

## March 9, 2016 Meeting Summary | Form Based Code Advisory Working Group

### Attendees

**PC Members:** Rosemary Ciotti (FBC AWG Chair), Nancy Iacomini (PC Chair), Stephen Hughes, and Elizabeth Gearin. **FBC AWG Members:** Linda Dye, Stef Pryor, Betty Siegel, Kathy Guernsey, Noreen Quill, and Ed Miltenberger. **Staff:** Matt Mattauszek and Jennifer Smith. **Applicant's Team:** Cathy Puskar and Matt Allman (Walsh Colucci Lubely & Walsh PC), Megan Winsten (Applicant's representative), Temple Washington (WHA Architecture & Planning PC), Karen White, Antonette Isherwood (Walter L. Phillips, Inc)

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### Agenda

#### Review FBC Proposal: 2400 Columbia Pike (aka Rappahannock Coffee site)

- The purpose of the meeting was to review the development proposal with the FBC AWG and for the AWG to validate staff's finding of compliance with the FBC regulations. The requested modifications related to inclusion of existing historic facades and topography were discussed.
- Matt Mattauszek provided an overview of the proposal, general information on the FBC regulations, and described the type of modifications.
- Temple Washington, architect for the developer, described the proposal and the modifications in more detail.
- The FBC requires proposals that include historic facades to be reviewed by the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB), and to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) before the proposal is approved. The applicant complied with this requirement and has met with HALRB on multiple occasions to receive feedback on the proposed building design and the integration of the two historic facades. A conditional CoA was approved by HALRB at its meeting on September 16, 2015, and the applicant will obtain the final CoA before building permits are issued.
- The two one-story existing buildings were constructed in the early-mid 1950s, and at that time, were infill development built between other existing buildings. The earlier structures have since been razed, exposing the simple masonry block materials used to construct the side and rear facades of the two existing buildings. In contrast, the front facades are constructed with brick and have large storefront windows and glass entrance doors covered by wide canopies. Horizontal bands in the parapet above the canopies give additional character. These findings led to the support for and approval in 2014 to amend the FBC regulations from preservation of the full buildings to preservation of the two front facades along Columbia Pike.
- The proposed development includes a 6-story, mixed use building with ground floor retail and upper story residential apartments. The two historic facades would be reconstructed as part of the project, and flanked by additional retail storefronts to fill the entire Columbia Pike frontage. The main residential entrance is proposed for the Columbia Pike frontage. An alley is proposed to the rear of the site, to the south, and it would also connect to Columbia Pike along the eastern property line. Parking access and service for the building would occur from the alley. The alley will also provide bicycle access for the planned route south of Columbia Pike as called for in the Neighborhoods Area Plan and the Master Transportation Plan. The required private open space is proposed south of the alley, at grade.

