

Docket Item # 15
BAR CASE #2005-0303

BAR Meeting
February 1, 2006

ISSUE: Concept approval of 2 new buildings

APPLICANT: AFBA

LOCATION: 909, 901, & 919 North Washington Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

I. Executive Summary

The applicant is requesting concept approval of two large buildings, with a combined square footage of 127,000 square feet, located at an important and visually prominent location on North Washington Street. In a concept review, the Board is looking to see if the scale, mass, height, use of solids and voids, projections, and recesses are appropriate and visually compatible to the historic context of the Old and Historic Alexandria District while meeting the Standards and Guidelines, and in this case, the Washington Street Standards.

Because of the size of the proposal and the visual prominence of this site, any development for this location requires appropriate mass and scale and extremely high quality building design, in addition to compliance with the Washington Street Standards. In addition, a number of existing mature trees would be removed from the site. While the proposed project is in greater compliance with the Washington Street Standards than the existing approval for this site, Staff finds the project still does not meet each of these categories.

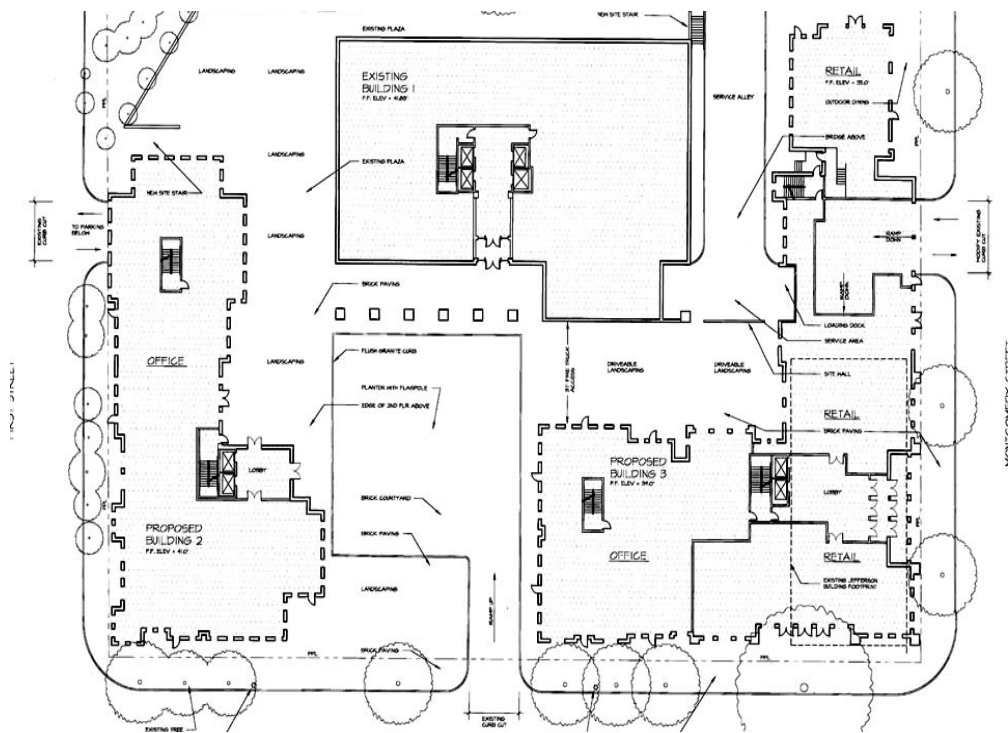


Figure 1 Proposed site plan

A. Appropriate Mass and Scale:

While the applicant is modulating the footprint and elevation the proposal is essentially two 50-foot tall elements on Washington Street.

To address the concerns of massing, Staff is recommending the following:

- Revise the 4- story element on the corner of North Washington Street and First Street to use a primarily 3-story element, rather than the 4-story element.
- At the corner of North Washington Street and First Street, provide additional setbacks to provide more green space on North Washington Street.
- Reduce the height of the building at the corner of Montgomery Street and North Washington Street to appear more as a 3-story element to compete less with the adjoining “Gateway” building of the Physicians Assistance Building.
- Eliminate the contemporary volumes and use traditional volumetric forms.

