

From: Robert M. Pringle
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For Board of Architectural Review Meeting of September 2, 2020

August 25, 2024

Heritage Issues

Dear Members

I believe we should realize that the middle of a pandemic is not the time to debate a complex, perhaps precedent- setting, urban development project. To put it another way, how can you argue with a mask on your mouth?

Who wants to bother with every-day, City Hall squabbling when, to overdramatize only slightly, death is in the wings? One result has been that those with most at stake, including the occupants of affordable housing and the neighbors in their low-slung, widely spaced houses, and some apartment buildings, have yet to be adequately informed.

This project should be put in the closet until the people most affected --residents and neighbors-- have the time and ability to consider it, and when we can meet in person and review this matter together rather than on a computer screen.

As things stand, the developers are seeking a "permit to demolish" before other details have been worked out. They are, of course, aware that once peoples' homes are demolished, further talk will be futile.

The area in question may be considered by some to be lacking in historical importance. True, it has few plaqued houses, partly because the same goes for most houses in traditionally Black areas. But it includes the area known in the Nineteenth Century as The Bottoms or The Dip, part of a story explained in more detail in *Courage Journey: A Guide to Alexandria's African American History* ¹ Looked at more closely, it was indeed important in Alexandria's history and economy.

¹ Published by VisitAlexandriaVa.com/BlackHistory

It includes everything from old horse stables, interesting if modest residences and small homes still reflecting their Black heritage. The housing is varied and attractive, as my wife and I discovered only after walking became a healthy necessity thanks to Covid 19.

The Heritage site also anchors an important part of this area. It straddles Wilkes Street which continues all the way to the waterfront. It greets traffic coming into Alexandria on Rt 1. To build the massive structures proposed would destroy one of the few remaining gateways to the city not already overbuilt, in a fashion totally incompatible with the historic core of Old Town Alexandria.

The area immediately to the west of Heritage, abutting the cemeteries mentioned earlier, is filled with particularly attractive homes with spacious surroundings and funky yards. It is an area which should be protected.

But here is the problem: if the Heritage proposal goes forward it will greatly increase the pressure to "densify" other areas west of Washington St which do not necessarily enjoy the kind of protection enjoyed elsewhere, particularly in "Old Town." Nothing will be safe.

Moreover, do not believe that if the City approves the new Heritage it will consist of anything more than the same mass-produced architecture that has already erupted all over the greater Washington area. If you don't believe it just look at the metal and glass development now on display on our own waterfront (despite all those years of negotiation); on the bones of Potomac Yard (it was more beautiful when it was full of trains), or, for that matter, on the new DC Waterfront (which is slightly more attractive because large amounts of money were thrown at it.)

Let's slow down and think the matter through without the interference of mortal threat.

(signed) Robert M. Pringle

From: [Kim Burstein](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Comment for Sept. 2 BAR Meeting - Heritage Project
Date: Monday, August 31, 2020 8:35:17 AM

Dear Members of the Board of Architectural Review:

I am writing today to submit comments ahead of the September 2 Board of Architectural Review meeting because I am extremely concerned about the mass of the project and its seven-story height. Even though the developer has slightly reduced the number of units since its submission of plans in January 2020, the current plan seems architecturally out of character for our residential neighborhood.

I have been a homeowner at 526 South Alfred Street for almost 20 years. My home is located across the street from Block 4 of the Heritage Project. I chose to move here because of the unique charm of Old Town that is substantially enhanced by the tree-lined streets and its quiet location, while still being close to King Street.

I understand the project is trying to accommodate many needs, including affordable housing, which I support; however, I believe the height and density of the buildings is out of character with the neighborhood, where the highest building is the four-level Clayborne Apartments on South Columbus Street, the easiest and closest comparison.

My neighbor had requested a shadow study be completed because we are concerned about the diminished sunlight that would result from the height of the buildings and its impact on our homes, which are across the street. At the most recent August 25 community meeting, Ms. Puskar said this study had yet to be completed—unfortunate timing considering your upcoming meeting.

I urge you and your fellow members to encourage the developer to reconsider adjusting the mass and scale of this project, so it more appropriately fits into the residential neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Burstein
703-474-9889
kimburstein@yahoo.com

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From: [J Campbell-Cohen](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Heritage Project
Date: Monday, August 31, 2020 3:04:16 PM

Dear Members of the Board of Architectural Review:

I am writing to express my concern with the latest proposal for the Heritage West area prior to the September 2nd review. While I don't oppose redevelopment, particularly if there is a plan to ensure that current residents have a relatively seamless means of new accommodation, I am opposed to the scale and design of the project.

The increase in density is at odds with what makes Alexandria unique. A seven story apartment complex cannibalizes the charm of the surrounding neighborhoods. The size and scale are welcome in Crystal City, but will make Gibbon Street (my home) even more of a commuters nightmare.

So too is the design. I suppose it's virtually impossible to make a 7 story structure fit with the neighborhood, but the lack of Old Town charm is concerning.

My hope is that you and your fellow members encourage the development team to adjust the size of this project to more align with the historic charm of the neighborhood.

Thank you,
Javid

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[EXTERNAL]Opposition to scale and style of Heritage Project

Amber Phillips <phillips.amber.j@gmail.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 9:26 PM

To: Lia Niebauer <lia.niebauer@alexandriava.gov>

Dear Members of the Board of Architectural Review:

As homeowners who will be directly affected by the Heritage Project because we live on South Alfred Street across from Block 4, my husband and I are submitting comments ahead of your Sept. 2 meeting to write in opposition to the scale and style of the Heritage Project.

As BAR member Mr. James Spencer said in the July meeting on this, the Alfred Street area is a quiet, two-lane street filled with two-story townhomes. Seven stories, even back on Patrick Street, is just too large for our residential community. I am not opposed to redeveloping The Heritage. In fact, I welcome the project -- as long as the existing residents can safely be relocated in the pandemic. But the scale and height simply will not work. I could see five stories on S. Patrick and three on S. Alfred, perhaps.

