Docket Item # 16
BAR CASE # 2006-0283

BAR Meeting
December 20, 2006

ISSUE: Approval of four condominium buildings

APPLICANT: Robert S. Brandt, Inc.

LOCATION: 900 North Washington Street

ZONE: OCM

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

1) Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, railroad tracks or ties, 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.

2) The above statement 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.

(Insert sketch here)

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the final design details and materials approval for the construction of four condominium buildings at 900 North Washington Street, occupying the triangular block bordered by North Washington Street, North Columbus Street, Montgomery Street, and Powhatan Street.

The Old and Historic Board of Architectural Review (BAR) approved a Permit to Demolish for the existing building on March 1, 2006 and the concept plan on July 19, 2006 (BAR Case #'s 2005-0287, 2005-288). The Planning Commission approved the Development Site Plan for the project on September 7, 2006 (DSP Case # 2005-0024).

The conditions placed by the Old and Historic Board of Architectural Review at the concept approval phase were:

1. Restudy approach to the height of the buildings fronting North Columbus Street, exploring options for mitigating appearance of 4th floor, or explore deleting the 4th floor.
2. Restudy approach to window shapes and lintel forms on North Columbus Street buildings, to avoid appearance of fragmented buildings.
3. Restudy the 4 story bay windows, change to 3 story bay windows on North Columbus Street buildings.
4. Restudy the paint color of the North Washington Street building.
5. Restudy the roof shape of the North Washington Street building.
6. Restudy the pediment on the North Washington Street building.

The proposal has been revised to respond to the Board's conditions and other concerns of the community and staff at the July hearing, including the following:

- The fourth floor be made substantially less visible and prominent by providing increased setbacks, or through the use of colors and/or roof forms;
- Provision of a functional entrance on Washington Street for the Washington Street building; and
- Additional variety of materials, windows and colors to comply with the Washington Street Standards.

Community:
There have been several community meetings with the Northeast Land-Use Board since the approval of the conceptual plan by the Board. At these meetings there has been general agreement that the building on Washington Street and the Columbus Street elevations have continued to improve. There has also been continued discussion about incorporating desirable aspects of the original proposal into the current proposal.

Conclusion:
Due to its size, geometry, location, and visibility (three frontages) this is a very difficult and complex site and a considerable architectural challenge. The applicant committed to working with the community, the Board, and staff to address the conditions set forth by the Board and

other concerns of the community and staff. The proposal has evolved and changed over time, and with each revision the applicant has attempted to address the various comments. In staff's opinion, the applicant has fully responded to the conditions placed by the Old and Historic Board of Architectural Review at the concept approval phase, and has also made the refinements necessary to comply with the Washington Street Standards and achieve an architectural expression compatible with the neighborhood and the District. Therefore, staff recommends that the a Certificate of Appropriateness be granted by the Board for the project.

II. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the new construction of four condominium buildings located on the triangular block, bordered by North Washington Street, Montgomery Street, North Columbus Street, and Powhatan Street.

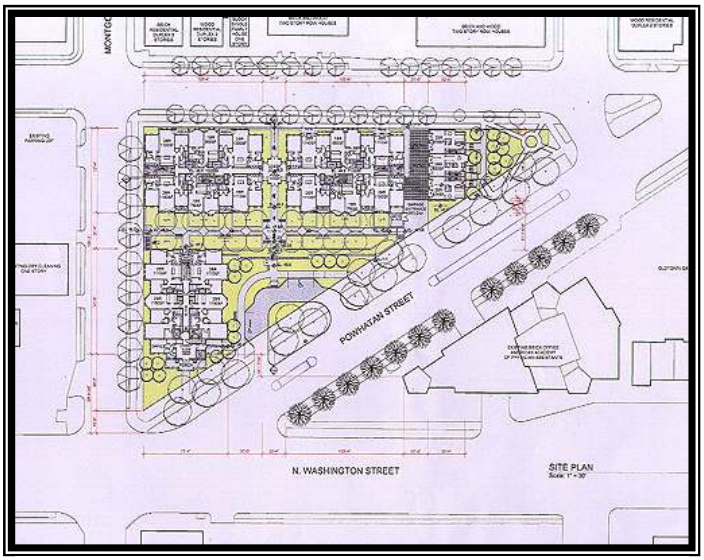

Figure 1 - Site plan

The proposed site plan includes a primary building fronting North Washington Street, two secondary buildings with a one-story connector, fronting North Columbus Street, and three attached, two-story townhouses fronting Powhatan Street. Open space within the project take the form of courtyard areas between the four buildings. Parking for the project is located underground, with access to the parking garage from Powhatan Street. An angled drive allows for passenger drop-off from Powhatan Street.

