

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

Board of Architectural Review
Wednesday, December 2, 2020
7:00pm, Virtual Public Hearing
Zoom Webinar

Members Present: Christine Roberts, Chair
James Spencer, Vice Chair
Purvi Irwin
John Sprinkle
Robert Adams
Lynn Neihardt
Christine Sennott

Members Absent: None

Secretary: William Conkey, AIA, Historic Preservation Architect

Staff Present: Susan Hellman, Historic Preservation Planner

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Architectural Review hearing was called to order at 7:00 p.m. All members were present at the meeting by video conference.

Ms. Roberts stated that Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency, the December 2, 2020 meeting of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) is being held electronically pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2 3708.2(A)(3), the Continuity of Government ordinance adopted by the City Council on June 20, 2020 or Section 4-0.01(g) in HB29 and HB30, enacted by the 2020 Virginia General Assembly (Virginia Acts of Assembly Ch. 1283 and 1289), to undertake essential business. BAR board members and staff are participating from remote locations through Zoom Webinar. The meeting can be accessed by the public through broadcasted live on the government channel 70, streaming on the City's website and can be accessed via Zoom hyperlink on the docket.

II. MINUTES

2. Consideration of the minutes from the **November 18, 2020** public hearing.

BOARD ACTION: Approved, as Amended

By unanimous consent, the Board of Architectural Review voted to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2020 meeting, as amended.

III. CONSENT CALENDAR

3. BAR #2020-00544 OHAD

Request for alterations at 422 South Fairfax Street.

Applicants: Mark and Kelly Robertson

BOARD ACTION: Approved, as Submitted, 7-0

On a motion by Ms. Neihardt, and seconded by Mr. Sprinkle, the Board of Architectural Review voted to approve BAR #2020-00544, as submitted. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Demolition, Basement/Foundation Plans, Landscaping, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Utilities and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
 - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
 - b. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or other artifact.

REASON

This item was pulled from the consent calendar because the Board received a letter from an adjoining property owner.

SPEAKERS

Lynette Camus, Studio Camus, represented the property owners and answered questions.

DISCUSSION

Ms. Irwin asked if there was an existing 6' fence at the property and the applicant's representative said that there was an existing fence of differing heights surrounding the rear yard.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

4. BAR #2020-00196 OHAD

Request for concept review at 450 South Patrick Street, 900 Wolfe Street & 431 South Columbus Street.

Applicant: Heritage at Old Town PropCo LLC

SPEAKERS

Cathy Puskar, attorney with Walsh Colucci, represented the applicant and introduced the project and answered questions.

Ryan Kautz, architect with Hord Coplan Macht, presented the revised design for the project. Board questions for the applicant, answers provided by Ryan Kautz, architect with Hord Coplan Macht

Ms. Roberts asked about the distance from the curb to each face of the building along South Patrick Street on Block 1. Mr. Kautz responded that the distance from each façade to the curb is the same with the exception that the southwest corner is set back an additional 5 feet. The distance from the curb to the façade on South Patrick Street is 30 feet.

Ms. Irwin asked for clarification regarding the brick colors on the South Alfred Street townhouse elements. Mr. Kautz responded that the colors are three different shades of brown brick.

Ms. Irwin asked about the depth of the projecting bays along South Alfred Street. Mr. Kautz responded that the fronts of the bays are aligned but the variation in depth occurs at the rear of the bays.

Ms. Roberts asked if the balconies facing Wilkes Street Park on Block 1 are projecting. Mr. Kautz responded that these are projecting balconies.

Ms. Roberts asked for clarification on the projecting bay at the southwest corner of Block 1. Mr. Kautz responded that the bay projects 2 feet from the adjacent building face.

Mr. Sprinkle asked what design influences were used in the interest of greater variation in the design. Mr. Kautz showed precedent images and referred to a variety of window configurations.

Mr. Sprinkle asked if the applicant had done a study of the solid to void relationship on historic buildings and how this applied to the proposed design. Mr. Kautz responded that they would provide this information.

Mr. Adams asked why the Board is looking at the project prior to approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. Mr. Conkey responded by explaining that the Concept Review policy allows for a preliminary review of a design for a project prior to these approvals.

Ms. Roberts asked if the projecting bays on the South Alfred Street elevation of Block 2 stop above the entry doors. Mr. Kautz responded that these bays stopped above the entry door to create a canopy for the door.

Mr. Spencer asked about the material for the canopies at the fourth floor roof deck on the east side of Block 2. Mr. Kautz responded that these are to be an open trellis.

Ms. Irwin asked if the ground floor entrances facing Wilkes Street Park are recessed. Mr. Kautz responded that these entrances are recessed.

Ms. Roberts asked if the balconies on the Wilkes Street Park elevation are projecting. Mr. Kautz responded that these balconies do project.