I also support my neighbors' concerns about a shadow study not being done yet to determine the existing homes' sunlight, and that the project's design looks like every other apartment complex in the metro region. It reminds me of the Belle Pre Apartments, where my husband and I lived before deciding to make our permanent home in Alexandria and start building our young family.

Thank you for taking the time to hear us all out. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration to this project and preserving the Old Town character that makes us all love living here.

Amber and Jeffrey Phillips
530 S. Alfred St
512.810.1852
phillipsamberj@gmail.com

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From: [Brian S](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Resending comments on BAR #2020-00197 OHAD
Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 6:31:26 PM

(Apologies, I earlier sent the wrong comment letter).

Dear Ms. Niebauer and Board of Architectural Review Members:

I am writing to request delay of consideration of the proposal to demolish the sites considered as part of docket item:

1. BAR materials for this docket item were not available in a timely fashion due to technical difficulties. I strongly object to consideration of this matter when the materials have not been provided to the community for review with sufficient advance.

2. The area in consideration is rich in historical significance. It is adjacent to a number of historic properties in Old Town, but itself has a long history of significance to the African American community and urban renewal. However, a full historical study has not been completed to map out the cultural significance of the area. In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, such historical study has largely not been feasible due to extremely limited access to historical archives and resources. Other historic cities of our state such as Williamsburg and Charlottesville, as well as historically significant cities across the country have prioritized historical assessment and development to the benefit of tourists and residents and the community at large, and for the preservation of a rich historical legacy.

I believe that approving the demolition at this time presents a significant threat to identifying the historical sites as it raises the possibility of damaging further items of architectural and historic significance.

I implore BAR to require a historical study to be completed before demolition can be considered. To ensure independence, such a study should be conducted by an independent researcher that is not identified by or compensated directly by the developer.

3. I further object to the separation of the demolition and the redevelopment phases of the project. Voting on demolition, prior to approving a plan what is to occupy the space seems a recipe for disaster. If we cannot arrive at a consensus of how to redevelop the properties, the approval of demolition presents a significant threat to the character of Old Town. **Any demo approval by BAR** should be conditional on approval of the entire development project. In fact, approval of the redevelopment plan **should be a prerequisite to considering demolition.**

4. I want to raise objections to how the process has been conducted. Meetings have been inadequately noticed, and controlled by the developer themselves. **Residents are forced to provide personal information (PII)** in order to participate, but the developers (who are not residents and do not stand to be affected by the development), do not share any information about their identities.

Moreover, **the meetings have been segregated** into community and resident meetings. Meetings have been held separately for the community and for the residents of the current buildings. This process dramatically limits accountability as it makes it impossible for the community to be assured of proper monitoring and what information is being provided to each group. Many of the residents of the affordable housing community face significant barriers to fully understanding and fully critiquing the process. For example, many are elderly and may face impediments to the zoom meetings or face other technological and physical challenges. Others are recent immigrants to the US, unfamiliar with the process and their rights. **The lack of a full meeting open to the community and residents is extremely troubling.** With many projects that BAR reviews, the issues are fairly discrete and

reasonable to discuss in a zoom meeting – trim on a property, the use of storm windows, etc. However, **with a project of this scale and magnitude, I believe it is critical to wait until the pandemic settles so that issues may be reviewed fully in person.**

5. I also want to **express concerns with undertaking this process during a pandemic.** The developer has pledged to pay relocation and some other expenses for some of the current residents, although I will note that between the city and relevant development parties the language used in such discussions has often been vague or wavering, limiting such benefits to “qualified residents” – where the qualification process has been left undefined and subjective, potentially leaving some or many residents unable to access such benefits.

Nevertheless, the current pandemic has been accelerating rather than moderating. Rather than a second wave of the virus, the country has never contained the initial wave and indeed the initial wave seems to be accelerating. As we look to the winter months, most epidemiologists expect a second surge to hit. And for the most part, promises of a vaccine remain unfulfilled, with most experts agreeing that a vaccine cannot be expected in wide availability until late 2021 even in the most optimistic of scenarios. Even if actual demolition is postponed until late in 2021, the stress of an impending demolition will exert an enormous mental and physical weight on the residents of the current units. Many of these individuals are elderly and have lived in the units for decades – any move, no matter how far off, tends to be stressful for such folks. Yet, during the current pandemic, the situation is ever more stressful. To have the weight of an impending move hanging over their heads amid such uncertainty about the pandemic, seems cruel. Even in the best case scenario, relocation during what is anticipated to be an ongoing pandemic, exposes residents to extreme risk.

6. COVID presents enormous and unprecedented economic risks, which affect the risks residents face. What happens to the current residents if they are displaced and the project falls through or the developer goes bankrupt amid the pandemic? This has happened numerous times in history – for example, during the 2009 Financial Crisis, and during the Savings and Loan crisis of the 1990s. The economy is currently facing its largest economic crisis in 200 years, and the waves of layoffs and business failures have not yet even been felt. Even if the developer has made full faith commitments to protecting the residents, what insures the residents from further unseen economic deterioration? The answer is: nothing. As an economist, I believe there are very serious and grave risks to moving forward with this project when so many firms are struggling to preserve viability.

Brian Scholl, Ph.D.

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From: [Eda Lipton](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Heritage Project/ BAR
Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 8:21:37 PM

Respectable members of Board of Architectural Review:

I have been a homeowner of 528 South Alfred Street for 24 years, (which is located just across the street from Block 4 of the Heritage project), where I moved with my family to enjoy the peaceful and friendly lifestyle.

Thus, I followed you meetings in regards to this topic from the beginning.

Understandably, developing an urban area is a complex task, and while I support contemporary architectural details, and definitely support affordable housing, my concern is about the height and dimensions of the new buildings which are significantly disproportionate to the existing, even newly built, ones. Not to mention density that will come along, the challenge of infrastructure.

I struggled to imagine 'Wall-style " 7 levels building Heritage4, across the street, thus I asked for shadow study that I mentioned during the meeting in March, and then again in July, which my neighbors supported.

