

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JULY 5, 2017

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE OLD AND HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
DISTRICT BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

FROM: HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF

SUBJECT: CONCEPT REVIEW WORK SESSION #3, 1604-1614 KING STREET
BAR CASE # 2016-0419

I. BACKGROUND

This is the third informal work session for the proposed King Street Gateway project at 1604-1614 King Street. The Board began seeing this proposed project over three years ago, when the property owner first presented very schematic ideas for a residential building behind the row of historic townhouses on King Street. As early as the first meeting in 2014, the Board generally endorsed the proposed project's height, scale and mass. In both December 21, 2016 and March 1, 2017, the Board saw more refined versions of the project. In response to BAR comments, the architectural character of the new building has continued to change and evolve and the architect has now designed both a more traditional bay spacing reminiscent of the townhouses on King Street, more traditional window mullions, a simplified and less irregular balcony placement and the use of traditional red brick for the piers.

At the most recent work session in March, the applicant presented an alternative at the BAR meeting that had recently been endorsed by the neighbors and the Old Town Civic Association which included a metal tracery screen over the glass top floor of the building. While the Board did not have sufficient time to evaluate the tracery top, or provide meaningful comment, they did note that while the location of the project at the edge of the historic district allowed for a more contemporary building, some members affirmed that the new building should be compatible with the historic townhouses in the foreground and the more traditional architectural typography of Old Town.

As a reminder, under the BAR's Concept Review Policy the BAR's purview in this optional concept review work session is limited to providing informal guidance to staff, the Planning Commission and City Council on the height, scale, mass and general architectural character of the overall project. The applicant will ultimately return to the BAR for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for architectural details, materials and finishes for this project and for the associated Permit to Demolish after approval of the DSUP. While concept review is non-binding, there is a reasonable expectation on the part of the applicant that major architectural features, such as the building height or setback or whether there are projecting balconies, will not be changed by the BAR once approved by City Council.

At the December 2016 meeting the applicant provided three alternatives for the treatment of the westernmost townhouse at 1614 King Street, ranging from full demolition to the retention, or reconstruction, of approximately half of the second floor of the townhouse. The current project description does not specify a preferred treatment for this townhouse, although the submitted materials show the retention and/or reconstruction of the second floor with a delicate iron gateway framing the pedestrian entrance to the residential building in the rear. This is the alternative that is preferred by the neighbors and by staff. The Board can expect to see the applicant's full proposal for the demolition and/or reconstruction of the second floor when the applicant returns for final approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness and Permit to Demolish.

Staff is pleased that the applicant has been very open about the project evolution and has met on several occasions with the Upper King Street Neighborhood Association, as well as the Old Town Civic Association. Both Associations have expressed a strong preference for a more

traditional architectural character, with a no large expanses of glass, though a contemporary, compatible expression of traditional architectural details was welcome.

II. PROPOSAL

Included below are the King Street elevations seen by the Board during the last two concept reviews to show the progression of the architectural character of the project, and to provide a context for the current proposal. While the height, scale and mass have remained nearly identical since the project's inception, with each iteration the architect has revised the architectural elevations of the building.

- Figure 1 shows the glass topped building with irregular bay spacing and materials that the Board saw in December 2016.
- Figure 2 dates from March 2017 and has a solid top and alternating balconies.
- Figure 3 shows the proposal submitted by the applicant shortly before the hearing with a metal tracery at the top.



Figure 1: December 2016



Figure 2: March 2017



Figure 3: Metal tracery top alternative presented at the March 1, 2017 hearing

Current Proposal

With this third concept review, the applicant has submitted three different treatments for the top floor of the building, while the lower levels are consistent among the proposals (Figures 4-6). The bay spacing and fenestration pattern is now more traditional and compatible with the townhouses in the foreground. Further, the red brick piers have a more subtle taper and become more delicate as they extend upward. The balconies, once inconsistent in size and location, are now regularly stacked and more formal. Because neither staff nor the Board expressed concern with the proposed materials on the building the applicant has generally focused on the architectural detailing of the top of the building, as shown in the three options below:

- Base Option (Figure 4) is the applicant's preference. It is similar to the tracery proposal shown at the March 1st BAR hearing. The middle "body" of the building shows the new bay spacing, fenestration and simplified balcony placement, which are the same for Alternatives A & B.
- Alternative A (Figure 5) shows a solid top, which the drawings state are "solid panels on metal framing".
- Alternative B (Figure 6) is a hybrid alternative. It also has a tracery top, but with a surrounding framework simulating columns, segmental arches and a cornice.
- The side and rear elevations of the building utilize the same proposed materials and design scheme, but with no projecting balconies on the side elevations.



