

11
1-20-24

Re: 301 North Fairfax

Brian Branton, 307 N. Washington St, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation

My name is Brian Branton, and I am representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation.

Today, I stand before you to express our opposition to this proposed development as it threatens to disrupt what makes our community so special.

First and foremost, the project does not meet the applicable standards for approval. It ignores the current zoning ordinance restricting new residential development to a 1.25 FAR by asking it be doubled to 2.5 so they can build to the edge of the site. Hoffman wants you to re-zone the site to high density within a medium-density area.

The resulting 4-story structure would simply overwhelm the average 2.5 stories of the surrounding homes and businesses in the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

Second, it violates Section 4-206 (A)(2)(a) of Article IV of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance by asking for a 5 ft. setback, instead of the required 16-foot setback for new multi-family dwellings, which would slash its ground cover requirement by 33%.

And most importantly, it ignores the architecture of the community with a building design that's devoid of any respectful reference to our colonial and 19th century architectural history. It also doesn't accommodate the alley required by the Waterfront Small Area Plan, and it violates Design Guidelines in the Old & Historic District and the Waterfront Small Area Plan – both of which, need I remind you, this site is subject to.

Our city deserves respect for its heritage, and a development of this magnitude would overshadow the very essence that makes Old Town so distinct. Historic Preservation is not just about maintaining the physical structures; it is about preserving the soul of our community. Each building, each cobblestone, each gas lantern contributes to the narrative that has shaped our town. Introducing a development that blatantly contradicts this established architectural aesthetic risks diluting the authenticity that makes our city and this neighborhood such a great place to live and visit.

The Historic Alexandria Foundation is not against development. We can still achieve our density and affordable housing goals with a re-designed 301 N. Fairfax. All of us in opposition would welcome an appropriately designed building with an additional 3rd floor setback, required tree coverage, and a restored alleyway.

Our historic preservation district isn't just a collection of buildings; it's a commitment to safeguarding a cultural heritage. Once lost, this distinctive character cannot be reclaimed. We stand at a crossroads where the decision being made today will echo through the generations. Let us not sacrifice our town's soul for short-term gains.

Again, on behalf of the Historic Alexandria Foundation, I urge you to deny the SUP that so dramatically expands the FAR until the plan accommodates the features I've described and becomes architecturally respectful to our Old & Historic neighborhood. Let us decide wisely today, for once lost, the charm of our town is lost forever.

CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

From: Chris Brown <chris@ytcadvisors.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 11, 2024 10:24 AM
To: CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Application for rezoning and various special exceptions for 301 North Fairfax Street property

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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My name is Christopher Brown and I have lived at 226 North Fairfax Street for over thirty years. I want to express my strong objection to the request for a rezoning and various special exceptions for the property located at 301 North Fairfax Street. My 1894 home lies just over 100 feet from the proposed development at 301 N Fairfax Street.

Having lived in Old Town for such a long period of time I have seen many changes in our community. Most of them positive. I am not opposed to change.

Having been a neighbor of the existing office building for over 30 years I have grown accustomed to it and have developed a certain fondness for the benign building and use. However, I am not opposed to the change of use from commercial to residential.

Having been associated with the development industry for over 40 years I am not opposed to development.

But I am **STRONGLY OPPOSED** to the density of this project and specifically to the request for an FAR of 2.5 for a residential building. That density forces a massing on this one lot that completely covers the lot and is out of scale with the surrounding dwellings, including my own. That density is inappropriate in the Old and Historic District.

I would urge you to deny the request allowing for an increase in the FAR to 2.5 regardless of your actions on the balance of the application. I think you will find that the root cause of many of the issues and objections of the community are based upon this unreasonable request and will fade away with the more reasonable by right FAR of 1.25

Thank you,

Christopher W. Brown

226 North Fairfax Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

703 472-1612

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CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

From: Kaitlyn B. <borysiewicz24@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 12, 2024 3:44 PM
To: CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Support+Docket+Item+11+(301+N.+Fairfax+redevelopment)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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I am writing in support of efforts to rezone 301 N. Fairfax Street in Old Town. I am baffled by arguments that an obsolete, unused building is more beneficial for Alexandria than expanding the supply of available housing. This indirect effort to keep people out of Alexandria will hurt us in the future.

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Statement for the Public Record - Waterfront Small Area Plan Restrictions on 301 N. Fairfax Street Proposal

The developer of 301 N. Fairfax cannot escape the clear goals and requirements for new development for sites in the Waterfront Small Area Plan ("Plan"). The City Council must enforce these requirements by denying the Special Use Permit that would permit a scale and density incompatible with the Plan.

As the map (page 4, Figure 2 of the Plan) shows on the right, the 301 N. Fairfax property clearly lies within the Waterfront Plan's boundary.

The Plan must be followed, regardless of whether it is an "overlay" plan or not, as the Planning Commission staff continues to irrelevantly assert, because the Waterfront Plan formally amends the Master Plan:

"...through this Plan, the City is amending portions of the Old Town Small Area Plan....and, therefore, amending the City's Comprehensive Master Plan." Page 10.

One page 24, the Plan "*...recommends that any private development in the planning area be subject to design standards and guidelines approved for the waterfront... Any new development must be compatible with the goals of this Plan.*" This clearly subjects the Hoffman proposal to the requirements and principles of the Waterfront Plan.

