From:	JAL
То:	Lia Niebauer
Subject:	[EXTERNAL]Comments on the demolition of The Heritage buildings
Date:	Friday, October 16, 2020 2:40:26 PM

Lia:

As a neighbor living at 1132 Duke and as a charity provider for a non-profit that has helped residents in The Heritage complex for many years, I am deeply troubled about this project wearing both hats above.

First, the existing density is typical for Old Town, a high density community. The new buildings, however, will exacerbate the already choking traffic situation and put pedestrians and cyclists at high risk. To ameliorate this situation, the following should be considered:

Safety: A special walkway/bike path that connects the west side of Patrick to Columbus with hawk lights to ensure safety.

Traffic amelioration: A walkway above Patrick, which is standard for high traffic intersections, will not only protect pedestrians but keep traffic flowing.

Low income residents: Guarantees of relocation to comparable affordable housing must be ensured before any ground is broken. Of course, that need not be in Alexandria which is increasingly unaffordable to low income individuals and families. My charity has devoted considerable financial resources in recent years to relocating families either close by, namely across the bridge to Prince George's County, or further south and west in Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun counties.

Many thanks for your attention,

Sincerely,

James A. Larocco President, the Basilica of St. Mary St. Vincent de Paul Society 1132 Duke St 703-684-1984

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#### RE: Additional Comments on Heritage at Old Town Concept II

Dear Madam Chairperson and Members of the Board of Architectural Review,

We appreciate that you recognized that the enormity of the Heritage at Old Town concept is not in keeping with the character of Old Town and in support of that position, we submit the following for your consideration. For clarification, we include references to the related sections of the South Patrick Street Affordable Housing Strategy (Strategy) and Small Area Plan (SAP) for the Southwest Quadrant.

The Heritage at Old Town Project's 7-story buildings (76-79 feet) do not respect the Strategy, which shows that the development of the nine sites would be mostly 3-4 story buildings (figures 3.1 & 3.8, pages 16 & 24). The Strategy limits building heights to 45 to 55 feet on the project sites with the noted exception of 62 feet on the site of the existing mid-rise apartment building (figure 3.12, page 28). The Strategy also shows a transition from 45 feet along South Alfred Street to 55 feet on South Patrick Street.

The SAP (Intro & page 10) requires "the residential character of the neighborhood be maintained and protected, and all new residential and commercial projects should provide open space and recreation opportunities." The Concept II design submitted to the BAR showed 7-story building blocks with almost no setback from the property lines and open space less than the required 25% of lot size. The Strategy (page 26), however, states "Parking for the residential multi-family buildings will be provided underground [which] will improve the pedestrian experience and allow for better consolidated usable ground level open space." These requirements confirm that a building's character is more than its construction material and elements; it is the project's site orientation, context, and integration with natural elements and landscaping that are as important as its brick and mortar. These are what make its contribution to the neighborhood. None of these factors were apparent in Concept II.

The Strategy establishes "Tree Protection Areas" along Franklin, Gibbon, Wolfe and Alfred Streets (figures 3.6 & 3.7, page 23). The Concept II drawings submitted on September 2 do not provide either the tree protection distance of 8 to 15 feet or the pedestrian or frontage areas shown for the "Street Typology," which was established to match the way buildings in the surrounding neighborhood are set back from the street. In some cases the drawings indicate that the buildings would be as close as 6 feet to the property line.

The Strategy (pages 7 & 42) targets the need to retain the 215 committed affordable units of the Heritage, Old Towne West III and Alfred Street Baptist Church sites. This project, however, should be based solely on the 140 units of the Heritage sites. The 75 units of Old Town West III and Alfred Street Baptist Church should be addressed in their own projects. To make the project "financially sustainable," the Strategy proposed a ratio of 3 market rate units to every affordable unit but this ratio does not appear to be necessary because the owner's income from market rate and affordable units would be the same when the HUD funds are included. Other affordable housing projects in Alexandria have used a ratio of 2 market rate units to every affordable unit. If the 2 to 1 ratio were used and the number of affordable units were reduced to 140 units, the total number of units would shrink to 420, which would reduce the project's mass and height, and allow increases in setbacks and additional open space to be consistent with the specifics and intent of the Affordable Housing Strategy.

Best regards,

Lia,

Would it be possible for the participants of this hearing to address two concerns of mine....

1- What impact will having 400-500 additional families in this area have on the Lyles-Crouch Elementary School population. Lyles-Crouch is already well above maximum capacity, so I am concerned that increasing the density of the population in this area will exacerbate an existing problem. Have city officials thought through this matter?

2 - Will a walkway and bike path be preserved for pedestrians needing to transit the area as we currently can? This Veterans Walkway is an important transit space that allows residents from neighborhoods west of Hwy 1 to move east to locations such as Lyles-Crouch, the bike path, Potomac River, etc.

Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Mike Skardon

414 S. Fayette St. Alexandria, VA. 22314

DISCLAIMER: This message was sent from outside the City of Alexandria email system. DO NOT CLICK any links or download attachments unless the contents are from a trusted source. To the Chair and Members of the Alexandria Board of Architectural Review,

The following paper addresses specific concerns for the scale, mass, height and architectural character of the updated Concept III for the Heritage Old Town, which is little changed from previous versions.

- The objectives of the Heritage project have inflated its mass and height, making it much too large for the Historic District.
- The Developer's Concept III does not substantively reduce the project's mass and scale.
- The project's ratio of building area to open space is not sufficient.
- The Veteran's Memorial Walkway should not be eliminated.
- All 9 blocks of the Core Area should be taken into consideration in the current review.

Each concern is identified and followed by information that discusses the rationale for that concern. In general, the supporting rationale is based on City of Alexandria's South Patrick Street Affordability Strategy (the Strategy), the Small Area Plan for the SW Quadrant, and the Applicant's Concept submittals.

Thank you for your consideration,

Chris and Kay Morell 421 South Columbus Street Alexandria, VA 22314 Mobile @ 703-350-1571 Email - morellchris@hotmail.com

# The objectives of the Heritage project have inflated its mass and height, making it much too large for the Historic District.

The mass, height and footprint of the Asland Heritage Project is excessive because its objective number of units has been inflated. Since its inception in 1976 Heritage's 244 apartments have been profitable with 140 0-40% AMI Committed Affordable units and 104 65-70% AMI Market Rate units. The objective of the Affordable Housing Strategy is to preserve the affordable housing within each of the Heritage, Old Town West III and Alfred Street Baptist Church properties. Asland, however, has chosen to use the affordable housing from all three properties and increase that total by a ratio of 3 market rate units to every affordable unit. This arbitrary calculation results in an objective of 777 units and giant apartment blocks, rather than separate moderately sized projects for each of the 3 properties. To accommodate their objective the project has had to reduce the setbacks and open space, and increase the height far beyond what was planned in the Strategy or required by the Small Area Plan and the Historic District. The project's size should be based solely on the 140 affordable housing units of the Heritage property and the ratio of market rate to affordable units should be reduced. The remaining 75 affordable housing units of the Old Town West III and Alfred Street Baptist Church properties, in the table below\*, should be addressed when those properties are developed. Basing the project's objective on the affordable units of the Heritage sites, and a reasonable ratio of market rate to affordable units would reduce the project's mass, height and footprint to be consistent with the development visions of the Strategy and Small Area Plan, and without violating the limits proscribed for the Old and Historic District.