B. Well-designed Building:

While the applicant has generally used acceptable styles and materials, Staff feels the proposal lacks sufficient detail even for a conceptual approval by the Board.

C. Washington Street Standards:

While the proposal complies with many of the requirements of the Standards, the fundamental requirement of appropriate mass and scale, varying heights, and high quality design needs further restudy. As to the design, Staff believes that with a deferral for restudy this can be addressed. As to the mass and scale, while not insurmountable, this issue will require significant revision to the plan and additional restudy.

D. Conclusion:

While the applicant has worked with Staff and the community on the design and approach, and these meetings have helped to improve the overall direction, the proposal requires considerable additional refinement and restudy on the mass and design details.

Staff is recommending a deferral for restudy to address the elements as outlined in the report. In addition, Staff anticipates working with the Community on these issues following a restudy by the Board.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral for restudy, with the following conditions and concerns to be addressed:

A. Mass and Scale:

1. Revise the mass and scale of the building at the corner of North Washington Street and First Street to have a three-story volume.
2. Revise the building at the corner of Washington Street and Montgomery Street to be a smaller scale and less prominent element.
3. Simplify the volume and eliminate the contemporary “step backs.” Each step back should be consistent and relate to the architectural style and type of each perceived “building.”

B. Design:

4. The elements used as precedents from non-historic buildings shall be eliminated.

Montgomery Street:

5. Overall this elevation, mass, and scale are fairly well resolved with these additional refinements:

- a. Provide additional detail on the retail bays.
- b. Eliminate the glass connector element.
- c. Provide North St. Asaph Street elevation.
- d. Refine the garage entrance.

North Washington Street:

_____6. Additional refinement and restudy are needed:

- a. Revise the massing of the building as the corner of North Washington Street and Montgomery Street as outlined above.
- b. Eliminate the glass connector element.
- c. Provide the exterior elevations for the internal courtyard.
- d. Revise the Mansard-roof building adjacent to the courtyard to read more as a “building.”
- e. Lower the height of the base of the buildings at the corner of North Washington Street and First Street.
- f. Study the possibility of an increased setback at the corner of North Washington Street and First Street to provide a setback more compatible with the adjacent building.

First Street:

_____7. Additional refinement and restudy are needed:

- a. The corner of the building should be revised to be a more prominent and highly detailed building typical of a corner building.
- b. Explore ways to reduce the height of the base.
- c. Revise the massing as discussed above.

NOTE: Docket item #14 must be approved before this docket item can be considered.

II. ISSUE:

The applicant is seeking concept approval for the new construction of two buildings to be located at 909, 901, & 919 North Washington Street, which are subject to the Washington Street Standards. The application requires the demolition of the Jefferson Building.

The application requires the approval of a development special use permit (DSUP) to increase the allowable net floor area from 1.5 to 2.41. Consistent with the Board's policy, Staff is bringing a concept review before the Old and Historic Alexandria Board of Architectural Review. In a concept review, the Board is looking to see if the scale, mass, height, use of solids and voids, projections, and recesses are appropriate and visually compatible to the historic context of the Old and Historic Alexandria District while meeting the Standards and Guidelines, and in this case, the Washington Street Standards.

The applicant has stated that this project will not begin until 2013. Because of the extended amount of time requested by the applicant, the City has consistently indicated that the proposed time frame for the approvals is highly unusual and would require extenuating circumstances for approval now. The applicant and Staff met with various Alexandria civic associations to discuss the project and receive input. The applicant has worked with the City and community to revise the architecture to be more traditional in style and elements. A clear comment from the community was that the building design should be traditional buildings that recall the elements of exemplary buildings of the District. Staff concurs that the design of the buildings should be a traditional design, in the fact the Washington Street Standards require that new "construction shall be compatible with and similar to the traditional building character, particularly mass, scale, design, and style, found on Washington Street on commercial or residential buildings of historic architectural merit." Additionally, existing open space and a number of mature trees would be removed under the proposal. Staff would encourage the applicant to make efforts to retain open space and the mature trees. The applicant has requested that the project be brought to the Old and Historic District Board of Architectural Review for concept review, and with the understanding that all approvals by the Board of Architectural Review are valid for only one-year.

