 6,210 square feet of rooftop decks and compel the developer to build no higher than 3 stories. No shade study was done, and the extra approximately 23.5 feet of height would block eastern sun from an entire block of Fairfax homeowners. The proposed 4th floor adds approximately 14.2'; then the developer adds an additional 9' (for 3' rail, 6' privacy screens between rooftop terraces, and 9' mechanical and stair enclosure). The building dominates the rest of the neighborhood from 200 block of Fairfax viewing north, and 300 block of Queen viewing east, as the developer's own renderings clearly reveal.

We strongly support efforts to increase affordable housing in the city, but not the permission the City Council gives to developers to increase density (the 4th floor in this case) in the historic district in exchange for minimal affordable housing units (only two in this case).

The BAR should oppose the concept without requiring "wedding cake" setbacks for each floor, so the building is less imposing, not just the top floor. The BAR should oppose the concept until the proposal is re-architected it to look like townhomes, not a brutalist structure towering over 2-story historic townhouses. The BAR should oppose the concept until the proposal is re-

architected with variable brick colors; lighter colors in upper floors and darker at street level better complement the neighboring townhouses and appear less imposing.

The BAR should oppose the developer's use of fabricated cement for a portion of the walls. Windows planned for the Queen-facing "massing" are large, set between modular brick piers that are commercial looking with the appearance of an office building, not a residence that blends with historic townhomes.

The BAR should oppose the concept without the requirement for a generous number of protective trees, planted at a size that immediately provides screening. The plan calls for grass and trees, but these should not be "sapling" size, but medium size, so they immediately provide adequate cover and shade.

The BAR should oppose the concept because there is no real discussion in the staff report of open space or setbacks facing streets. We think this is a critical concept review issue. Open space is an important issue city wide. This proposal results in the loss of open space in the area without a proportional increase elsewhere. This project has little open space, and the small courtyard is only available in the back of the building and hardly visible to neighbors.

The BAR should oppose the concept until a re-design locates off-street capacity for the daily disruptive activities of trash collection, deliveries, services, move-in/move outs. Currently all this activity will either occur streetside on Queen, on a 25' loading zone, further disrupting Queen St. traffic and parking, or will somehow take place in an underground space crammed into the subterranean lot already crowded with 68 spaces. If this activity occurs on Queen Street, then 48 move-ins means boxes and furniture stacked for a full day each; move-outs mean box springs and mattresses left on Queen for eventual pick-up – right in front of two restaurants. If condo owners are permitted to rent, sublet and offer their apartments as Airbnb's, we can expect even more disruption of our otherwise stable neighborhood. Is this transience what revering Historic Old Town looks like?

The BAR should oppose the concept because the parking implications for current residents will be a nightmarish, disruptive, unsustainable, and massively impactful to current residents and visitors, tourists. The BAR should oppose the concept if condo owners are not required to park in one of 68 underground spaces, because they will elect to park for free on our streets. There is hardly room for our cars today; 48-96 new cars competing with current residents, weekday workers, and weekend tourists will force current residents to move to expensive parking lots and devalue our homes. Condo residents must not be granted Zone 2 parking permits; parking enforcement must be rigorous, so they will not take all the zoned street parking capacity.

Forty-seven (47) of the 68 planned parking spaces are designated for compact cars; those condo owners with conventional sized car will be unable to use these. Labeling 69% of the parking spaces as "compact" is a cynical way for the developer to deliver required parking, by simply wishing that residents will have small cars. The result of packing standard sized cars into tiny spots will be car denting and dinging. By compelling the developer to reduce the building height by 1 story, this will reduce the parking places; accordingly. Then, the City should compel the developer to re-plan the remaining spaces for full sized cars, not for the fantasy of compacts. The BAR should oppose the concept until the City agrees to compel condo owners to

buy/rent/use the underground lot, or alternatively compel the developer to provide 20-30 free reserved full size spaces there for current neighborhood residents to use when if are forced from parking on our own streets. If this concept-driven issue is not adequately addressed, we can expect to see Manhattan-style constant space hunting around city blocks until spaces open, especially during weekends.

The BAR should oppose the concept because the developer's traffic study is terribly flawed and equates traffic of the current barely utilized office structure to that of the new structure. 48 full time residences will produce multiple ingresses/egresses per unit per day (compared to a small handful of office worker entering and exiting the office building once or twice is a full day). The developer asserts that current AM trips are 56 and PM trips are 30 and that new trips will be 104 in the AM and 46 in the PM. Our view is that 48 units with an average of 3 residents each, EACH of whom make at least 4 entrances and exits per day = 576 total daily entrances/exits, adding stressful new density to the neighborhood.