Type of Units	Number of	Core Area - Heritage &	Bedroom
	Units	Old Town West III	Distribution
0-40% AMI Committed Affordable	140	Heritage Blocks 1, 2 &4	174 – 1
65-70% AMI Market Rate	104	Heritage Blocks 1, 2 &4	Bedroom
Total	244	Heritage Blocks 1, 2 &4	70 - 2 Bedroom
0-40% AMI Committed Affordable			28 - 1 Bedroom
Old Town West III Blocks 3 & 5	* 53	OTW Blocks 3 & 5	12 - 2 Bedroom
Alfred Street Baptist Church	* 22	ASBC Adjacent to Core	29 - 3 Bedroom
	Total = 75		6 - 4 Bedroom

Southwest Quadrant Housing Affordability (Excerpted from the Strategy page 7)

\* The 53 affordable Old Town West III units and the 22 affordable units owned by Alfred Street Baptist Church (outside the Strategy Core Area) are not in the Heritage project boundaries.



Strategy (figure 3.1, p. 16) a perspective of South Patrick Street looking North from Gibbon Street



'Core Area' excerpted from the Strategy (Figure 1.1, Page 2). Blocks 1, 2 & 4 are the Heritage sites which contain 140 affordable units. Site 3 is part of Old Town West (53 units) and the area just to the north of Block 1, outside of the core area, belongs to Alfred Street Baptist Church (22 units).

# The Mass and Scale of Concept III are still too large for the Historic District.

The Concept III structures still cover their sites with less than minimum setbacks and open space and they remain seven stories tall. At this size each structure will be larger than almost all the structures in Old Town and they are far taller, more massive and invasive than was ever envisioned in the historic district or depicted in the Strategy. Their minimal setbacks bring the viewer closer to the buildings making them seem even taller and more massive. The difference in the visions of the Strategy and Concept III is most easily seen by comparing the perspective drawings listed in the table below. Approval of Concept III at its current scale sets a precedent that will be used by future developments to circumvent the Strategy's plan, as shown by the proposed mass and scale of Block 3 on slides 53 through 55 of Concept III. Consider the impact of nine blocks of this size on their adjacent historic neighborhoods of townhomes.

Comparison of the Visions of the Strategy and Concept III			
South Patrick Street Affordable Housing Strategy - Vision	Concept III - Vision October 21, 2020		
S Patrick looking North from Gibbon	S Patrick looking North from Wilkes Slide 24		
Figure 3.1 Page 16 (and above)	S Patrick looking South from Wolfe Slide 25		
	Wilkes Park looking East from S Alfred Slide 34		
	Wilkes Park looking West from S Alfred Slide 23		
Wilkes Street Park looking East Figure 3.8 Page 24	Wilkes Park looking West from S Columbus Slide 40		
	Wilkes Park looking West from S Columbus Slide 41		
	S Columbus looking East to Wilkes Street (Existing housing picture) Slide 51		
	S Alfred looking SW from Wolfe Slide 17		
S Alfred looking South from Wolfe Page 29	S Alfred looking SE near Wolfe Slide 36		
	Existing Townhouses on west side of South Columbus St South of Wolfe St Slide 51		

# The project's ratio of building area to open space is not sufficient.

Open space is required to ensure adequate light and air, absorb water runoff and help prevent the spread of fire. It also provides spaces for neighbors to gather and socialize, and where children can play. The Open Space requirement for this project is 25 percent of the Block 1 & 2 sites (51,790 SF). In Concept II the total Open Space provided by both Blocks was 31,476 SF which is 39% (20,314 SF) less than the requirement as calculated in the Concept II submittal. Of the open space provided, 78% was on the 4<sup>th</sup> Story roofs and in the courtyards. Although no similar information is provided in Concept III the open space appears to be the same. The lack of open space and setback at ground level limits landscaping opportunities that would soften the building, limit the project's oversight of adjacent properties, create natural shadow lines, cool the air, provide habitat and reduce the amount of storm water runoff. These massive impervious blocks are in opposition to the rhythm and landscape of their surroundings, where houses are set back with gardens and streets are lined with mature trees.

# The Veteran's Memorial Walkway should not be eliminated.

The plan to incorporate a history of the Bottoms in the 'Wilkes Street Park' indicates that the existing Veterans' Memorial Walkway, which occupies that site, has no value as a historic place or area. The walkway was dedicated by Alexandria Veterans' Organizations and the city on Veterans' Day 1979 to honor the memory of deceased Alexandria Veterans. If the Applicant wants to incorporate a park to provide a history of the Bottoms it would be better to include that element as an expansion of the outdoor recreational areas, setbacks and open spaces, integrating it throughout the area for greater impact. If an additional area to recognize the Bottoms was located adjacent to the memorial walkway it could also enhance the walkway and provide additional recreation and social gathering spaces for residents and the public.

### All 9 blocks of the Core Area should be taken into consideration in the current review.

Blocks 1, 2 & 4 are the first phase of a total of 9 blocks identified for redevelopment in the Strategy. Although only 3 blocks have been submitted at this time, the scale, mass, height and architectural character of the full plan should be evaluated because the subsequent developments are likely to mimic their scale, mass, height and use of site. Their developers are also likely to employ the same or similar rationale to gain their approval. Concept III slides 53-55 give an indication of the scope and size of what can be expected for Block 3, the site of Old Town West. Accordingly, an incremental approval process for the 9 blocks, where the precedent has been set by this project, does not appear reasonable.



Strategy Page 16, Figure 3.1



Strategy Page 24, Figure 3.8



Concept III, Slide 41, Wilkes Park looking West from S Columbus



Concept III, Slide 51, Existing townhouse from S Columbus looking East to Wilkes Street



Concept III, Slide 17, S Alfred looking SW from Wolfe



Concept III, Slide 36, S Alfred looking SE near Wolfe



Concept III, Slide 51, Existing Townhouses on the West side of S Columbus Street (South of Wolfe Street)



Concept III, Slide 24, S Patrick looking North from Wilkes



Concept III, Slide 25, S Patrick looking South from Wolfe



Concept III, Slide 34, Wilkes Park looking East from S Alfred



Concept III, Slide 23, Wilkes Park looking West from S Alfred



Concept III, Slide 40, Wilkes Park looking West from S Columbus

To: Members of the Board of Architecture Review

From: Ellen Mosher

Date: 10/21/20

Re: 10/21/20 Hearing - DOCKET ITEM #12 - BAR #2020-00196 OHAD Concept III review at 450 South Patrick St, 900 Wolfe St & 431 South Columbus St.

Please do <u>not</u> recommend the height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of the proposed project because the project does not comply with BAR Old & Historic District standards or S. Patrick Street Strategy standards and recommendations.

