

BAR Presentation from Gaffney, 317 N. Columbus Street

Introduction

Good evening, Chairman and members of the Board. My name is **Mike Gaffney**, and I live at 317 N. Columbus Street, adjacent to this project.

I am here because the current proposal represents a significant departure from the design principles of the Old and Historic District. Specifically, I want to address how **discretionary parking preferences** are being used as the primary justification for a design that struggles to meet this Board's standards for orientation, massing, and rhythm.

The "Parking-First" Design (Proposed)

As seen in slide 2, the developer's proposal turns all six townhouses away from the street, orienting them toward an internal parking lot. **It is critical to note that the developer's proposal requires a Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) specifically to move forward with a design that is not street-facing.** This choice directly conflicts with established preservation principles:

- **Guideline Violation:** The City's Design Guidelines (Section 1.1) state that "**Buildings shall generally be sited parallel to the street**" and should "**include as much frontage as possible.**" By requesting a permit to turn its back on Princess Street, this project fails to provide the streetwall necessary to reinforce the character of the district.
- **The Applicant Created Constraint:** The applicant suggests this DSUP is a necessity of parking. However, they confirmed they only have a formal obligation for **11 spaces** (for Wells Fargo). The remaining 13 spaces are a non-obligated preference for "one to two spaces per tenant."
- **The Zoning Reality:** This site is in an **Enhanced Transit Area**, where the City's mandatory minimum is only **6 spaces**.

The Logic for the Board: The applicant is asking the board to accept a non Street facing design that creates a **100-year architectural compromise** to accommodate parking spaces above and beyond the City minimum and their contractual obligations. While the DSUP is a Planning and Zoning issue, its issuance will impact the architectural impact that is the responsibility of the BAR. We should not degrade the **integrity of the**

historic streetscape for a private parking preference that far exceeds what is legally or contractually required.

Illustrative Concepts

While it is not our role to design this project, in Slide 3 we offer the **Mews concept** as a high-level illustration to prove that a street-facing solution is entirely achievable. This conceptual approach demonstrates that the streetwall can be restored and parking obligations can be met while prioritizing high-quality architecture.

Closing

We strongly endorse the findings in the **BAR staff report** regarding synthetic cladding and oversized dormers that "**overwhelm the roof form.**" These aren't just details; they are symptoms of a project that is out of sync with the District.

This is a highly visible site, directly across from "**The Rectory,**" an 18th-century building and a cultural hub for our community. The proposed design fails to showcase the classic Old Town experience for visitors and residents. If this "parking-first" orientation is approved, it establishes a **bad precedent**:

- That buildings no longer need to face the street.
- That internal parking layouts can override historic building orientation.
- That the Design Guidelines are subordinate to private parking contracts.

We respectfully ask the Board to:

1. **Affirm** that street-facing orientation is a fundamental requirement of the District.
2. **Recognize** that private parking commitments do not constitute a site-driven hardship.
3. **Require** a design that reflects the historic pattern, scale, and rhythm of Old Town.

Let's ensure this project reflects the principles that define our community for generations to come. Thank you.

Attachment:

Merion Row (Proposed)

VIEW FROM PRINCESS STREET LOOKING EAST

MERION ROW
 335 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET
 ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
 CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
3D RENDERINGS

APPROVED	
OFFICIAL USE ONLY: _____	
DATE: _____	
STAMPED & SIGNED: _____	
DATE: _____	
STAMPED & SIGNED: _____	
DATE: _____	
STAMPED & SIGNED: _____	
DATE: _____	

VIEW FROM PARKING LOT LOOKING NORTH

REVISIONS APPROVED BY:

DATE	BY	REVISIONS

WALTER L. PHILLIPS
 Licensed Professional Engineer
 State of Virginia, No. 40000
 Date of License: 9/20/2018
 Date of Renewal: 9/20/2021
 Date of Expiration: 9/20/2021
 Date of Issuance: 9/20/2018
 Date of Renewal: 9/20/2021
 Date of Expiration: 9/20/2021

DATE OF REVIEW: 9/20/2018



Fw: [EXTERNAL]BAR Case: BAR#2026-00033 & 00034 (330 N. Washington St.) – Resident Comments

From Preservation <Preservation@alexandriava.gov>

Date Mon 3/16/2026 8:49 AM

To Luke Cowan <luke.cowan@alexandriava.gov>; Ashley Casimir <ashley.casimir@alexandriava.gov>

FYI

From: Nancy McLernon <nancymclernon@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, March 15, 2026 7:00:17 PM

To: Preservation <Preservation@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Paul Stoddard <paul.stoddard@alexandriava.gov>; Stephanie Sample <Stephanie.Sample@alexandriava.gov>; William Conkey <william.conkey@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]BAR Case: BAR#2026-00033 & 00034 (330 N. Washington St.) – Resident Comments

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

To Chair Scott and Members of the Board of Architectural Review:

We are Nancy McLernon and Glenn Hediger, homeowners at 323 N. Columbus Street. We appreciate the opportunity to offer written comments on the proposed development at 330 N. Washington Street as we are currently not in town and able to attend the March 18 BAR meeting. As neighbors, we support the thoughtful revitalization of this block, and we hope the Board will consider the following refinements to ensure the project achieves the highest level of compatibility with the existing residential fabric.