The BAR should oppose the concept because the traffic clogging implications will be epic for Queen and Fairfax, primarily, and adjacent streets secondarily. Fairfax is already an over-clogged bus boulevard, and Queen is the preferred route for tourists, Farmers' Market shoppers, and is clogged by massive tour busses turning southbound onto Fairfax from Queen. It will only get worse, especially with Queen streetside service activity referenced earlier that will take place at this proposed building. Assuming that condo residents will predominately use the bus or bikes is completely unsupportable and a naïve miscalculation.

The BAR should oppose the concept because public safety issues from the inadequacy of current communications will be exacerbated, and residential telecom capacity and bandwidth will be affected. We are told by Alexandria Police that Alexandria 911 calls currently get routed to MD and DC due to poor communications infrastructure; this public safety issue will only worsen with the proposed density. Current telecom service in the neighborhood (Verizon, Xfinity, et al) are awful – bad signal strength and limited bandwidth render video doorbells unworkable (a public safety issue because we cannot see who's at the door and can film the burglars who regularly steal packages from our doorsteps.) Telephone and conference calls that break up, and TV/Internet to badly pixilate; this will be exacerbated with the density of new condo owners, so the BAR should oppose the concept until the City forces an upgrade by the large monopoly telecom providers as a condition of development. The developer's promise to put all wiring underground might be aesthetically beneficial, but does not address capacity, operational continuity and quality, and the process of burying fiber, cables and electric transformers will be highly disruptive with excavations along Fairfax and Queen streets.

We close this memorandum urging the BAR to compel the developer to re-design his concept, make the building design smaller, both vertically and horizontally. Add open space. Add setbacks along streets. Provide a detailed physical model showing how this building would fit into the neighborhood, and not overwhelm the scale and historic character of the neighborhoods which surround it.

Our group thanks the members and staff of the BAR for the opportunity to raise our voices, protect our Historic Old Town neighborhood, and propose what we consider to be reasonable and supportable changes to the proposed development of 301 N. Fairfax Street.

Letter 2
List of Citizens.

Scott Corzine
Anna Bergman
Gebe Martinez
Kevin Johnson
Jana McKeag
Tom Foley
Michael Maibach
Mary & Bob Mann
Enid Borden
Marti Kubik
Sally Hitchcock
Aaron Szabo
Katie King
Paul Brannan
Dennis Jameson
Cassie & Tim Vanderslice
Barry Kessel
Ed Salt
Yvonne Callahan
Mary Ann Way
Chris Brown
Pam & Tim Chase
Tom
Nick Carossi
Douglas Olsen
Maggie Coots & Zach
Ann & Mark Goedde
Tom Lubnow
Krista Oberlander
Sally Buikema
Neil Hammerstrom
Ellen Mosher
Terry Maiden

Letter 2
List of Citizens.

Pawnee Maiden
Pamela Callahan
Gincy Carosi
Richard Hunt
Marianne Caulfield
Bob Caulfield
Alda Krinsman
Allan Krinsman
Kathleen Jones
Virginia Agee
Victoria Varvariv Markowicz
Lisa Martin
Pat & Don Korb
Nanci Petit
Jeanne Theismann
Andrew Macdonald
Al Krinsman
Nancy Petit
Carole Sieling
Mary Manning
Davey Talbot
Brian Morris
Board of Founders Park Assn.

To: Members of the Board of Architecture Review

From: Ellen Mosher

324 N. Saint Asaph Street

Date: 5/17/23

Re: 5/17/23 BAR Hearing

DOCKET ITEM #16 - BAR #2023-00162 OHAD Concept Review at 301 North Fairfax Street

Please do not recommend the height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of the proposed residential project because the project does not comply with BAR standards and does not comply with the 50 ft. height limit in the Old and Historic District.

- The proposed height exceeds the Height District Map height limit of 50 feet in the Old and Historic District, and therefore, not allowed.
- The scale and mass are boxy, dense and lacks architectural features to break up the massing. The applicant stated it was “Palazzo” inspired architecture but this institutional design does not relate to the existing neighborhood, and therefore not compatible with the neighborhood of charming 2-3 story townhouses in the Old and Historic District.
- The general architectural character lacks Old Town architectural features and is not compatible with the neighborhood of charming 2-3 story townhouses in the Old and Historic District, and does not comply with BAR standards.

For your review, attached are photographs of the neighborhood 2-3 story townhouses that show the varying rooflines, varying heights, and a variety of architectural features that are characteristic of Old Town. Also attached are two Old Town residential development projects located at 400 N. Washington Street and 320 S. West Street that are compatible in Old Town neighborhoods. Hopefully, this information is helpful.

Thank you for reviewing this information.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District Townhouses Across the Street and Within one Block of Project Site.