During the City Council hearing Oct 17<sup>th</sup> for a Potomac Yard Innovation District project, the applicant's attorney, Ms. Puskar, commented about architecture stating this 7 building project used 5 different architects "so the buildings relate to one another and allow for individual expression". These buildings are around 95 feet tall. The architect for 2 buildings of the Innovation District is the same architect for the Heritage's 3 building project. <u>Remarkably, one of the architect's Innovation District "modern & industrial" style buildings, termed by City Staff during the October 17<sup>th</sup> hearing, is now per the staff report "compatible with the Old & Historic District" for the Heritage project. <u>See Exhibits A & B.</u></u>

This proposed <u>project's lot SF is approximately the size of 3 football fields</u> with up to 76-foot tall institutional modern buildings dwarfing the existing neighborhood. This project is massive! The character, height, mass and scale of this "campus" is not compatible with the character, height, mass and scale of the existing neighborhood. The applicant appears to be adamant with repeating their one institutional design on 3 blocks rather than relating to the existing neighborhood, and the rest of the Old & Historic District that consists of multiple architectural styles on every block. However, those styles are not the same as the Innovation District. A few Old Town style examples include: Georgian, Colonial, Greek Revival, Federal and Victorian styles. Wisely, the Innovation District did not want the same building design on more than one block and neither does Old Town where the neighborhood height, mass and scale is much smaller. A single massive design the size of multiple football fields is just too big for Old Town and too big for this neighborhood.

Football Field Size:57,600 SF x 3 = 172,800 SFHeritage Site per Applicant:TOTAL ON-SITE AREA:207,158 SF OR 4.75 ACRES

Per Staff's comments to the applicant 2/3/20 and per the S. Patrick St. Strategy regarding the single building mass they stated "provide a diagram for each building that breaks the massing, scale and architectural materials into 3-4 separate building portions that read separately and help the buildings better relate to their contexts". Attached are 4 examples of Old Town developments including 3 with building breaks that enable them to blend with the existing neighborhoods. *See Exhibit C*.

The BAR has successfully maintained Old Town's charm throughout the decades resulting in Alexandria receiving numerous accolades for the Old & Historic District. The words used most to describe Old Town are charming, history, romantic, 18th & 19th Century architecture, Christmas town & magical to name a few. See the attached list from the Visit Alexandria website where I highlighted in red text the Old Town accolades. *See Exhibit D*.

Per Staff's comments to the applicant 2/3/20 and per the S. Patrick St. Strategy, building height transitions need to be added to Block 2 on S. Alfred and S. Columbus Streets. *See Exhibit E* 

### You Decide



BLOCK 1 - WEST ELEVATION - S. PATRICK ST. (CURRENT)

**Innovation District?** 

Old & Historic District?



# <u>You Decide</u>

### **Innovation District?**

Old & Historic District?



**Innovation District?** 

Old & Historic District?



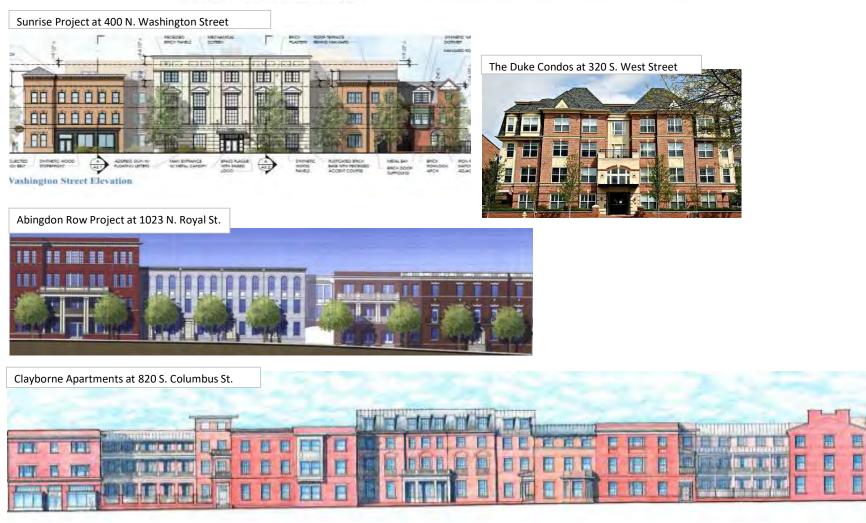
#### From the Potomac Yard Innovation District DSUP - Lot 19



#### Examples of Old Town Developments with building breaks that read separately & better relate to contexts

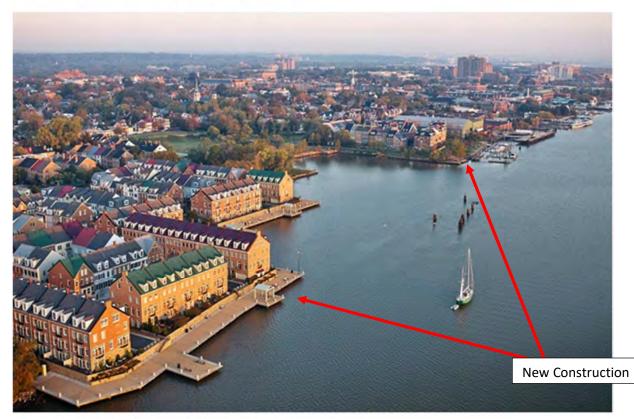
Per staff to applicant 2/3/20:

19. Provide a "diagram" for each building that breaks the massing, scale and architectural materials into 3-4 separate building portions that read separately and help the buildings better relate to their contexts.



Old Town Alexandria's accolades are due to the Old & Historic Districts' adherence to the Old & Historic building character rules applied to renovations and new construction. The red text accolades below include the words charming, history, romantic, 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Century architecture, Christmas town & magical to name a few when describing the Old & Historic District.

# Alexandria, Virginia



Cameron Davidson/Westend61/Getty Images

Picture from the latest accolade Editors' Favorite Cities of the Year: 2020 Legend Awards— <u>Departures</u> (2020). Please note the waterfront townhouses in this picture are all new construction adding to the charm of the Old & Historic District.

# **Top Reasons to Visit**

#### (https://www.visitalexandriava.com/things-to-do/top-10-reasons-to-visit/)

On the Potomac River within eyesight of Washington, D.C., Alexandria, VA is nationally recognized for its rich <u>history</u> and <u>beautifully preserved 18th- and 19th-century architecture</u>—an extraordinary backdrop for acclaimed, chef-driven restaurants; a <u>thriving boutique scene</u>; vibrant <u>arts and culture</u>; and a welcoming, walkable lifestyle. Named the <u>#1 Best Value U.S. Travel</u> <u>Destination 2018</u> by Money magazine and one of the <u>South's Prettiest Cities 2018</u> by Southern Living, Alexandria is the relaxed and refined home base for your D.C. vacation and an unforgettable getaway of its own. Need more reasons to visit? Check out the ideas below. Want even more ideas? View our <u>Old Town weekend itinerary</u> and <u>DC family vacation itinerary</u>.

