

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 6, 2024
TO: CHAIR MACEK AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: KARL MORITZ, DIRECTOR; DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING
SUBJECT: DSUP #2023-10012, REZ #2023-00006, & MPA #2023-00008/1201 E. Abingdon Dr.

ISSUE:

The Applicant's representative, Kenneth W. Wire, Attorney, issued a letter to the Planning Commission dated February 5, 2024, requesting that the Commission remove Condition 52 from the Staff Recommendations section of the Staff Report, which reads:

*Condition 52. Provide a City standard bus-shelter, with the ability to accommodate future real time bus information LED screens, and electric connections, for the WMATA 11Y bus stop located immediately adjacent to the site, to the satisfaction of the Director of T&ES. The final bus shelter and bus stop bench design shall meet City standards and the approval of the Director of T&ES. Design and specifications for the City standard bus shelter are at: www.alexandriava.gov/6548. Bus shelters require a building permit. (T&ES) (Code) **

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

As part of staff's review and analysis, staff considered how a condition to provide a bus shelter for the WMATA stop adjacent to the site would offset an impact that would be created by the implementation of the proposed project and staff notes the following reasons establish this:

- The project will introduce 250-330 new residents (including residents of seven committed affordable units who been shown to have higher rates of public transit use) to this block of Old Town North and a key element of the OTNSAP is to expand transit and enhance the neighborhood as a transit-rich area. The increase in residents will put greater demand on the existing bus stop/pad; thus, a bus shelter is needed to provide shelter from the elements during inclement weather and to provide a better user experience with the associated amenities for a larger number of bus riders. Shelter has been found essential to encourage and promote ridership by creating a comfortable and accessible experience.
- There is currently a bus stop/pad at this location that serves the 11Y bus, which is a commuter route running north and south from Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway to the south to Downtown Washington, D.C. to the north, with headway intervals of approximately 15-20 minutes during

morning and afternoon peak hours. The existing 11Y bus stop to the north, at Abingdon and Slaters, has a shelter and various WMATA 11A/11C/11n/11 routes have shelters along North Washington Street and a primary north-south artery that links major employment hubs in the region.

- The bus pad immediately to the south was installed as a required condition for the Abingdon Row development, which includes a total of 19 residential townhouse units (City previously identified this need to support the new townhouse residents). The current bus pad is deficient in meeting the needs of this many additional residents as multifamily buildings necessitate shelters to accommodate the increased demand.
- While the residential project generates fewer overall trips than a fully occupied office building, the nature of the trips is quite different and the presence of the 11Y commuter bus route will serve the residents by providing an enhanced public transit option, including for commuter use.
- The purpose provision of the CRMU-X zone, to which the applicant is requesting a rezoning, includes the minimization of automobile travel and locating housing in proximity to a mix of uses, creating a transit-rich environment to support increased densities.

Additionally, Staff has prepared a response to the five (5) project benefits cited by the applicant in the enclosed letter.

1. Reducing the overall vehicular traffic generation for the property;
 - While the residential project generates fewer overall trips than a fully occupied office building, the nature of the trips is quite different and the presence of the 11Y commuter bus route will be an amenity for the residents who live in this building. A guiding principle of the OTNSAP is to “create a mix of uses with transit options offering a lifestyle that is independent of automobiles.” Therefore, while proposing to reduce overall vehicular traffic for the site by nature of the proposed use, the project must also seek to enhance transit options and reduce automobile dependency.
 - The proposed project did not meet the threshold to require a full transportation study. Thus, Staff has referenced the mode split¹ of nearby developments within Old Town North that would likely be comparable to the mode split for this site:
 - The Gables: 30% mode-split
 - 901 North Pitt Street: 30% mode-split
 - Montgomery Center: 40% mode-splitThese are comparable projects in the vicinity and staff would expect a similar mode split of 30-40%, given the similarities. Improvements to transit and the streetscape help achieve the non-auto mode split.
2. Meeting the City parking requirements;
 - Meeting the City’s parking requirements does not remove the need for providing transit and streetscape improvements that contribute to reducing residents’ dependency on automobile trips. For example, wider sidewalks and new street lights are routine contributions as conditions of approval to promote the multimodal options around the site.

