

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE # 2011-0282

BAR Meeting
October 26, 2011

ISSUE: Request for concept review of three multi-family buildings in Phase V of the James Bland Redevelopment Project

APPLICANT: Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority and GBP Associates, LLC by Kenneth Wire (McGuire Woods)

LOCATION: 1000 First Street and 998 North Alfred Street

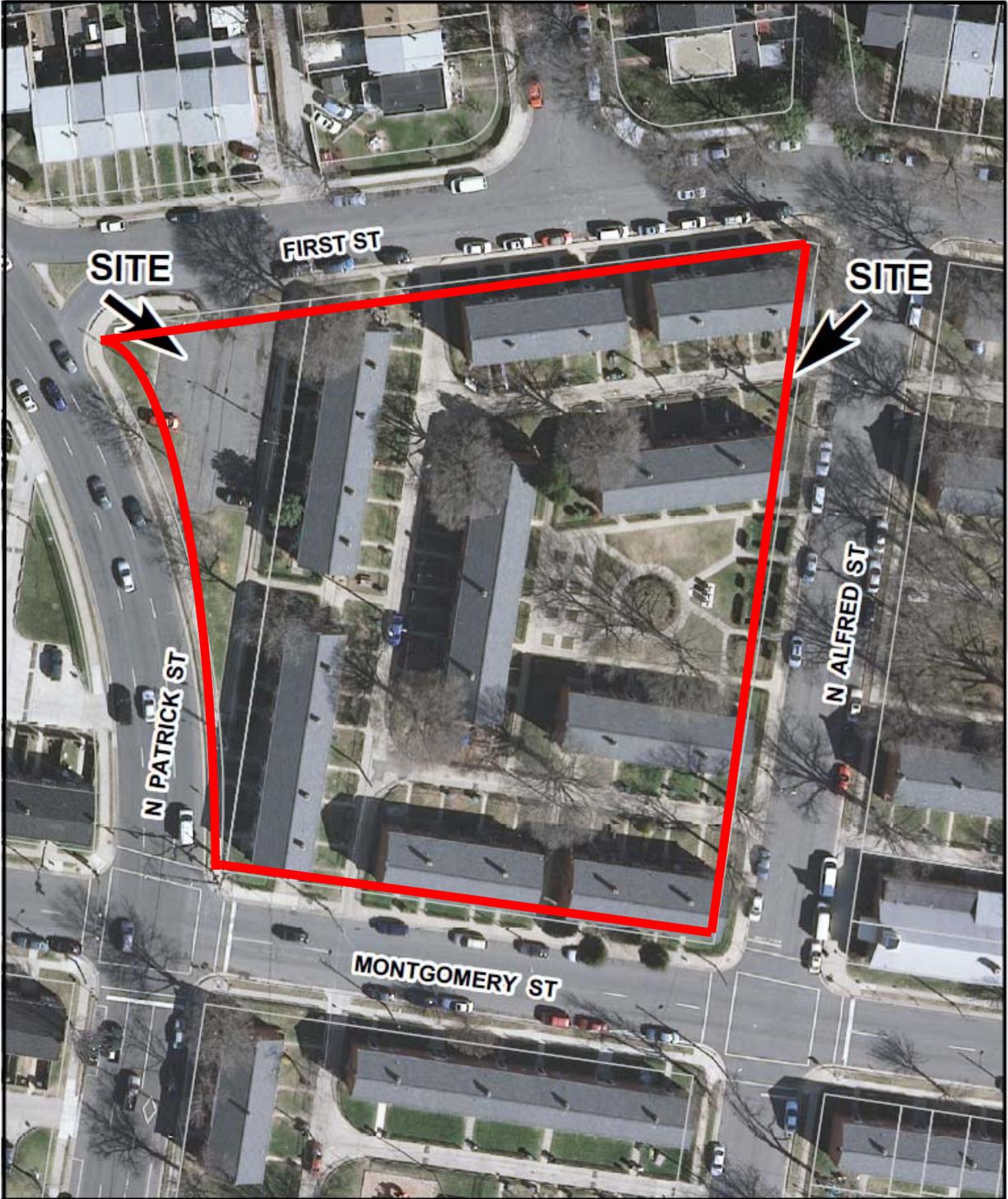
ZONE: CDD #16

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Board support, in concept, the proposed three multi-family buildings with the following considerations:

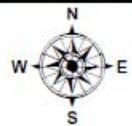
1. Continue to work on the proposed feature at the entrances to the courtyards and to design an appropriate courtyard planter scheme for permanent, appropriately-scaled planters that do not obscure architectural details or clutter the courtyard space.
2. Refine the “hyphen” element on the northernmost building to make it as visually light as possible and to make the step down from four stories to three stories appear integrated.
3. Provide more information on the materials, colors and details of the multifamily buildings.
4. Provide details about the outdoor space and any proposed materials, such as benches, fencing and lighting, that require BAR approval.
5. Consolidate locations of all vents and drainage systems so as to minimize the visual impact of these elements and locate on secondary elevations, where possible, and integrate drainage systems into architectural design.
6. Show location of all rooftop mechanical equipment and remove all stickers and markings prior to installation.

*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE: In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period. In the case for a certificate or permit for a project that requires a development special use permit or site plan under section 11-400 of the zoning ordinance, the period of validity shall be coincident with the validity of the development special use permit or site plan pursuant to section 11-418 of the ordinance.

**BUILDING PERMIT NOTE: Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-746-4200 for further information.



BAR CASE #2011-0282



I. ISSUE

The applicant is requesting concept review of the multi-family buildings in Phase V of the James Bland Housing redevelopment project. This block is bounded by North Patrick Street, Montgomery Street, North Alfred Street and First Street. The applicant has bypassed Phase III in order to move forward on the multi-family buildings for better delivery of certain unit types. While it is the fourth construction phase to come before the Board, it will continue to be known as Phase V because that is the way this block was designated on the original plans. The Board approved three multi-family buildings and townhouses for Phase IV in March and April of 2011.

Phase IV is an entire block that will have 27 townhouses, four triplexes and three multi-family buildings located on the western half of the block, separated from the townhouses by a private street with a public access easement that will run north-south, approximately in the middle of the block. During concept approval for the entire project in 2008, the Board supported two multi-family buildings of this general size on the western half of the block. While the massing, scale and general architectural character remain similar to what was approved during the concept review, there will now be two four-story multi-family buildings flanking a center five-story building instead of the two, four-story buildings originally approved. The original plan was for two multi-family buildings with a mix of ARHA on the lower levels and multi-family units above. For financing reasons, the applicant now proposes that the two smaller buildings will have only ARHA units and the larger center building will have only market-rate units.

As in the three previous phases, the applicant and Staff anticipate that the Board will review the proposed design scheme over the course of multiple hearings before a final Certificate of Appropriateness is approved. At this point, because the applicant must obtain approval of DSUP #2011-0022, an amendment to Development Special Use Permit #2008-0013 to construct three multifamily buildings instead of two multifamily buildings on Block 998 to increase the height of the market-rate multifamily building by 12 feet (48' to 60'), the multi-family buildings are before the Board only for concept review. It is anticipated that Council will approve the amendment in December 2011 and that the applicant will return to the BAR after that to request a Certificate of Appropriateness for the multi-family buildings and townhouses in Phase V.

Building Description

The smaller building on the southern end of the block will house 16 ARHA units and the smaller building at the north end will step down from four stories to three stories and will have 14 units. These buildings will measure approximately 70 feet by 72 feet. The building in the center will have 32 market-rate units and will be angled along North Patrick Street. The North Patrick Street elevation will be approximately 86 feet long. This building will be increased to a height of 60 feet (five stories). Two courtyards, one each between the center building and the end buildings, will be 20 feet in width and will function as the primary entrances for one ARHA building and the market-rate building.