# Alexandria Accolades

### (https://www.visitalexandriava.com/plan/about/accolades/)

Loved by residents and visitors alike, Alexandria's cosmopolitan feel and walkable lifestyle, nationally designated historic district, independent restaurants and boutiques, intimate historic museums and new happenings at the waterfront have landed the city on some of the most coveted lists, from Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards to Money magazine.

- Editors' Favorite Cities of the Year: 2020 Legend Awards—<u>Departures</u> (2020)
- The Friendliest Cities in the U.S.: 2019 Readers' Choice Awards (Alexandria #2)— <u>Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards</u> (2019)
- South's Best Cities (Alexandria #7)—<u>Southern Living</u> (2020)
- Best Destinations for Baby Boomer Women in 2020—<u>Expedia AARP Travel Center</u> (2020)
- The Top 20 Destinations You Should Be Traveling to Next Year—<u>Departures</u> (2019)
- Most Festive Christmas Cities in the U.S.—<u>USA Today</u> (2019)
- Most Romantic U.S. Destinations to Spend the Holiday Season (Alexandria #4)—<u>Fodor's</u> <u>Travel</u> (2019)
- Top 3 Best Small City in the U.S. (Alexandria #3)—<u>Condé Nast Traveler Readers'</u> <u>Choice Awards (</u>2019)
- The Most Magical Christmas Towns Across the World (Alexandria #7)—<u>Oprah</u> <u>Magazine</u> (2019)
- The Perfect Southern Town for a Hallmark Christmas Movie—<u>Southern Living</u> (2019)
- The Coolest Suburbs in America—<u>Apartment Therapy</u> (2019)
- America's Greenest Cities (Alexandria #4)—<u>CubeSmart</u> (2019)
- Most Dog-Friendly Vacation Destinations in the U.S.—<u>Expedia</u> (2019)
- Top Trending Destinations of 2018 (Alexandria #3)—<u>Expedia</u> (2018)
- Safest Cities in America (Alexandria #2)—<u>SmartAsset</u> (2018)
- #1 Best Value U.S. Travel Destination (Alexandria #1)—<u>MONEY</u> (2018)
- Best Small Cities in the U.S. (Alexandria #4)—<u>Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice</u> <u>Awards</u> (2018)
- The South's Prettiest Cities (Alexandria #14)—<u>Southern Living</u> (2018)
- Best Bike Cities in America (Alexandria #25)—<u>Bicycling</u> (2018)
- Safest Cities in America (Alexandria #4)—<u>SmartAsset</u> (2017)
- 10 Most Successful Cities in Virginia (Alexandria #9)–Zippia (2017)
- "All-Star" in Virginia for LGBTQ Equality (Alexandria #2)–<u>Human Rights Campaign</u> <u>Municipality Equality Index</u> (2017)
- 20 Most Unique Cities to Visit in Your 20s (Alexandria #7)–<u>CarRentals.com</u> (2017)
- Happiest Cities in the United States (Alexandria #21)–<u>National Geographic Explorer</u> (2017)
- 2017 Best Cities for Millennials in America (Alexandria #4)–<u>Niche</u> (2017)
- 2017's Most Diverse Cities in America (Alexandria #21)—<u>WalletHub</u>
- North America's Coolest Downtowns (Old Town Alexandria #5)—Expedia Viewfinder (2017)
- America's Most Attractive Cities (Alexandria #11)—<u>Travel + Leisure</u> (2017)
- 25 Best Cities for Entrepreneurs (Alexandria #1)—<u>Entrepreneur</u> (2017)
- Top 100 Best Places to Live (Alexandria #32)—<u>Livability</u> (2017)

- Top Cities for Millennials–Millennial Personal Finance (2017)
- The 15 Most Romantic Places in Virginia (Alexandria #1)-Best Of Virginia (2017)
- Top 20 Most Romantic U.S. Cities (Alexandria #3)–<u>Amazon.com</u> (2017)
- Best Counties to Live In (Alexandria #10)–<u>24/7 Wall St.</u> (2017)
- Must-Visit U.S. Hotspots for 2017 (Alexandria #5)–Smarter Travel (2017)
- America's Top Holiday Towns–<u>USA Today</u> (2016)
- Best Christmas Towns Around Washington, D.C. (Alexandria #1)–<u>Only in Your State</u> (2016)
- Nation's Top Digital Cities–<u>The Digital Cities Survey</u> (2016)
- 50 Best Bike Cities of 2016–<u>Bicycling Magazine</u>
- Best Midsize Cities for Public Transit–Redfin (2016)
- America's Most Attractive Cities (Alexandria #11)–<u>Travel + Leisure</u> (2016)
- Safest Big Cities in Virginia (Alexandria #4)–<u>Value Penguin</u> (2016)
- 25 Healthiest Cities in America-<u>Niche</u> (2016)
- 25 Best Cities for Millennials in America (Alexandria #3)–<u>Niche</u> (2016)
- Best Cities for Entrepreneurs–<u>Livability</u> (2016)
- Best Cities to Live in America–<u>Niche</u> (2016)
- The DC Suburbs, Ranked (Alexandria #1)–<u>Thrillist</u> (2016)
- America's Best Small Art Festivals" (King Street Art Festival #2)–Fodor Travel (2016)
- Most Educated Cities in America–ValuePenguin (2016)
- #1 Best Downtown in America–<u>Livability</u> (2016)
- #1 Most Romantic City in the U.S."–<u>Amazon</u> (2016)
- D.C. Area's Most Romantic Streets (King Street)–Curbed (2016)
- 20 Most Charming Small Cities in the U.S.-<u>RentLingo</u> (2016)
- Top City in D.C. Region for LGBT Inclusive Policies–Human Rights Campaign (2015)
- 8th Most Festive City in the U.S.–Amazon (2015)
- Best Cities to Visit for Christmas–Casual Travelist (2015)
- 5th Safest City in America–SmartAsset (2015)
- Top 5 Safest Small City in America–Protect America (2015)
- #1 Most Exciting City in Virginia–Gogobot (2015)
- Most Breathtaking Scenery in Virginia–Only in Your State (2015)
- #1 Digital City in the United States–The Digital Cities Survey (2015)
- Top 100 Best Places to Live –Livability (2016)
- Top 10 Towns for Craft Lovers American Craft Week (2015)
- Top 10 Most Romantic Cities–ProFlowers (2015)
- Top 10 Downtowns–Livability (2015)
- Best Mid-Sized City for Veterans to Live In–Military Times (2015)
- Silver level Bicycle Friendly Community–League of American Bicyclists (2015)
- Best Cities for Millennials in 2015–Forbes
- Top 20 Most Romantic Cities in the U.S.–Amazon (2015)
- Best Mid-Sized Cities for Education In America–Movoto Real Estate (2015)
- Most Well-Read City in America–Amazon (2014)
- 10Best: Prettiest Southern streets for a stroll (King Street)–<u>USA Today</u> (2014)
- Top 10 Best Downtowns 2014–Livability.com
- Top 50 Bike-Friendly Cities–Bicycling magazine (2014)
- Top 10 Safest Places in Virginia–Movoto Real Estate (2014)
- Top 20 Most Romantic Cities in the U.S.–Amazon (2013)
- America's Top ArtPlaces 2013–ArtPlace
- Silver level Bicycle Friendly Community–League of American Bicyclists (2013)

