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2-24-24



4 February 2023

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

As the Alexandria leadership team for YIMBYS of Northern Virginia, we enthusiastically support the office-to-residential conversion at 1201 East Abingdon Drive. Alexandria desperately needs more homes to support everyone who works and goes to school in our region. This project will convert an underutilized 1980s office building into 136-144 badly needed rental homes, including 7 committed affordable units, providing more opportunities to live in the wonderful Old Town North neighborhood.

The project will also benefit the whole community by substantially improving sidewalks, adding a bus shelter, and replacing a large surface parking lot with an attractive courtyard and new building wing.

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.

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

14  
2-24-24

Good morning. My name is Anderson Vereyken, and I live in the Meridian building right by the Braddock Metro stop. I'm here to speak in support of the proposed development at 1201 East Abingdon Drive.

There are two reasons why I am in favor of the development. First, I'm a renter in a neighborhood near East Abingdon, and I can say based on first-hand experience that we need more housing supply in that area. Rents keep going up – last year, mine increased by 200 dollars a month. My building is about to send out renewal offers, and I expect to see an increase once again. So long as occupancy rates stay high and the rental market stays squeezed, landlords know they can raise prices year after year because their tenants have no other options. The only way to stop the trend is to increase the available supply of housing with new development like the East Abingdon project.

Second, I support this development because it is incredibly exciting to see vacant office buildings put to better use. Office space is sitting empty in cities across the country and Alexandria is no exception. Especially considering how expensive housing has become and how desperately we need more units on the market, converting empty offices into more homes is a win-win for all involved. The East Abingdon project would take an unused office building and turn it into as many as 144 new units. Something instead of nothing seems like a pretty good deal to me. Additionally, office buildings are often constructed with commuters in mind, meaning they may already have on-site parking and close access to public transportation. For example, the East Abingdon property has an existing underground garage that will be reused as part of the development, and the property is close both to a metro stop and multiple bus lines. These preexisting assets help minimize the impact on neighbors, reduce development costs that would otherwise be passed on to renters or buyers, and further the city's goal of encouraging people to use public transportation rather than drive. It is heartening to see the city prioritizing office-to-residential conversions, and I hope to see this trend extend beyond the East Abingdon development to other future projects as well.

One more thing before I end. During the Planning Commission meeting regarding this proposal, Commissioner Brown observed that the Small Area Plan for Old Town North is currently outdated as it relates to office-to-residential conversions. Given the amount of empty office space in Old Town North, the high rents in that neighborhood, and the nearby presence of public transit, Old Town North represents an opportunity for further office-to-residential conversions. I therefore encourage City Council to take up Commissioner Brown's suggestion and add new provisions to the Small Area Plan that make office-to-residential conversions an established, anticipated land use in Old Town North.

Andrea Haslinger  
522 Bellvue Place  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Alexandria City Council  
City Hall, 301 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

February 23, 2024

Dear Members of the Council,

I am a resident of Pitt Street Station and I have been authorized by the HOA board of directors to provide you with comments on the proposed redevelopment of the property at 1201 East Abingdon Drive, or what has been known in the neighborhood for many years as the Harris Building. Pitt Street Station is quite close to this building and Bellvue Place, a private street along which most of our homes are located, runs perpendicular to it.

I participated in various capacities on previous Old Town North small area plan projects, most often with the various redevelopment ideas of the Old Colony Motel immediately to the south of this site. Whenever this building was mentioned, the response was always, "That would never get approved today. It's too massive." Now it seems to not just be getting approved, but it's getting bigger. As I and others said at the Planning Commission meeting where this was recently discussed, the proposed height is inconsistent with current zoning, the National Park Service limits, and Washington Street guidelines. It's already taller than surrounding homes. The developer says it 'won't be all that much taller' when completed, and that the additional height is necessary or it is not a financially viable project. If they can't create a financially viable building that complies with current zoning requirements, that should not be their neighbors' problem. We had hoped that consideration would be given to keeping the height as it currently exists.