The buildings have an industrial architectural character with a pronounced fenestration. The windows on the center building will have the effect of triple windows through the use of a casement with fixed windows above and below, and arranged in double and triple configurations. The end buildings will have a casement with a fixed window above, similarly proportioned to the center building, and arranged in singles and pairs. The overall design composition of the

elevations uses the classical form of a base, middle and capital and the three buildings generally form a five part Palladian plan (a central building with hyphens connecting smaller buildings on each side.) The base and middle will be predominantly brick on the end buildings with a split-face stringcourse separating the two. The center building will have light-colored masonry with a red brick at the middle three stories with contrasting light-colored masonry stringcourses. The top floor, or capital level, will be lighter in color with a strong cornice line and HardiePanel wall material. On the center building the HardiePanel on this level will be constructed so as to provide the appearance of pilasters. All of the buildings will have alternating projections to break up the massing. The center building's footprint is aligned with the curve along North Patrick Street and the private street elevation is broken up to reflect the change in form.

The northernmost building has four stories of brick separated from a three-story section by a "hyphen" element clad in HardiePanel. This results in a step-down from the four-story section to the three-story section which is immediately adjacent to First Street and the boundary of this project.

The materials proposed at this point include: brick, metal grilles and railings, HardiePanel and a formed metal or synthetic cornice.

II. HISTORY

Parker-Gray has been recognized as a local historic district since 1984, with review and approval of exterior alterations, demolition and new construction by the Parker-Gray Board of Architecture Review. The boundaries for the locally designated district include all five blocks of James Bland Homes.

In early 2007, the City began the process of nominating the Uptown/Parker-Gray neighborhood to the National Register of Historic Places. The boundaries of the Uptown/Parker-Gray historic district encompass the local district as well as a number of additional blocks. On January 12, 2010, the National Park Service listed the Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to that, in June 2008, the State of Virginia listed the historic district on the Virginia Landmarks Register.

In advance of the demolition of the existing buildings in Phase I, the applicant thoroughly documented James Bland Homes as required by the BAR when approving the Permit to Demolish. The documentary requirements were: a written history, HABS/HAER level measured drawings and photo documentation. Copies of the materials are located in both the Kate Waller Barrett Library and the Alexandria Black History Resource Center.

The private streets and alleys have public access easements and therefore anything visible from the private streets and alleys are within the Board's purview.

Phase I has been constructed, Phase II is currently under construction and building permits are being reviewed and approved for Phase IV.

Prior Reviews and Approvals for the James Bland Redevelopment

September 24, 2008: Approval of Permit to Demolish and Concept Approval (BAR Case #2008-0150/0151).

October 2008: Development Special Use Permit approved by Planning Commission and City Council (DSP #2008-0013).

May 27, 2009: Approval of Certificate of Appropriateness and Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for Phase I (BAR Case #2009-0088/0089).

May 26, 2010: Approval of Certificate of Appropriateness and Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for Phase II (BAR Case #2010-0070)

March 23 2011 and April 27, 2011:

: Approval of Certificate of Appropriateness and Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for Phase IV (includes multi-family buildings, townhouses and park)

III. ANALYSIS

During the first concept review phase, there was minimal discussion about the architectural design and character of the multi-family units, as the majority of the Board's attention was focused on the townhouse units which comprised the bulk of the project. As part of the concept approval of the scale and mass of the multi-family buildings, the Board made the following condition:

7. That the applicant work with Staff to revise the elevations of the multi-family buildings on North Patrick Street.

While the discussion about the multi-family buildings was limited during the concept phase, the Board expressed the belief that the multi-family buildings were an opportunity to pursue an industrial or modern design approach to reflect the early 20th century industrial, warehouse and institutional history of the Parker Gray district. The applicant commissioned a new architect, KTG Y, for the design of the multi-family buildings. This architect has brought a fresh approach which Staff believes contributes to a sense of architectural variety in this large redevelopment project. While the multi-family buildings in Phase V are different from those in Phase IV, they have a related appearance that will provide continuity along the North Patrick Street block face yet prevent a sense of architectural cohesion.