- Most Well-Read City in America–The Washington Post (2013)
- Top 10 Cities on the Rise–NerdWallet (2013)
- 10 Favorite Cycling Destinations" Virginia Living (2013)
- Best Small Cities for Art Nerds–TravelNerd (2013)
- Best Foodie City in the South–ConventionSouth (2013)
- Top 10 Foodie Cities 2013–Livability.com
- Best U.S. Cities for St. Patrick's Day–The Atlantic Cities (2013)
- Top 10 Downtowns 2012–Livability.com
- Top 10 Pet-Friendly Destinations –<u>Animal Planet</u> (2012)
- Top Great Streets in America (King Street)–American Planning Association (2011)

# Block 2 - Height Transitions Needed

- 23. Block 2 comments:
  - a. Provide two-to-three-story portions at the northern ends of the building to create a transition between the adjacent townhouses and the building.



To: Members of the Board of Architectural Review Re: Heritage Concept 3 review Date: October 21, 2020

As did almost all of my neighbors, I applauded the BAR's unanimous rejection of the Heritage developer's Concept 2 proposal. Your criticisms were telling and completely consistent with the BAR's charter to protect the Old and Historic District's architectural integrity and essential character.

Similarly, I join them in asking and urging you to reject the developer's Concept 3 proposal.

The "new" version still incorporates everything you opposed last time. It is still grossly out of scale with the adjacent neighborhood, which consists primarily of single-family, two- or three-story residences.

The proposed tall buildings, with an industrial/commercial look, would loom large over the rest of this residential neighborhood. Such massive, tall buildings, even a half-block away, would distort and permanently alter the fundamental character of this neighborhood. They still loom.

The Heritage proposal remains the elephant in the room. In this latest iteration, the developer and architect have made some minor changes, but they are cosmetic. They gave the elephant a pedicure, but an elephant with a pedicure is still an elephant!

In terms of scale and "style," the proposed development would be right at home in Potomac Yards or North Fayette Street or the Carlyle area, but not in the O&HD! It's bad enough that we have the northern "gateway" into Alexandria dominated by such ugly buildings. Please don't let equally ugly buildings dominate the southern "gateway" into our city.

Albert C. Pierce 320 South Alfred Street October 21, 2020 Board of Architectural Review October 21, 2020 Virtual Meeting

Re: October 21, 2020 Docket item #12: BAR #2020-0196 OHAD: Request for concept review at 450 S. Patrick Street, 900 Wolfe Street and 431 S. Columbus Street.

Members of the Board of Architectural Review,

I have reviewed the proposal that is on the docket for October 21, 2020 and the concerns over mass, height and scale remain. I do not see significant changes from those discussed during the September 2 meeting. The proposal is completely out of scale with the surrounding homes and structures in the neighborhood and within the Old and Historic District.

I do not have the time to provide significant photos of the existing structures and compare them to other developments around the City of Alexandria. I have read comments that were submitted for the September 2 meeting and those already included in the agenda for today's meeting. I understand the need to support our most vulnerable residents and most certainly support efforts to maintain and build affordable housing within the City. However, I am struggling to comprehend that the only way is to completely erode the neighborhood and move forward with the large buildings, which only comprise three of a potential nine block plan for the S. Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy, the remaining six which are outside the boundaries of the OHAD. The proposed buildings, which architecturally appear to be more appropriate for North Old Town, Potomac Yards or another location within the City, have the potential to also dwarf existing homes and impact such simple things as sunlight.

Given the BAR's specific scope on this proposal, I urge you to request a proposal that is more architecturally appropriate for both the OHAD and the neighborhood.

Thank you,

Janice Kupiec

Homeowner, 800 Block S. Columbus Street, Alexandria, VA

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission 220 North Washington Street Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2521 (703) 746-4554

October 20, 2020

Board of Architectural Review Old and Historic Alexandria District City of Alexandria

Alexandria, Virginia

Re: BAR #2020-00196 Heritage at Old Town

Dear Chairman Roberts and Members of the Board:

The Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) is the city commission charged with advising and supporting the City Council, City Manager and city staff as to "the responsible stewardship of this unique, historic city," including through such means as "preserving the historic cultural diversity of the city," "developing our city in directions that do not threaten its historic integrity," "building a sense of community identity and continuity," and "preserving historic sites and buildings." Our interest thus extends to protection and preservation of Alexandria's historic resources throughout the city, including those within the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

HARC is concerned that the height, scale and mass of the new buildings as now proposed for this site would far exceed that which is characteristic of the Old and Historic Alexandria District; that their architecture is starkly out of character with that of the nearby neighborhood, and of the Historic District generally; that it would impair the welcoming quality of an important gateway to the City and its Historic District; that it would damage the historic Bottoms neighborhood which surrounds the site; and that it could set a poor precedent for future development in the Historic District and beyond.

We understand that this project is scheduled for a third Concept Review at your meeting of October 21, 2020. We urge your awareness of and consideration of the following factors as you conduct that review.

#### Impact on the Old and Historic Alexandria District

The current project contemplates construction of new buildings on three contiguous blocks within the Bottoms neighborhood in the "southwest quadrant" of Old Town. We understand that the BAR's current review is confined to the two blocks which are entirely or partially within the boundaries of the Old and Historic District (OHAD). The project occupies only a small portion of the OHAD, the bulk of which extends north, east and south from this site. The entire project site is within or immediately adjacent to the OHAD, however, and whatever new construction takes place here will necessarily have impacts on that surrounding and adjacent District.

HARC has great interest in the historic integrity of the Old and Historic District, which is perhaps Alexandria's most widely known historic resource; which is of central importance to our city among such resources; and which is itself, in its entirety, a resource listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The proposal contemplates new construction occupying almost the entire compass of these blocks, predominantly 6 or 7 stories in height, in a neighborhood of predominantly 2- and 3-story townhouses of modest scale. The architecture may be representative of modern commercial or multifamily residential buildings elsewhere in Northern Virginia in areas of little historical significance or distinction, but it is starkly different from that in the immediate neighborhood, and even, perhaps, from that most characteristic of the Old and Historic District as a whole.

We are concerned that the height, mass, scale and architecture of the buildings as currently proposed are entirely out of character with the predominant characteristics of the adjacent and broader OHAD, and that it could thus have a substantially negative impact on the historic integrity of that District.

#### Proximity to an Important Gateway to Alexandria

The project site is bounded on the west by South Patrick Street, which is the gateway to Old Town (and to the city generally) from U.S. Route 1 and Interstate 95, the principal highway arteries for north-south traffic on the east coast of the United States, and the first gateway for traffic from the north and east on Interstate 495, the Capital Beltway. The site's gateway location calls for great care and consideration of project impacts in keeping with the Historic District Ordinance's purpose

...to safeguard the city's portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and other significant routes of tourist access to the city's historic resources by assuring that development in and along those transportation arteries be in keeping with their historical, cultural and traditional setting. (Sec. 10-101(H). Emphasis added.)