Public Comments

Chris Morell, 421 South Columbus, summarized the features included in the Small Area Plan and asked the Board to protect the historic district from the project developers.

Kay Morell, 421 South Columbus, stated that she has not seen a view showing what the building would look like from her back yard. She is concerned that the project is being steamrolled through the process and would like a balance of good design with the need for affordable housing.'

Carren Camp, 310 Franklin, stated that the proposed density is too great, the design is too contemporary, and that the design is not compatible with Old Town,

Stafford Ward, 600 block of South Columbus Street, supported comments from Mr. Adams regarding the design and stated that the City should be driving the development process instead of the developer.

James Beattie, 718 Wolfe Street, was concerned that the northeast corner of Block 2 is too industrial near existing nearby residential properties and stated that this is the least compatible part of the design.

Ellen Mosher, representing Old Town Civic Association, 324 North St. Asaph, shared a presentation comparing the current design to the previously submitted design.

RL Sheedy, representing HAF, 1311 Prince Street, was concerned that the building as designed will loom over the historic district. She stated that the project does not fit into the architecture of the historic district and that the building should blend into the existing fabric. HAF is requesting that a physical model of the project and the surrounding context be built.

Manfred Stommel, 428 South Columbus Street, was concerned that the presentation did not adequately show the proposed parking.

John Szczech, 413 South Columbus Street, echoed previous concerns that the comments about the height, mass and scale have not sufficiently been addressed. He thought that the practice of whitening out the background buildings in the elevations is misleading.

Darryl Resio, 827 Wolfe Street, felt that it is difficult to provide input on a project of this size and scale. He felt that the project needs to include greater variation in the window configuration and that the buildings are too large.

Judy Cohen, 720 Gibbon Street, shared a photograph of the Sunrise project on North Washington Street and talked about how it is successful as a large building because it is broken into discrete parts that are compatible with the neighborhood.

Mary Marrow-Bax, stated that she has repeatedly asked for the size of the park and the adjacent building and would like to know the proposed number of overall and affordable units. Ms. Puskar responded that the Wilkes Street Park is 66'-4" x 246'-6", the existing 6 story building is 59'-8" wide, and there will be a total of 750 units, 185 of which will be affordable but this number is subject to change based on input from HUD.

Barbara Hayes, 802 Duke Street, recommended that the Board review the recommendations of the small area plan.

Steve Hayes, 802 Duke Street, felt that the developer is not responding to comments from the Board and that the design feels like a prison.

Brian Scholl, 800 Gibbon Street, stated that the current design is not responsive to previous Board comments and feels that the design has gotten larger.

Stafford Ward, 600 block of South Columbus Street, asked about the physical model that had been requested by civic groups. Ms. Roberts responded that the Board does not have the authority or ability to create a model. Mr. Conkey responded that the Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning had written a letter in response to the request.

Yvonne Callahan, 735 South Lee Street, stated that the Board concerns had been ignored in the proposed design and that the drawings do not adequately show the 6 and 7 story buildings behind the 4 story buildings. She feels that there is too much metal included in the design for the buildings and that the applicant should include more references to historic buildings. She also stated that Wilkes Street Park is more of a street than a park.

The public comment period was closed

DISCUSSION

General Comments

Ms. Irwin stated that the architecture of the historic district is euro-centric in nature and the Design Guidelines reflect this tendency. When considering the influences for this project the applicant should look to the diversity of the history of the site. The building design should have its own character aside from the strict language of the historic district that includes all influences.

Mr. Sprinkle stated that the quality of the design be respectful of the past and nearby historic architecture. He further asked the applicant to demonstrate a precedent where a building of this size and scale was introduced into an historic district.

Ms. Neihardt stated that a building that is used for affordable housing should have a similar quality design and materials to market rate buildings. She further indicated that the Block 1 building is too large and should be broken into two separate buildings.

Mr. Spencer appreciated the efforts of the architect to attempt to design a project of this size so that it is compatible with the historic district. He was concerned that the height and scale have not been adjusted per the Board comments. Per previous comments he would like the architecture of the building to include references to the history of the site.

Ms. Sennott is of the opinion that the design for the building needs more surprise and delight, the design at this point lacks a cohesive character.

Mr. Adams stated that the design for the building is of a 2021 architecture style. The buildings

are too large. The design should be a near replica of historic buildings in a way similar to the Sunrise project.

Ms. Roberts stated that the building architecture is not of the historic district, changes to the design have been incremental rather than more holistic as the comments have stated. She asks that the building be the best possible design.

Block 1 – South Patrick Street

Ms. Irwin stated that the scale on this portion of the building is acceptable because it is adjacent to South Patrick Street. She felt that the previous color scheme was more successful than the revised version. The applied bays on the building provide visual interest and break up the facades. She stated that as a design approach the applicant should not be directly taking forms from historic buildings and applying them to a new building.