- **Building modifications related to the inclusion of the two historic facades:** With input and conditional approval from HALRB, several architectural elements are proposed that differ from the FBC regulations in order to better relate the new construction with the historic facades including: larger window panes along the ground story and for some upper story openings; taller parapets, varied cornice lines and smaller cornice projections; overall building setback from the Columbia Pike RBL at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors; and frameless glass retail doors.
- **Ground Story Finished Floor Elevation for retail along S. Barton Street:** From Columbia Pike, the existing grade drops approximately 9 feet to the proposed rear alley. If the applicant were to step the finished floor elevation to meet the FBC regulation for entrances to be within 6” below to 24” above the adjacent sidewalk grade, four retail bays would be needed along the building façade facing Barton Street (approximately 65 feet in width). The retail bays would also require significant internal ramping to accommodate rear access from the retail bay to the building’s interior service corridors. This would significantly decrease the overall amount of leasable space and increase the amount of area reserved for service functions. This option would prove impractical and would create very small retail spaces that are less likely to lease. Instead, the applicant proposes to construct the ground floor retail at one finished floor elevation, level with the Columbia Pike frontage. The proposal also includes a raised terrace along the east edge of the building to maintain accessible entrances and exits to the ground story. The terrace creates exterior space that could be used for outdoor cafes should the closest retail bay be occupied by a restaurant. The clear sidewalk and tree zone, forward of the raised terrace, slopes down to the alley.
- **AWG and Planning Commission comments on the proposed design and requested modifications included the following:**
  - A PC member asked whether there is interest in building the street wall along the southern property line to match the brick material used on the Arlington Village Condominium or the proposed new construction of this project. The applicant indicated that they are still in discussion with the Board for Arlington Village about the proposed design of the wall. The applicant is also negotiating with the Arlington Village Board on an easement area (~250 square feet along S. Barton Street) that would be needed to construct the entrance to the alley where it is currently shown on proposed plans. An AWG member indicated there is interest by the Arlington Village Board to construct the wall with brick materials closely matching the existing condominium.
  - An AWG member asked what is planned for an out-parcel along the southern part of the site? The applicant responded that it would not be redeveloped as part of this project and that it could be available for redevelopment when the adjacent site to the east redevelops, the current site of the Citgo gas station. The applicant also described the details for the retaining wall proposed along the eastern alley.
  - It was suggested that the applicant reconsider the exterior stairs leading from the sidewalk terrace to the alley, if the stairs are not needed to meet Fire Code or other Building Code regulations, in order to increase the size of the terrace which could add more space for an outdoor café,. It was noted that finding space suitable for cafés has been a challenge in the past. Other attendees indicated support for exploring this option further; however one person noted that this may be problematic for the residents living closest to the project in the adjacent condominium.

- The applicant was asked who will maintain the proposed plantings along the edge of the terrace and what plants were envisioned. It was also suggested that the applicant consider an artistic treatment to the wall instead of landscape plantings, which may be difficult to maintain throughout the year and over time. The applicant indicated that HALRB supported plants along the wall, and that non-invasive plants would be used; however, the applicant indicated that a design or pattern in the brick would be explored.
- AWG members indicated concerns about potential tripping hazards with the proposed grade changes in the sidewalk area at the corner of Barton Street and Columbia Pike. The applicant noted that accessible routes to the ground floor entrances, at least 6' wide, would be maintained. Several ideas were mentioned as possible ways to address the slight grade change of up to 6 inches along the Columbia Pike frontage, behind the clear sidewalk including railings, detectors, or more pronounced change in materials and color to make the grade change more pronounced. Ultimately, however, AWG members suggested that the applicant reconsider the design to remove the slight grade change since it may not be obvious, especially for people with low vision, and could be a safety issue.
- AWG members generally supported the requested architectural modifications related to the inclusion of the historic facades
- The applicant supported the installation of power door openers for the main residential lobby and the building entrances from the alley.
- Staff and the applicant were asked to examine the possibility for designating one of the on-street parking spaces along Columbia Pike as a handicap parking space. Staff will research the request.
- When finalizing the details for the proposed street wall along the south property line, AWG members asked the applicant to consider the design to avoid light spillover from cars in the alley onto the Arlington Village development.
- Some AWG members mentioned support for the neighborhood in negotiating the street wall design and easement area and hoped the applicant would work in good faith to address the neighborhood's needs. *The applicant indicated they are still discussing the options with the neighbors.*
- An AWG member wanted clarification that no building feature would overhang the eastern alley where it could be hit by a car or truck in the alley. An AWG member asked what size trucks would be accommodated in the alley due to the turning movements. *The applicant indicated trucks approximately 30 feet in length.*
- An AWG member asked the applicant whether notification about pending development had been given to existing retail tenants. *The applicant indicated that discussions had not yet occurred since the timeline had been changing. Staff indicated that condition language would be included with the staff report that requires the applicant to notify the retail tenants of the pending development and to provide them with contact information for Arlington Economic Development in order to obtain the Demolition and Land Disturbance Permits.*