Mass and Scale:

1. While the applicant has modulated the building in plan and elevation, the proposal is essentially two, 50-foot tall buildings. In addition, while the building design is traditional,

much of the massing is quite contemporary. For example, on First Street the 4th floor is setback approximately 10' from the face of the building. This massing is a contemporary application and Staff believes this is inconsistent with the Washington Street Standards. In addition, the 4th floor of portions of the buildings at North Washington Street and Montgomery Street are treated as a glass curtain wall which Staff also believes is in violation of the Washington Street Standards.

2. One of the defining characteristics of the Old and Historic District is the variation of building styles and massing that occurs within each block, which give the district a sense of variety, richness, and architectural texture. This is due to the buildings within each block having been constructed over periods of time that result in each block being a collection of buildings and architectural styles, roof shapes, and materials that are character-defining elements of the district and give it a unique sense of place.

General Design Comments:

The appearance of the proposed complex is that of a collection of buildings, with facade widths between 19 and 40 feet. The applicant has provided historic examples of buildings found within the Old and Historic Alexandria District that have served as inspiration for the new construction. While some of the examples are easily identifiable, such as City Hall, most of the examples are not identified by address so it is unclear if these examples are located on Washington Street. Also, some of the buildings shown in photographs are not historic, yet mimic historic architectural styles.

The applicant is showing for all buildings that the exterior expression of floor-to-floor heights as 11'4". No elevations were provided for the side of the buildings that are visible from the public right-of-way, particularly on North Washington Street, looking into the existing drive and courtyard of the 1980s AFBA Building.

A. North Washington Street:

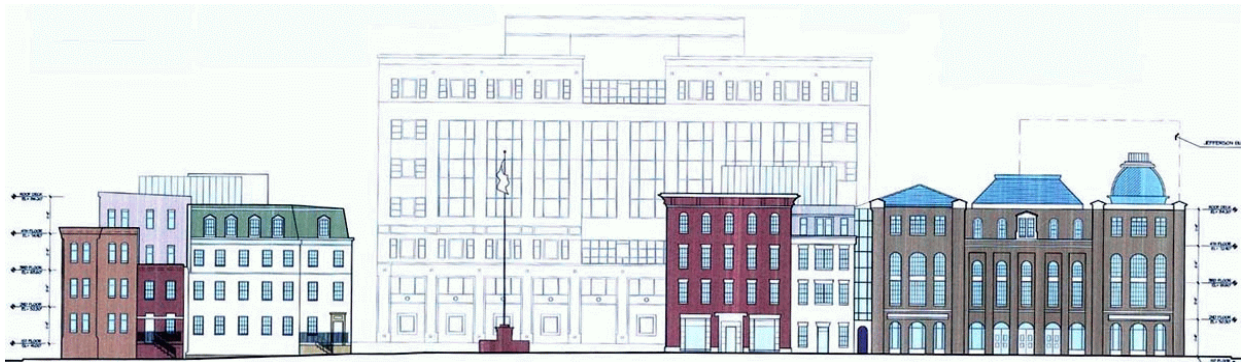


Figure 2 Proposed North Washington Street elevation looking east

From North Washington Street looking east, the new complex will appear as a series of connected townhouses, commercial buildings and civic buildings, with the existing courtyard entrance to the 1980's AFBA Building located between the two buildings.

At the corner with First Street, the building will read as three attached yet architecturally different buildings. The first will read as a flat-roofed, three-story townhouse of two bays, with each bay a width of 12'. Within each bay, two windows will be located, symmetrically positioned over each other on all three floor. However, there is no entrance or windows located at the street level. The next section will read as a flat-roofed two-story building with a raised entrance and a two bay rhythm with a width of 15'. A window and a door will be located on the first accessible floor, and two windows on the second. It is unclear if the door will be operable. There appears to be a slight separation between the second section and the third. The third section is larger and will read as a 4-story, Second-Empire style building with a mansard roof. There will be a raised corner entrance, with symmetrical placement of windows on all three of the floors. The fourth floor windows will be gabled and will not line up with the windows on the lower floors. This section will have a 35' stretch containing five bays, and a 16' stretch containing two bays.