Mr. Spencer agreed that the metal bays are successful as design elements. He was concerned about the potential for a canyon type of feeling to South Patrick Street if the opposite side of the street is similarly developed. He pointed out that the perspective does not show the hill to the north of the site and the large church buildings at the corner of South Patrick and Duke Street.

Ms. Roberts asked the applicant if there could be greater variation in the distance from the curb to the various facades to add visual interest and texture. She felt that this façade is too large and should be further broken into components.

Ms. Sennott was concerned about the proximity of the building to the sidewalk and wants to see additional visual interest at the first floor.

Ms. Neihardt felt that the South Patrick Street design was not successful.

Mr. Adams felt that there should be greater variation of the cornice line with definable separate elements.

Block 1 – Northwest corner

Ms. Irwin likes the revisions to the balconies.

Ms. Neihardt felt that the design for this portion of the building needs greater variation.

Ms. Roberts stated that the design for the lower 5 story section is successful and relates more to the precedent images than other parts of the building. She further indicated that if the building will have a 7 story portion then there should be fewer steps in the elevation.

Mr. Spencer agreed that the 5 story section of the building is successful and asked if there was a way that the recessed upper levels could be better integrated.

Ms. Sennott suggested that greater contrast between the window frames and the adjacent masonry would help to provide additional visual interest.

Mr. Sprinkle suggested that adding a defined building entry to each block could help to give the

impression of multiple smaller buildings.

Block 1 - Northeast Corner

Ms. Irwin felt that previous versions of this corner were more interesting and that this design felt boring in comparison, however the addition of detailing in the next phase of the development of design will help to alleviate this concern. She suggested that the history of the site should be integrated into the design and this could happen through the detailing.

Mr. Adams suggested that the building should provide a more dynamic silhouette.

Mr. Spencer stated that this portion of the building felt like a podium design with residential over retail and suggested removing the band above the first floor to create a more unified design.

Ms. Roberts suggested that a quiet, boring design for this corner is appropriate as a counterpoint to the historic home on the opposite street corner.

Block 1 – South Alfred Street Elevation

Ms. Irwin stated that she likes the recessed entrances as a way to add variety to the streetscape but suggested that a variation in the depth from the sidewalk to the face of the building would help to break up the massing.

Mr. Spencer likes the current design of the corner window elements. He suggested that the minimal variation in façade depth at the roof should be more significant and should result in a variation of depth at the street level.

Ms. Roberts stated that she supports the use of the glass bridge to allow a view into the mews and create the feeling of distinct buildings.

Ms. Neihardt stated that the bridges should be eliminated and there should be two separate buildings instead of one joined by bridges.

Mr. Sprinkle stated that this elevation is an opportunity for the design to vary because directly across the street is Block 2.

Mr. Adams stated that this portion of the building could benefit from the introduction of a variety heights, bay shapes, and roof forms. The applicant should look to the historic district for inspiration for these forms.

Block 1 – Southeast corner

Ms. Irwin stated that she liked the design direction of this being a projecting tower element rather than the previous recessed vertical element but suggested that metal and glass would be a more appropriate language.

Mr. Adams suggested that the lack of an historical precedence for this part of the design makes

it difficult for there to be a consensus on the design.

Block 2 – Southwest corner

Ms. Irwin prefers this version of the corner design to the previous version and encouraged the applicant to explore the possibility of adding some version of balconies back to the west elevation to provide visual interest.

Ms. Neihardt stated that the brick spandrels are more successful than previous metal spandrels and appreciates the overall warehouse feel of this portion of the building.

Mr. Spencer liked the large precast opening on the west elevation and suggested that the applicant explore the possibility of adding a segmented arch to the underside of the opening. The introduction of a peak or other roof element to the corner could add to this as a strong corner.

Ms. Sennott agreed with Ms. Irwin that the inclusion of balconies on the west elevation would help to improve the elevation.

Mr. Adams stated that the corner needs additional detail and relief to give it a richness of design.

Block 2 – Northwest corner

Ms. Irwin stated that there should be additional variation amongst the window design and does not like the large dark panel between the windows on the metal clad fourth floor at the north end of the building.

Mr. Sprinkle questioned the compatibility of the fourth floor at the north end of the building and suggested the introduction of a mansard roof form as a possible variation and reference to historical buildings.

Ms. Neihardt felt that the projecting bays above the ground floor entries are not appropriate and are not found elsewhere in the historic district.

Block 2 – Northeast corner

Ms. Irwin stated that she likes the recessed central bay as shown in this version and suggested the introduction of additional detailing at the ground floor.

Ms. Roberts was concerned about the wedding cake effect on this portion of the building but agreed that the three story massing at the ground floor is more compatible with the low scale residential buildings nearby.