In case it is still unclear, the City of Alexandria Virginia Master Plan dated March 2022 displays a map of all small area plans and all overlay plans which (a) shows that 301 N. Fairfax lies within both the Old Town Plan and the Waterfront Small Area Plan, and (b) that documents for overlay plans that "*Overlay plans are supplemental plans and amendments to existing Small Area Plans. Properties located within the boundaries are subject to the requirements and regulations per the overlay plan.*" (See Appendix A.)

The Waterfront Plan uniquely encourages input from citizens for new development there, as captured on page 10, which provides that "*With the Plan...the citizenry is given the opportunity to help guide that redevelopment...*" This position statement is part of that citizen guidance.

The Plan lays out why new development in the Waterfront District must restore historical elements that were once there – "*The Waterfront Small Area Plan is an opportunity to add back history that's been missing from the waterfront for too long.*" Page vii.

On page 15 the Plan identifies historic alleys as one example of those historic features targeted for restoration, where it "*...also adopts the recommendations for historic interpretation in nearly every location along the waterfront through such actions as.... recreating historic alleyways...*"

"The Plan's principles for the public realm are as follows: ...View corridors, when possible, will be strengthened. Alleys should be retained or reopened where feasible..." Page 18.

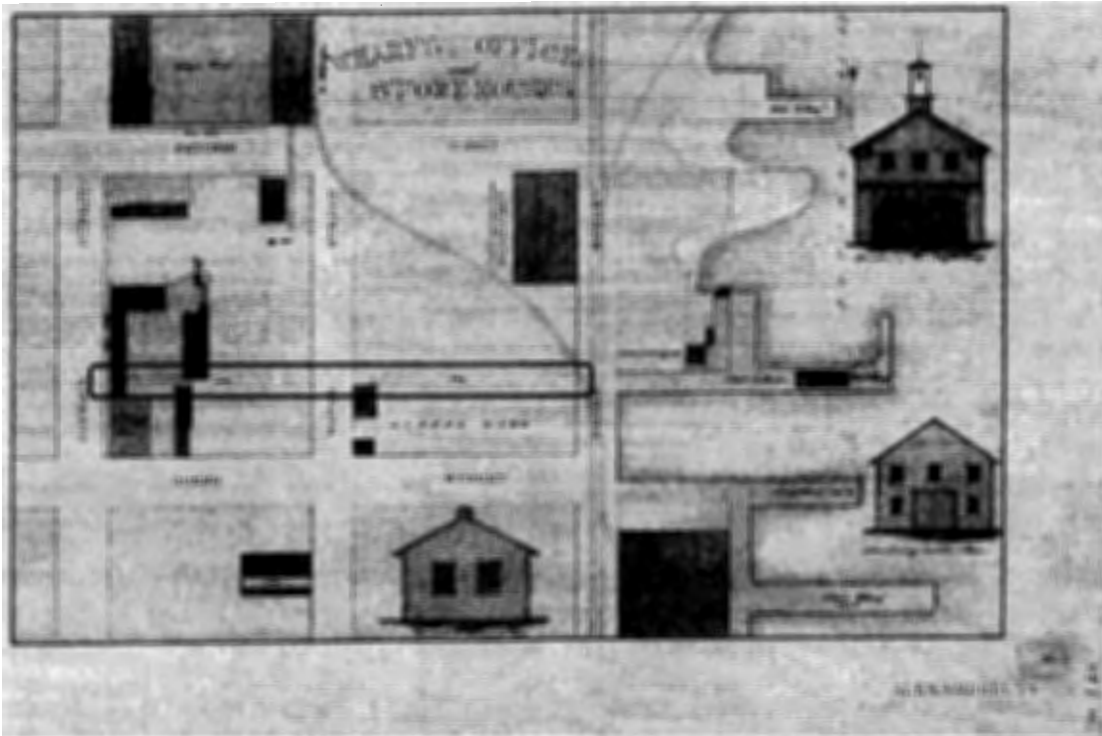


Alexandria Waterfront Plan Goal Statements include “Goal 9”, which addresses the critical notion of permeability by requiring developers to “Enhance vistas of the water from surrounding areas and of the Waterfront from the river” by preserving and enhancing “view corridors to the water, including historic streets and alleys.” Page 20. See Appendix A and note the requirement for properties to adhere to the overlay plan, and Appendix B that shows all historic and current pedestrian alleyways for enhanced river access.

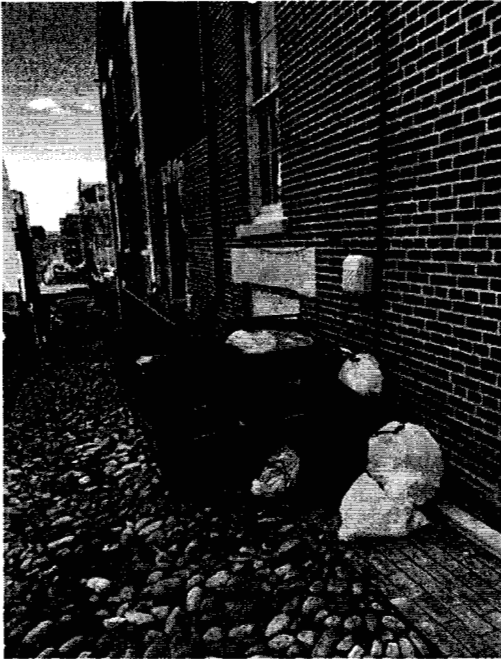
The historic map on the right indicates that a view corridor still exists on the block bounded by Fairfax, Queen, Lee, and Princess streets. It overlays Alexandria’s 1749 survey map onto the current Alexandria Master Plan, showing the view corridor from N. Fairfax through the block, and all the way through Quay Street to the Potomac. This required view corridor cannot be retained with an SUP that permits the Hoffman organization to build to a 2.5 FAR with a footprint that extends to the very northernmost perimeter of the property. The last minute “hail Mary” offer by Hoffman to trim 5 feet off the building is a cynical manipulation for Council votes. It does not meet the 16-foot setback requirement or accommodate the required 18–20-foot alley that could accommodate the missing service entrance. The SUP must thus be denied. (See Appendix D.)