Moving south along the block across from the drive, the new buildings will read as three distinct buildings with a glass connector between the second and third sections. The first section will have the appearance of an Italianate commercial building with a street level storefronts with large expanses of void, and three additional floors, with five bays of windows. The windows will be aligned symmetrically. This section will have a flat roof and corbels or brackets at the cornice line. The width is 40'. The second section will also read as four floors and will have the appearance a Second-Empire townhouse, with a mansard roof, three bays and a width of 20'. The windows on the second and third floors will be paired in the middle bay. A small 6' wide section largely of glass will connect this section with the much larger section, inspired by Alexandria's City Hall. There is a void at the street level in the connector, but it is unclear if it will be a functional entrance.

The last section is the most predominant architecturally on North Washington Street and is evidently inspired by City Hall. This section is comprised of three large bays with widths of 30', 40', and 30'. It will have a civic appearance with what appears to be multiple entrances at the street level within an arcade, large expanses of windows on the second and third floors, and smaller windows on the fourth floor. The complex roof shape includes a hipped component and a round dome with a cap at the corner with Montgomery Street.

B. Montgomery Street:

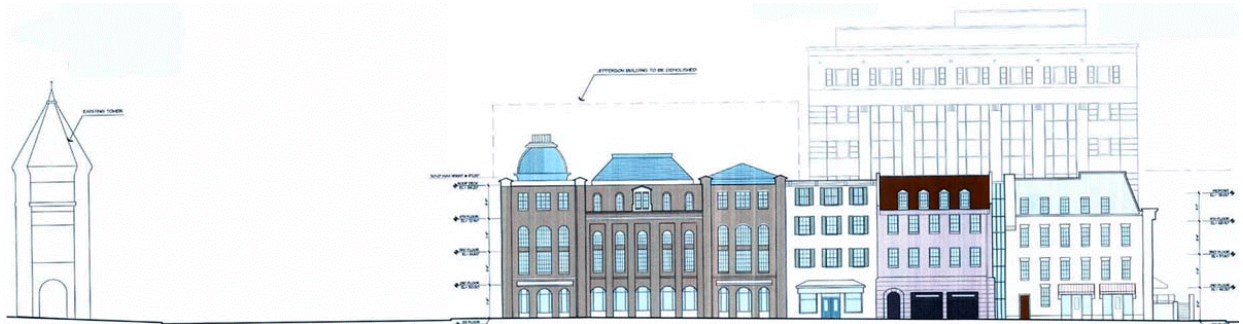


Figure 3 Proposed Montgomery Street elevation looking north

Looking north from Montgomery Street, the new project will have four connected sections, that give the appearance of large civic or commercial buildings, all appearing to be four stories in height.

The City Hall inspired section of the building continues from North Washington Street and wraps the corner with Montgomery Street, and maintaining the 30', 40', and 30' bay rhythms. The next section reads as a flat-roofed early 19th-century commercial building, with a storefront and symmetrical placement of windows on the three upper floors. It has a width of 30'. The next section appears as a federal building, with an over scaled differentiation between the first and second floors. At the first floor, there appears to be two large, carriage-type openings and one arched pedestrian entrance. This section has a gabled roof with four dormer windows. Similar to the North Washington Street frontage, a small 4' glass connector joins the last two sections of the building. The last section approaching North Saint Asaph Street appears to have a modified Mansard roof which has been clipped. At the street level, two large canopied entrances with side lights appear to provide pedestrian access to the building. Single windows are aligned on the second and third floors, and windows appear on the fourth floor. This section has a 50' width.

C. First Street:



Figure 4 Proposed First Street elevation looking west

Looking west from First Street, the new construction reads as six connected but separate buildings, ranging from a simple townhouse to large institutional and commercial buildings. The bulk of the new construction on the First Street frontage will be clustered on the corner adjacent to North Washington Street.