HARC's concern derives from its charge to advise on "building Alexandria's national and international reputation as an attractive city" so as to "attract people...to Alexandria" and thus to "increase the contribution of tourism to city finances." (Sec. 2-4-32 (b) and (c)). The siting of tall, massive buildings with little variation in the façade close to the property line along South Patrick Street would dramatically change the view from the Route 1 gateway—currently lined with many tall, mature trees, and variegated low- to mid-rise buildings compatibly scaled with the historic setting, set far back from the roadway. The stark new design would stand in sharp contrast to the present viewscape and could create the effect of a multi-story "wall" instead of an inviting entry to the City and the adjacent historical neighborhood. The existing buildings and the character of this neighborhood are compatible with the City's historic, cultural and traditional setting; any new construction should respect those values as well.

#### Impact on the Historic Bottoms Neighborhood

The *Bottoms* or the *Dip* was the first African American neighborhood in Alexandria, begun in the 19th century when several free blacks entered into long-term ground rent agreements on the 300 block of South Alfred Street, which became the nucleus of the neighborhood. The Bottoms is roughly bounded by Washington, Prince, Henry and Franklin Streets; the current project site,

between Wolfe, Patrick, Wilkes and Columbus Streets, is at the center of that historic neighborhood.

Too many of the original structures in the Bottoms have been lost, but many important historical structures remain. The present brick structure of the Alfred Street Baptist Church at 301 South Alfred Street (in the first block north of the current project site) was probably designed and built by free black craftsmen. Founded in 1803, the church is one of the oldest African American congregations in Alexandria, and is significant for its major religious, educational and cultural role in Alexandria's free black community prior to the Civil War. The Odd Fellows Hall at 411 South Columbus Street (adjacent to and in the same block as the project area) was a major gathering place for African American benevolent organizations following the Civil War, serving an important role in developing community identity, promotion of racial consciousness and leadership skills. Dr. Albert Johnson, a graduate of the first black medical school, at Howard University, was the sole African American doctor practicing in Alexandria in 1900. His home (814 Duke Street, in the first block north of the project site) is significant in the historic context of residential development because it illustrates the range of professions and people who lived in the Bottoms. The Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church (606 South Washington Street, at the edge of the Bottoms neighborhood), built in 1834, is the oldest African American church building in Alexandria.

These four sites—Alfred Street Baptist Church, Odd Fellows Hall, Dr. Albert Johnson House, and Roberts Memorial Church—are all listed both on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. These structures and a number of Bottoms townhouses still stand, one in the same block and others very nearby the current project site. Construction of a new project of the height, mass and scale of that proposed, and of an architecture so starkly different from that of its surroundings, could have an unnecessarily detrimental impact on what remains of the historic Bottoms neighborhood in which it is centered.

#### Precedent for Future Development in the Bottoms Neighborhood and Beyond

The current project contemplates new construction on three of the nine blocks in the neighborhood (seven east and two west of South Patrick Street) that have been identified as potential redevelopment sites. Two of those are partially or wholly within the OHAD and are discussed in detail in the BAR's docket materials; a third abuts those two but is outside the Historic District.

Although the BAR does not have the responsibility or authority to review present or future plans for the seven blocks which lie outside the boundary of the OHAD, this does not require that the Board evaluate the present project without consideration of the context of the surrounding neighborhood, and the impact it might have on the larger Historic District. Indeed, the Historic District Ordinance charges the Board with "assuring that new structures…be *in harmony with their historical and architectural setting and environs*" (emphasis added); it does not require that the Board not take cognizance of a project's environs if they fall in whole or in part outside the boundary of the OHAD.

HARC urges your consideration that whatever judgments you reach now about the buildings to be constructed at the present site are very likely to be taken as precedent for what is now or later proposed for the other blocks that have been identified as potential redevelopment sites. If the BAR were now to judge buildings of the height, scale, mass and architectural character of those proposed here as appropriate for the Old & Historic District, it is likely that current and future proposals for buildings on other blocks, beyond the scope of the BAR's review, would be even less constrained by the historical, cultural and architectural objectives that guide the BAR's charge. Those blocks are, nonetheless, within or very close to the Old & Historic District and the Bottoms neighborhood, and many face the South Patrick Street gateway to the City. If the Board were to endorse buildings of inappropriate character on these first two blocks, extension of that precedent to the remaining blocks could amplify any damage to the Bottoms, the OHAD, and the gateway.

\* \* \*

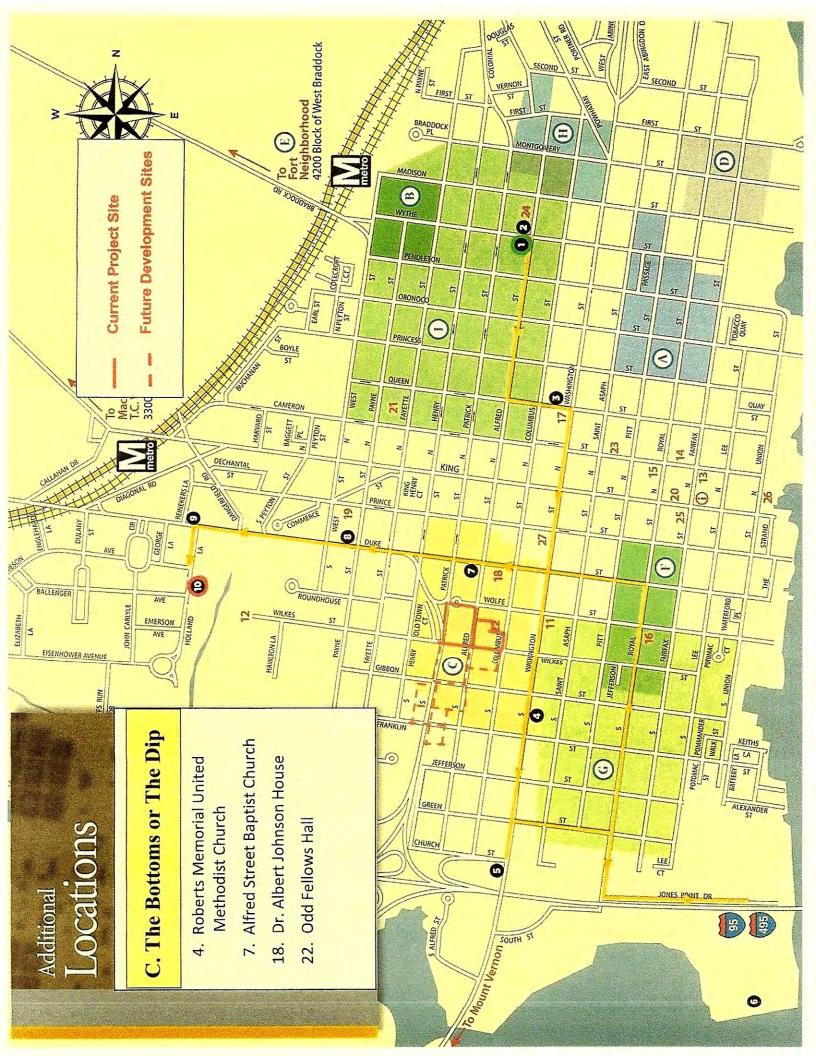
HARC is gratefully aware of the high standards that the Board of Architectural Review has thus far applied in its consideration of this proposal. We appreciate your diligence in the preservation and protection of the Old & Historic Alexandria District and the City's other historic resources within and outside the District, and we urge you to maintain that rigorous standard as this project proceeds.