The second map, shown below, drawn by Alexandria native son and Union Army Brigadier General, Montgomery Meigs, shows that in 1865 an alleyway (clearly marked “Alley”) bifurcated what is now 301 N. Fairfax and the entire block, extending to also bifurcate the block between what today is N. Lee Street and Union Street. The Waterfront Small Area Plan thus requires the developer of 301 N. Fairfax to reinstall this pedestrian alleyway to provide the Potomac access that is one of the Plan’s essential principles. This cannot be done unless the building footprint and FAR are reduced in size, requiring denial of the developer’s application for an SUP:

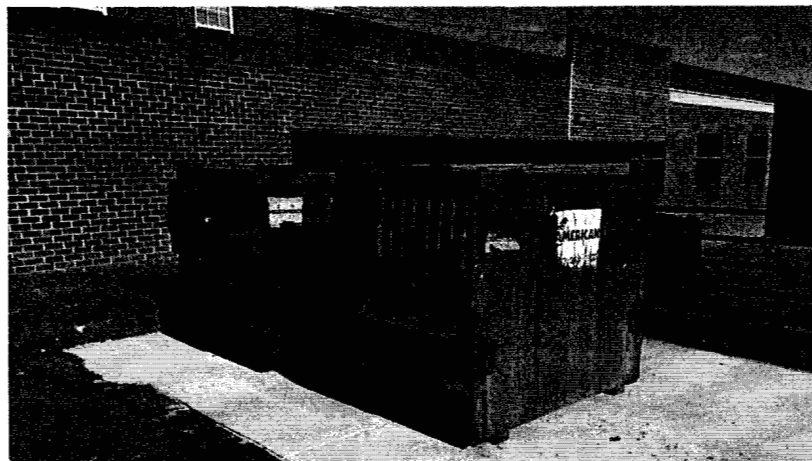


A leading reason that alleys were an original feature of Old Town blocks, was not only for pedestrian access to the Potomac, but also to conceal unsightly garbage storage and collection. Without moving that activity to the rear of 301 N. Fairfax Street with the reintroduction of the historic alleyway, residents of the neighborhood will be subjected to garbage sights like these – shown below in two of our historic alleyways - right on the Queen Street curbside near Fairfax:



These two garbage sites in our alleyways demonstrate trash volume produced from only a single-family residence (left) and two retailers (right). Consider that Old Town resident neighbors will be subjected to the garbage from a total of 48 residential units proposed by Hoffman being collected weekly on Queen Street because there is no service entrance in his plan. The only way to eliminate this unacceptable scene is to add the alleyway and move this unsightly activity to the rear of the proposed building where it belongs.

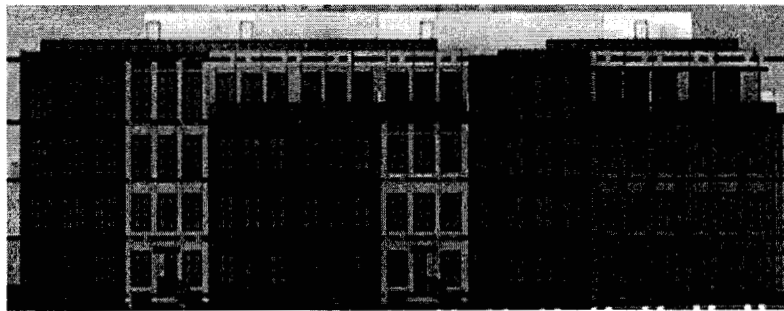
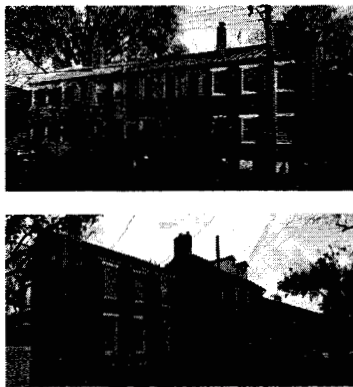
To put this issue into tangible perspective, the photo below shows the two large dumpsters currently in use behind the office building occupying 301 N. Fairfax. If an underutilized office building produces a volume of garbage that requires two dumpsters behind the current building, we area residents anticipate a volume of trash and garbage from Hoffman’s 48 residential units that will turn our streetscape into an ugly collection site, right in front of two popular restaurants across the street. This should not be acceptable by the Council – merely one block from City Hall.



The underutilized office at 301 N. Fairfax produces garbage that necessitates two large dumpsters.