Please, be so kind to take inputs in consideration and strongly encourage the developer to reconsider adjusting the scale of their project, so that it blends in with this residential area.

Thank you,
Eda Lipton

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08.31.20

Cecily Crandall
815 Green St.
Alexandria, VA 22314

City of Alexandria B.A.R. (Board of Architectural Review)
City Hall--Division of Planning & Zoning
c/o: Lia Niebauer at lia.niebauer@alexandriava.gov

Dear Board of Architectural Review Members (BAR):

This letter is regarding Docket item **#5--BAR #2020-00197 OHAD** and Docket item **#6- BAR #2020-00196**. Unfortunately, my letter today is not as complete as I would have liked due to time constraints resulting from the City of Alexandria BAR Docket computer link to the city staff report (BAR #2020-00197 Staff Report (B)) not being accessible to citizens/public until the afternoon of Monday, August 31, 2020 (despite many people attempting to get assistance for this problem) and the inability to adequately review all associated documents in the short time frame subsequent. Therefore, I ask for a DEFERRAL of this hearing on the grounds that the City of Alexandria has not followed its' own regulations as follows: Per the May 1993 *Design Guidelines for the Old and Historic Alexandria District and Parker-Gray District*, page 3 of the *Design Guidelines* states: "*Staff reports are made available to the applicant and the general public **on the Friday** before the Wednesday hearing.*". This can only be interpreted as the staff reports must specifically be made available to the general public on/before the Friday before the Wednesday BAR hearing and NOT as a "general practice" subject to interpretation. The reference to "Guideline" clearly refers to the "Guidelines for the Old and Historic Alexandria District and Parker-Gray District" only. To deny adequate time (really only one day) for the public to review said staff documents and to respond with comments to the BAR is not in keeping with the spirit of the City's own stated regulations. Please enter this lack of proper notification and public access into the City/BAR record.

To address the aforementioned docket items I am asking that the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) to **DENY the request for DEMOLITION as well as DENY**

the CONCEPT REVIEW for the proposed S. Patrick St. Re-Development/The Heritage project for the following reasons:

I. INCOMPLETE STUDIES

- A. **MISSING DRAWINGS:** To our knowledge the developer and his team have not provided drawings the requested by the BAR at the July 15 hearing which show the homes in proper scale, shape, detail that surround the proposed apartment projects.
- B. **TRAFFIC STUDIES:** were incomplete and no written information was provided at the August 24 virtual meeting held by the developer and his team. This is important data which impacts thousands of residents and is necessary in order to make an informed decision about the viability of this project. These must be done and produced for the public prior to approving this project.
- C. **WATER TABLE ISSUES:** Flooding in the area is an issue in the proposed projects. The ASBC discovered issues in the area of their proposed expansion parking garage, the Clayborne Apartments discovered water issues while under construction and now has flooding issues in its' parking garage. Little Hunting Creek and its tributaries run through this quadrant. Such a massive project over blocks (and more scheduled) should have proper water studies including soil borings to the intended depth of the garages. Given the surface flooding in the area, it is negligent that these have not been done and should not be considered for approval either for demolition or passage of the concept until they are completed and any problems properly addressed.
- D. **HISTORIC ELEMENTS/ARCHEOLOGY STUDIES:** This project is located in area of Old Town bounded on the NE corner by the historic Alfred St. Baptist Church and on the SW corner by historically and culturally significant Freedmen's Cemetery. The buildings themselves are significant in terms of the history and evolution of urban renewal and are located directly in an area called The Dips or The Bottoms (bounded by Duke St. on the North, S. Columbus St. on the East, S. Henry St. on the West and Franklin St. on the South) which of significant African American heritage. These grounds could potentially contain relevant historic building remnants, artifacts and even human burial grounds. This is an area to be preserved and protected not only for any tangible

elements contained therein, but remembered in design/style and actual tributes. However, no archeological studies have been done by the developer or the city of this important area. We have only been told by the developer that they have done research and founds nothing significant on the grounds but they could not provide documentation of to back up their claim. The City has told us that we, as citizens, are responsible for doing the research to determine any historic relevance of the current buildings or grounds/location. This was attempted, however, w/the pandemic, historic research offices and libraries were/are closed, historians were unreachable and the city's archeological department is just reopening. In light of this, it seems imprudent and dismissive to vote to demolish these relevant buildings in this historic area without proper studies and investigation that other land/buildings in Old Town have rightly been subjected to.

- E. COVID-19 PANDEMIC: It is unconscionable that the City of Alexandria is considering moving 250+ residents of The Heritage apartments, many of whom have lived there for decades, during a world-wide pandemic. Those in attendance at the August 25 virtual meeting w/Asland and Cathy Puskar were initially told that the residents would not be moved during the pandemic because the move would not occur until September 2021. However, we were also told that there will be internal moves to consolidate residents before that date which means some of the residents will have to move twice. While the developer and his team, said that the pandemic will not be a factor by September 2021, no one knows that for certain. More importantly, all of these resides will have the worry for over a year associated with an impending move during a time of fear of physical safety, job insecurity and isolation from friends and loved ones.

II. **MASS/SCALE/DENSITY of PROPOSED BUILDINGS**

- A. The scale of the proposed buildings (Blocks 1 & 4 and Block 2) are not appropriate for the surrounding neighborhood filled with two story townhouses and single-family homes in the Old and Historic Alexandria District.
- B. Throughout the City Community meetings/charrettes held in and around 2018, participating neighbors were repeatedly told that the height of the new buildings (in particular the Heritage buildings on S.

Alfred St.) would be 3 to 4 stories tall—possibly 5 on S. Patrick St. Now the developer is asking for 7 stories on S. Patrick St. and 5/6 stories on S. Alfred/Wilkes St. adding a significant number of units. We feel like this was not only a bait and switch, but that we were not told the truth.

