



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

Sent via E-mail

May 2, 2022

Re: Old Town North Small Area Plan Development

The redevelopment currently occurring within Old Town North is implementing the vision and recommendations of the Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTNSAP) approved in 2017. Old Town North continues to be a desirable part of the city given its walkability, proximity to the waterfront, public amenities, mix of uses, arts and cultural uses, and proximity to Old Town. The redevelopment has provided the public amenities envisioned by the Plan including new arts uses, streetscape improvements, new public pedestrian connections, affordable housing and increased environmental improvements (stormwater, energy efficiency etc.) for the new buildings as identified in the Plan.

The OTNSAP provides the framework for redevelopment within Old Town North and was developed through a collaborative process with the Old Town North Advisory group, the community, and the City. The OTNSAP identifies a range of principles to implement the vision of the Plan including establishing a mix of land uses and building heights compatible with the neighborhood, achieving a balanced mix of residents and employees, and establishing regulatory incentives that support the creating and retention of commercial, arts and cultural uses, as well as affordable housing.

A goal of the land use concept recommended in the Plan was to provide a balanced mix of residents and employees in the area than what historically existed in Old Town North to support local businesses, placemaking, and add vibrancy to the neighborhood. At the time, the Plan estimated an average occupancy for existing non-residential uses of approximately 3.5 employees/1,000 square feet and residential at approximately 1.5 residents/unit, recommending two to three times more residential than office square footage. The anticipated and planned development enables a better balance of office and residential uses as shown in Figure 2.02 of the Plan.

While development cycles and demand are driven by market forces, the Plan identifies sites (Figure 2.07) where potential redevelopment would likely occur over the next twenty to twenty-five years, acknowledging that for various reasons some of these sites may not redevelop and other sites not identified in the Plan area may redevelop.

Except for the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) power plant, the zoning recommendations in the Plan utilized existing commercial and mixed-use zones, indicating the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) allowed. The Plan was also clear to acknowledge that the proposed FAR, density, and height recommendations shown in Figures 2.08 and 2.09 were not inclusive of any density and/or height bonuses that sites may be awarded through the development review process to provide specific arts and affordable housing public benefits. While the Plan did not speculate on how these would be utilized for redevelopment sites, it established or strengthened these regulatory incentives in the hopes that they would be utilized to support Plan and City-wide goals. Utilization of Section 7-700, which provides bonus density and height for the provision of affordable housing, is generally applicable to sites across the City. Additionally, the creation and utilization of Section 6-900 to support art and cultural uses within the Old Town North Arts

District, was a recommendation of the Plan to retain and attract arts and cultural anchors/uses to the area. Recent development approvals within the Plan area have utilized one or both incentives for the provision of arts spaces and/or affordable housing.

Projected Redevelopment of the Old Town North Small Area Plan vs Constructed Projects

The 2017 Old Town North Small Area Plan projected that +/- 3,000 new dwelling units would be added to the plan area in the next +/- 20 years on the identified redevelopment sites* (this projection does not include by-right conversion of existing commercial buildings to residential uses, such as 801 North Fairfax or Abingdon Place). Dividing the projected growth (3,000 units) by 20 years results in about 150 units/year. The Plan has been approved for 5 years and the Plan projected +/- 750 units for that time period. The total new units that have been constructed since 2017 using the recommendations of the Plan total 540 units.

The amount of approved/constructed development is within the amount of development that was projected when the Old Town North Small Area Plan was approved in 2017. In addition, all future development currently being discussed is within what was planned by the Old Town North Small Area Plan.

The table below shows projects completed/under construction, approved not yet constructed, and in the review process.

Redevelopment Site	Address	Stage	Units (MF)
Completed – Under Construction			
Venue (Crowne Plaza)	901 N Fairfax	Partially Completed	163
Alexan Florence (former WMATA Bus Barn)	600 N Royal	Completed	287
Muse (Craddock site)	1201 N Royal	Completed	90
Approved Not Yet Constructed			
TideLock (Transpotomac Plaza)	1033 N Fairfax St	Final Site Plan	234
Waterman Place – Carr	901 N Pitt St	Preliminary	250
In Review Process			
Little Tavern Apartments	828 N Washington St	Concept	18
Montgomery Center	815 N Royal St	Concept	360
PRGS Site (former power plant)	1300 N Royal St	CDD Concept	~2,000

*Plan projections were based on Plan identified redevelopment sites and did not include potential office to residential conversions under existing zoning.

Population Projection

The total number of units expected at full plan build-out has not changed significantly from what was anticipated in the beginning of the planning process. The estimated total population based on the number of units in 2040 is expected to be approximately 7,700 residents, depending on unit size and vacancy. In the 2020 Decennial Census the Old Town North Area had an average household size of 1.45 and an 11% vacancy rate. The units expected to be built are expected to be of a similar size as what is currently available in the area and the vacancy is expected to decrease and approach the city average of 8%.

Bonus Density for Arts and Affordable Housing

The Old Town North Small Area Plan makes it clear that additional density may be requested for the provision of affordable housing or arts uses and that the provision of both affordable housing and arts uses is desired. However, the Plan did not forecast the extent to which these density bonus programs would be used as it has been the City's experience that utilization can vary among plan areas and according to market conditions. To date approximately 112,000 sq. ft. of additional density has been constructed to provide approximately 13,000 sq. ft. of arts uses and +/-12,000 sq. ft of affordable housing (12 affordable units). Additional projects that are approved but not yet constructed include approximately 180,000 sq. ft. of additional density to provide approximately 11,000 sq. ft. of arts uses and 30,000 sq. ft. of affordable housing (31 affordable units).

Community Benefits

The OTNSAP envisioned community benefits relating to open space, the arts, affordable housing and sustainability. Each redevelopment site provides a package of community benefits consistent with OTNSAP recommendations. The Plan envisioned enhancing existing parks and open spaces as well as creating new public/publicly accessible open spaces in the form of a converted rail corridor through the Plan area and a waterfront park on the PRGS site. Additionally, each development site provides publicly accessible open space that provides new pedestrian connections around the site.

Each development project makes a monetary contribution to support the acquisition, design, and construction of the linear park. Streetscape improvements and increasing tree canopy also occur with each development project. The creation of regulatory incentives for arts and cultural anchors will create a vibrant and active community while providing rent-free spaces for established arts organizations as well as the expansion of arts spaces in the neighborhood. Approved development projects make contributions to the Housing Trust Fund and, if utilizing bonus density/height, provide on-site affordable housing units, therefore increasing the affordable housing inventory and providing a range of housing typologies. The Plan included sustainability recommendations that are being implemented including green building design (green roofs, solar ready, LEED silver or equivalent certification), improved stormwater management, and other green infrastructure. The approach for the PRGS site requires a site-wide coordinated sustainability strategy and is currently under development. Additional community benefits include requirements for historic interpretation as well as bike and pedestrian connections.