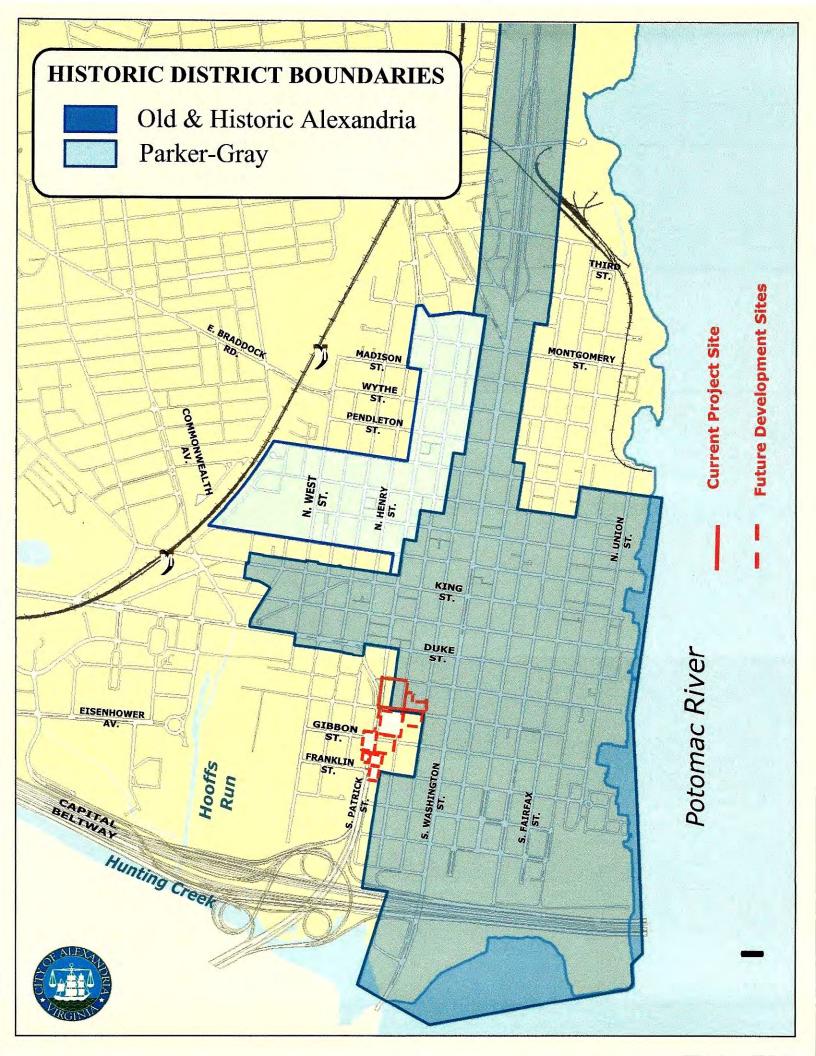
As always, HARC is available to help and support this effort in any way it can.

Sincerely,

Danny Smith and Linda Lovell, Co-Chairs

HISTORIC ALEXANDIA RESOURCES COMMISSION





#### **TO: BAR/Board of Architectural Review**

#### HEARING DATE: October 21, 2020

**FROM: Cecily Crandall** 

#### DOCKET ITEM #12 - BAR #2020-00196 OHAD (Concept III Review at 450 South Patrick St, 900 Wolfe St & 431 South Columbus St.)

First, I would like to thank Ms. Roberts, Chair of the BAR and all committee members for their comments and position regarding this project at the September 2, 2020 BAR Hearing. The committee's intelligent and thoughtful feedback were very much appreciated by myself and my many neighbors.

Secondly, I ask that you do <u>not</u> recommend the height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of the aforementioned proposed project because this project does not comply with the S. Patrick Street Strategy standards and recommendations nor with the BAR Old & Historic District (OHAD) standards.

In reviewing the re-submitted proposed plans/drawings, it is immediately apparent that the applicant did not follow the recommendations provided by the BAR in the two previous BAR hearings. What has been re-submitted is the same, industrial, commercial, "modern-esque", generic behemoth that was submitted previously. Ms. Puskar, at the City Council meeting on 10/17/20, remarked to council that many changes had been made to the design and the height of the buildings. However, the reality of the re-submission, belies her statements. The proposed height, mass, scale, and general architectural character, with the exception of the architectural character/design which is actually worse than the previous submissions, if that is even possible, are so similar that I could not see a difference. It appears more like moving deck chairs around on the Titanic.

As an A/E/D professional myself, I see two scenarios that would lead to the above project plans. First scenario: A client who was unclear on what he wanted/needed and deferred to the architect's professional knowledge in order to provide an appropriate design for this space. In this case, it might reflect an initial faulty interpretation by the architect of the proposed buildings' ability to fit into the OHAD. However, given that this aspect has been more than addressed by the BAR previously, the second scenario comes into play. This scenario would be that the client, James Simms/Asland, directed the architect to produce what he, the client, wanted, with little input from his hired professional. This usually means one thing: The client, James Simms, wanted the project done quickly and with a small budget. Instead of respecting the buildings location in OHAD and the surrounding height, mass, scale and general architecture, it appears that quick, easy and cheap, ruled the day.

Curiously, the same architect used to design Buildings #15 & #19 of the very "Modern & Industrial" Potomac Yard North, Hord, Coplan, Marcht, was used by Mr. Simms for the design of The Heritage buildings. And what do you know? The proposed Heritage buildings are carbon copies (particularly #19) of the PYN proposed buildings. Did Mr. Simms look at the architects' portfolio and point and say, "I want that one!" as it would take no time or effort to apply an existing design to The Heritage and then very quickly (because design drawings take time and

money to develop) foist this *recycled* and *inappropriate* design plan on our historic neighborhood?

