

*******DRAFT MINUTES*******

Alexandria Board of Architectural Review
Old & Historic Alexandria District
Work Session

Wednesday, March 12, 2014
7:30pm, Lloyd House
220 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Members Present: Tom Hulfish, Chairman
Oscar Fitzgerald, Vice-Chairman
Peter Smeallie
Chip Carlin
Christine Roberts
John von Senden

Members Absent: Wayne Neale

Staff Present: Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager
Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner

Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, Planning & Zoning
Tom Canfield, City Architect, Planning & Zoning

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Chairman Hulfish.

SPEAKERS:

Mark Orling, project architect, presented the most recent hotel design images and responded to Board members' questions.

Austin Flasjer, Carr City Centers, applicant, spoke in support of the project and responded to Board members' questions.

Ken Wire, counsel for applicant, spoke in support of the project and responded to Board members' questions.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Al Cox began the discussion by going over the nine items raised in the memo prepared for the Board to frame the work session discussion of what needed improvement. The Board went through each recommendation in the memo and provided comments for staff and the applicant but took no formal action.

Memo Recommendation #1: *That the project read as three distinct but compatible building masses and that the materials, colors and details be standardized for each building. This includes a uniform color scheme, fenestration and architectural details for each “building”; the addition of the gable form on The Strand carried through to the western terminus of that building mass; as well as refinement of the courtyard elevation shown as “2a” in Figure 3.*

Board Comments: The three building color scheme was discussed in more detail with Memo Recommendation #2 below.

The Board agreed that an expanded elevator penthouse brick wall, in combination with the mechanical screening provided by the east gable end feature, was sufficient screening and much more architecturally integrated than the metal fence. Mr. von Senden commented that rooftop screening, such as the previous 7’ metal fencing, often looked worse than the units themselves. The architect stated that they would not know the exact size of the units until the equipment was selected but all units were located in the center of the roof and sight-line studies indicated that they would not be visible for a distance of several blocks.

The Board agreed that a waiver of rooftop screening would also be acceptable in lieu of the metal screen in certain areas.

Memo Recommendation #2: *That each building form continue to be simplified, standardized and coordinated among all elevations. For example, the windows at the corner of the three-story South Union Street building should match on both the South Union and Duke Street elevations.*

Board Comments: The Board expressed consensus that a two building scheme with two different color bricks was preferable to a three building and three color scheme. The applicant showed a design using a pair of decorative spandrel-linked windows on both sides of the South Union and Duke Street corner which everyone supported. Mr. Orling then presented two alternative muntin patterns for the first story windows. Mr. Carlin pointed out that the large windows at Comfort One Shoes (201 King Street) were successful. The Board reached a consensus to use Alternative 1 windows (12 light) on the large tan building and Alternative 2 windows (one oversized pane with fewer muntins) on the red brick building.

Memo Recommendation #3: *That the pitched roof of the main warehouse building be set back from the building face and slope to the maximum extent possible in order to minimize visibility from the Duke Street sidewalk and that the roof windows be low profile with the frame and glass color designed to match the roof color as closely as possible. The applicant must provide a large scale wall section of the Duke Street elevation and provide enlarged details of the cornices and brick corbels for all elevations.*

Board Comments: Mr. Orling stated that the proposed pitched roof slope could not be increased. Ms. Roberts suggested eliminating the mansard roof entirely and having a five-story wall on Duke Street, to be more elegant and classical. Mr. Cox explained the zoning ordinance requirements which required a set back or visual transition above the basic 30 foot wall height which precluded a five-story straight wall. Mr. Carlin asked whether the two top stories could be

set back 3-5 feet. Mr. Orling responded that it could be set back 2-3 feet. Mr. Orling displayed the building wall section showing the pitched roof was already set back behind a cornice and gutter. Mr. von Senden was confident that this would effectively diminish the visibility of the pitched roof surface from the sidewalk on Duke Street and supported the proposed design.

Chairman Hulfish noted that all along the design has included a mansard roof in some form and that a one story pitched roof is what City Council expects. Chairman Hulfish asked whether any Board members objected to the roof pitch and there were no objections. The Board members were generally satisfied with the set back and roof pitch shown in the Duke Street wall section.

Memo Recommendation #4: *That The Strand elevation be refined, as it will be the most prominent elevation—eliminate the spandrel panels and explore the use of French doors and shallow balconies to create an architectural dialogue with the waterfront parks.*

Board Comments: Ms. Roberts, Mr. von Senden, and Mr. Carlin all expressed a preference for The Strand elevation which featured operable windows with spandrels above the first floor and French doors with a glass railing at the first floor. They also preferred the glass railing at the top of the lantern elements. This scheme replaced the previous study which proposed French doors with either glass or metal railings. The Board generally supported the new hybrid scheme.

