

**\*\*\*\*\*DRAFT MINUTES\*\*\*\*\***

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

**Wednesday, May 7, 2014**  
Council Work Room  
301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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

Staff Present: Planning & Zoning  
Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, Planning & Zoning  
Tom Canfield, City Architect, Planning & Zoning  
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Michele Oaks, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

The work session commenced at approximately 8:32 p.m.

**SPEAKERS:**

Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, Planning & Zoning, gave a brief introduction and noted the advisory role the Board will be providing during the Planning Commission and City Council's deliberations of this project.

Tom Canfield, the City Architect, also provided a brief analysis and summary.

Michael Hickok and Devon Perkins, Hickok Cole Architects, introduced the project team and presented a schematic site layout with mass and context studies, precedent images, and a brief historic context and requested feedback from the BAR. He noted the goals of the project, which included designing distinctively different buildings for each site that relate to each other and have some level of architectural continuity. He also identified some of the site challenges, including the grade change along the Oronoco frontage. He noted the intention of the site layout's design was to open up vistas and views to both parks that flank the site and to discontinue the use of the tail of Oronoco Street and extend the green space from Founder's park up to the East Building.

Bert Ely, 200 South Pitt Street, asked about the number of parking spaces for the underground parking garages. Mr. Wire stated that the garage layouts have not been finalized yet, but this information would be provided with the next submission. He also inquired about the uses being proposed for the pier. Mr. Wire indicated that they are exploring uses for the pier and outdoor dining could be an option.

Poul Hertel, 1217 Michigan Court, stated that he agreed with Mr. Neale and Mr. von Senden's comments. He feels that the West building should be reoriented on the site to open up the north view. He also is concerned with the East building and suggests that it be pulled back from Founder's Park. He would like to see an opening through the East building. He noted that the buildings should either be "signature buildings" or the buildings need to somehow relate to the historic waterfront.

He concluded with commending the design team for the preliminary nature of the plans and bringing the public in early in the design process.

Katie Cannady, 20 E Oak Street, requested that the architect eliminate the interior courtyard as "public spaces", as these are never really used by the public and should not be counted as such. She is concerned with the hotel use and the activity it will generate within the neighborhood. Regarding design, she stated that she hopes that the buildings do not contain too much glass, as she does not like glass.

Mark Mueller, 414 S Royal Street asked about the number of rooms proposed for the hotel and stated that he was concerned about not precluding tall ships from utilizing the pier. The architect responded by stating that the hotel will have 150 rooms.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION**

Chairman Hulfish opened the board discussion questioning the architect on how they were going to address servicing larger vessels on the pier if Oronoco Street is abandoned. Ken Wire, the attorney for the applicant explained that it was his understanding that the National Park Service Agreement only allows for emergency vehicle access on the pier.<sup>1</sup>

Ms. Roberts inquired about pedestrian paths and mid-block connectivity from Union Street to the water. She is also concerned about the visual permeability from Union Street out to the bulkhead. She also wanted more information about bike routes and how the "emergency access lanes" on the pier will be treated. The architect noted that it was their goal to design these lanes so they function as emergency lanes but visually look and feel like pedestrian paths.

Mr. von Senden noted that the building alignment is in a north/south direction versus an east/west direction and this was the only place in the City where a north/south street hits the water.

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<sup>1</sup> City staff has been having discussions with the National Park Service to clarify this language in the settlement agreement.

Mr. Neale stated that Founder's Park is a great open space, which has a defined edge. At the corner of North Union and Oronoco, the west building's new building footprint departs from this form. He recommended that the architect consider reversing [mirror] the orientation of the west building on the site whereby the open space would transfer to the north. He also noted that the corner of the west building should relate to the street grid, suggesting it could be truncated. Regarding the overall building uses, he questioned the hotel location and use. He feels that this location is not appropriate for this use, as it is divorced from urban activity. He would like the buildings to be a smaller footprint. He commended the architect on the use of precedent images.

Mr. Carlin liked the overall approach to the site plan and found it dynamic. He thought that the buildings will open up the views along Union Street and create new vistas. He liked that the plan will create a new park [public plaza] on the pier. He was enamored with the project and noted that it was his opinion that the project was the #1 approach on the waterfront to date and is inspirational.

Mr. Smeallie was impressed with the shape of the buildings and feel that the angles work with the irregular coastline. He said that he supported the scale and mass of the buildings as presented and that he supports the organization of the structures and the mix of uses. He also liked the use of contemporary architecture in this location within Alexandria.

Mr. von Senden thought initially when reviewing the project that "Alexandria is not a Frank Gehry City." He noted that he likes the angles. In addition, after a study of context, he said that this gives the opportunity to do something new. He said that overall he liked the organization of the uses, but concurred with Mr. Neale's reservation about the hotel use. He noted the need for transparency on the east building. He recommended for the architectural submission to include drawings which illustrate how the topography of the site affects the surrounding neighborhood and building mass.

Dr. Fitzgerald noted that he echoes many of Mr. von Senden's comments. He added that he felt that the architects were designing the site for the tenants and not the larger mass of people that will be visiting. He is concerned with supporting a-symmetrical designs [footprints] without knowing what they are buying into.

Mr. Chairman expressed concern about the permeability of the eastern building and the privatization of the river. He recommends a walkway through the building. He also noted that the Board is used to seeing a normal grid pattern.

Chairman Hulfish agreed that it was a good start, better than other project starts.

The work session concluded at approximately 9:30 pm.

Minutes submitted by,

Michele Oaks, Historic Preservation Planner  
Board of Architectural Review