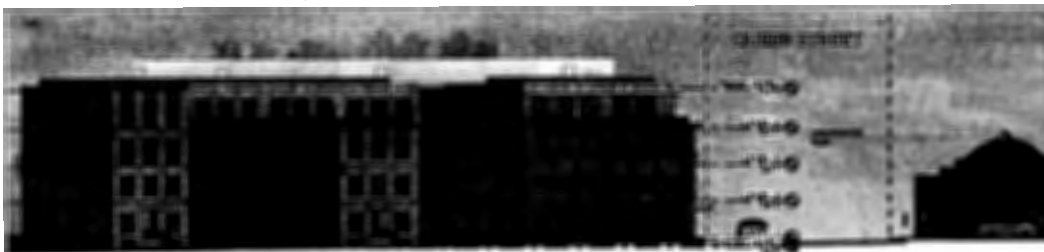
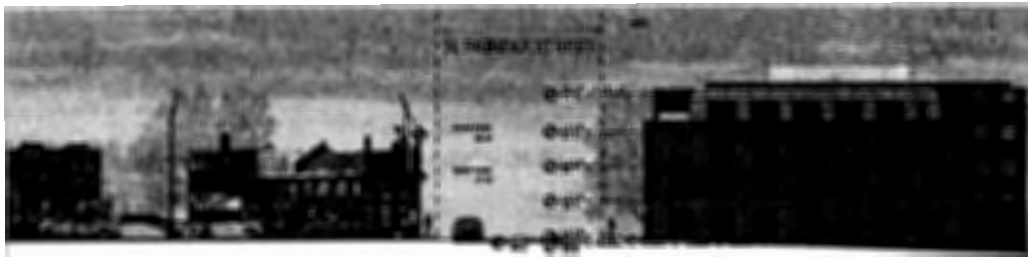
The Waterfront Plan imposes on the City Council other reasons to deny the inappropriate density being sought by the Hoffman organization. The Plan provides on page 86 that “Thus, increases in density are permitted but only with SUP approval, and only if the proposed development is found to comply with the specific Development Goals and Guidelines outlined below ...” and on page 87 that those “located within the Old And Historic Alexandria District” make them “already subject to design guidelines and standards in existing zoning regulations that will not change at sections 6-404 and 10-105(A)(4).”

Examining Section 6-404, we see that it requires the Council, relative to granting Hoffman an SUP, to consider that new “Buildings should be in harmony with existing buildings of genuine architectural merit, to be found in the historic district.” The Hoffman plan lacks that merit. The Council must consider “The degree to which the height, mass and bulk of the proposed construction are compatible with and reflect the traditional height, mass, and bulk of buildings and structures displayed within the streetscapes of the historic district.” The photos below show poor architectural compatibility and why the 301 N. Fairfax plan fails threshold tests of appropriateness:



Developer's Plan

The height, mass, and scale of the Hoffman proposal overwhelms the surrounding neighborhood. By these threshold standards, as well, the SUP must be denied:



Developer's Plan

Section 10-105(A)(2) further provides that “the city council on appeal shall consider the following features and factors in passing upon the appropriateness of the proposed construction”:

- *“Overall architectural design, form, style and structure, including, but not limited to, the height, mass and scale of buildings or structures...”*
- *Design and arrangement of buildings and structures on the site; and the impact upon the historic setting, streetscape or environs...”*
- *Texture, material and color, and the extent to which any new architectural features are historically appropriate to the existing structure and adjacent existing structures...”*

The photos on the preceding page demonstrate how the Hoffman proposal fails these tests laid out in the Waterfront Small Area Plan. See **Appendix C** that details **13 Waterfront Plan tests that the Hoffman plan fails**. The Google Earth aerial view below shows how badly the monolithic buildings on this block – that will be demolished and re-developed by Hoffman and other developers - clash with the scale of the townhomes that surround them if Hoffman is granted the SUP for the inappropriate scale he proposes:



Finally, the Waterfront Plan, on page 127 provides that *“Analysis of the value of the additional density provided in this Plan strongly suggests that, at a minimum, a per-square-foot developer contribution to off-site amenities of \$9.00 in 2012 dollars is financially feasible...The per-square-foot contribution should be calculated based on all new square-footage...”*. At a proposed size of 93,336 square feet, the Waterfront Small Area Plan thus obligates Hoffman to pay the City of Alexandria \$12.06 per sq foot (\$9.00 in 2012 dollars expressed in 2023 dollars) - a contribution of \$1,125,632. However, in the Planning Commission Staff Report, we see only nominal pledges to compensate Old Town for the excessive density and special treatment being demanded by the developer:

- \$4,194 pledged for urban forestry,
- \$10,000 pledged for bikeshare,
- \$29,267 pledged for public art, and
- \$105,948 pledged to the housing trust fund.