Figure 4: July 5, 2017 Applicants Preferred Option, full front façade of north elevation



Figure 5: July 5, 2017 Alternative A top floor

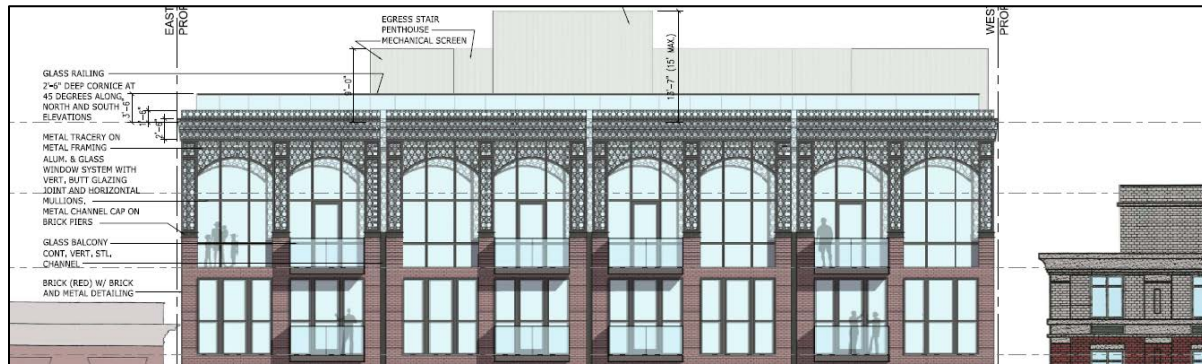


Figure 6: July 5, 2017 Alternative B top floor

III. ANALYSIS

Following the March BAR hearing staff met with the applicant on a number of occasions to discuss the Board's feedback and to refine the details of the building's King Street façade, including design alternatives for the building's top. Staff is very pleased that the bay spacing and balcony placement on the body of the building is now more regularized and reflects the width of the historic townhouses on King Street.

While staff finds the metal tracery at the upper portion of the building to be unique and potentially exciting, and acknowledges that there are examples of decorative metal gates and railings throughout Old Town, staff can find no local precedents for the use of a metal tracery as a wall material on the top of a building, either historic or modern. That is not to say that the project architect couldn't design a beautiful building clad with metal tracery, but staff does not believe that this is the location for such a project. The applicant feels strongly that a metal tracery at the top of the building can be compatible and contemporary, as well as a unique and welcome addition to the transitional upper King Street streetscape, and staff has encouraged them to bring that option forward to the Board for consideration.

However, there are a number of reasons why staff finds a solid top to be more successful than the metal tracery. First, as the *Design Guidelines* note, the new building should be a background building to the historic townhouses on King Street and the tracery, particularly at night, will draw significant attention to the building because of its uniqueness. As a one story garden structure, the backlit tracery could really be quite beautiful but it seems out of context sitting on

top of a seven story building. Second, as noted above, there is little historic precedent for metal tracery on a building in Old Town and staff finds it to be too jarring and incompatible with both the historic and modern buildings in the immediate vicinity. One would not be surprised to see a new building with metal tracery in historic districts like Savannah or New Orleans, but here it is in conflict with the Old & Historic Alexandria District where we did not have that decorative wrought iron building tradition. Staff supports the use of decorative metalwork at the entrance to the project from King Street, where it is limited to a small, pedestrian scaled feature reminiscent of the iron gates in Old Town which offer glimpses through and into courtyard gardens.