However, we are realists and understand that this project is a done deal and now must deal with the fallout of the construction process and the final product. Therefore, we are requesting that several conditions be added to the DSUP.

1. Because we live so close to the building in question, we foresee significant impacts on our homes - and access to them - during construction. When the townhouses that replaced the Old Colony were built a few years ago, we often had issues with cut-through traffic on Bellvue Place. Construction workers and vehicles too ill-informed to know that Second Street is the only legal ingress and egress to the site, or too lazy to use it, and all other traffic that couldn't get to or from Second Street because of obstructions at the construction site, would use Bellvue Place as an expedient path. Because it is a private street, we are responsible for its maintenance and, in fact, just spent considerable HOA funds to repave it in May 2023. Our reserve budget cannot support

the repaving costs such additional traffic could incur. We also have children and pets on the street, and drivers who don't live on Bellvue tend to speed. We ask that the developer be required to have measures in place ensuring no construction traffic is allowed to use Bellvue Place.

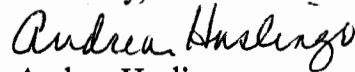
2. We also own - and also just repaved - the eastern side of N. St. Asaph Street over which we assume construction traffic will necessarily travel. After construction is completed and the developer repaves their side of N. St. Asaph Street, we ask that they be required to repave or otherwise remediate any damage to our side of the street as well.

3. We ask that the developer be required to provide the contact information, including cell phone numbers, of at least one dedicated representative who is available throughout the construction process and who is authorized to address things such as noise, vibration, dust, traffic, power outages or other issues that might affect nearby homes. Ideally this person would be available whenever issues arise, but realistically we ask for a response time of 12 hours or less.

4. We ask that the developer provide four to six parking spaces for the use of Pitt Street Station residents along the back of the building when construction is complete. Over the course of the last several years, with various local construction projects and more people working from home, parking on the surrounding streets is becoming quite scarce. Unlike surrounding homes, we have no dedicated visitor or overflow parking. With the Harris Building being relatively empty, many residents have used the parking spaces along N. St. Asaph Street when necessary. There are currently about twenty four spaces plus a loading zone (which will presumably not be used as such after construction.) The few preliminary plans we've seen show about six residences with access to and, we assume, parking on N. St. Asaph Street. This should leave quite a few spaces unassigned to residents of the new building. We understand that this is not a usual request, but we consider it perhaps an accommodation to or compromise with the immediately nearby homes in exchange for the increased height that will, after all, most affect those homes.

Finally, while not a construction issue, we ask that the City place a "No Thru Street" sign at the entrance to N St. Asaph St. at Second street. Letting drivers - particularly delivery drivers - know that they can't get to Bashford Lane or Pitt Street via N. St. Asaph Street might eliminate some cut-through traffic on Bellvue. Ideally this would happen now, before construction begins.

Sincerely,

  
Andrea Haslinger

On behalf of Pitt Street Station HOA

cc: Planning Commission staff  
Ken Wire, Wire/Gill

14  
2-24-24

**CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov**

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**From:** Bonnie Naugle <bonnie.naugle@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 24, 2024 9:39 AM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Saturday meeting comments for docket item #14

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

Dear council members,

I'm writing in support of the office building conversion to housing. We need more housing in Alexandria and our conversions have been really success. I applaud our city for leading the way in conversions as the office market has declined due to remote work.

The existing building is not historic by any means and housing would be a way to bring life to this block in old town.

Thank you for your time.

Bonnie Naugle,  
12-year resident of Alexandria

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February 24, 2024

Subject: **Docket item #14: MPA #2023-00008; REZ #2023-00006; DSUP #2023-10012; 1201 E. Abingdon Drive**

Dear Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Jackson, and Members of the City Council:

The Old Town Civic Association asks the Council to take the following actions:

- Oppose the increase in **height** for the property at 1201 E. Abingdon from the existing building height and long-established permitted height of 50 feet to 65 feet.
  