Architectural Style and Form

Staff has consistently supported the mass and scale of the four-story multi-family buildings finding them appropriate for the locations bordering North Patrick Street/Route 1. Staff supports the increase in height to five stories for the center building and notes that the proportions of this building are preferable as they result in a clearly defined "middle" in the classical form. Staff also finds the added height to be appropriate for a building of this size and in this particular location. In addition, Staff conceptually supports the idea of the northernmost building stepping

down one story to be more appropriately scaled with respect to the existing townhouses on First Street.

Regarding the architectural style and design, Staff strongly discouraged an over-scaled townhouse-appearing scheme for these buildings, preferring that they be designed as visually unified “buildings”. In reviewing the history and context for this neighborhood, the use of an industrial or warehouse motif for these buildings seemed to provide an appropriate architectural vocabulary at this scale. The Parker-Gray historic district once contained numerous railroad stations, warehouses and school buildings which coexisted immediately alongside the residences, though few commercial buildings, and few historic buildings of the height proposed for these buildings remain. There are, however, examples of other similarly scaled historic and newly-constructed buildings in this portion of the City immediately west of the district, such as the Braddock Lofts by EYA across from the Wythe Street Post Office. The use of an industrial architectural vocabulary allows for a simple, rhythmic design with a strong building frame punctuated by large windows, making the building visually lighter and more open than the typical Colonial style masonry structures. The masonry elevations with regular punched openings recall the form of historic mill buildings constructed prior to the widespread availability of electrical lighting.

The use of projecting elements, with material and color changes help to break up the mass and bulk of the buildings, contributing to compatibility with smaller scale buildings in the district.

The northernmost building has proved to be the most challenging to design so that the step down from four stories to three stories appears intentional and integrated. During pre-submission meetings, Staff met with the applicant and their architect to consider various schemes. It became clear early in the design process that the exact same building, minus half the fourth story, as the southernmost building would not be an appropriate solution. The creation of a terrace with an arbor or canopy, or a green roof, on the stepped down portion was also considered. While the terrace concept was determined not to be feasible for this building, the applicant is considering a green roof on the third story roof, though it will not be visible and therefore not within the Board’s purview. The current proposal features the four-story brick portion separated by the three-story brick portion with a “hyphen” element in HardiePanel. The “hyphen” has a minimal cornice and, in response to earlier Staff recommendations, more windows on the north elevation. Many successful hyphens are predominantly visually open, often all glass within a metal frame. While Staff finds that this building has improved since the initial design concepts, Staff believes that it can be further refined and welcomes the Boards comments.

Relationship among the Buildings

As previously stated, a project-wide goal of this redevelopment is that the ARHA units be indistinguishable from the market-rate dwellings, yet visual variety must be provided throughout the project. Therefore, in Phase IV, it was thought that making the two smaller buildings identical to one another (twins) while sharing a strong design and material relationship with the large center building (as cousins) could provide the desired balanced relationship among the three buildings. The HardiePanel insets are different colors, and the middle building has Juliet balconies in these recesses. In initial meetings for Phase V, Staff recommended that the subtle distinctions between the end buildings and the middle building be further distinguished to better

articulate a rhythm in the street wall. Staff finds that the proposal for architectural difference in Phase V represents an appropriate differentiation among the buildings while presenting a cohesive streetscape. The buildings are differentiated by the use of a different color rusticated masonry at the first story of only the center building, the fenestration, the color of the HardiePanel, and different cornice sizes and designs. Due to the step-down in the northern end building, these three buildings are each distinct. The southern end building also has a stylistic relationship with the block immediately to the south.

Courtyards

The space between the buildings will function as a landscaped courtyard. Two of the buildings will have their primary entrance from the courtyard. The northernmost end building will not have an entrance onto the courtyard due to site limitations. The applicant has proposed brick piers with a curved wall at the four sidewalk entrances to the courtyards to identify the building entrances. The entry piers are an excellent way to announce the building entrance, to link the three buildings and to enclose the courtyards as semiprivate transition spaces.