As noted in previous reports, there are many ways to approach or design a building that makes for a successful project, and the BAR's *Design Guidelines* do not dictate the use of any particular architectural style. The *Guidelines* state:

“As a general rule, the Boards favor contextual background buildings which allow historic structures to maintain the primary visual importance. Singular buildings in the latest architectural vocabulary are generally discouraged. It is not the intention of the Boards to dilute design creativity in new commercial buildings. Rather, the Boards seek to promote compatible development that is, at once, both responsive to the needs and tastes of the late 20th century while being compatible with the historic character of the districts.” (New Commercial Construction, p.2)

Staff suggests the use of cast stone or metal material for the top floor rather than additional red brick, which could cause the tower to appear even taller than it is. Following the Chicago School style of building, the base, middle and top should be differentiated from each other, in reference to the classical Greek column. Staff recommends that the architect look to historic cast iron architecture for design inspiration. This method of prefabricated construction began in the United State around the mid-19th century and was used primarily on commercial and industrial building. Staff has included a few precedent images below that might provide a jumping off point for a solid top (Figures 7 and 8).

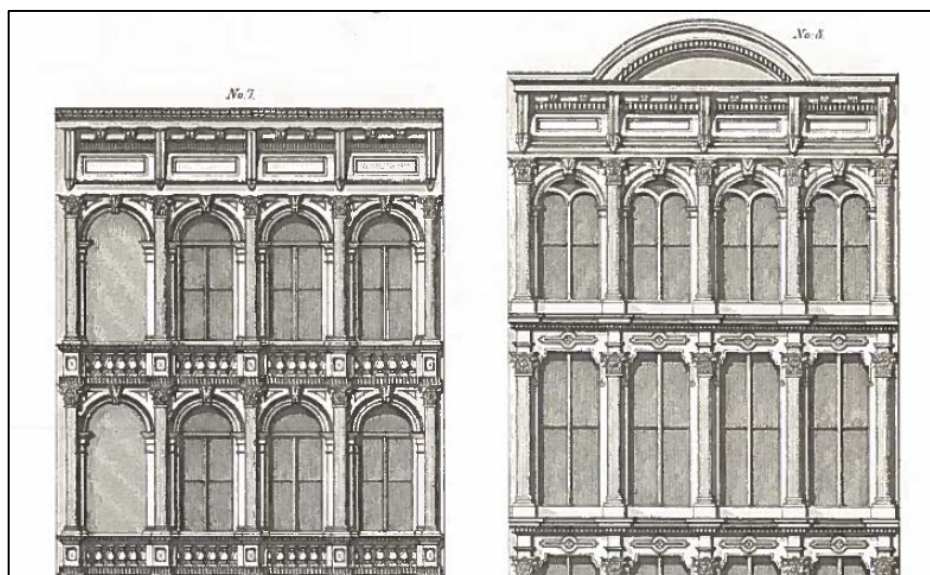


Figure 7: Examples of cast iron building tops



Figure 8: Carlin Hulfish hardware cast iron storefront, 315 King St. (demolished)

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the overall project, as presented, but strongly recommends a seventh floor design that is closer to Alternative A, and believes that the top should be more refined than currently shown. For instance, while staff believes that the segmental arches are better proportioned than the semi-circular arches and recall late 19th century segmental arches on nearby historic buildings, it is visually disconcerting and not classical tradition for the arches spring from the side of the shaft of the pilaster rather than be supported at the top. Staff recommends that the paired pilasters be shortened so that the arches may spring from their capital and that the area above the arches be enhanced with panels to reduce the scale and provide visual interest.

Staff recommends that the BAR endorse the scale, mass, height and general architectural character of the majority of the proposed new building, as shown in all submitted alternatives, and provide direction that the top of the building have a more solid quality, with final details and materials selection to be reviewed and approved as part of the Certificate of Appropriateness request after approval of the DSUP.

STAFF

Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

V. ATTACHMENTS

1 –7/5/17 application materials for 1604-1614 King Street Concept Review #3

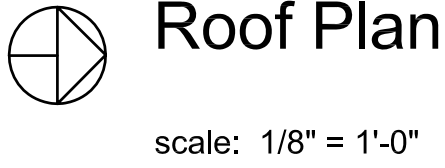
1 6 0 4 - 1 6 1 4 K I N G S T R E E T

ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

MICHAEL WINSTANLEY
ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS

06/23/2017 BAR CONCEPT III SUBMISSION





Original drawing is 24" x 36". Scale entities accordingly if reduced.