It appears that Mr. Simms wants the proposed buildings designed in an already used, basic, uninteresting style in an effort to keep from spending the time to design/build a property that is in keeping with surrounding neighborhood, that adheres to the OHAD guidelines, that adds value to the neighborhood in terms of interest, quality and continuity of style. City planners have written that Mr. Simms, et al. did not want to build this project in keeping with the OHAD because to do so for such a "large" building would be "too hard". In fact, James Simms own statement reflects his mindset with regard to this project. Quote, "I don't believe any period of time in history should remain in stasis and that includes architecture. That includes buildings," Mr. Simmons said. "Otherwise, we'd all be living in lean-tos.". Mr. Simms' guote seems to broadcast the following: That he simply does not care about the existing OHAD neighborhood or the property owners/residents, some of whom have lived here for 50+ years. That he does not care about preserving the rich architectural history of our town. That he does not respect the carefully crafted guidelines of the OHAD or its purpose. That there is no need to work with/receive input from the existing neighbors (My understanding is that other developers for projects like the Sunrise/N. Washington St. took the time to meet with neighbors, get their input and actually apply it the proposed project in an effort to be a good neighbor. The result is a building that looks residential and appropriate for the space not commercial/industrial and wildly out of scale as are the proposed Heritage buildings). That the proposed buildings will look ridiculously out of place, will overshadow the homes owned by the regular folks who currently live here and that the project will negatively impact and change our little neighborhood forever. Is this Mr. Simms call to make? How can we, the actual stewards of this lovely and special neighborhood, have our voices heard?

I ask that the BAR committee members reject the proposed Heritage plan re-submitted by James Simms, Hord, Coplan, Macht and Cathy Puskar and by doing so show that the BAR Guidelines mean something, that they have purpose and that to preserve and protect this amazing and unique town will be a legacy not forgotten.

Sincerely, *Cecily Crandall*  To: Members of the Board of Architectural Review

Re: Heritage Concept III Review: Docket Item #12–BAR #2020-00196 OHAD

Date: 21 October 2020

We are writing to convey our continued concern and disappointment over the proposed development of the Heritage Project in SW Old Town.

The Heritage development concept seems to be based on calculating the maximum size allowed to meet zoning requirements, adding all available credits and bonuses, and designing to fill that space. The result is 4 to 7 story buildings that are monstrous and completely inappropriate for the surrounding area of 2 and 3 story homes and townhouses. Applying a patchwork of colors and materials to massive buildings does not make them any less massive. The latest version addresses none of the criticisms of Concept II. If the demolition of the current buildings was approved due in part to the lack of architectural significance, would the current proposed designs meet the same standard? Integration with the surrounding neighborhood seems to be an afterthought.

Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness. – Frank Gehry

We urge you to use a critical eye in reviewing this poorly conceived project and require a creative, beautiful redesign that is more fitting In concept, mass and scale.

We look forward to seeing the Board take appropriate action at the upcoming meeting. Thank you for your consideration.

Charles and Jane Weber 407 South Saint Asaph Street

# Old Jown Civic Association J.C. Box 1213 Alexandria Virginia 22313

October 21, 2020

Subject: OTCA Comments in opposition to BAR Docket Item #12, BAR#2020-00196 for Heritage of Old Town apartments redevelopment proposal Concept review

Dear Chairman Roberts and Members of the Board of Architectural Review:

The Old Town Civic Association remains strongly opposed to these proposed buildings that are highly out of scale and show relatively little changes over the last three hearings. We request that the Board reject the current substantially unchanged proposal as incompatible with the Old and Historic District.

Despite revisions to reduce the proposed height of portions of the buildings to comply with the 50 foot height limit for the area of the Old and Historic District, the Heritage at Old Town redevelopment proposal remains wholly inappropriate in height, mass, scale and architectural character. The project proposes to construct apartment buildings on these sites that cover nearly the full block, a configuration that does not occur in the Old and Historic District, and still proposed to be constructed up to seven stories tall, drastically out of scale with the surrounding Old Town neighborhood on South Alfred, South Columbus, Gibbon, Wolfe, and South Patrick Street that consist entirely of 2 and 3 story townhouses.

We in the community, along with the owners of the properties in the plan area, engaged in an intense planning process with City staff that developed the South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy that resulted in a substantial increase in mass and density for these blocks. The level of development approved in the plan is not what the developer is proposing and instead is proposing much higher height and density then was developed for the approved plan.

Even with the increased mass and density approved in the South Patrick Street Affordable Housing Strategy, the master plan update states that the "Strategy balances the need for redevelopment with responsible design and height recommendations to ensure future redevelopment is not only compatible with the existing neighborhood, but also enhances it."

The approved height in the South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy is clear. The update approved two years ago calls for heights of 45 feet in the historic district, and 55 feet outside the district, except for the existing 62 foot building on the south side of Block 2 that can remain or be replaced, but, as a non-complying structure in terms of height, cannot be expanded in its degree of non-compliance. Page 27 of the approved plan states - "This Strategy recommends an increase to 55 feet on a limited number of blocks primarily along South Patrick

Street." The nearly 80 feet heights proposed here are extremely out of scale with the height parameters developed in concert with the community through the South Patrick Street Affordable Housing Strategy process and approved by Ordinance by the City Council to update to the Small Area Plan. The proposed building would dwarf the existing and exclusively 2-3 story townhouse.

The Heritage proposal is completely out of scale with any project constructed within the Historic District as well as several highly successful projects constructed within the Southwest Quadrant including:

- The Clayborne at 800 S. Columbus Street is four stories tall with significant front setbacks, courtyards, open space, and landscaping; and includes a full mid-block alley break with alley access to underground parking and loading.

- The former Fannon Petroleum site at 1300 Duke Street was redeveloped with three groups of four story townhouses in the area of the site located within the historic district, along the Duke Street frontage, and a completely separate appropriately scaled, four story, multifamily building toward the interior of the site, setback from the street with a landscaped courtyards, and underground parking and loading pulled 100 feet off the street, down a private brick paved alley provided as part of the development.

Numerous other development projects in the Old and Historic District and in the vicinity, including Robinson Terminal South, the Prescott on the 1100 block of Cameron Street, the 900 N. Washington Street multifamily project and many others demonstrate how to construct new buildings that are more compatible with their surroundings and the historic district.

The project should incorporate full building mid-block breaks, to break up these massive structures for the historic district, and include an alley to relocate the proposed entrances to underground parking and the loading bays off the adjacent public street frontages on South Alfred and Wolfe Street so that new residents access underground parking and loading spaces from these mid-block alleys, as is common throughout the historic district.

The historic research that the applicant has begun should be completed and then the footprint, massing and design of the proposed new project and buildings adjusted to preserve and highlight the most historic features of the project area, such as the Village Church and numerous townhouses covering the south half of Block 4, and reflecting the rail line and the course of the historic, and I assumed now buried Tan Yard Ditch.

Additionally, the developer should be required to provide a physical model that will allow a true comparison of the mass, height, and scale of the proposal in comparison to and showing the existing 2-3 story dwellings.

The development fails to recognize and incorporate the special character of this neighborhood and the Old and Historic Alexandria District. The proposed Heritage redevelopment is not compatible with the existing neighborhood, and if constructed will damage

the character of the neighborhood, and set a destructive precedent for future developments under the South Patrick Street Affordable Housing Strategy, and within the Old and Historic District.

Sincerely,

Stephen Milone 907 Prince Street President, Old Town Civic Association