Memo Recommendation #5: *That the applicant provide an enlarged schematic wall section at the “lanterns” on The Strand elevation to indicate the interior ceiling conditions and potential for architectural lighting.*

Board Comments: The applicant showed details and a section indicating that there would be no ceiling bulkheads. Mr. Smeallie inquired whether the exterior of the lanterns would have illumination and the applicant indicated they were pursuing a subtle LED strip or similar for architectural lighting facing the river. The Board felt comfortable that the lantern elements would remain transparent and the glass would not be blocked on the interior.

Memo Recommendation #6: *That the applicant submit a comprehensive sign plan and a comprehensive architectural lighting plan.*

Board Comments: The applicant asked for approval of a lighting plan at the next hearing because they need to prepare their Final Site Plan drawings. Dr. Fitzgerald found the wall lanterns to be too specifically Arts and Crafts in style and suggested a contemporary version of a more utilitarian, warehouse fixture. Mr. von Senden suggested that the project have contemporary rather than faux industrial light fixtures. The Board felt comfortable with the courtyard light fixtures and the proposed location of light fixtures shown on the plan but not with the specific building mounted fixtures shown.

Memo Recommendation #7: *That the applicant resubmit a materials board including an additional brick sample. The applicant must also construct a full size mock-up panel, as required by the DSUP condition, to be approved by BAR staff and Development staff prior to ordering of materials.*

Board Comments: Mr. Carlin noted that the waterfront plan was intended to create a welcoming environment and that the buildings should also be welcoming. He thought the proposed dark red brick with dark red mortar to be too dark, lifeless and dull. He advocated for a broader range of red brick color and a lighter mortar color. He also proposed a medium gray color mortar for the water table brick. Mr. Orling explained that the three-story building had a large amount of glass area and was quite transparent, so they intentionally chose rich brick colors. Mr. von Senden and Dr. Fitzgerald also wanted to see a lighter mortar color. Mr. Smeallie found the brick colors to be acceptable but liked a lighter mortar color with a lighter grey base. Staff suggested that natural stone could also be used for this small area next to the public sidewalk, such as cut black slate or bluestone. The Chairman urged the Board to provide more clear guidance. The applicant proposed using a red brick with more range of color, a lighter mortar and a slate option and the Board supported that approach.

Memo Recommendation #8: *That the applicant show the location and size of all exterior vents and similar mechanical appurtenances.*

Board Comments: The applicant said there will be two vents with a decorative screen on Duke Street and the garage exhaust vent will be in the courtyard. An additional vent is in the soffit above the parking garage door. The Board agreed with the vent size, design and location.

Memo Recommendation #9: *That the applicant provide a roof plan locating all mechanical equipment, illustrating how any rooftop projections above 50 feet function as chimneys and equipment screening with architectural quality equal to the building walls below. Continue to study and architecturally integrate the proposed HVAC screening.*

Board Comments: As discussed at the beginning under Memo Recommendation #1, the Board was in general agreement that this was a suitable and appropriate approach and looked forward to a unified design proposal at the hearing.

Miscellaneous Memo Recommendations #10:

Board Comments: In response to concerns about windows at the fourth floor frieze band in the large warehouse building, Mr. Orling presented an alternate scheme of groups of three windows separated by a brick pier but stated his preference for windows which matched those below. Initially, Mr. Smeallie, Ms. Roberts and Dr. Fitzgerald wanted the windows at the 4th story to match those located at the 2nd and 3rd stories below, but with the removal of the lintels to simplify the appearance. Dr. Fitzgerald then noted that warehouses typically had a clerestory or different window in the frieze. Mr. Smeallie did not support the clerestory but the general sense from the Board was that they preferred the clerestory alternative.

Additional Board Comments: The Board also agreed that the proposed garage doors were appropriate.

II. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hulfish adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:10 pm.

Minutes submitted by,

Catherine Miliaras, Preservation Planner
Board of Architectural Review

Attached please find comments submitted by the public.

PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED FOR WORK SESSION

To: Board Architectural Review

RE: Carr Hospitality by Rust Orling Architecture

Fr: Kathryn Papp

Date: March 10, 2014

Please allow this to serve as input to the Work Session scheduled for March 12, 2014.

The current proposed concept design still falls short, even with the significant work already done by Rust Orling, of the standards imposed by the surrounding historic properties, and above all by our expectations of a hotel we can be proud of – now and in a hundred years.

It fails in two major ways:

- ▶ **the façade it presents to the kind of discriminating person who visits Old Town**
- ▶ **the experience the hotel can offer guests.**

The overall look still remains one that can be found anywhere USA. Ms. Gibney was quite correct in asking for a complete re-design that would bring the building up to “great” standards. Something memorable, elegant, truly reflective of place.

In Old Town, it is the nuanced rhythm of irregular, often spontaneous looking, small design features that creates façades to enliven the eye. This is the difference between the Brandt warehouses and what Carr currently proposes. It is what characterizes any antique, even those rough-made ... subtleties that demand you be engaged and intrigued for much longer than by any industrial, cold, and mass-produced item. This subtle warmth of imprecise and delighted discovery is what best characterizes the historic district. It is now missing from the current design concept.