Garage Entrance

The middle building will have a garage entrance from the private street, providing parking for the market-rate units only. The challenge with a garage entrance on a highly visible elevation is how best to treat the surrounding wall so that it maintains the proportions and high quality material texture of the elevation and does not result in a lifeless, blank wall. In this case, as in the previous phase, the applicant has maintained the masonry openings of the fenestration pattern above but used decorative metal grilles in place of actual windows. The garage entrance is not aligned with the alley entrance across the private street.

Materials

Staff encourages the applicant to use materials as a way to strengthen the industrial vocabulary and differentiate the buildings. The use of multiple types of masonry and metal are appropriate, durable materials that create a timeless effect. HardiePanel has been approved on the townhouses in this project and provides an opportunity to enhance the industrial aesthetic. The smoother texture of this material visually lightens the top floor of the building and the joints of the panels have been carefully aligned to relate to the proportions of the adjacent windows. As new construction, this project is an opportunity to explore a range of high-quality materials and forms that complement the nearby buildings of historic merit without slavishly imitating them. The final selection of materials is important both for the industrial aesthetic and for differentiation among the buildings.

Overall, Staff supports the initial scheme for the Phase V multi-family buildings and generally finds the design architecturally appropriate and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Staff recommends that the applicant continue to meet with Staff and return to the Board with final design materials and details of the multifamily buildings as well as materials and details of the townhouses.

STAFF

Catherine Miliaras, Urban Planner, Historic Preservation Section
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

Planning & Zoning (Development):

1. Staff will continue to work with the applicant with regard to site furnishings and above grade utilities. In particular staff will review the design and locations of the following:
 - a. Mailboxes
 - b. Trash areas
 - c. Transformers and other above grade utilities
 - d. Bike racks
2. We have noted and understand the height change proposed for the multifamily half of the block in phase V. We support the change in height but recommend that the height limit remain 48 feet for the two ARHA buildings and that the increase to 60-feet only apply to the center of the block for the market rate building.
3. Development staff will continue to work with the applicants to ensure all public sidewalk and street improvements are made in conformity with the approved conditions of the special use permit.
4. Staff will continue to work with the applicant to review the architectural design of the buildings as well as the design details of the balcony railings, grill work screening of the ramp to the below grade parking, and building materials and colors.

Code Administration:

- F-1 The review by Code Administration is a preliminary review only. Once the applicant has filed for a building permit, code requirements will be based upon the building permit plans. If there are any questions, the applicant may contact Thomas Sciulli, Plan Review Supervisor at thomas.sciulli@alexandriava.gov or 703-746-4190. (Code)
- C-1 Building and trades permits are required for this project. Five sets of *construction documents* sealed by a *Registered Design Professional* that fully detail the construction as well as layout and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems shall accompany the permit application(s)

Alexandria Archaeology:

Open Space

1. The developer shall integrate aspects of the historic character of the property into the design of open space for this project and shall provide and erect interpretive signage that highlights the history and archaeology of the site. The archaeological consultant shall provide information about the history of the site for use by the designers. The consultant shall provide text and graphics for the signage subject to approval by the Office of Historic

Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, and the Planning Department. (Archaeology, RPCA, Planning)

Archaeology Comments

1. To insure that significant information is not lost as a result of the current development project, the applicant shall hire an archaeological consultant to complete an Archaeological Evaluation in concert with demolition activities. Archaeological monitoring shall be required during demolition. If significant resources are discovered, the consultant shall complete a Resource Management Plan, as outlined in the *City of Alexandria Archaeological Standards*. Preservation measures presented in the Resource Management Plan, as approved by the City Archaeologist, will be implemented. Archaeological work shall be completed in compliance with the Programmatic Agreement between the City of Alexandria, GPB Associates LLC, the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office Regarding the Redevelopment of the James Bland Public Housing, City of Alexandria. (Archaeology)

2. 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; Erosion and Sediment Control; Grading; Utilities, etc.) 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 artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology. (Archaeology)

Code

C-1 All required archaeological preservation measures shall be completed in compliance with Section 11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Findings:

F-1 Documentary research conducted by Thunderbird Archaeology found no definite evidence of structures on this block prior to and during the Civil War; however, it is possible that refugee slaves may have settled in the vicinity during the war. Residential development in this area was occurring by the third quarter of the 19th century. City directories and other archival sources show that most residents of the project area were African American laborers, although Euro-American laborers and a few skilled workers, tradesmen and professionals were also present. In the early 20th century, the project area developed primarily as an African American neighborhood. The area therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight primarily into 19th and early 20th-century domestic activities.