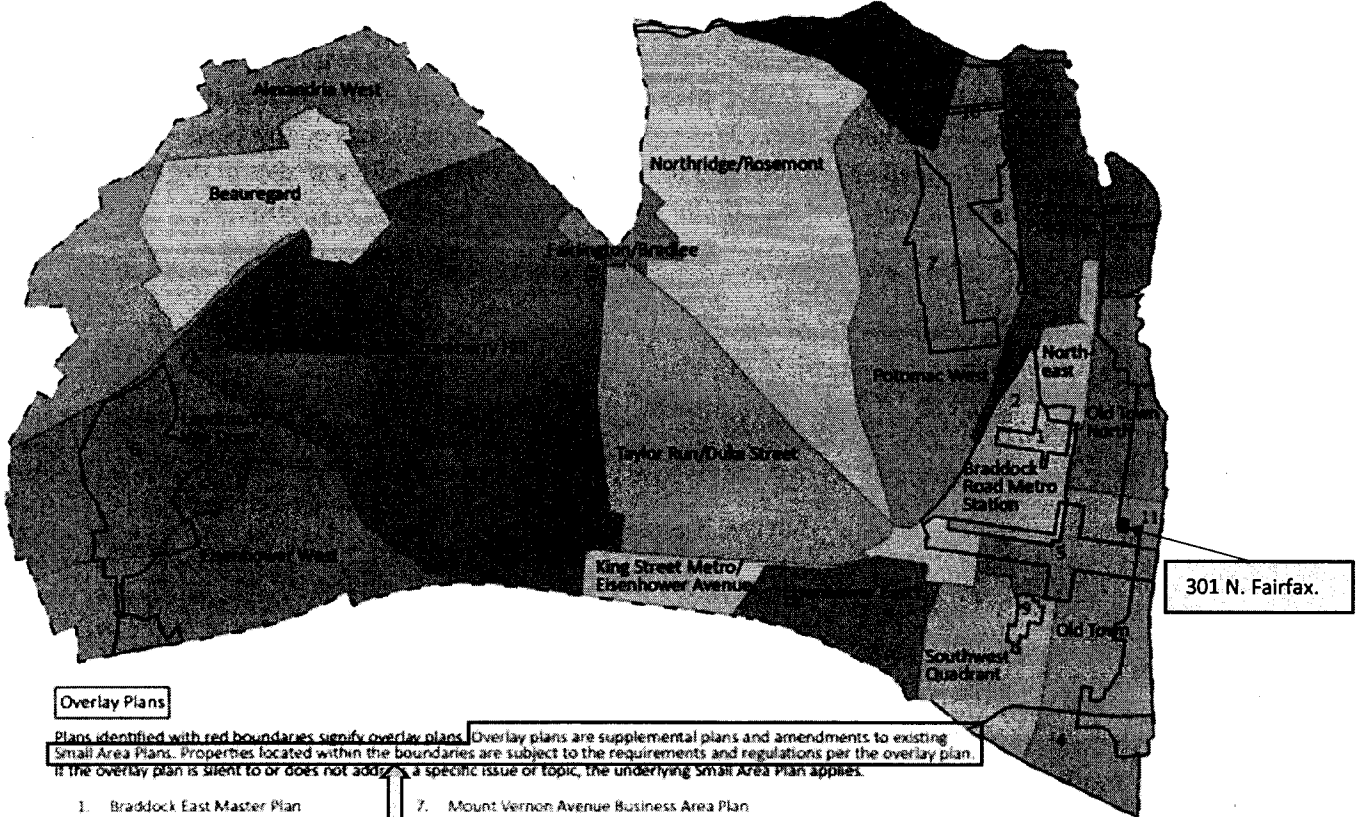
These token pledges total a mere \$149,409, which meets only 13% of Hoffman’s obligation to Alexandria in return for the preferential treatment being demanded by the re-zoning and SUP applications.

For all these reasons I urge the City Council to deny the developer’s application.

Anna Bergman



City of Alexandria, Virginia Master Plan



Overlay Plans

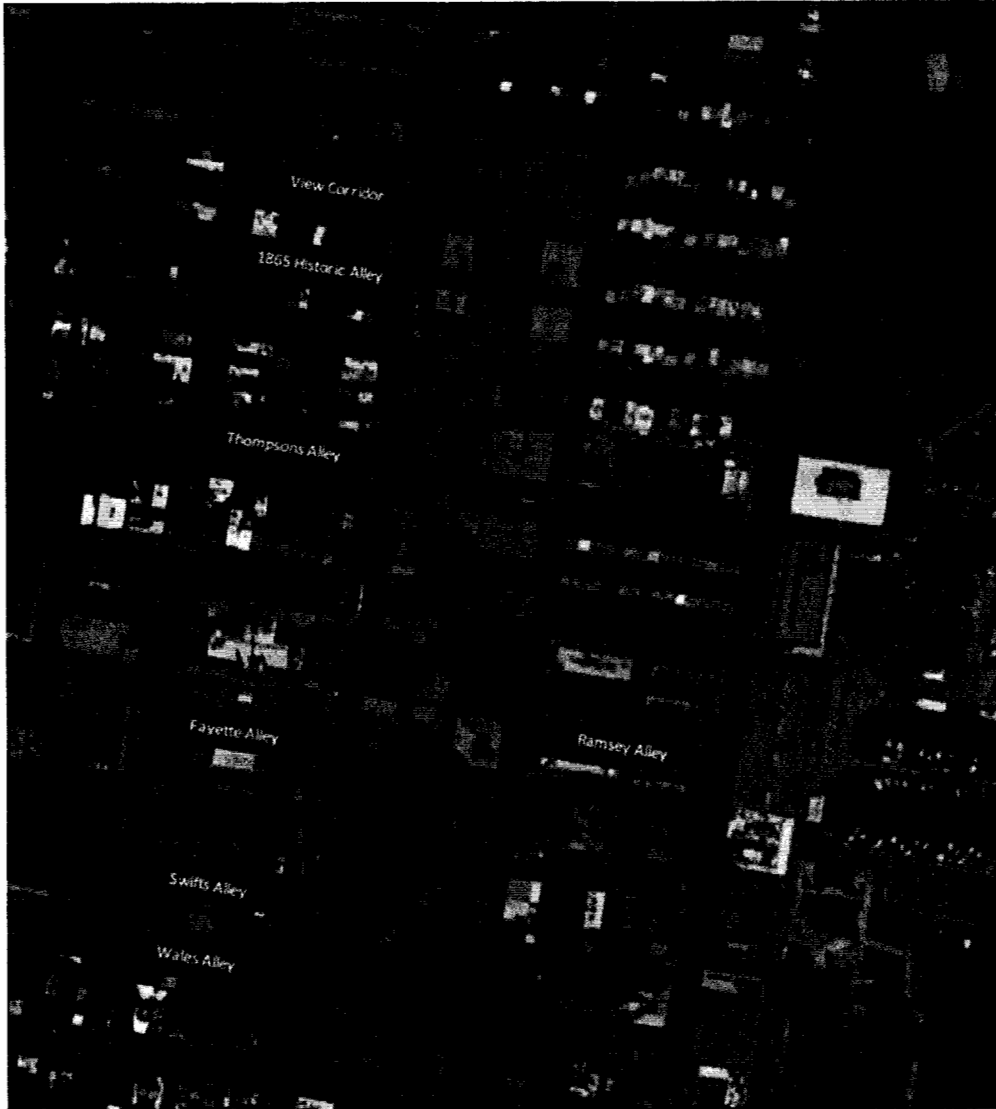
Plans identified with red boundaries signify overlay plans. Overlay plans are supplemental plans and amendments to existing Small Area Plans. Properties located within the boundaries are subject to the requirements and regulations per the overlay plan. If the overlay plan is silent to or does not address a specific issue or topic, the underlying Small Area Plan applies.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Braddock East Master Plan2. Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan3. Four Mile Run Master Plan4. Hunting Creek Area Plan5. King Street Retail Strategy6. Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan | <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Mount Vernon Avenue Business Area Plan8. Oakville Triangle & Route 1 Corridor Plan9. South Patrick Housing Affordability Strategy10. Upper Potomac West Task Force Report11. Waterfront Area Plan |
|--|--|