301 N. Fairfax Street Concept 2 Design:

- is not compatible with existing neighborhood character.
- is not compatible with existing neighborhood height, mass and scale.
- building height, mass & scale dominates the neighborhood of 2-3 story townhouses.



Figure 4: Proposed Queen Street Elevation



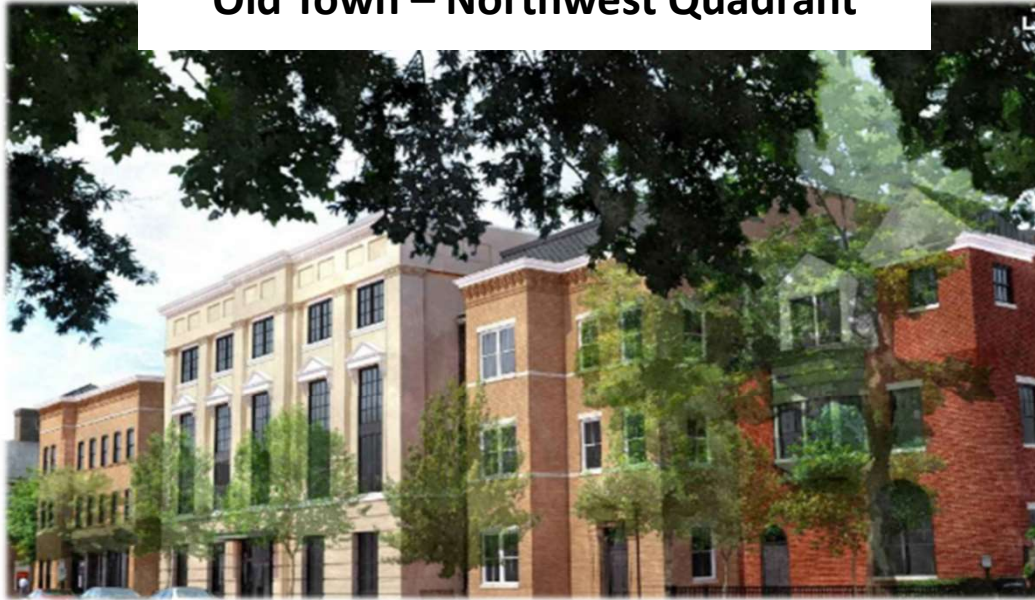
Figure 5: Proposed North Fairfax Street Elevation



Figure 8: Proposed east elevation

EXAMPLE OF DEVELOPMENT COMPATIBLE WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Sunrise Project 400 N. Washington Street Old Town – Northwest Quadrant



EXAMPLE OF DEVELOPMENT COMPATIBLE WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Duke Condos
320 S. West Street
Old Town - Southwest Quadrant



THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District Townhouses Across the Street and Within one Block of Project Site.



May 17, 2023

Subject: **Docket Item #16 - BAR #2023-00162 - 301 N. Fairfax Street**

Dear Chairman Spencer and Members of the BAR:

The proposed redevelopment for 301 N. Fairfax Street site is inappropriately large, blockish, proposed too close to and without enough relief along the public sidewalk, with an unsightly open garage entrance door at the edge of the public sidewalk.

First - Rather than the large multifamily building proposed, as a first course of action, the BAR should advise the applicant to pursue development with appropriately scaled townhouses, with rear-loaded parking, and appropriate building breaks and ground-level open space provided in the breaks between the buildings and front yard setbacks along the street,.

Second - If the BAR and other governing bodies determine a multifamily building is appropriate at this location, the project should be revised to take a design approach similar to that pursued in the redevelopment of the former Postmasters building on the 1000 block of N. Royal Street, northeast of the intersection of N. Royal and First streets. To meet such a design, the current design would need to be revised in AT LEAST the following ways:

- Break the building mass into smaller, more appropriately scaled, discreet massing blocks designed with varying heights, and design elements such as porches and bay windows;
- Provide setbacks along the public streets, particularly along N. Pitt Street, with private landscaped open spaces to diminish the mass and scale and soften the appearance of the building(s) that are proposed to be twice the height of the historic townhouses that form the majority of the context, historic character and environs in which the development is proposed; and,
- Along the east property line, setback the building approximately 25 feet to the west to provide a separate off-street drive aisle in the middle of the block to accommodate off-street loading for refuse collection and moving and delivery vehicles, and to relocate the below grade parking entrance to the interior of the block, away from the public street and sidewalk.

Third – The building should be setback along the north property line to enable installation of windows, including bay windows, cornices, and other architectural features that will visually breakup the proposed blank wall, and will provide some architectural character to the design that will aid the building to fit more appropriately with the small scale historic context.