Transportation & Environmental Services:

Recommendations:

1. Comply with all requirements of DSP2008-00013 and Site Plan DSP2011-00022. (T&ES)
2. The Final Site Plan must be approved and released and a copy of that plan must be attached to the demolition permit application. No demolition permit will be issued in advance of the building permit unless the Final Site Plan includes a demolition plan which clearly represents the demolished condition. (T&ES)

V. IMAGES

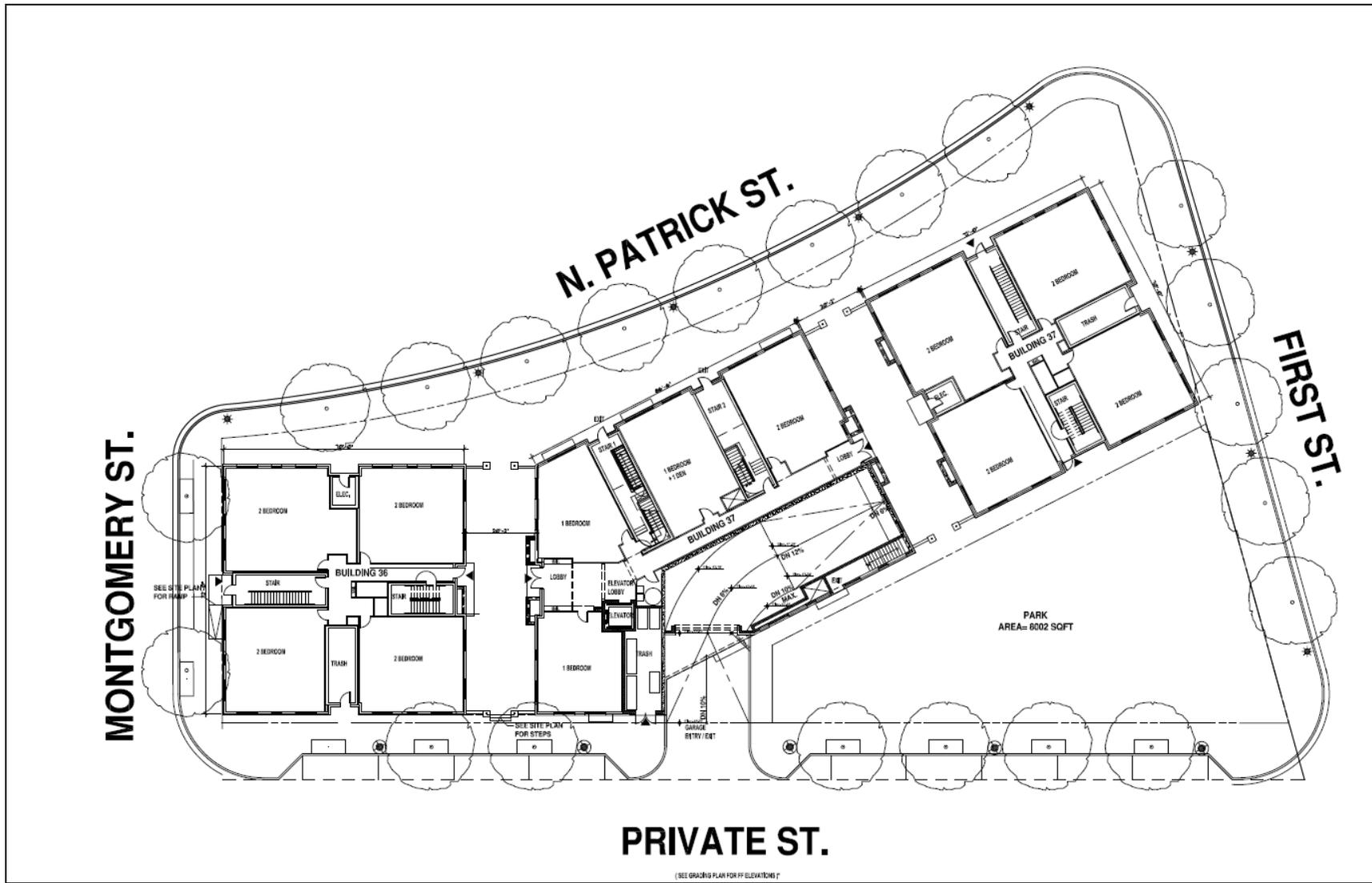


Figure 1. Proposed floor plans of multi-family buildings.

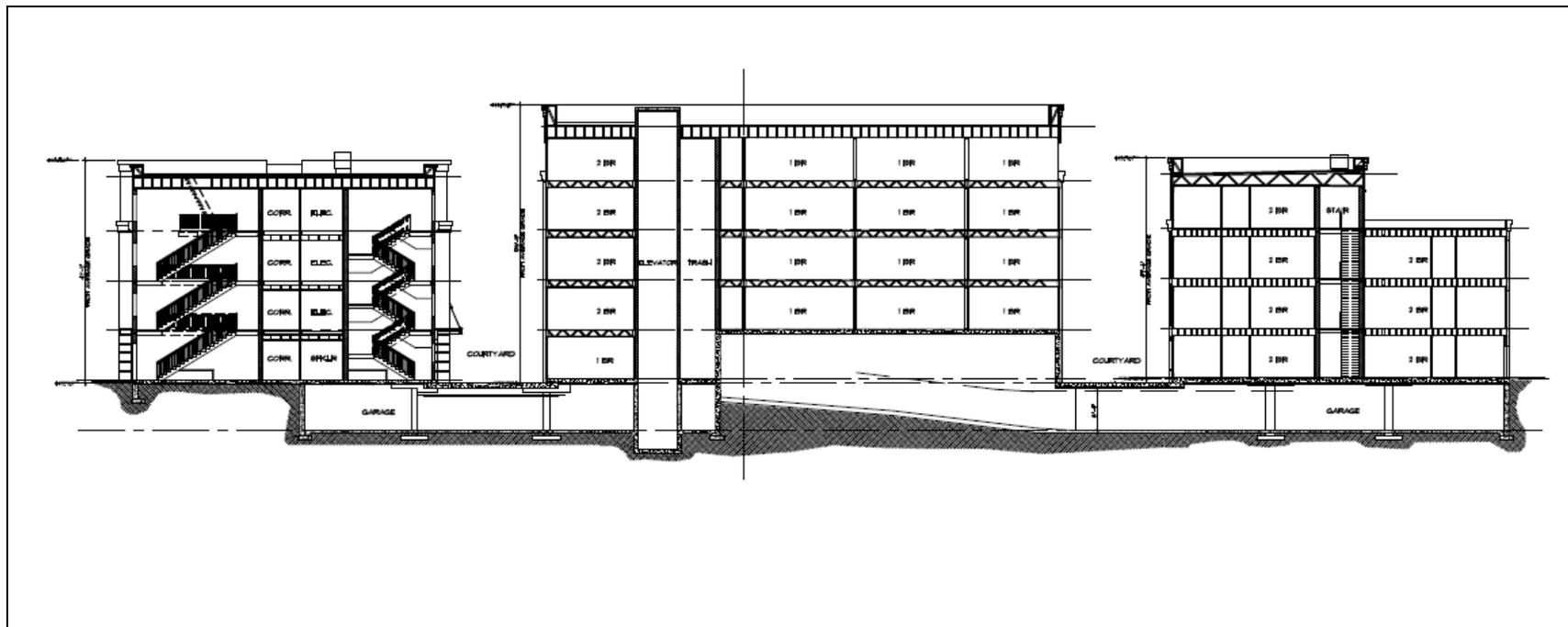


Figure 2. Section through proposed multi-family buildings.