March 2022

The Planning Commission staff continues to imply that, as an overlay plan, the Waterfront Small Area Plan has no effect on the 301 N. Fairfax property. This is completely refuted in the phrase highlighted above. The Commission also describes the 301 N. Fairfax site as a "transitional" area, when the map clearly shows that it lies squarely in the Old & Historic District. New development there must conform to design guidelines of both the Old and Historic District and the Waterfront Small Area Plan, which it currently does not.

Appendix B - Alley Sites Overlaid on Google Earth Photo



From top to bottom, above, we see that preserved historic pedestrian alleyways dominate the Old and Historic District. The Waterfront Small Area Plan requires that the 1865 alley and the current view corridor be retained when 301 N. Fairfax is developed. It cannot be done if an SUP is granted for a 2.5 FAR on the site:

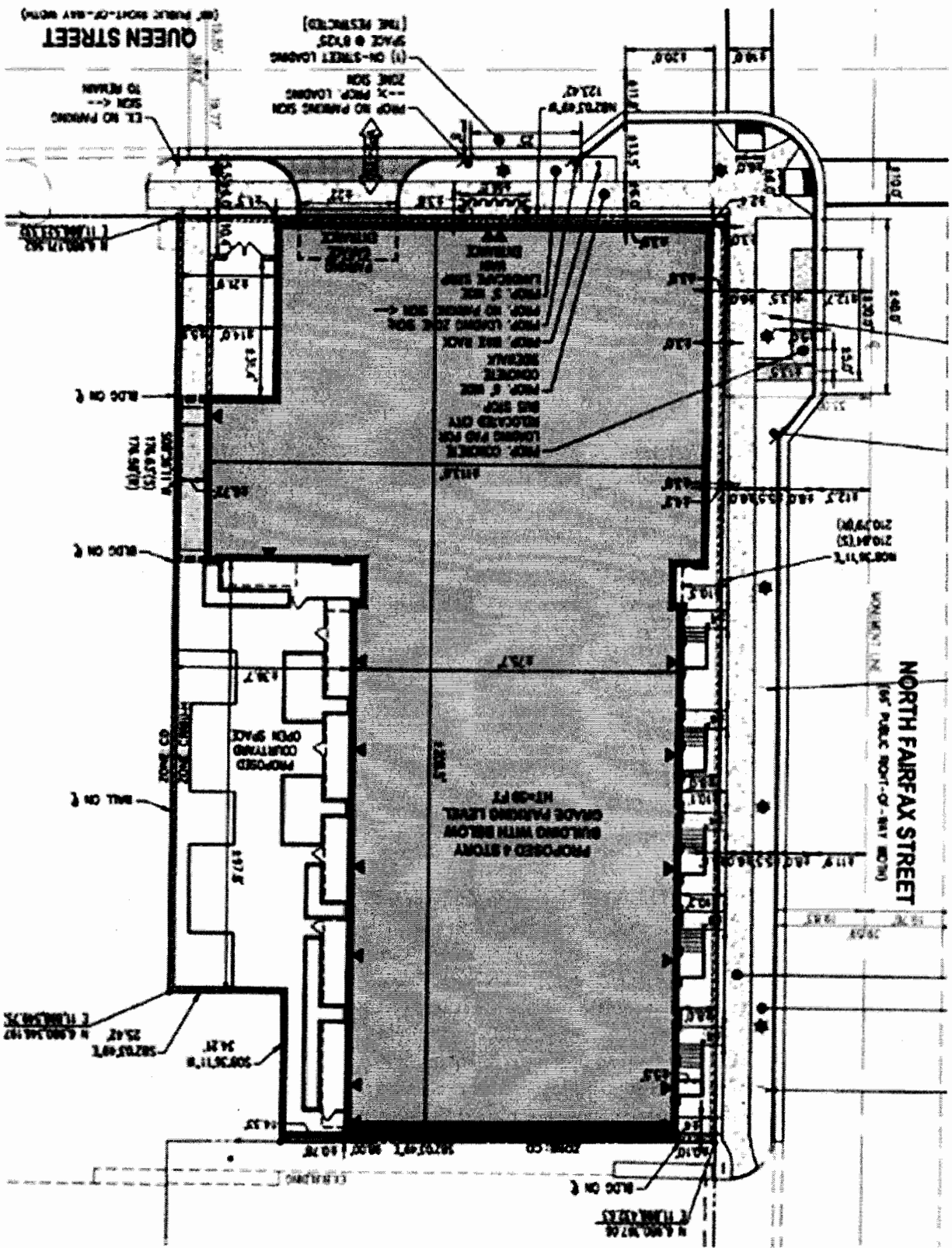
- Current view corridor between N. Fairfax and N. Lee streets, that connects to Quay Street.
- Location of the alley that split the block and the 301 N. Fairfax property in 1865.
- Thompsons Alley, bifurcating the 200 blocks between N. Fairfax, N. Lee, and Union streets.
- Fayette Alley, bifurcating the 100 block of N. Fairfax and N. Lee streets, connecting to Ramsey Alley, which bifurcates the block between Union and Strand Street.
- Swifts Alley, bifurcating the 100 block of S. Fairfax and S. Lee streets, and the block through to Strand Street.
- Wales Alley, bifurcating the 100 block of S. Fairfax and S. Lee streets, and the block through to Strand Street.