¹ Mode split or modal share refers to the percentage of non-auto trips anticipated to be generated. Therefore a 40% mode split would have 40% of all trips as non-auto (i.e., walking, biking, transit).

3. Complying with the City TMP requirements;
 - Developments greater than 20 multifamily units are required to participate in the City’s TMP program and the applicant has agreed to participate in the City-led program. As the project falls under the City’s new TMP requirements, they are eligible for deductions of up to 25% for contributions such as Capital Bikeshare (“Cabi”) and bus shelters. Assuming the shelter costs \$30k, and based on other parameters of this specific project such as the \$20k Capital Bikeshare contribution, the applicant would receive approximately \$12,500 reduction in their TMP payments over a 30-yr lifespan; or \$416.67 per annum.
4. Contributing towards the Old Town North Implementation Fund;
 - The developer contributions to the Old Town North Implementation Fund are targeted for the acquisition, design and construction of the proposed linear park. These funds are not allocated for the use of any transportation-related improvements.
5. Contributing \$20,000 to the Capital Bike Share program.
 - Although Staff acknowledges the high volume of city residents who use Capital Bikeshare, this is independent from the request for a standard bus shelter and Capital Bikeshare contributions are required of every residential development project and serve public transit in a different form.

In summary, staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend approval of Condition 52 to provide a City-standard bus shelter for the purpose of providing for the increased transit needs of the residents.

STAFF:

Karl Moritz, Director, P&Z

Robert M. Kerns, AICP, Chief of Development, P&Z

Catherine Miliaras, AICP, Principal Planner, P&Z

Daniel Welles, Urban Planner, P&Z

Carson Lucarelli, Urban Planner, Transportation & Environmental Services

Christina Brown, Deputy City Attorney, CAO

ATTACHMENTS:

1. February 5, 2024 Letter to Planning Commission from Kenneth W. Wire, Attorney.



Kenneth W. Wire
kwire@wiregill.com
703-677-3129

February 5, 2024

VIA EMAIL TO karl.moritz@alexandriava.gov

Chairman Macek and Members of the Planning Commission
301 King Street, Suite 2100
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Docket Item 4, Development Special Use Permit #2023-10012

Dear Chairman Macek and Members of the Planning Commission:

On behalf of my client, PF III Abingdon, LLC (the “Applicant”), I respectfully request that the Planning Commission delete staff recommended DSUP Condition 52, which states:

Condition 52. Provide a City standard bus-shelter, with the ability to accommodate future real time bus information LED screens, and electric connections, for the WMATA 11Y bus stop located immediately adjacent to the site, to the satisfaction of the Director of T&ES. The final bus shelter and bus stop bench design shall meet City standards and the approval of the Director of T&ES. Design and specifications for the City standard bus shelter are at: www.alexandriava.gov/6548. Bus shelters require a building permit. (T&ES) (Code) *

Staff’s recommendation for an offsite bus shelter has **no nexus** to the proposed application. With this application, the Applicant is: 1) reducing the overall vehicular traffic generation for the property; 2) meeting the City parking requirements; 3) complying with the City TMP requirements; 4) contributing towards the Old Town North implementation Fund; and 5) contributing \$20,000 to the Capital Bike Share program. If the Planning Commission does find there is a nexus, the City must then satisfy the requirement that the proposed condition has a “**rough proportionality**” which requires a “**reasonable relationship**” between the impact of a project and the proposed condition. The City cannot meet this burden because this application is reducing the overall traffic from the site and meeting all other City policies aimed at addressing transportation improvements for new projects.

I look forward to discussing this application and this requested change at tomorrow’s Planning Commission hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. W. Wire", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kenneth W. Wire