

From: [Sydney Olson](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Hotel AKA
Date: Wednesday, March 16, 2022 5:18:51 AM

Dear BAR members,

First, thank you (and especially Lia Niebauer) for the opportunity to view the ombré stain at Hotel AKA. It was helpful to see the sample and meet with members of the hotel project staff.

The ombré stain is a very small improvement over the black rendering. However, it remains a mystery why anyone would consider a very large building stained this color to be attractive or appealing.

I urge the BAR to send the proposal back to the AKA design team. Surely a group of talented design folks can do better for our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Sydney Olson
Sent from my iPad

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From: [Leslie Stricklen](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Holiday Inn
Date: Wednesday, March 16, 2022 9:18:52 AM

BAR,

I viewed the paint color at the Holiday Inn yesterday. It reads very dark, and they are using black awnings in the front of the building. I asked if they could at least do a black and white awning to soften the gothic look. I hope you will encourage AKA to go back and look at their choice of color that will stand out, in an unfavorable way, among all of the brick buildings that surround it. Their choice of color is so harsh and unappealing for such a large footprint.

Leslie and Raymond Stricklen III
Liberty Row

Sent from my iPhone

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600 Second Street, Unit 202
Alexandria, VA 22314
March 16, 2022

Emailed to lia.niebauer@alexandriava.gov for the BAR

The Board of Architectural Review (BAR)
City of Alexandria
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Proposed AKA Hotel renovation at 625 First Street and 510 Second Street
("Proposed Renovation") — comments based on March 15 site visit.

Dear Members of the Board:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide further comments on the Proposed Renovation following a site visit on March 15 made possible by AKA.

I am a resident of Liberty Row Condominiums, adjacent to the AKA Hotel site. My site visit was productive and AKA representatives were able to provide answers to many questions, but, understandably, not all at this time. My comments on the newly obtained information are as follows:

1. Exterior Color: In response to the comments of area residents, AKA proposes applying a medium-tone gray stain on the building's exterior. I believe that the lightest gray tone is more palatable to those of us at Liberty Row, as the walls visible from residences in all three Liberty Row buildings are solid, without the interspersions of windows. Residents of Watergate along N. Pitt Street also would face a long wall with windows on the upper floors, thus, making the light gray tone more attractive. As explained, the gray stain is durable and better than paint. AKA representatives said the stain is absorbed by the brick, will not chip or peel as paint does, and is better able to withstand the elements. It is also my understanding from AKA representatives that the stain will be applied so that it will appear uniform without variations or streaks in the covered wall space.
2. New Windows: A sample of the new windows to be installed, primarily along the South (First Street) and East (N. Pitt Street) facades looked contemporary with black framing. They are consistent with other windows and framing in other newly constructed buildings in the North End.
3. Wooden Fence Sitting Atop West-Facing Brick Wall Behind Liberty Row Building 540: This wooden fence shows signs of aging. AKA Representatives state, however, that it is their intent to keep it in place, although it will be stained with the same stain applied to the brick. If this fence could be redone, it would be a vast improvement for the residents of Liberty Row's Building 540. For example, if new wooden slats could be laid horizontally, as opposed to the current vertical design, this wall would appear more modern and consistent with the effect AKA

wishes to create in the renovation. Having horizontal sections of this fencing framed by stainless steel or aluminum supports would be much more attractive.

4. Proposed Ivy Planting: Also, AKA representatives indicate that the developer's landscape specialists are proposing to cover the wall referenced above with **ivy**. I expressed **strong opposition** to this proposal. Ivy is invasive and destructive to structures. The tendrils bore into brick or wood, leaving spaces in which **ants and other insects may flourish**. **Also, rats love ivy**. I stressed that the representatives please pass along my concerns with respect to planting any ivy as part of a landscaping plan for the hotel.

5. Vehicle Drop-off Areas: The driveway of the hotel will be truncated as AKA does not anticipate servicing large groups. It is my understanding that the target clientele is other than the tour-group market pursued by the former Holiday Inn. The business plan does not include large-group functions or receptions or catering. As such, AKA representatives state that a shorter driveway also offering valet parking is more appropriate. In my opinion, this is a reasonable approach. Bus traffic and parking issues are not anticipated under the proposed business plan. Also, all brickwork along the entrance will be replaced by more attractive pavers. This appears to be a significant improvement.

6. Outdoor Bar and Indoor Cafe: As explained during my site visit, there will be outdoor seating on the Southeast corner of the hotel (First Street and N. Pitt Street). It is proposed that a cafe offering light fare and coffee will be located here. Also, guests will be able to purchase alcoholic beverages inside the hotel close to the proposed cafe location and take advantage of outdoor seating, weather permitting. This seems reasonable, although there is no specific information at this time about seating capacity, hours of operation, noise abatement and trash collection. These issues should be monitored as the renovation progresses.

AKA representatives state that given the targeted clientele and four-star hotel designation, it is not anticipated that noise associated with congregation at this location will be an issue. AKA representatives indicated their intent to have senior-level management staff at the hotel to monitor and prevent issues that might adversely affect the adjacent communities. The matter was, nevertheless, raised to ensure that noise concerns are kept in mind.

7. Restaurant: AKA representatives state that the developer intends to allow space for a destination restaurant on the first level of the hotel, adjacent to N. Pitt Street. It is proposed that a door from the restaurant will be placed on N. Pitt Street. It is unclear whether this will be an emergency-only exit. No negotiations for a proposed restaurant are underway at this time. It is also too early to know what hours of operation, seating capacity, trash pickup schedule, or noise abatement techniques may apply. Apparently, venting of the restaurant will continue to be housed in the same location as that of the former Holiday Inn restaurant. This venting sends airflow upward toward the Liberty Row property. We should continue to monitor these restaurant issues and the type of improved venting technology that may/should be installed.

