

City of Alexandria

Old Town North

Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC)

June 2023 Meeting Notes

Wednesday, June 7 at 9:00 a.m.

Hybrid: City Hall, Room 2000 and via Zoom

Recording Link:

https://alexandria.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=29&coa_view_id=29&coa_clip_id=5909

Committee Members in Attendance

Stephen Kulinski, Chair (SK)

Thomas Soapes, Vice Chair (TS)

Katherine Bingler (KB)

Zaira Suarez (ZS)

Abbey Oklak (AO) *via Zoom*

City Staff in Attendance

Michael Swidrak (MS) P&Z *Via Zoom*

Daniel Welles (DW) P&Z

Catherine Miliaras (CM) P&Z

Applicant Members in Attendance

Ryan Whitaker (RW) Whitaker Investments

Grant Epstein (GE) Community Three

Community Members in Attendance (in Person or Virtual only if a Question was asked)

Shelley Frost (SF) *via Zoom*

INTRODUCTION & OLD BUSINESS

- The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:02 a.m. as the June 2023 meeting of UDAC.
- TS motioned to approve the February 2023 Meeting Notes; KB provided a second. **The motion passed for the approval of the Meeting Notes 5-0**

NEW BUSINESS

Note: Presentation materials on the below items are located at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/boards-and-commissions/urban-design-advisory-committee-serving-old-town-north>

Presentation of the modifications to Tidelock Building C

- RW introduced the project and mentioned that it was approved by City Council in February 2022 and indicated that the construction costs for the project have skyrocketed compared to when it was originally proposed. The applicant team is looking at scaling back the project in many areas to cut costs and make the project viable.
- RW indicated that the most significant changes are to Building C, which is the arts anchor building. They are proposing to reduce the overall square footage of the building by removing the second floor and rooftop deck, which were previously intended to be a restaurant.
- GE noted the building will now be one story and will still be designated for the arts use and will include a green/vegetated roof and presented the new proposed floor plans.
- GE mentioned that the reduction to Building C will result in the proposed public art being more interactive with the site.
- TS: mentioned change to residents and noted that residents asked why the building needed to be a part of the project at all. RW confirmed the building is required for the arts and cultural anchor and also mentioned it is intended to activate the site.
- KB asked where mechanical will be. RW confirmed it is still on the roof.
- KB asked who will pay to complete arts space. RW responded that it is not required by the City but they have the budget to complete a large part of it.
- TS made a comment indicating the importance of the arts district.
- AO complimented the project and that the building now looks more in scale. She mentioned it probably did not need to be brought to UDAC.
- SK commented noting that he understands the need to cut costs but as approved it screened other large buildings and thus helped alleviate mass. Removing the top two levels has resulted in the loss of character and it now looks like a pad site building. The back of the building added mass/height that is very limited and will not be discernible from the street.
- SK recommended the applicant team put a higher level of thought into the design in order to make a more attractive building without significant added cost. SK stated that the design looks mundane compared to other elements on site. The applicant responded stating that the back side will have public art along the wall, which cannot be seen in the presentation so it is challenging to see how it will fit in.
- SK recommended the applicant consider adding a glass parapet to make the rear side taller and that the west elevation needs some hierarchy (i.e. alternating glass sizes) as it is currently very linear in appearance and too repetitive.
- ZS expressed concern with painting a mural on the ironspot brick shown on the west elevation and mentioned being in support of a new rhythm with glass on this elevation.
- SF inquired about the green roof, in which the applicant team explained how the building will support it.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 a.m.