F

E

D

C

B

A



EXTERIOR ELEVATION - NORTH
BASE OPTION
SCALE: NTS



EXTERIOR ELEVATION - SOUTH
BASE OPTION
SCALE: NTS

1604-1616 KING STREET,
Alexandria, Virginia

MICHAEL WINSTANLEY
ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
MICHAELWINSTANLEY.COM
107 N. WEST STREET
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314
(703) 519-8081


Professional Certification.
I certify that these documents were prepared or approved by me, and that I am a duly licensed architect under the laws of the state of Virginia, license number 0401012577, expiration date 08/31/2018.

REGISTRATION:

[illegible]

A/E PROJECT NO:
DRAWN BY:
CHECKED BY:

PROJECT

 VIRGINIA
STATE GRID
NORTH
NAD 83/93

EXTERIOR ELEVATION
- NORTH & SOUTH:
BASE OPTION

SHEET NUMBER:

A-200

REGISTRATION:

[illegible]

0 4' 8' 16' PROJECT
SCALE : 1/8" = 1'-0" VIRGINIA
STATE GRID
NORTH
NAD 83/93

SHEET NUMBER:

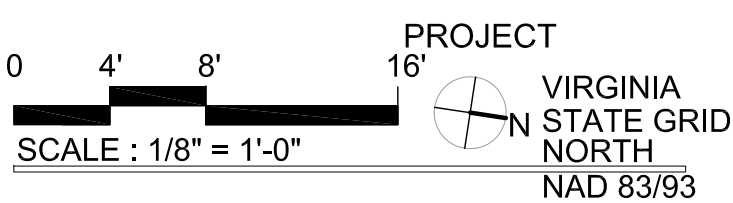
A-201

Original drawing is 24" x 36". Scale entities accordingly if reduced.

REGISTRATION:

[illegible]

A/E PROJECT NO:
DRAWN BY:
CHECKED BY:

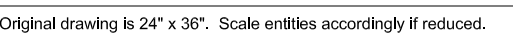


EXTERIOR ELEVATION -
SOUTH (DECHANTAL
STREET): BASE OPTION

SHEET NUMBER:

A-202





EXTERIOR ELEVATION
- WEST: BASE OPTION

REGISTRATION:

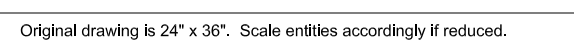
[illegible]

0 4' 8' 16' PROJECT
SCALE : 1/8" = 1'-0" VIRGINIA
STATE GRID
NORTH
NAD 83/93

EXTERIOR ELEVATION
- NORTH (KING
STREET): ALT. A

SHEET NUMBER:

A-205A



REGISTRATION:

[illegible]

0 4' 8' 16' PROJECT
SCALE : 1/8" = 1'-0" VIRGINIA
STATE GRID
NORTH
NAD 83/93

SHEET NUMBER:

A-205B








MICHAEL WINSTANLEY
ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
MICHAELWINSTANLEY.COM
107 N. WEST STREET
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314
(703) 519-8081

REGISTRATION:

[illegible]

PROJECT

 VIRGINIA
STATE GRID
NORTH
NAD 83/93

SHEET NUMBER:

A-801B

Original drawing is 24" x 36". Scale entities accordingly if reduced.

A



1604-1616 KING STREET,
Alexandria, Virginia

MICHAEL

WINSTANLEY

ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS

MICHAELWINSTANLEY.COM
107 N. WEST STREET
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314
(703) 519-8081


Professional Certification.
I certify that these documents were
prepared or approved by me, and that I am
a duly licensed architect under the laws of
the state of Virginia, license
number 0401012577, expiration date 08/31/2018.

REGISTRATION:

NO.	DATE	ISSUE DESCRIPTION
	09/23/2016	CONCEPT I & II SUBMISSION
	11/16/2016	BAR SUBMISSION
	02/15/2017	BAR CONCEPT II
	06/23/2017	BAR CONCEPT III

A/E PROJECT NO:
DRAWN BY:
CHECKED BY:

PROJECT



VIRGINIA
STATE GRID
NORTH
NAD 83/93

KING STREET VIEW
ALTERNATIVE B -
NIGHT

SHEET NUMBER:

A-802B

Original drawing is 24" x 36". Scale entities accordingly if reduced.