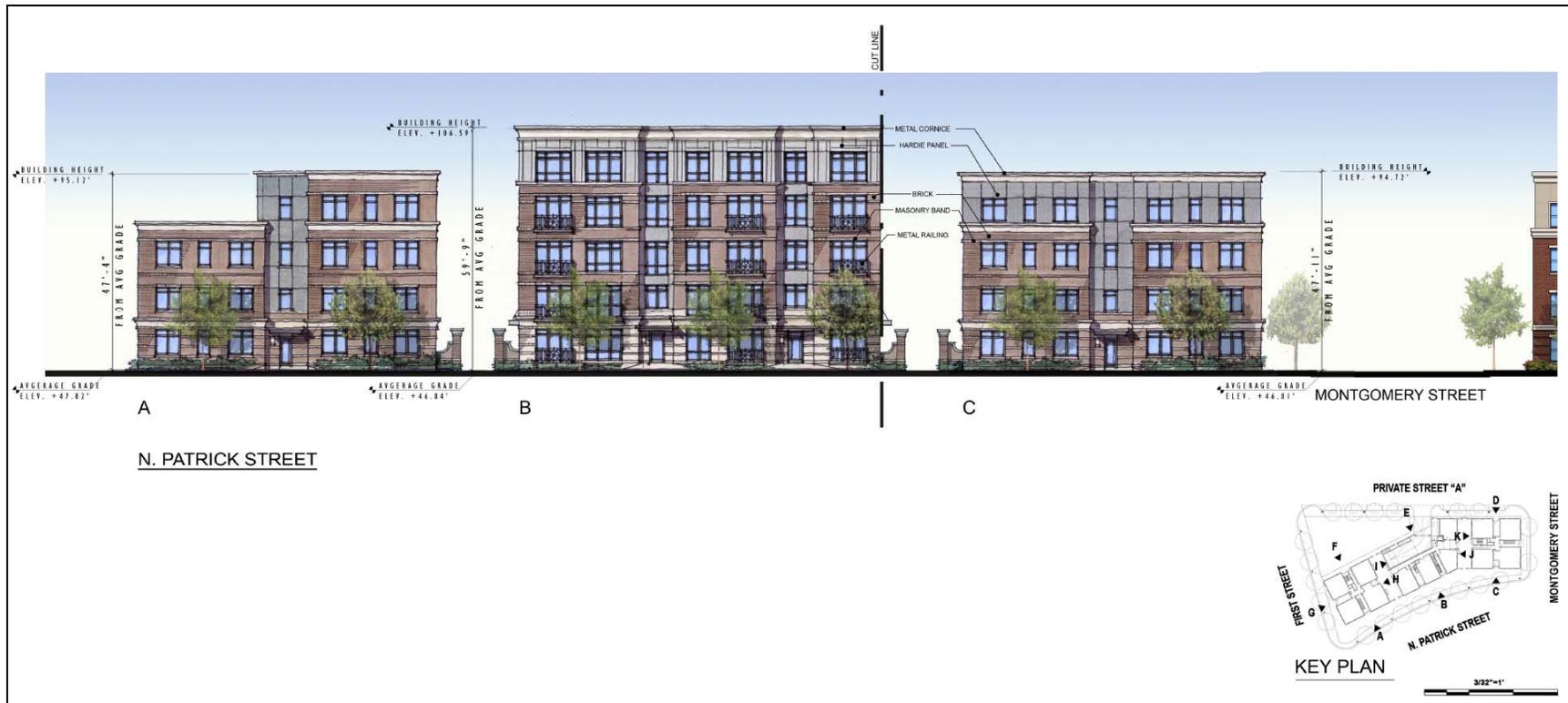


Figure 3. Proposed west elevations (facing North Patrick Street).



Figure 4. Proposed east elevations (viewed from internal private street).



Figure 5. Proposed interior courtyard elevations.