- C. The height and density of these massive buildings are unprecedented in this area of Old Town. These neighborhoods, in many cases, have been carefully preserved for a long time. The monstrosities proposed will diminish the previous preservation efforts thus rendering the historical element of the neighborhood dead. To allow buildings of this size, which will significantly dwarf the surrounding residential homes--many historical, will change the neighborhoods forever.

D. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE/DESIGN OF PROJECT/BUILDINGS

- A. The proposed buildings don't make the "Welcome to Old Town"—stated goals by city staff in the Community meetings and written plans. Sadly, they very loudly scream: "Welcome to Ballston or Rockville", or worse, National Harbor. As a matter of fact, the architect for this project has pictured on their website the exact same building design as they used for completed projects in Ballston & Rockville (see attached photos). Did they cut and paste—putting no time or effort into this design, just reproducing a cookie cutter behemoth that is passed from architectural firm to architectural firm; jurisdiction to jurisdiction? They look like every other generic, "modern" style building (I use the term "modern" loosely as these are not modern in an artistic sense but merely modern in age; derivative and uninspiring otherwise—buildings such as The Sunrise on S. Washington St. are a good example of architecture that would be appropriate in this area). It just feels as if they didn't even try. Is this because the architects and the developer think so little of our special little town and the surrounding historic homes (and contrary to M. Puskar's repeated claims that there are only townhouses from the 1970's & 1980's along with her teams' submitted maps that, for some reason, do not show these historic homes, there are many historic buildings in the immediate area of this project as well as throughout the South West Quadrant, that date back to the 1800's and even 1700's) that we live in?

- B. One of the things that makes Old Town so special and desirable is the historic architecture and, what those of us who moved and bought homes here, thought was the desire by our city officials to protect this valuable property with the OHAD designation. As it seems now, this designation is arbitrary. The average Joe living in the district is required to strictly adhere to the OHAD regulations. For example, in reading the Sept. 2 BAR docket, there were no less than 9 citizen cases before the BAR for a full hearing and 47 citizens with cases for administrative approval for a total of 56 citizens going through the BAR process in an attempt to follow the OHAD guidelines. How can the BAR justify not holding developers to the same standards? As a personal example, I recall meeting an elderly woman, who lived down the street, shortly after moving here. She came to my door asking me to sign a petition that would allow her to keep the non-wood windows she had unknowingly installed to replace her 50+ year-old failing wood windows (which she did not realize were required by the OHAD regulations). She tearfully, told me that she was on a fixed income and could not afford to pay for them. The BAR had told her that if she got a petition signed by a specified number of neighbors they would re-consider her request. She got the required number of signatures and was encouraged going to the BAR hearing. Regardless of the signatures and time and effort put into collecting them, the BAR denied her request. This elderly, widowed woman could not afford to remove the new non-wood windows and replace them with wood windows as the BAR directed her to do (or face large fine if she did not). Instead, a woman who desired to live her last years in a house she loved and had lived in for 30+ years, had to sell her home and move. I wonder how this woman would feel if she saw the proposed mammoth, Rockville-esque generic apartment buildings that don't conform to any OHAD standard? I know how I feel. That there is a double-standard: One standard for the average resident and another for deep-pocketed New York developers and their hired gun lawyers.
- C. The gentrification of Old Town continues with this project. The South West Quadrant is filled with existing affordable housing--a true middle-class neighborhood. Residents from all over the world

live here, many for 30, 40 and 50+ years: Teachers, government workers, artists, singles, young couples, families with children, physically challenged and seniors desiring to age in place all living peacefully together in a neighborhood with a strong residential look and feel that has been called “suburban” in feel even by the BAR itself in recent years. All of which will be changed forever, never to return, if this project is allowed to pass.

I ask that the BAR committee members **deny the applicants’ request for Demolition as well as the Concept Review** for this project and that they strongly consider not only the effect this project will have on the residents during a PANDEMIC, the impact of the proposed massive, generic style buildings on the surrounding historic (OHAD) neighborhood but the lack of the numerous and necessary studies which are imperative before making decisions that permanently alter an entire Quadrant of a one of the most beautiful and unique historic towns in the United States.

Sincerely,
Cecily Crandall

Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District townhouses on the same block with and within one block of the Heritage Project



Below buildings are from the architects Hord Coplan Macht as compatible to the above townhouses in the Old & Historic District

Proposed for S. Patrick Street in Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District



Proposed for S. Alfred Street in Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District



The applicants buildings designed for Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District are already in use in Ballston & Rockville. The neighbors have stated numerous times that these buildings do not reflect the Old & Historic District, are not compatible with the Old & Historic District, and the building guidelines have not been followed therefore the applicants proposed building designs must be changed. The entrance to Old Town's Old & Historic District should not look like Ballston or Rockville.

Below buildings are from the Hord Coplan Macht website

672 N. Glebe Road, Arlington, VA - 672 Flats Ballston Metro



1801 Chapman Ave, Rockville, MD - Galvan at Twinbrook



Below buildings are from the architects Hord Coplan Macht

Proposed for S. Patrick Street in Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District



Proposed for S. Alfred Street in Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District



From: [Mark Streich](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Comments on The Heritage Redevelopment - 900 Wolfe Street, etc.
Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 7:56:47 AM

Here are our comments for tonight's meeting about The Heritage Redevelopment - 900 Wolfe Street, etc.

My wife and I recently moved to Alexandria, because it has so much to offer. We had not even seen the neighborhood, as we were forced to buy virtually, due to COVID. One of the things we loved about the area was its commitment to maintaining the human scale of the neighborhoods. Yes, there were huge developments outside the area, but at least there was 1 square mile of walkable neighborhoods.

As we walked around, after moving here, we pass the proposed sites of redevelopment. The existing buildings provide affordable housing, pleasant surroundings for the residents, and the tenants are nice and keep the area up. They are proud of where they live, and should be.

To see that a developer wants to put up 7-story buildings IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD goes against EVERYTHING Old Town Alexandria stands for.