In particular, the street level and top level window designs are stark, uninteresting, lack nuance or reference to any of the vast numbers of window designs used on warehouses in the 19c, especially those of around 1840 (not the late 19c) when the port was most active. They mimic, instead the mansard windows done for the 1970's Tavern Square building as can be seen on the Pitt Street side. Combining a severe mansard roof with equally severe windows results in a building topped off by an un-aspiring and mean finish. In contrast, mid-19c warehouses featured buildings whose upper sections trumpeted the builders' wealth or hopes for the building. As we will not be able to re-produce the steep roofs of our classic warehouse period, we should look harder at these.

Similarly, the Union street level windows are jarring to the eye. Modern does not have to mean large, plate glass, uninterrupted surfaces. With the advent of social media and the Internet, advertising as gone way beyond glass and steel as a way to attract customers. Again, it would be useful to review warehouses of the mid-19c to find windows that can replace the large, reflective glass surfaces, which showcase a lobby area. Given the reception desk, restaurant, gym locations, this is probably not an area people will congregate.

And making the Strand so very different from its background architecture is just strange. The sidewalls of glass barren and just out of place. They emphasize the many buildings rolled into one. Glass was used mid-19c, but not like this. Re-interpreting the design with maritime murals might interesting.

Finally, the all important *guest experience contained in the hotel* as proposed can only be imagined as rather meager and ordinary. It is here where the Carr Hotel concept singularly fails. The rooms are by necessity small, low ceilinged, and will probably feel cramped when furniture – unless it is early 19c scale – is installed.

As a concept hotel the Carr remains a building without a soul or spirit of place. One of the primary reasons people decide to visit and are willing to spend is for an exceptional experience. I would suggest you explore the Morgan's Hotel Group web site: <https://www.morganshotelgroup.com> for how to capture and express the spirit of a place, and then to intensify it in a truly modern way.

We need to start fresh, while we can, and produce a shining example for those who come a hundred years after us – of the best we could do.

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board

After sitting through the most recent BAR hearing on Carr's hotel, I am more convinced than ever that they need to make dramatic changes to their existing plans. It's not a style of window grid or exterior light, or more shades of bricks.. etc that need tweaking.

In my humble opinion, they need to start over! And Simplify. Raise the quality. Without a doubt, the building is too massive of a structure for the lot, but that ship has sailed.. But the addition of a mansard roof does nothing to lessen that scale, and quite honestly, makes it worse. Also trying to break up the bulk with the multi brick and cement materials only calls attention to the inferior design. It makes it busy on top of bad. The existing design is awful.

I again, forward you pictures of Capella Hotel in Georgetown as a good example of what style and quality would be appropriate in this location. This building's style is reminiscent of an old warehouse - with simple design and black metal windows, and flat roof. This style is in keeping with the block of antique warehouses (Brandt's) and would be an appropriate fill in and complete the block of warehouses. What Carr has proposed looks nothing like a warehouse. It looks like a Hampton Inn that you would find on the Jefferson Davis - Route 1 corridor near Target, a government "per diem" rate hotel, which, Austin Flasjer of Carr told me (spoke to him after the last BAR mtg) they plan to build. He said "a Morrison House boutique hotel doesn't make as much money as a government "per diem" hotel. That's why we are building a 120 key hotel". A government per diem rate hotel is NOT a boutique hotel, as we were promised. How about getting back to the promise? Building a government rate per diem hotel on prime waterfront land is the same as building low income housing on the waterfront. The waterfront calls for luxury. Just like the Oronoco, just like Robinson Terminal South will be, etc. I think, through design, Carr should be made to deliver on the promise of a true "boutique" hotel - not just in name, but in design.

Also, Carr should not be allowed to place their loading docks and trash doors on Duke Street. This will cause the Robinson Terminal South to respond accordingly, creating an ugly, trash strewn dead end, vs an inviting approach to the river. Their Duke Street side should look and be landscaped to look more like Capella's C&O side. Like many boutique hotels in historic areas, the trash and loading docks are non existent. Carts are rolled in and out of an alley (that they could create).

The architect seemed to agree, but said he could not move the loading dock, trash, because it was a part of the "approved waterfront plan" and he did not want to "fool" with any changes to that. Well, how silly is that? The plan should be able to be tweaked as mistakes are found instead of carrying through with them. Can you all please look into this? And find out who could give authority to tweak this part of the plan so these doors, docks can be moved elsewhere (an interior alley Carr creates?).

Your help is needed. Thank you for your time.

Beth Gibney
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This first building of the waterfront plan will set the standard for everything else. With your help, I'm sure Carr can develop a plan that is simple, elegant and appropriate for the space. Carr's architect, who I also spoke with after the last BAR meeting, also agreed that