8. Outdoor Courtyard: The Proposed Renovation includes an outdoor courtyard to be located on the Southwest corner (First Street and N. St. Asaph Street). AKA representatives indicate that it will be accessible only from the hotel's interior. Further, it will be bounded on three sides by a metal, mesh wall to be filled with plants. This should provide privacy and protection to the residents of Liberty Row Building 635 whose units are adjacent to the location of this outdoor courtyard.

9. Egress onto Liberty Row Property: Presently, there are two points of egress from the existing structure onto Liberty Row property. One on the West side and one on the North side. AKA representatives indicate that these points of egress will be retained. They mention that

the developer is very conscious of security issues and will, no doubt, place motion-sensing lights and cameras in appropriate spots for the protection of Liberty Row residents. We should continue to monitor this issue as the renovation progresses.

10. Entry to Hotel Parking on Second Street: Entry to the hotel parking lot and garage continues to be on Second Street. The above-ground parking lot which extends from part of Second Street and along N. Pitt Street has sometimes been conducive to loitering. Special care should be given to landscaping and hardscaping plans that will discourage such use of this portion of the hotel property. For example, plans should avoid creating areas that are not clearly visible from N. Pitt Street and Second Street. There should be ample lighting around this area as well. This is a matter of safety for area residents. Again, AKA representatives stress that the developer is quite security conscious so that steps will be taken to address this concern. We should continue to monitor this issue as the renovation progresses.

11. Security Cameras: Installation of security cameras at key locations along the property's perimeter is important. The renderings go into some detail about outdoor lighting, but I did not see any mention of security cameras. Again, given that there is a significant residential element to this area of Old Town, measures promoting safety are paramount. As AKA representatives earlier stated, the developer is security conscious, so this issue should continue to be monitored as the renovation progresses.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to present my views following my March 15 site visit to the Proposed Renovation. I hope that the issues outlined will be taken into consideration by the BAR and the Applicant as this project evolves.

Sincerely,

Linda L. Lord

Linda L. Lord, Esq.

From: [Elizabeth Chimento](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]BAR Meeting Final Letter
Date: Wednesday, March 16, 2022 11:53:44 AM

Board of Architectural Review

Lia.niebauer@alexandriava

Re: AKA Hotel Renovation

625 First St. and 510 Second St.

March 16, 2022

Members of the Board:

At the Feb. 16, 2022 meeting, nearby residents rejected the owners' request to paint the building's exterior gray/black (Benjamin Moore RAL 7022 Umbra Grey) and instead asked the Board to retain its red brick color.

The homeowners stated the proposed color was a sharp, unbecoming contrast to the surrounding neighborhood homes which maintain a typical colonial palette. The size of the hotel, wrapping around three city blocks, further accentuates its neighborhood dominance rather than aesthetically blending in.

The hotel owners were directed by the BAR to do a mock-up of the paint selection on an inconspicuous exterior wall for all to view (Tuesday, March 15 from 3:30 to 6 pm.)

The discussion turned to differentiating paint from stain and to pointing out the Compagna Center (Washington St.) exterior is a brick building painted white several years ago which is peeling and unattractive. No one wants that outcome at the AKA Hotel if it is painted.

I consulted Benjamin Moore technicians for information on painting vs. staining the exterior hotel brick since the owner is using a Benjamin Moore color for the stain. The technician states that the color is added to a concrete stain which is thinner than paint and is applied to the brick. However, the stain only lasts 3 to 5 years before it must be redone. Blistering and peeling caused by moisture occur from both painting and staining.

The Benjamin Moore technician further states that paint is less likely to show abuse and will last longer (8 to 10 years) than stain.

Given this information, if the Board approves applying stain to the hotel exterior,

I ask the members to stipulate that the stain be examined every five years for fading, blistering, moisture accumulation and any other damage revealed and that those walls be redone.

I continue to strongly prefer leaving the exterior walls red brick as they aesthetically blend in with the rest of the neighborhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to reply.

Elizabeth Chimento

1200 N. Pitt St.

Alexandria, VA 22314

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Hi Lia Niebauer,

First Name: Danny

Last Name: Smith

Questions & Comments: BAR 3/16/22

Docket Item 7; BAR 2021-00471 OHAD

My name is Danny Smith. I serve as Chair of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission and am speaking on behalf of the commission. I reside at 401 South Lee Street

This case has been discussed at multiple HARC meetings, and the HARC members unanimously voted that HARC oppose the painting or staining of the brick at the Hotel AKA. Quoting in part the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance Section 10-105(A)(1), the responsibility of the BAR: "The board of architectural review...shall review such features and factors for the purpose of determining the compatibility... with the Old and Historic Alexandria District area surroundings and... with the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway... and may make such requirements for, and conditions of, approval as are necessary or desirable to prevent any... alteration... incongruous... to such existing... area surroundings or memorial character...."

In conjunction with the quote above, Section 10-105 (A)(2)(d) clearly specifies that among the features and factors the BAR shall consider are "Texture, material and color...."

The Old and Historic District design guidelines state that the Board strongly discourages the painting of previously unpainted masonry surfaces.

The existing surface of the building's red brick fits in with the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Coloring the brick surface with either a stain or a paint will render it incongruous with and inappropriate for the district and the viewscape of the George Washington Memorial Parkway which we strive to protect. The inappropriate character of the applicant's proposal is further exacerbated by plans to install black exterior features including trim, windows, and awnings resulting in an essentially featureless, monochromatic, monolith. We respectfully urge you to deny the applicant's proposal to paint or stain the red brick surface of the building.

Thank you.