And the worst part is this will displace the residents, who have probably lived here a long time, from their homes. Yes, there are plans for "affordable housing" but those will probably go to other people who haven't been part of this community. The existing residents will be long gone, as they need to live somewhere during development. We were happy there was affordable housing already here.

I don't know if there's any way we can actually stop this redevelopment train in its track, but I strongly encourage the Board to do so. If allowed to proceed, in this part of Alexandria, it will allow the rest of the town to do so, and Old Town Alexandria will cease to be the place it purports to be.

Karen & Mark Streich
421 S. Payne Street

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We have lived in the 300 block of S. Columbus St. since 1987 but never knew about the charette(s) so we've just been learning about the scope of the Heritage development plans in the last months and we're trying our best to catch up. (As a general rule, how does the City provide this type of information to homeowners?)

According to notes taken during recent Zoom meetings with Cathy Puskar and other representatives from the NY developer team, out of the existing 244 units, 140 are under HUD contract, 21 are occupied "by voucher" with the remaining at "market rate." (Never was able to get a firm answer on that number but the math would indicate 79.) One of the developers quoted the current rates at \$1,500 for 1Bs and \$1,675 for 2Bs.?

It sounded like the developers will rebuild those same number of units (244) with the same distribution (after residents will be moved about one or more times): New market rates as provided on the recent Zoom meeting will be \$2000 (1Bs) and \$2600 (2Bs). HUD and voucher residents would continue to pay 30% of their incomes.

- 1) Are these breakdowns accurate?
- 2) Do you understand "market rate" to be synonymous with "going rate?" (That's what dictionary definitions show.)

It's my understanding that this first project — like the others planned for in the Patrick St. Housing Affordability Strategy — was conceived under the guise of "housing affordability," which would presume prices lower than "going rates."

A recent search on the Internet provides a number of apartment rental sites here in Old Town — many of them new. Ads for 10 new ones show current going rate/market rate prices ranging from \$1152 - with only one being over \$2000 (\$2019) for 1Bs. (The average of the 10 for the 1Bs was \$1635.) The projected rates for the new Heritage project are higher. (When adjusted for inflation they, perhaps, could be equal but certainly not lower than the inventory already available.)

- 3) How does the addition of 500+ market rate apartments equal to or higher than existing inventory equate with the City's concept of Affordability?
- 4) Does the City explain what the rationale is behind destroying 244 perfectly suitable homes just to bring 500+ more market rate rental apartments to the local market, which seems to be quickly reaching a saturation level, if it's not already there?
- 5) **Do we know current vacancy levels for rental apartments here in Old Town?** (I couldn't find that number nor the number of units currently coming out of the ground.)

We want to go into BAR meetings and any others as educated as possible so THANK YOU for this information and any other information you can add.

— Mary Morrow-Bax

From: [Stommel, Manfred](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: Fw: Notes for the meeting
Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 3:08:52 PM

Notes for BAR Meeting:

As current residents at 428 S. Columbus St., we have witnessed 2 major flooding events at the corner of Wilkes and S. Columbus in the last two years. The city of Alexandria has been alerted about the drainage problem, but what has the city done to ensure that the Heritage Builders are not exacerbating the flooding problems, when additional 500 units are adding their wastewater to the pipes under Wilkes/S. Columbus?

In addition, we have been told that intends to construct a new holding tank to eliviate the flooding problems, but this project won't be completed util 2025. Wouldn't it make sense to without building permits until the flooding problems have been addressed?

Petra Von Heimburg & Manfred Stommel, 428 S. Columbus St., Alexandria, VA 22314
248-808-0507

From: [Eric M](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]BAR Hearing tonight
Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 3:46:39 PM

Ms. Niebauer, I own a house in 900 block of Duke Street, I'll be attending the Zoom meeting/BAR hearing tonight. I'm opposed to such a huge development being built a block from my house, one block away from the Historic District, and on the entrance way into Alexandria from 495.

I have some questions:

What is the city planning to do in order to keep traffic flowing along Patrick Street? Patrick is already backed up coming into town early in the morning, and trying to get out of town at evening. How will the city also keep our side streets from overflowing with traffic?

Will the city be increasing its police patrols in the neighborhoods? Unfortunately, as you know from seeing our city's crime statistics, there is more crime in areas surrounding low income and affordable housing, is the city going to hire more police officers to police this area and keep all residents, those inside and outside the complex, safe? Will there be increased street lighting in the area and police call boxes for the residents forced now to live with increased crime?

Does the city have a plan to get ahead of the increased crime, maybe with community outreach, activities, more social workers to work with the increased amount of young children that 777 units will bring? I'd like to see a plan of that and maybe we can NOT go down the path of the other low income housing clusters in our city.

Unfortunately, low income and affordable housing also create more trash and debris in the streets and in parking lots, as you've seen across our city. What is the city's plan for increased trash collection and clean up? Will the needed increased amount of garbage trucks damage the city streets? Is there a city plan to increase coverage for trash collection? Will we see more street sweepers, or is there a deliberate plan to keep ahead of trash and debris?

Thank you,
Eric

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To the Chair of the Board of Architectural Review,

I write this letter to ask the BAR to **deny** BAR# 2020-00197 demolition permit to demolish buildings at 400 South Patrick, 900 Wolfe, and 432 South Columbus Streets in the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

I oppose this demolition permit for the following five reasons:

1. The submitted concept design review required for demolition by the applicant, Heritage at Old Town PropCo LLC, **requires multiple amendments and several SUPs** to the 1993 Southwest Quadrant Small Area Plan, and its 2018 Adopted Small Area Plan Overlay, the South Patrick Street Affordable Housing Strategy.
 - a. Master Plan Amendments **to amend the height maps** in the Southwest Quadrant and S. Patrick Street Strategy
 - b. Zoning Ordinance **amendment to the Height District Map** for blocks 1 and 2
 - c. Rezoning from RB (blocks 1 and 4) and RC (Block 2) to RMF
 - d. SUP for **bonus density and height** for the provision of affordable housing
 - e. Transportation Management Plan SUP (Tier Three)
 - f. Modification for Crown Coverage and minimum street tree requirements
2. The **disregard of the adopted South Patrick Street Affordable Housing Strategy**, which was developed especially for property owners such as the applicant, Heritage at Old Town PropCo LLC.
 - a. The strategy was the result of a week-long charrette and subsequent community meetings working towards a compromise for a solution for development, housing affordability and neighborhood compatibility, prioritizing safety and accessibility along S. Patrick Street. That compromise was reached after a costly, eight-month process that included The Heritage at Old Town and Olde Towne West II property owners, the community, the city housing department and the city department of planning and zoning.
 - b. Despite the resources that went into reaching the zoning planning, the city is now **proposing to ignore the results of that process to approve amendments** that primarily favor the applicant, Heritage at Old Town PropCo LLC, and ignore the views of the community who participated in the city's process for adopting the strategy.
 - c. As it was, many members of the community were concerned about the process of the strategy, the adoption of the plan as is, and contributed comments along the process ([Comments and Responses on June 4 and July 13 Working Drafts](#) and [Comments Pre-Charrette Week](#)). Areas of concern included new development building heights, density, massing, design consistent with the existing neighborhood character, and maintaining community accessibility/connectivity from east to west in the Southwest Quadrant. **The Southwest Quadrant is already bisected by heavily trafficked South Patrick Street and would be**

- further isolated by the development of buildings 80 feet tall and spanning large city blocks.**
- d. Multiple community members sent letters or spoke in opposition at City and Zoning public hearings as well as before the City Council in 2018.
3. The applicant, Heritage at Old Town PropCo LLC, **has misrepresented the approval of “bonus density”** to increase the height of the proposed buildings at seven stories with its proposed design concept.
 - a. The City Council approved the South Patrick Street Affordability Housing Strategy in September 2018 **which notes building heights of no more than 55 feet (or 4-5 stories).**
 - b. On Page 27 of the applicant’s “BAR Concept Phase - Presentation 1” dated June 15, 2020 in the BAR# 2020-00197 Staff Report, **the presentation notes the proposed buildings with a height of seven stories.**
 - c. Per Section 7-702 of the City of Alexandria’s Zoning Ordinance, the City Council will need to vote to approve of the applicant’s “bonus density” from five stories to seven stories.
 - d. During the July 15 BAR hearing, Ms. Puskar conceded that the additional “bonus density” would need to be requested by the applicant to the City Council.
 4. The **lack of notification, public discussion and transparency regarding the creation of the RMF zone**, which the applicant, Heritage at Old Town PropCo LLC, has asked for three blocks to be rezoned to.
 - a. During the South Patrick Street Strategy drafting process, and included in the adopted Strategy, the department of city and zoning recommended that a new zone be created expressly to address housing affordability. The particulars of what this zone would entail were not discussed in detail.
 - b. The new RMF zone was passed by the City Council **FIVE months after the adoption of the Strategy**. There was and is no mention of the process for the creation of the new zone, nor public input for the creation of this zone, on the Strategy’s website, [South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy 2018](#), the primary access point for the community to access information regarding the Strategy and the affected neighborhood area(s).
 - c. The archived action docket for the [2/23/19 City Council meeting](#) noted that for docket item 7 (Text Amendment #2018-0013 Creation of the RMF/Residential Multifamily Zone to Incentivize Provision of Affordable Housing) the **"City Council closed the public hearing** and approved the Planning Commission recommendation."
 5. The applicant has not fully considered the character of OHAD neighborhood consistent with the *Design Guidelines for the Old and Historic Alexandria and the Parker-Gray District* issued by the City of Alexandria’s Department of Planning and Zoning (and enforced by the Board of Architectural Review) in May 1993.

- a. on Page 27 of the applicant's "BAR Concept Phase -Presentation 1" dated June 15, 2020 in the BAR# 2020-00197 Staff Report, buildings BLOCK 1 and BLOCK 4 are clearly within the OHAD boundary.
- b. During the July 15 BAR hearing, the BAR Chair asked the applicant to reconsider the design of the buildings that are consistent with the character of other buildings within OHAD.
- c. However, on Page 6 of the applicant's "BAR Concept Phase - Presentation 1" dated June 15, 2020 in the BAR# 2020-00197 Staff Report Transparency, the applicant notes BLOCK 3 under "F-1 of the Archeology Comments." **According to pages 19 and 27, there is no BLOCK 3 noted on those maps.**

For these reasons, the plan proposed by the applicant, Heritage at Old Town PropCo LLC, did not comply with the proper process and is not consistent with the best interests of the community. Accordingly, I ask that you deny the demolition permit.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kempe
401 Old Town Ct.

From: geribaldwin@ymail.com
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: Re: Bar# 2020-0196 0197
Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 5:17:52 PM

Geraldine "Geri" Baldwin
431 South Columbus Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
571-245-0493
September 2, 2020

To: Board of Architectural Review/Planning and Zoning

Re: Bar #2020-01960197
The Heritage At Old Town
September 2, 2020

With much respect and great regard for the Commission Planning and Zoning Board of Architectural which helps shape our city of Alexandria and we'll bring safety through many projects and its development of layout and plans.

I am a citizen and a long time resident of the Heritage At Old Town 34 years, I am writing this letter of request out of respect that the Board would take inconsideration of its strategies/format and documentation of layout be set aside without prejudice as to put on hold until a later date even so be heard by the City Council Member's for review and discussion before any approval:

I believe residents should be heard by city of Alexandria Housing Landlord/Tenants Relations Board before hand for a more better understanding of such impact this have on residents; whereas the city of Alexandria Housing Landlord/Tenants Relations Board is an sense of Liaison for all resident's-that is to say With the respect for it's Board, I believe it should serve it's purpose for it was established for.

As this season is ending and the cold weather is near and yet! Spring is like around the corner of a Beautiful Season so many at this time not knowing what the future holds due to this Pandemic COVID 19, so many lost jobs not knowing where next meal coming from as many turning to Food Banks and reaching out for paying rent as even the system of Alexandria, Virginia and Rental Office are working with many residents throughout our city in such issue and case of well-being.