Approaching from the North Saint Asaph Street, the first section has the appearance of a simple flat-roofed, three story townhouse, with two bays, and width of 19'. The second section is much larger, with two large entrance into the underground parking garage, and a total width of 40'. This section has an intersection gable roof and windows aligned on the second, third, and fourth floors, with a grouping of three windows on the third and fourth floors. The third section again

has the appearance of a town house, with a tall front stoop, three bays, a side gabled roof with dormer windows, and a width of 22'. There also appears to be an additional story recessed behind the gable roof containing three windows. The third section has a width of 28', a high stoop, four bays, and reads as a Greek Revival style townhouse. The 24' wide, fourth section has some design features that evoke a Richardsonian Romanesque townhouse, with the arched entrance and window on the first level. This section also has a projecting Oriel window on the second floor and an unusual roof line, with what appears to be a recessed glass upper story. There also appears to be some additional roof or screening structure between this section and the third section. The last component approaching the corner with North Washington Street has three bays widths of 12', 28', and 12'. No entrances are located at the street level. Windows are aligned vertically on the three floors.

D. North Saint Asaph Street



Figure 5 Proposed North St Asaph Street elevation looking south

The existing AFBA Building and the brick retaining wall are the most visible structures looking south from North Saint Asaph Street. The new construction will occur at the corner with Montgomery Street. The Second-Empire inspired building largely fronting Montgomery Street wraps the corner, with a 12' wide recessed break. The first floor will have a large canopied storefront, with single windows aligned on the second and third floors. Three small windows will be located with the Mansard roof. A small 12' wide three story, flat roofed, section inspired by a townhouse completes this section of the project fronting North Saint Asaph Street.

Due to the existing retaining wall, the side elevations of buildings facing First Street are visible looking south.

III. HISTORY:

The block currently contains the Jefferson Building located at 901 North Washington Street and the 1989 AFBA Building. 901 North Washington Street is a seven story glass and marble curtain wall building that was constructed in 1963. It was designed by Charles Pearson of the architectural firm of Saunders and Pearson and was approved by the Board on 1/23/63. The existing AFBA Building at 909 North Washington Street was completed in 1989 when the boundaries of the Old and Historic Alexandria District was limited to 100 feet on either side of

the center line of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in that area of North Washington Street, so at the time of construction, the building was outside the district the purview of the Old and Historic Alexandria Board of Architectural Review.

IV. ANALYSIS:

The following Washington Street Standards found in Section 10-105(3) are applicable:

1. Construction shall be compatible with and similar to the traditional building character, particularly mass, scale, design and style, found on Washington Street on commercial or residential buildings of historic merit.

Staff is recommending significant additional refinement, to address this requirement. In addition, Staff is recommending elimination of elements such as the glass curtain wall that are contemporary in form.

2. Elements of design consistent with historic buildings which are found on the street shall be emphasized.

See #1

3. New buildings and additions to existing buildings shall not by their style, size, location or other characteristics, detract from, overwhelm, or otherwise intrude upon historic buildings which are found on the street.

Staff is recommending significant additional refinement, including decreasing the height of the building located at corner of First Street and North Washington Street and the building located at the corner of Montgomery and North Washington Street. In addition, Staff is recommending that the building located at the corner of First Street and North Washington Street have additional setbacks so as to relate to the setback of the adjacent building located across the street. Staff is concerned that the heights as proposed, particularly with the building at the corner of Montgomery Street and North Washington Street will compete with the existing "Gateway" building of the Physicians Association across the street.

4. The design of the new buildings and additions to existing buildings shall be complementary to historic buildings which are found on the street.

The applicant needs to clarify which historic buildings located on Washington Street were used.

5. The massing of new buildings or additions to existing buildings adjacent to historic buildings shall which are found on the street shall closely reflect and be proportional to the massing of the adjacent historic buildings.

This needs to be further demonstrated by the applicant.

