

Akida Rouzi

Subject: FW: Short letter of support to Planning Commission Members for docket item this evening

RE: Subdivision #2013-0006
Development Site Plan #2012-0024
317, 319, 321, 323, 325, 327 and 329 North Columbus Street and 330 N
Washington Street- Cromley Row
Public hearing and consideration of requests

Dear Chairman Komoroske and Planning Commissioners:

This evening you will consider the subdivision and DSUP for the 300 North block of Columbus Street, also known as Cromley Row. I wish to offer my support for this development plan.

As you are aware this project has already come before the Board of Architectural Review where its mass, scale, and architectural character relative to the surrounding neighborhood was found to be acceptable. The B.A.R. voted to approve the plan you see before you this evening.

While some from the residential part of this neighborhood spoke at the B.A.R. hearing against the design of the project - feeling that it did not reflect the scale and character of their historic homes - I felt quite the opposite was true. This project spans the area between these historic homes and the much larger and newer commercial buildings located on Washington Street. The designer has taken both of these contextual pieces into consideration and responded in what I believe to be an appropriate manner with the building's design, making an appropriate bridge between these two disparate aspects of the immediate area.

As far as the architecture itself is concerned, it should not be the main topic of your decision this evening as the B.A.R. has already weighed in on the design with specific suggestions for improvements, many of which the developer has accommodated. It is a better project for those changes. However architecture, somewhat like art, evokes reaction and it should. What we see here is an expression of the designer's voice informed by the familiar "pattern language", those pieces of the architecture that make it fit into its place. And yet this project is not trying to replicate the historic homes across the street - and if it did so it would only serve to demean those authentic buildings. Instead the designer of this project uses the familiar language pieces to design a row of houses that places them in our time. I feel strongly that is how we should be creating in-fill projects in the historic district....using the parts of the architectural language but not trying to recreate the authentic past.

While not all will like this design, nor can any design ever be produced for this site that would make everyone happy, I think this is a great project for this site. I believe it has been designed with care and creativity and I would ask you to approve the subdivision and DSUP.

With kind regard,

Judy Noritake

Judy Guse-Noritake, AIA, LEED AP
Managing Principal

NORITAKE
associates

605 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
[t.] 703.739.9366 x.130 [f.] 703.739.9481
www.noritakeassociates.com
jnoritake@nka-arch.com

Akida Rouzi

Subject: FW: re: Proposed houses on block 300 N. Columbus Street

From: James Roberts
Sent: Tuesday, July 02, 2013 2:32 PM
To: ajeromecobb@yahoo.com
Cc: Kendra Jacobs; Gary Wagner; Dirk Geratz
Subject: re: Proposed houses on block 300 N. Columbus Street

Dear Ms. Cobb,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the proposal for townhouses at 317-329 N. Columbus Street.

The site is within the Commercial Downtown (CD) zone. Many zones in the City permit both commercial and residential uses, and it is not necessary to re-zone to a residential zone in this case as the CD zone allows townhouses as a permitted use. The project that will be discussed at the Planning Commission is for residential townhouses, and there has been no indication from the applicant that anything other than residences are contemplated.

It is staff's view that there would be technical challenges associated with a change in use to commercial, both in terms of making the building fully accessible (to the standards required of commercial buildings), and in providing the parking required of a commercial use. Additionally, the building would be required to meet the zoning and code requirements applicable for a commercial use. If any changes to the structures' exterior are needed to accommodate a commercial use, an amendment to the site plan may be required. Any enlargement of the structure would necessitate a major amendment, which would require approval by the Planning Commission.

I hope this answers your questions, please contact me if you would like any further information.

Jim Roberts

Jim Roberts

Urban Planner and Landscape Architect
ph.703 746 3820



From: Anne Cobb [<mailto:ajeromecobb@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Monday, July 01, 2013 12:13 PM
To: PlanComm
Subject: Proposed houses on block 300 N. Columbus Street

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I have lived in Old Town Alexandria since 1979. My husband and I purchased our present house at 308 N. Columbus Street in 1999.

I appeared before the Alexandria BAR and City Council in 1980 when I renovated my previous house. I complied with all the rules, sending letters to every neighbor who lived in front, beside, even the street behind my house. Building materials and design were mandated even though the structure could not be seen from the front and barely from an alley.

I am baffled by the way the BAR has conducted the proposed building of 5 houses on our block. While my husband and I are happy to have new houses built across the street, we are not pleased with the design. It looks nothing like Old Town, Alexandria. Mr. Cromley and the Board clearly does not care what the neighbors think. Why couldn't Mr. Cromley build houses like the beautiful ones across the street from Christ Church?

Our biggest question is this..Why is this area still zoned commercial when residential townhouses are being built? Does this not mean that a business could move in? Given these building designs, we could see retail shops and offices across the street. Could you please give us an answer?

Sincerely,

Anne Jerome Cobb

308 North Columbus Street

Alexandria, VA

(703) 548-1047