With all the above of such impact and Flu Season, Holidays Season of joy of happiness is kind of an unsettling feeling for many to whereas many feel Don't have a voice. For many residents still have many questions. So I am asking as a resident citizens and longtime Former Landlord/Tenants Relations Board Member

From: [MICHAEL HOBBS](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Heritage Project - Demolition Permit
Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 6:28:17 PM

For the Board of Architectural Review, c/o Ms. Niebauer:

Just the day before yesterday, on Monday afternoon, I was able to access and download the Staff Report and Recommendation on the requested permit for demolition for the Heritage project. I understand it went on-line about noon on Monday.

I also understand that it is not proposed that the residents of the buildings which are to be demolished would be relocated until a year from now.

Since this seems not to be a matter of immediate urgency, I would urge you to consider deferring action on the requested permit until your next meeting, two weeks from tonight. I presume that publication of the Staff Report two days before your meeting does not violate any legal minimum that might apply, but it does fall well short of the Board's own guidelines, which indicate that meeting materials will ordinarily be published a minimum of five days before the meeting (the Friday before the next Wednesday meeting).

Deferring final action on the Permit to Demolish for this short time would not involve any substantial delay in the overall timetable for the project, and it would permit all interested parties--nearby residents and property owners, interested members of the public--and you, yourselves--more reasonable time to read, review, and reflect on the information and rationale contained in the Staff Report, and more in keeping with the reasonable advance notice contemplated in the Board's guidelines.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael E. Hobbs

419 Cameron Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Tel. 703 548-5798
mhobbs27@comcast.net

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From: [Brian S](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]BAR #2020-00196 OHAD
Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 6:35:09 PM

Dear Board of Architectural Review:

I am writing to express my deep concerns about the proposed redevelopment project in the southwest quadrant (BAR docket item: BAR #2020-00196 OHAD). I ask that you reject the proposal in its current form.

The project is completely outsized for our community. The project does not align in scope and scale with the historical and architectural assets of our community. Further, before such a radical reshaping of the character of Old Town moves forward, further study and transparency is warranted, particularly in light of the fact that the proposed mammoth structure may not be suitable in a Post-Covid world. Moreover, several aspects of the design go beyond what is permitted and should be denied approval by BAR.

Our community is a historic area comprised almost exclusively 2-3 story townhouses and garden style apartments. The area has high permeability and a common architectural style. The proposed design is a mammoth completely out of synch with that cityscape.

Some concerns:

- **This is a massive development project that will increase the population of the Southwest Quadrant by 50% or more, and is completely out of scale with the surrounding community.**
- **Lack of transparency:** As a city board, BAR has a role in historic preservation, but it also has a role in ensuring projects are not approved without adequate transparency. The owner/developers have repeatedly obfuscated their plans in the development project, and have been loath to provide full details. I implore you not to consider the project while important issues remain outstanding.
- **Architecturally: the developer has largely declined to make substantive modifications to the design in response to comments at the July 2020 BAR meeting.**
- **As a gateway to the city, the style fails to meet the local standard.** Rather than saying to entrants “Welcome to Old Town Alexandria”, the style and design of this “gateway” says: “**Welcome to Crystal City.**”
- **The building’s height, scale, and permeability are completely inappropriate.** The proposed designs are corner-to-corner blocks of mass that – even at its lowest points - dwarf anything in our area. Height should be limited to 3 stories as per other local structures. ^[1]
- **The architectural style is completely out of synch with the existing structures in the immediate community and Old Town.** The building design seems a basic structure recycled from somewhere else in the country. Further, due to its massive size relative to the Southwest Quadrant as a whole, **it inherently defines a new normal where the architectural legacy and character of our community is depreciated.**
- The design **further reduces already scarce green space in the community**, while increasing the population of the Southwest Quadrant by more than 50%. This proposal

can be anticipated to further stress local residents who have already struggled to find adequate outdoor space prior to the pandemic and are now struggling even more. No provisions are made for new parks to accommodate the dramatic increase in the population (note that the Wilkes St. park is an existing space, not a new park).

- As a member of the Charrette process on this project, community concerns about size, height, density and scaling have largely been ignored thus far. Yet, **the design presented here does not conform to even the modest height commitments outlined in the Route 1/South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Study.** Height and massing exceed those parameters in several important locations. Further, it appears that the maximum scaling commitments that were made during the Charrette have been exceeded with **the building now proposed to reach heights of up to 7 stories.** The community was promised during that process that the building heights would be more limited. Instead, this is a massive structure.

- **Appropriate studies that have been previously promised have not been completed and are not currently available to make further evaluations of the height and density.** These studies include traffic and sunlight/shadow studies - BAR and the public do not even have the basic studies at their disposal to assess this project. I will further note that such studies should be financed by the developer, but independently sourced by BAR or an independent organization such as Old Town Civic Association.

- The structure will form the largest continuous structure in Old Town. Other properties have been referenced as examples to justify certain design features, but those structures are generally small in scale. Instead, this is a massive impermeable block of development.

- The number of units appears to exceed the 3:1 benchmark for market to affordable units. The South Patrick Street affordability study envisioned replacing 215 units in total. The current development appears to replace a smaller number of units with nearly 800 units.

- **Garages and loading facilities are extremely problematic in the design.** To preserve the character of the community and the tranquility of local residents, these places should be located in contained alleyways or internal locations. The current designs appear to keep them in public view.