The demolition of the existing buildings on the site was reviewed and approved by the Board on March 1, 2006 (BAR Case #2005-0287). The Board approved the conceptual design for the project on July 19, 2006 (BAR Case #2005-00288). The purpose of the conceptual design review is for the Board to make a finding of appropriateness of the *scale, mass, and architectural character* of the proposed project. The current BAR submission provides fully developed design drawings. The current plans deviate from the design presented in the approved conceptual plans by responding to the conditions and concerns of the Board. The current plans provide substantially more information in terms of design details and materials. This final BAR review will focus on materials, proportions, relationship between architectural elements and detailing for a determination that the project is consistent with the Design Guidelines, the Washington Street Standards, and appropriate for the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

Materials:
The four buildings of the project will all have brick exteriors-- two colors of red brick, and brick painted one of three different shades, precast stone lintels, cornices and trim in wood, true slate shingle roofs, and fiberglass forms under the oriel windows, and aluminum clad windows. The

windows are manufactured by Pella in the Architects series and will be double-hung, double-glazed windows, with simulated divided lights and a spacer bar. The applicant has provided samples of the materials.

Description of Elevations:

Figure 2 – Approved Concept of North Washington Street elevation

Figure 3 - Proposed Washington Street elevation for Certificate of Appropriateness Review

A. Washington Street Building:

The primary building of the project fronting Washington Street has been revised to respond to the comments of the Board, the community, and staff. The building reflects a Second-Empire style building with a true mansard roof and four floors. The overall height of the building is now 44'11". The elevation facing Washington Street is symmetrical in relationship to bays and proportions, with bay widths ranging from 5' to 18'10", with intermediate widths of 8' ½" and 14' 2 ½". A central prominent bay, with a centered bay window and a front portico, is flanked by two smaller bays. A functional entrance has been added to the elevation facing North Washington Street which had been a concern of staff at the concept approval phase based on the Washington Street Standards. Double French doors serve as the main entrance under a covered portico. The covered portico is supported by four groupings of paired columns. A wood railing is located on top of the portico.

The windows range from single to paired, some with arches and precast stone lintels. All the windows are two-over-two. Other revisions to this building include incorporating a recessed entrance for handicapped accessible entrances on the northeast corner of the building. Two-story bay windows have been added on the north and south elevations of the building, providing architectural embellishments and relief to these long sides of the building. In respect to materials,

the building will be clad in brick manufactured by Roycroft and will be painted a buff color. The mansard roof will be in true slate in a grey-green color. All lintels will be precast stone in a limestone buff color. All trim will be wood. Windows are aluminum clad by Pella in the Architects series.

B. Washington Street-Powhatan Street Courtyard:

A challenge to this project has been that the buildings of the project will have two "fronts"-- one on Washington-Powhatan streets and one on North Columbus Street. The buildings fronting North Columbus Street have been revised since the concept review to respond to this challenge. From Washington Street, these buildings appear to be three-stories in height with intersecting slate covered gable roofs. The bay windows have been reduced to three stories from four stories which had been a condition of the Board and the bay widths range from approximately 10' to 13'. Windows have flat lintels and appear as singles and pairs. The windows are one-over-one, with the exception of the windows within the central bay which are two-over-two. The applicant has set the building back approximately 20 to 80 ft. from Powhatan Street and approximately 100 feet from Washington Street. The buildings will be two shades of brick—a painted buff color and a natural red. Porch elements with columns have been incorporated at the first level.