To assist the Board in evaluating the "compatibility" and "site arrangement" standards set forth in Section 10-105, we respectfully suggest the following:

1. Verification of Massing and Height Transitions

The applicant has indicated that the new homes will be consistent with the height of our own (and those of other neighboring structures). To ensure this is achieved in a way that respects the "rhythm of heights" required by Section 10-105(A)(3)(a), we believe a contextual Elevation Study would be beneficial.

- The Goal: A cross-section that includes the existing Columbus Row homes would help the Board confirm that the massing provides a sympathetic "step-down" transition from the Washington Street corridor to the residential interior of the block.

2. Ensuring Functional Harmony through an Auto-TURN Study

A key component of site compatibility under Section 10-105(A)(2)(c) is how a new building relates to the structures in its immediate surroundings. Given the constrained 22-foot maneuvering aisle, we

323 N. Columbus Street

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15 March 2026

322 North Columbus ST.
Alexandria, VA 22314

To the members of the BAR,

My name is James Foggo. I am a resident of Old Town Alexandria and I currently live on North Columbus Street across from The Merion Group's proposed site for a perpendicular row of six town homes. I have some concerns about the plan for the project based on my long history with the area.

I grew up in the 8th District of Virginia and attended Washington Mill Elementary, Walt Whitman Intermediate, and later spent my freshman year at Fort Hunt High School (now West Potomac). During these formative years, I spent a considerable amount of time in Old Town Alexandria and in particular on the waterfront, including a memorable visit to the USS Laffey (DD-724), one of the most decorated ships of WWII, moored alongside before her decommissioning in 1975.

Upon graduation, I matriculated to the U.S. Naval Academy, on an 8th District Congressional nomination, and retired from the United States Navy 44 years later in September 2020. **Upon my retirement, I could have lived anywhere, but I chose to return to the Old Town Alexandria area because of fond memories from my youth. Accordingly, I purchased an expensive home in Old Town because of its historic appeal and adherence to preservation and observation of stringent requirements regarding expansion and urban development.**

Having talked with the developers during a visit to my home earlier this month and having participated in the recent "online Town Hall" with the Merion Group, **I believe that the plan for the six new town homes violates the spirit of the Residential Design Guidelines regarding building orientation.**

I believe a better example of city planning for the Old and Historic District would be a 3-unit street-facing row on Princess with a Mews-style cluster behind it. This configuration respects the historic pattern of the block (notably 711 Princess) and ensures that any Development Special Use Permit request is based on sound urban design.

I hope that you will take my concerns as a taxpayer and those of my neighbors into consideration as you make a determination on the approval of a plan for the six new units. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

James G. Foggo
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)

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Fw: [EXTERNAL]West Old Town Citizens Association comments for the record on BAR #2026-33, concept review for 330 N. Washington Street

From Luke Cowan <luke.cowan@alexandriava.gov>
Date Wed 3/18/2026 7:33 AM
To Ashley Casimir <ashley.casimir@alexandriava.gov>

From: Dino Drudi <dino.drudi@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 5:31:02 PM
To: Luke Cowan <luke.cowan@alexandriava.gov>; Preservation <Preservation@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: William Conkey <william.conkey@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]West Old Town Citizens Association comments for the record on BAR #2026-33, concept review for 330 N. Washington Street

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

Dear Chairman Scott and BAR members:

The West Old Town Citizens Association board of directors reviewed the staff report for BAR #2026-33, concept review for 330 N. Washington Street. The Association is especially concerned about this proposed alley development setting a precedent in this part of the neighborhood and feels that the staff report needs to be supplemented to show actual nearby examples of comparable alley houses and, accordingly, requests that the BAR continue this matter to give staff more opportunity to research and present to the public other nearby examples of comparable alley houses.

The developer uses a "Mews" style of inward-facing townhouses, which the neighbors characterize as a "suburban infill model" atypical of this part of Old Town, conjecturing that the design might be driven by the Applicant's parking lease requirements. The concept review could explore alternative configurations, reductions in the number of units and their orientation, but not inappropriate designs driven by private contractual requirements, such as parking agreements.

The Association also generally supports doing a contextual Elevation Study and other concerns neighbors have expressed to date in Nancy McLernon's, Glenn Hediger's, and Mike Gaffney's statements.

Respectfully submitted,

Dino Drudi
West Old Town Citizens Association President

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