Sincerely,

Stephen Milone, AICP

907 Prince Street

Attached - Four street view photographs of the southern, middle, northern sections of the referenced development at 1023 N. Royal Street, along with the off-street parking entrance, loading, and drive aisle.

Google Maps 399 First St

Alexandria, Virginia

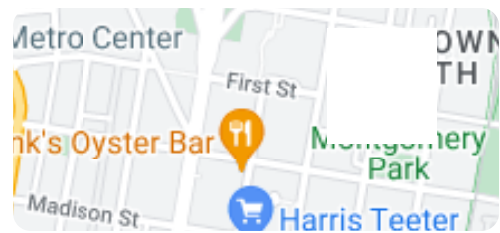
Google Street View

Jul 2022

See more dates



Image capture: Jul 2022 © 2023 Google



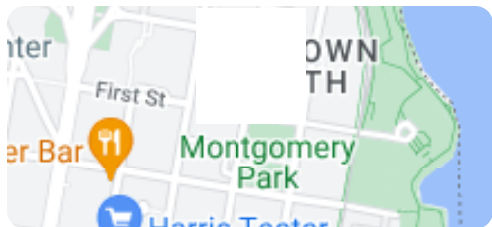
Google Maps 1023 N Royal St

Alexandria, Virginia
Google Street View
Jul 2022 See more dates



Google

Image capture: Jul 2022 © 2023 Google



Google Maps 1023 N Royal St

Alexandria, Virginia

Google Street View

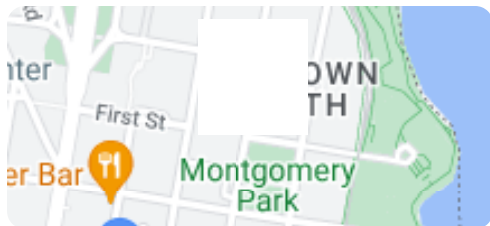
Jul 2022

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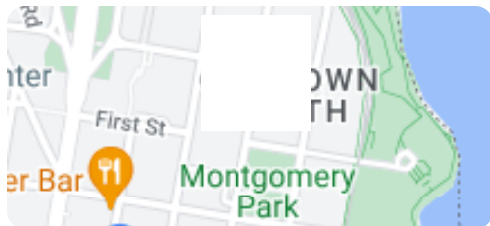
Google Maps 1025 N Royal St

Alexandria, Virginia
Google Street View

Jul 2022 See more dates



Image capture: Jul 2022 © 2023 Google



May 17, 2023

Good evening. My name is Allan Krinsman and I live at 314 North Fairfax Street, so my residence is directly impacted by this proposal. I'm here to respectfully request, notwithstanding the staff report, that the BAR find the proposed high-density multifamily building, in its present form, to be inconsistent with the density, height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of the low-density residential townhouses in the neighborhood surrounding 301 North Fairfax. The only reason that this proposal appears in the report to be acceptable is because of an incorrect and inappropriate, apples to oranges comparison of a high-density residential building to two bulking, massive 1970s commercial office buildings to the east and north of the site, both of which are living on borrowed time. Questionable decisions from the 1970s should not control what happens for the next 50 years at 301 North Fairfax. A proper and appropriate, apples to apples comparison, would have been comparing the height, scale, mass, and character of the proposed high density building to the low-density townhouses that surround the 300 block of north Fairfax and would have found the proposed building to be inconsistent. Look at the 400 block of north Fairfax, just one block up. The roughly 48 units there occupy a full city block. The proposal for 301 north Fairfax would squeeze the same number of units, 48, into one quarter of a city block, making the density 4 times as much as the townhouses just one block away. Looking at the other low-density townhouses on the blocks surrounding 301 north Fairfax and at many of the blocks beyond gives the same result. The homes are almost all 3 story townhouses with some form of street-level parking. None of them have below ground parking to accommodate the owners' cars. I know that developers are always going to propose designs with the highest possible density and always want their projects fast-tracked. I know that Alexandria favors growth in new residential units. I get that and I'm in favor of responsible growth and affordable housing. But that doesn't mean that designs for high density residential buildings that worked for the Old Town North Small Area Plan or in other Alexandria neighborhoods should automatically carry over to Old and Historic Alexandria. Location always matters. 301 north Fairfax is 2 blocks from King Street, 2 blocks from Founders Park and 1 ½ blocks from the Carlyle House and many other historic 18th and 19th century houses in the heart of Old Town. Any replacement building at 301 north Fairfax must relate in mass, scale and character to the surrounding residential uses. The proposed building fails that requirement. In its current form, the proposed building needs more than a few cosmetic changes. Substantial revisions are needed and other possibilities for 301 North Fairfax should be considered by the city. Thank you very much for your time.