Figure 4 – Approved Concept of North Columbus Street elevation

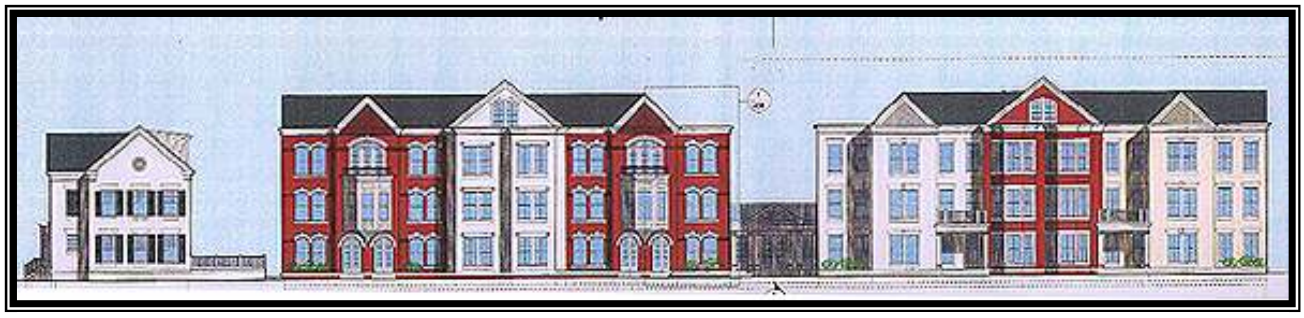

Figure 5 - Proposed North Columbus Street elevation for Certificate of Appropriateness Review

C. North Columbus Street:

As discussed during the concept review, Columbus Street is characterized by smaller scale, generally two- to three-story townhouses. The two buildings fronting North Columbus Street have been revised considerably to respond to the concerns of staff and the community and the conditions of the Board. The height of the buildings has been reduced to the appearance of three-stories, while a fourth-floor-access to a rooftop terrace is provided by French doors set in a gable form, that is recessed approximately 30' from the face of the building. At the street level,

the applicant has incorporated functional entrances, composed of rounded paired French-style doors. On the second floor of one of the buildings, a projecting oriel/bay window with a roof top porch provides architectural distinction and assists in breaking-up the long façade. A similar approach occurs on the second building in the form of a central bay with paired, three-story bay windows.

The one-story connector element between the two buildings serves as a functional entrance to the buildings. It is mostly glass with wood trim and mimics a conservatory.

The two buildings relate to one another but have different bay and window rhythms, porch expressions, and color. In respect to materials, the building share painted and natural brick as the primary exterior material, wood trim, precast stone lintels, wood and iron railings, and slate roofs.

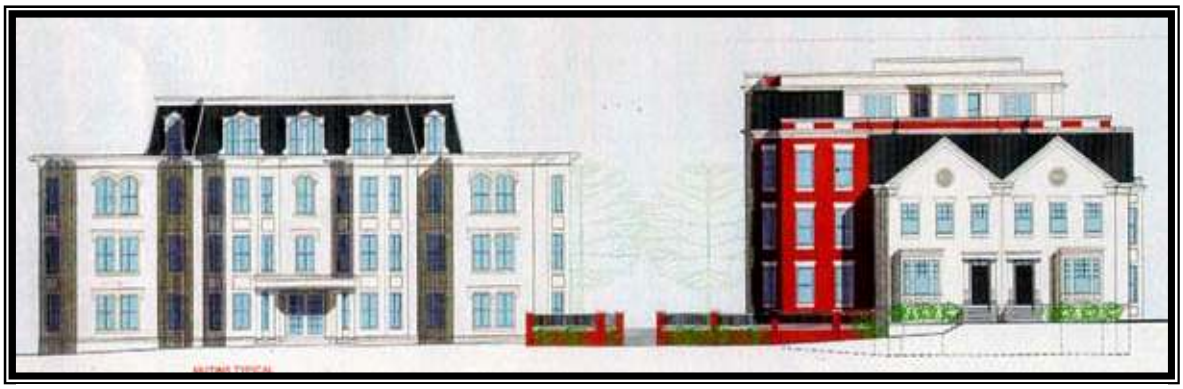

Figure 6 – Approved Concept for Powhatan Street elevation

Figure 7 - Proposed Powhatan Street elevation for Certificate of Appropriateness Review

D. Corner of Columbus Street and Powhatan Street:

This is an element which has been positive and has continued to improve with the revisions to the plan. Three connected townhouses are now shown, each with two bays. The height of the stoops have been lowered and side gabled roofs have been added, with slate roofing All of these elements combine to create a very successful form, mass and scale for these buildings. The units have also been refined to include window and bay elements compatible with the adjoining townhomes, (the Old Town Gateway project.) Windows have been incorporated below the water

table and on the sides of the projecting pavilion elements. Wood operable shutters, sized to fit the window openings have also been added.