Appendix C – Table of Tests Failed by the Hoffman Plan

The Hoffman Proposal Fails 13 Tests that Apply to New Development in the Waterfront Small Area Plan

Waterfront Plan Test	How Hoffman Fails
Celebrate and honor the broad history and culture of the waterfront from pre-history to now.	Lacks respect for and reference to the architectural vocabulary of surrounding Old Town and does not re-install the historic alley.
Respect the scale and character of Old Town.	Overwhelms the townhomes that surround it on three sides which average 2.5 floors.
Enhance cues and sight lines for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles on all grid streets and alleys and increase accessibility for all.	Adds no features or amenities that connect the property and block to streets and alleys. Exiting traffic from the garage curb cut adds much more traffic volume onto Queen, actually decreasing "accessibility for all."
Link the waterfront to Alexandria neighborhoods.	Provides no features that link the property and block to the waterfront.
Minimize pedestrian and vehicle conflicts.	Locating (a) all loading/unloading, deliveries and service worker activity, (b) garbage collection, (c) resident entrance/exit, and (d) garage entrance and exit for 68 cars on the western end of the 200 block of Queen at Fairfax adds an unsafe and extraordinary increase in traffic onto a street that will be narrowed by 8 feet by a new bus bulb and that currently accommodates cars that double-park for take-out from popular Momo Restaurant. It will be unmanageable.
Maximize underutilized parking opportunities elsewhere in Old Town.	Service workers, delivery vehicles for 48 units will double park on Queen and Fairfax and will take up the limited parking spaces that resident depend on.
Create revenue, initiate new partners, and leverage other resources to enhance and maintain public open space and infrastructure	Open space is only achieved with private rooftop decks and a small space behind the building that is not open to the public. The building mass removes half of the open corridor currently existing between 301 N. Fairfax and 300 N. Lee.
Protect the existing amount of open space and expand it, if possible.	Open space is only achieved with private rooftop decks and a small space behind the building that is not open to the public. The building mass removes half of the open corridor currently existing between 301 N. Fairfax and 300 N. Lee.
Allow the historic character and scale to influence new development opportunities.	The mass, scale and footprint overwhelm the surrounding neighborhood. The architectural choices make the bare minimum reference to Old Town character, building, window and roofline features.
Protect existing residential neighborhoods from excessive noise and traffic.	This building will add 68 new cars to the traffic pattern. Visitors, service workers, garbage collectors, and delivery vehicles for 48 residential units will either double park at the Queen/Fairfax intersection or take up the few street parking spaces available to nearby residents. On streets that currently accommodate non-stop Dash bus traffic and a phalanx of large tour buses heading to Old Town with tourists, this extra traffic will reduce safety, exacerbate noise, and make parking a blood sport.

Waterfront Plan Test	How Hoffman Fails
Preserve and enhance view corridors to the water, including historic streets and alleys.	The excessive footprint of the building will eliminate the current view corridor through the block that connects to Quay Street all the way to the river. The footprint does not leave enough room to re-install the historic alley documented in the 1865 Union Army map of the block.
Create a system of visual elements to draw people to the water.	There are no visual elements proposed by Hoffman that draw vehicles, pedestrian, or cyclists to the water, because it provides no break to the overwhelming mass that would provide the "permeability" required by the Waterfront Plan.
Make the waterfront an example of design excellence	In three BAR meetings on the Hoffman proposal over the summer that received unanimous public opposition, almost every citizen and BAR member suggestion for improving the architectural approach for an Old Town residence – versus the current design that is far more appropriate in North Old Town – were summarily rejected by Hoffman's counsel and architect.