6. New buildings and additions to existing buildings which are larger than historic buildings which are found on the street shall be designed to look separate and shall not give the impression of collectively being more massive than such historic buildings. This design objective shall be accomplished through differing historic architectural designs, facades, setbacks, roof lines and styles. Buildings should appear from the public right-of-way to have a footprint no larger than 100 feet by 80 feet. For larger projects, it is desirable that the historic pattern of mid-block alleys be preserved or replicated.

Staff would recommend that the applicant decrease the number of styles used in the design, including, changing the sections of the facade that read as townhouses to more commercial forms and widths. This would also decrease the number of small “breaks” in the facades. Also Staff would recommend further variations in overall heights, roof shapes, recesses and projections, and pedestrian access

7. The massing and proportions of new buildings or additions to existing building designed in an historic style found elsewhere along Washington Street shall be consistent with the massing and proportions of that style.

Needs refinement. The applicant needs to avoid contemporary treatments, like recessed glass stories on buildings that are mostly historically replicative in appearance.

9. Facades of a building generally shall express the 2– to 40- foot bay width typically found on early 19th-century commercial buildings characteristic of the Old and Historic Alexandria District, or the 15- to 20-foot bay width typically found on the townhouses characteristic of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Techniques to express such typical bay width shall include changes in material, articulation of the wall surfaces, changes in fenestration patterns, varying roof heights, and physical breaks, vertical as well as horizontal, within the massing.

Largely met. Also see # 6.

11. Construction shall reflect the traditional fenestration patterns found within the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Traditional solid-void relationships exhibited within the district’s streetscapes (i.e. ratio of window and doors openings to solid wall) shall be used in building facades.

Appears to be met. Some refinement needed on some storefronts and at pedestrian level.

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral for restudy, with the following conditions and concerns to be addressed:

A. Mass and Scale:

1. Revise the mass and scale of the building at the corner of North Washington Street and First Street to have a three-story volume.

2. Revise the building at the corner of Washington Street and Montgomery Street to be a smaller scale and less prominent element.

3. Simplify the volume and eliminate the contemporary “step backs.” Each step back should be consistent and relate to the architectural style and type of each perceived “building.”

B. Design:

4. The elements used as precedents from non-historic buildings shall be eliminated.

Montgomery Street:

5. Overall this elevation, mass, and scale are fairly well resolved with the additional refinements:

- a. Provide additional detail on the retail bays.
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- c. Provide North St. Asaph Street elevation.
- d. Refine the garage entrance.

North Washington Street:

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- a. Revise the massing of the building as the corner of North Washington Street and Montgomery Street as outlined above.
- b. Eliminate the glass connector element.
- c. Provide the exterior elevations for the internal courtyard.
- d. Revise the Mansard-roof building adjacent to the courtyard to read more as a “building.”
- e. Lower the height of the base of the buildings at the corner of North Washington Street and First Street.
- f. Study the possibility of an increased setback at the corner of North Washington Street and First Street to provide a setback more compatible with the adjacent building.

First Street:

_____ 7. Additional refinement and restudy are needed:

- a. The corner of the building should be revised to be a more prominent and highly detailed building typical of a corner building.
- b. Explore ways to reduce the height of the base.
- c. Revise the massing as discussed above.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 Proposed structures shall be kept under 50 feet in height, otherwise ladder truck access will be required. The elevation drawings depict several structures ranging in height from 60 to 65 feet. These structures will require ladder truck access. This access is not currently provided in this concept plan submission.
- F-2 The proposed modification to the existing fire access upon addition of the proposed structures shall meet the following criteria: Fire / Ladder Truck Access shall be required to the two longest sides of each structure. This requires a truck to be able to position itself between 15 and 30 feet from the face of the building. All elevated structures used for this purpose shall be designed to AASHTO HS-20 loadings. The proposed access appears to be too close to the existing building near the southwest quadrant of the structure. Turning radii within the fire access lane shall be R-25 minimum. The width of the travel lane shall be 22 foot minimum. Provision for turning fire apparatus around shall include 60 foot deep pockets. These pockets may be part of the fire access lane. The width of the proposed fire access road appears to be less than 22 feet in width. Is the line shown dividing the auto court from the fire access road a separate elevation. What measures are intended to permit fire apparatus to cross the auto court into the fire access road. Turning radii has not been provided, but appear to be far less than the R-25 minimum requirement. Show the limits of the fire access road. As shown on the plans, the lines fade off the drawing.
- F-3 Provide all exit and egress paths from each structure.
- F-4 A full NFPA 13 sprinkler system will be required for all structures and the underground garage.
- F-5 Provide more information on any retaining walls proposed.
- F-6 Additional hydrants may be required as more information is made available.
- F-7 Landscaping shall not be located within the fire access road.