Block 2 – Southeast Corner and South Elevation

Ms. Irwin stated that she preferred the wraparound projecting bay to this version because it created a strong corner as a counterpoint to the other corners on the proposed buildings.

Ms. Roberts suggested that the proposed projecting bay is a response to a similar projecting bay on a building across the street.

Ms. Irwin preferred the proposed version of the south elevation and inquired about depth at the ground floor park entries. She felt that the variety of roof lines at this portion of the building is successful.

Ms. Neihardt felt that this design is too blocky and could use greater differentiation.

Mr. Spencer stated that it is difficult to provide feedback on the design for the two story portion of the south elevation because it is difficult to see it in the provided renderings. He further indicated that he did not like the previous wraparound projecting bay but is still unsure of the proposed corner. He felt that the proposed bay is too narrow.

Mr. Sprinkle suggested that the applicant consider what the building would look like if the various portions had been built over time by different architects. He felt that the southeast corner is too weak and should be a prominent element similar to other corners.

The Chair conducted a straw poll on the height, mass, scale, and architectural character of the proposed from each Board member.

Mr. Sprinkle:

Height, Mass, & Scale: The building is generally two stories too tall and is unprecedented in and historic district.

Architectural Character: The building is missing a cohesive style and needs more variation of design elements.

Ms. Irwin:

Height, Mass, & Scale: The applicant has been responsive to concerns about height and has located the tallest sections in the areas where it is most appropriate.

Architectural Character: Encouraged the applicant to create a building that is unique but compatible with the historic district. This can be achieved through greater variation of design elements. She felt that the design for the Sunrise project is too historicist and would not support it for this project.

Mr. Spencer:

Height, Mass, & Scale: Agreed with Ms. Irwin regarding the location of the tallest portions of the building and acknowledged that the Board has not been consistent regarding the question of scale.

Architectural Character: Through the evolution of the design he likes some elements of the current design and some of previous designs. He felt that the building should read as a collection of smaller buildings rather than a monolithic building.

Ms. Sennott:

Height, Mass, & Scale: With appropriate architectural detailing the proposed building height and scale could be appropriate.

Architectural Character: The design for the building should include a variety of building design

elements. She felt that the level of detailing at the Sunrise project is appropriate but the style is not in this location.

Ms. Neihardt:

Height, Mass, & Scale: The building is generally too large.

Architectural Character: The design should include more items of interest and should have more defined sense of entry.

Mr. Adams:

Height, Mass, & Scale: The building is generally too large, a modest three to four story building would be appropriate in this location.

Architectural Character: The design should include more variation in design elements and should generally be a higher quality building.

Ms. Roberts:

Height, Mass, & Scale: Seven stories is too tall for the historic district but if this height is determined to be required then it could be possible to make it successful through the use of better architectural articulation. The massing could be improved through the introduction of greater porosity and breaking down the massing into separate buildings.

Architectural Character: The design should include more variation in design elements and should create a sense of place in the neighborhood.

Ms. Roberts offered that as the project moves into the Certificate of Appropriateness phase the applicant could meet with Board Members individually to review continued evolution of the design.

5. BAR Elections

On a motion by Mr. Spencer, the BAR voted 7-0 to reelect Ms. Roberts as Chair to another one year term

On a motion by Mr. Sprinkle, the BAR voted 7-0 to reelect Mr. Spencer as Vice-Chair to another one year term

V. ADJOURNMENT

The Board of Architectural Review hearing was adjourned at 11:33 p.m.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

The following projects were administratively approved since the last BAR meeting:

BAR #2020-00510 OHAD

Request for window replacement at 210 South Payne Street.

Applicant: Mary Rust

BAR #2020-00543 PG

Request for fence replacement at 513 North Columbus Street.
Applicant: Thomas Wise

BAR #2020-00561 OHAD
Request for alterations at 214 North Fairfax Street.
Applicant: Toska Gamble

BAR #2020-00565 OHAD
Request for window replacement at 801 South Pitt Street #122.
Applicant: Muriel Forster

BAR #2020-00566
Request for window replacement at 801 South Pitt Street #317.
Applicant: Jann Gilmore

BAR #2020-00570 OHAD
Request for window replacement at 1821 West Abingdon Drive #101.
Applicant: Eugene Paul

BAR #2020-00575 OHAD
Request for fence replacement at 718 South Alfred Street.
Applicant: Jacqueline M. Kennedy

BAR #2020-00576 OHAD
Request for alterations at 214 North Royal Street.
Applicant: Tom Crowley

BAR #2020-00575 OHAD
Request for door replacement at 601 Wilkes Street #402.
Applicant: Dan and Christine Gill

BAR #2020-00582 OHAD
Request for door replacement at 115 South Payne Street.
Applicant: Anthony Pandolfi