- Reduce the proposed **mass** and size of the building footprint addition to a maximum of 100 feet by 80 feet to comply with the established Washington Street Standards, Zoning Ordinance 10-105(A)(3)(a)(1)(v).
  
- Require installation of an **8 foot wide brick sidewalk** with an 8 foot wide landscape strip along E. Abingdon Drive to match the 8 foot brick sidewalk with 8 foot landscape strip recently required and installed on the south half of this block, immediately to the south of the subject parcel, when the Old Colony South hotel redeveloped into townhouses, rather than the 6 foot sidewalk recommended by staff in Condition 24(b).
  
- Require **25 to 50 percent or more EV ready** parking spaces providing electric vehicle (EV) charging and ready for installation of electrical vehicle charging comparable to the best practices range, rather than the anemic 2 percent charging and 3 percent ready parking spaces required by Conditions 34 and 35.

### **Height**

The Master Plan for the Old Town North (OTN) area encompassing the lot at 1201 E. Abingdon Drive has been designated for a permitted MAXIMUM height of 50 feet since at least the 1974 Master Plan and continuing through the current Master Plan and amendments. The master plans for the last half a century envisioned and discussed within the master plan that the maximum height in Old Town North would reach its apex at the Alexandria House and would taper downward like a tent, toward the outer boundaries of the small area to lots around the periphery of the small area such as the 1201 E. Abingdon site that is along the far western edge of the OTN small area boundaries where the heights are a mixture of 45 and 50 feet. In this case, the 1201 E. Abingdon site is also located within the Old and Historic Alexandria District that additionally limits maximum heights to 50 feet to maintain the memorial character of the George Washington

Memorial Parkway as a pathway for visitors from the nation's capital to President Washington's Mount Vernon.

The OTN small area plan (OTNSAP) specifically notes that Height limitations within Old Town North are affected by two sets of regulations: height districts and specific zoning categories. Height is determined by whichever set of regulations is the more restrictive. In this case the existing zoning height limitation of 50 feet is reinforced by the Old and Historic Alexandria District height limit of 50 feet.

Page 9 of the OTNSAP notes that for the Historic Washington Street Area...North of First Street, the setback is 500 feet from the centerline of Washington Street...[where heights of] Structures are limited to 50 feet in this District.

Page 15 of the small area plan recommends protecting the appearance of Washington Street as the gateway to Planning District I.

### **Mass**

Zoning Ordinance Section 10-105 for the Old and Historic District requires an even more restrictive review of development proposed, including additions, fronting Washington Street. The ordinance requires that "Buildings should appear from the public right-of-way to have a footprint no larger than 100 by 80 feet." In this case, the addition is proposed to be larger than 100 by 80 in the standards and creates a presence along Washington Street that exceeds the background presences of the existing building.

### **Sidewalk**

The following photograph shows the existing sidewalk along the 1200 block of E. Abingdon Drive that was recently constructed and should be matched for the 1201 E. Abingdon Drive proposed sidewalk.





OTCA supports the conversion of the existing office building to residential use, but finds the proposal needs to be reduced in height and mass to most appropriately fit into the Old and Historic Alexandria District and the historic Washington Street gateway corridor streetscape.

Sincerely,

Stephen Milone

President, Old Town Civic Association

American Institute of Certified Planners

Masters in Urban and Environmental Planning

Urban Planner, Land Use Division Chief, Alexandria Planning and Zoning 1999-2013

SPEAKER'S FORM

DOCKET ITEM NO. 14

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND GIVE IT TO THE CITY CLERK  
BEFORE YOU SPEAK ON A DOCKET ITEM

PLEASE ANNOUNCE THE INFORMATION SPECIFIED BELOW PRIOR TO SPEAKING.