THE FALSE CHOICE: The economics of the project are misleading. I have been tracking the project for nearly three years. The 3:1 ratio of market:affordable units has been repeated time and again. Despite multiple requests, I have been unable to receive any justification for that ratio, and as far as I can tell, its only virtue is that it has been repeated, not that there are underlying economic assumptions that justify it. The community has been asked to swallow a mammoth project that radically reshapes the community for the worse in order to support affordable housing. As an economist, and someone who has advocated for affordable housing at the national level, I believe in affordable housing, but in this project it seems to be a mere marketing ploy. The claim of a 3:1 ratio seems to have little basis. The implication has always been that the market units will subsidize the affordable units. In fact, during the Charrette, we were told repeatedly that a 3:1 building structure was the only way to finance sustaining affordable housing (BTW no other policy alternatives were allowed to be considered during these meetings). **But in reality there is no subsidy being provided to affordable housing from the market rate units. ALL of the units are to be rented at market prices.** Yes, some renters will receive a housing subsidy, but the plan is for that subsidy to come from HUD, not from the market rate units. This means there is no

justification for the 3:1 ratio.

So what does this all mean? We don't have to swallow a whale of a project in order to have affordable housing. Old Town Civic Association (OTCA) has made a proposal that enables the developer to redevelop the properties and even increase the number of units, but maintain a size and scale that is in sync with the community. With a back of the envelope calculation, the OTCA proposal nets the owner about 3 times the current rental income. Yet, we are told that the developer demands to earn something more on the order of 6 times its current rental income. The developer's position is that there is to be no compromise with the community's interests. I understand that the developer's objective is purely profit without regard to the consequences, and because the owner is not a member of the community it bears no consequences of its actions. But this is not a project that serves the needs of Old Town Alexandria. The scale is out of synch with the community and should be rejected.

Sincerely,

Brian Scholl, Ph.D.

^[1] There is one local building in the Heritage complex that goes above this, but it is buffered by green space and recesses on all sides so that it is less disruptive to the community.

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To: Members of the Board of Architecture Review

From: Ellen Mosher

Date: 9/2/20

Re: 9/2/20 Hearing

DOCKET ITEM #6 - BAR #2020-00196 OHAD

Concept review at 450 South Patrick St, 900 Wolfe St & 431 South Columbus St.

Please do not recommend the height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of the proposed project because the project does not comply with BAR standards or S. Patrick Street Strategy standards and recommendations.

Example 1 - Page 14 of the Staff Report- height

As part of the Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) request, the applicant is working with City staff to propose amendments to the Strategy to shift height to achieve more compatible massing overall and create a better building design more responsive to the context

Per the approved South Patrick Street Strategy, the height of the new buildings should be more responsive to the existing townhouses in the neighborhood not overpower them.

Example 2 - Page 15 of the Staff Report- V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the BAR endorse the height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of the proposed project. The design for these buildings is important as they will be both the dominant architectural feature in this part of the city and their location on South Patrick Street makes them a critical gateway to the city.

Page 2 of the Staff Report - scale, mass, and general architectural character

Most of the Board members present at the meeting expressed concern about the character of the design for the building as it relates to the historic architecture in the area. The Board stated that the design did not include references to details or proportions found in Old Town and that the buildings as designed could be located anywhere.

These buildings are in Ballston Metro, Arlington, VA and Rockville, MD by the same architect. BAR Board members express concern about this July 15th but they still look like Ballston & Rockville. This critical gateway to the city should not look like Ballston or Rockville. The scale, mass, and general architectural character of this gateway to the city should look like Old Town since it's the entrance to Old Town. **See attached illustrations.**

CONCEPT II UPDATE

Page 2 From the Staff Report

This is the second BAR concept review before the Board for the proposed redevelopment of the properties at 900 Wolfe Street, 450 South Patrick Street, and 431 South Columbus Street: Heritage at Old Town. The project includes the construction of two residential buildings ranging from four to seven stories. At the BAR hearing on July 15, 2020, the BAR provided comments on the height, scale, mass, and architectural character of the proposed project. Most of the Board members present at the meeting expressed concern about the character of the design for the building as it relates to the historic architecture in the area. The Board stated that the design did not include references to details or proportions found in Old Town and that the buildings as designed could be located anywhere.

Below buildings are from the Hord Coplan Macht website

672 N. Glebe Road, Arlington, VA - 672 Flats Ballston Metro



1801 Chapman Ave, Rockville, MD - Galvan at Twinbrook



Page 15 From the Staff Report

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the BAR endorse the height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of the proposed project. The design for these buildings is important as they will be both the dominant architectural feature in this part of the city and their location on South Patrick Street makes them a critical gateway to the city.

Below buildings are from the architects Hord Coplan Macht

Proposed for S. Patrick Street in Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District



Proposed for S. Alfred Street in Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District



Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District townhouses on the same block with and within one block of the Heritage Project



Below buildings are from architects Hord Coplan Macht as their version of compatible to the above Old & Historic District townhouses

Proposed for S. Patrick Street in Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District



Proposed for S. Alfred Street in Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District



Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District townhouses on the same block with and within one block of the Heritage Project



Below buildings are from new housing projects that are compatible to the above townhouses in the Old & Historic District

Sunrise Project at 400 N. Washington Street



Abingdon Row Project at 1023 N. Royal St.



Old Town Alexandria's Old & Historic District townhouses on the same block with and within one block of the Heritage Project



Below buildings are from new housing projects that are compatible to the above townhouses in the Old & Historic District

The Duke Condos at 320 S. West Street



Clayborne Apartments at 820 S. Columbus St.



From: [Dirk J. Bouma, PE](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Cc: [Chris Morell](#); [Darlene Gee Bouma](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Hand was raised on demolition, discussion was cut short. Issues remain!
Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 8:32:33 PM

My first question, from the demolition: was a Phase I or Phase II Environmental Site Assessment been completed? If so, was it made available to the public? It has been difficult to get hold of critical documents. Ms Puriv Irwin mentioned she has reviewed Sanborn maps and identifies a "full and rich history of this site" including residential, commercial and industrial uses. Was environmental sampling considered?

The planned design for Block 2, the northern 4 story building will be built on what is now parking lot. The proximity of the building will impact the cherry trees that are adjacent to the subject property, but on the property of Ten HOA. The design needs to be modified to protect these trees, so that they will provide the appropriate buffer between existing residents and the new building.

Thank you for taking note of, and addressing my concerns. If given the opportunity, I will note these to the record.

Regards,
-Dirk J Bouma

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