Note: For the purposes of this review, the term Fire Access Road will refer to Emergency Vehicle Easement. In future submissions, denote any areas used for fire access as Emergency Vehicle Easement.

- C-1 The developer shall provide a building code analysis with the following building code data on the plan: a) use group; b) number of stories; c) type of construction; d) floor area per floor ; e) fire protection plan.

- C-2 The developer shall provide a separate Fire Service Plan which illustrates: a) emergency ingress/egress routes to the site; b) two fire department connections (FDC) to the building, one on each side/end of the building; c) fire hydrants located within one hundred (100) feet of each FDC; d) on site fire hydrants spaced with a maximum distance of three hundred (300) feet between hydrants and the most remote point of vehicular access on site; e) emergency vehicle easements (EVE) around the building with a twenty-two (22) foot minimum width; f) all Fire Service Plan elements are subject to the approval of the Director of Code Enforcement.
- C-3 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-4 Required exits, parking, and accessibility within the building for persons with disabilities must comply with USBC Chapter 11.
- C-5 The public parking garage (Use Group S-2) is required to be equipped with a sprinkler system (USBC 903.2.11).
- C-6 The public parking garage floor must comply with USBC 406.2.6 and drain through oil separators or traps to avoid accumulation of explosive vapors in building drains or sewers as provided for in the plumbing code (USBC 2901). This parking garage is classified as an S-2, Group 2, public garage.
- C-7 Enclosed parking garages must be ventilated in accordance with USBC 406.4.2.
- C-8 Sheeting and shoring shall not extend beyond the property line; except when the developer has obtained a written release from adjacent property owners which has been recorded in the land records; or through an approved encroachment process.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 The Turning Basin of the Alexandria Canal, operating between 1830 and 1886, is buried beneath this block running east/west, and originally extended east to the middle of N. Pitt Street. Atwell's Ice House stood at the southeast corner of this block. In 1987 when the AFBA building was built, evidence of the basin wall and fill was seen in the excavation work. Therefore, the construction of the two additional buildings has the potential for disturbing archaeological resources that could yield important information about Alexandria's past.
- C-1 To insure that significant information is not lost as a result of development projects on this block, the applicant must hire an archaeological consultant to complete a Documentary Study and an Archaeological Evaluation. Contact Alexandria Archaeology to obtain a scope of work for this investigation. If significant resources are discovered, the consultant must 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.

- C-2 All archaeological preservation measures must be completed prior to ground-disturbing activities (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of the Zoning Ordinance). To confirm, call Alexandria Archaeology at (703) 838-4399.
- C-3 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.
- C-4 The statements in C-2 and C-3 above must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement. Additional statements to be included on the Final Site Plan will be determined in consultation with Alexandria Archaeology.
- C-5 Certificates of Occupancy will not be issued for this property until the final archaeological report has been received and approved by the City Archaeologist.
- C-6 If warranted by the City Archaeologist, the developer will erect a historic marker on the property according to specifications provided by Alexandria Archaeology. The marker will highlight the historical and archaeological significance of the property.
- C-7 If warranted by the City Archaeologist, the developer will produce a booklet for the public on the history and archaeology of the property, according to specifications provided by Alexandria Archaeology.
- R-1 All archaeological work will be carried out in accordance with the *City of Alexandria Archaeological Standards and is subject to the approval of the City Archaeologist.*
- R-2 The applicant should not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”