1. NAME: Kenneth Wise
2. ADDRESS: 700 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 600, Alex, VA  
TELEPHONE NO: 7035773129 E-MAIL ADDRESS: KWise@cwregill.com
3. WHOM DO YOU REPRESENT, IF OTHER THAN YOURSELF? \_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant
4. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE ITEM?  
FOR: X AGAINST: \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_
5. NATURE OF YOUR INTEREST IN ITEM (PROPERTY OWNER, ATTORNEY, LOBBYIST, CIVIC INTEREST, ETC.):  
Attorney
6. ARE YOU RECEIVING COMPENSATION FOR THIS APPEARANCE BEFORE COUNCIL?  
YES X NO \_\_\_\_\_

This form shall be kept as a part of the permanent record in those instances where financial interest or compensation is indicated by the speaker.

A maximum of three minutes will be allowed for your presentation, except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard on a docket item shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent, at the start of your presentation. If you have a prepared statement, please leave a copy with the Clerk.

Additional time not to exceed 15 minutes may be obtained with the consent of the majority of the council present; provided notice requesting additional time with reasons stated is filed with the City Clerk in writing before 5:00 p.m. of the day preceding the meeting.

The public normally may speak on docket items only at public hearing meetings, and not at regular legislative meetings. Public hearing meetings are usually held on the Saturday following the second Tuesday in each month; regular legislative meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays in each month. The rule with respect to when a person may speak to a docket item at a legislative meeting can be waived by a majority vote of council members present but such a waiver is not normal practice. When a speaker is recognized, the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply. If an item is docketed *for public hearing* at a regular legislative meeting, the public may speak to that item, and the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply.

In addition, the public may speak on matters which are not on the docket during the Public Discussion Period at public hearing meetings. The mayor may grant permission to a person, who is unable to participate in public discussion at a public hearing meeting for medical, religious, family emergency or other similarly substantial reasons, to speak at a regular legislative meeting. When such permission is granted, the rules of procedures for public discussion at public hearing meetings shall apply.

Guidelines for the Public Discussion Period

(a) All speaker request forms for the public discussion period must be submitted by the time the item is called by the city clerk.

(b) No speaker will be allowed more than three minutes; except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard during the public discussion period shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent, at the start of your presentation.

(c) If more speakers are signed up than would be allotted for in 30 minutes, the mayor will organize speaker requests by subject or position, and allocated appropriate times, trying to ensure that speakers on unrelated subjects will also be allowed to speak during the 30 minute public discussion period.

(d) If speakers seeking to address council on the same subject cannot agree on a particular order or method that they would like the speakers to be called on, the speakers shall be called in the chronological order of their request forms' submission.

(e) Any speakers not called during the public discussion period will have the option to speak at the conclusion of the meeting, after all docketed items have been heard.

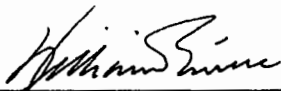
# CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

## Guidelines for Honest Civic Discourse for those Participating in Meetings in the Council Chamber

Members of the Alexandria community, its elected officials and City staff place a high value on constructive and thoughtful debate on public issues. To this end, all who participate in meetings in the Chamber, including public officials, staff and members of the community, are expected to observe the following guidelines.

1. Treat Everyone with Respect and Courtesy
2. Do Your Homework – Be Prepared and Be Familiar with the Docket
3. Express Your Ideas and Opinions in an Open and Helpful Manner
4. Be Respectful of Others' Time by Being Clear and Concise in Your Comments and/or Questions
5. Demonstrate Honesty and Integrity in Your Comments and Actions
6. Focus on the Issues Before the Decision Making Body – Avoid Personalizing Issues
7. Listen and Let Others Express their Ideas and Opinions
8. If a Decision is Made with which You Do Not Concur, Agree to Disagree and/or Use Appropriate Means of Civil and Civic Recourse, and Move On

Adopted by the Alexandria City Council on October 12, 2004.



William D. Euille, Mayor