Appendix D – Insignificant Impact of a 5-Foot Reduction of the North Elevation

CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

From: Ian Smith <gm.smithir@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 15, 2024 11:17 PM
To: CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Support+Docket+Item+11+(301+N.+Fairfax+redevelopment)

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Good evening,

I am a citizen of Alexandria writing in **support** of the proposed condos at 301 N Fairfax St.

Alexandria has been moving in the right direction recently with housing, especially with the recent passing of Zoning For Housing. These condos directly support Alexandria's housing goals and should be supported as a means of expanding housing opportunities in this city. The city should put its money where its mouth is and stay committed to providing housing for residents.

The current space is a decaying dump and is a complete waste of space in one of Alexandria's most important areas. New housing in its place will help to revitalize the space, provide additional tax revenue for the city, and provide a home for dozens of people who may otherwise need to move further away from the city or displace other residents.

Additionally, this location is more than adequate to handle the additional residents, with plenty of nearby transit and pedestrian access that can allow the potential residents to get around without a car.

I also support the fact that the condos would have committed affordable units, which will be life changing for families who may otherwise be priced out of the area.

Thank you

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Gloria Sitton

From: Joel Newman <jgnewman45@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 12, 2024 11:24 AM
To: Justin Wilson; Amy Jackson; Kirk McPike; Alyia Gaskins; John Chapman; Sarah Bagley; Canek Aguirre
Cc: City Clerk Staff
Subject: [EXTERNAL]301 N. Fairfax Street Proposal

Some people who received this message don't often get email from jgnewman45@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Mayor Justin Wilson
Members of the City Council
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA

You have a very important decision to make regarding the proposed 301 N. Fairfax Street condominium project at your January 20 meeting.

Like many of our neighbors, one of the reasons we moved to Alexandria was because it is a city with rich and unique history, culture and charm. As you plan for the future of Alexandria, we urge you to preserve this, particularly in the Old Town portion of the city, for current and future generations.

We are pro development and support the affordable housing initiative. We do support a new housing development for 301 N. Fairfax Street, however the current proposal for this site is not right for the City nor the residents who reside in this area. It is the wrong way to meet Alexandria's development and housing objectives.

- The proposed footprint and size (98,465 sq. ft.) of the 48-unit condominium building is overwhelming for the surrounding residential homes and is not acceptable for the Old & Historic District (OAHD).
- While it is proposed as a 4-story building, the 5th floor roof-top terraces and contemporary design do not represent the Old & Historic District's distinctive architecture, as noted in the Registry of Historic Places.
- The proposed building does not meet the open space, tree cover or architectural requirements of the OAHD, as defined in the Design Guidelines and Waterfront Small Area Plan. The loss of 33% of the required crown cover is unacceptable. As a result, the developer is requesting several variances and special permissions that are not appropriate for this site.
- Re-installing a "view corridor" and alleyway for pedestrian access to the Potomac is required by law to bifurcate the site.
- Using an alleyway for service vehicles, garbage collection and loading/unloading is the only way to keep that activity from curbside at Queen and Fairfax Streets.
- While the proposal does include two of the 48 condominiums to be designated as affordable housing, this is only 4% of the units, in what will be an expensive condominium building.

We are open to compromise. You have the opportunity to reshape this proposed project to support new development while also protecting the rich and unique history and charm of Old Town Alexandria.

We urge you to preserve the OAHD unique and historical character for the future. Please disapprove this proposal this 301 N. Fairfax St. proposal's rezoning, special use, and modification requests until the developer redesigns it to the appropriate scale, compliments the architecture of the surrounding OAHD, and preserves this historic district.

Thank you,

Joel & Suellen Newman
519 Princess Street
Alexandria, VA

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11
1-20-24



**YIMBYs OF
NOVA**

17 February 2023

Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Jackson, and Members of Council,

As the Alexandria leadership team for YIMBYs of Northern Virginia, we are so happy to see four impactful housing projects for our city on the hearing docket for January 20th, and we hope you will vote yes on all four. Together, these four projects will add 521 desperately needed net new homes to Alexandria. With a diversity of price points, types of housing, and parts of the city, these four projects together are an exemplar of the "all of the above" approach that is needed to effectively combat our housing crisis.

Docket item #5, 4898 West Braddock, will build 383 badly needed apartments in Alexandria West and will help the West End Transitway move forward.

Docket item #6, 820 Gibbon St, will add 14 townhomes, including one life-changing affordable homeownership opportunity, and a community parklet to southern Old Town.

Docket item #8, the Ladrey building redevelopment, will provide 100 additional affordable homes for seniors and people with disabilities, as well as new, safe, healthy, and still deeply affordable homes for the residents of the 170 existing apartments.

Docket item #11, 301 N Fairfax St, will replace an aging office building in Old Town with 48 condos, including two life-changing affordable homeownership opportunities.

Again, we are so excited about the "all of the above" approach these four projects represent, and we hope Alexandria will continue to welcome new homes of all types, all price points, and in all parts of our city to address our regional housing crisis and make our city better for everyone.

Alex Goyette, Luca Gattoni-Celli, Peter Sutherland, Phoebe Coy, Stephanie Elms, and Trip Hook
YIMBYs of Northern Virginia Alexandria leads