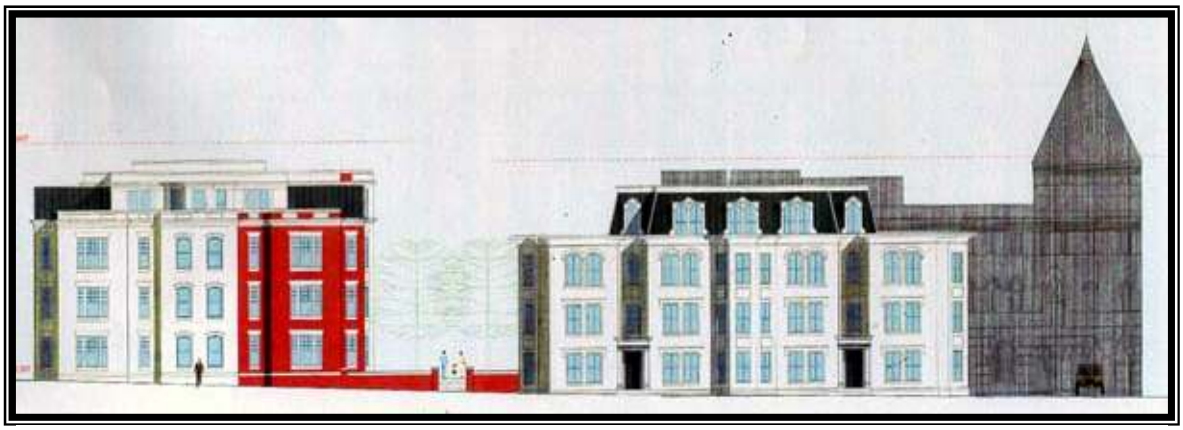

Figure 8 – Approved Concept of Montgomery Street elevation

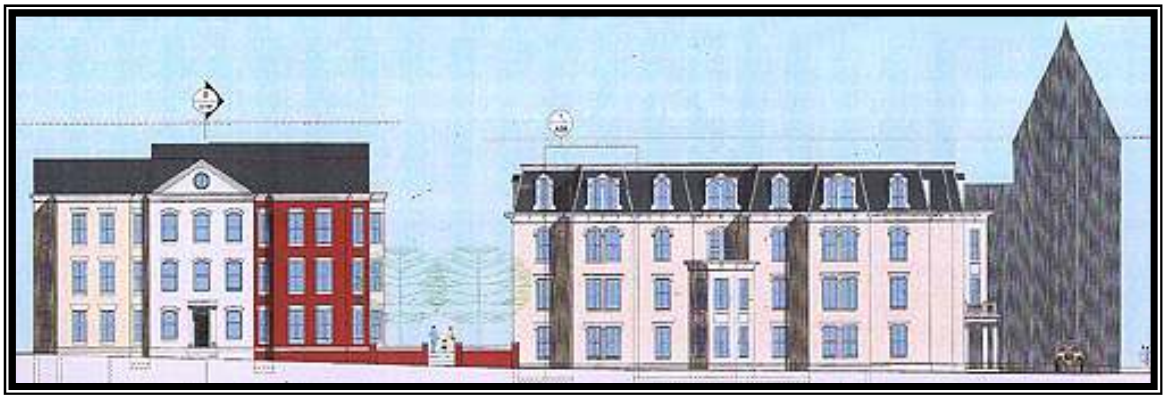

Figure 9 - Proposed Montgomery Street elevation for Certificate of Appropriateness Review

III ANALYSIS:

The subject property is zoned OCM.

In the review for a Certificate of Appropriateness, approving final design details and materials, the Board is looking to see that all the conditions placed on the project during concept approval are met—as well as conditions imposed by other reviewing bodies, and that the design details and materials are appropriate to the project and in keeping with the character and historic context of the Old and Historic District, while meeting the standards, and guidelines, especially the Washington Street Standards.

General Design Comments:

***A. Height*:** Height had been a concern of the community, staff, and the Board during the concept review phase of the project. As a condition of the approval of the concept design, the Board placed the following condition on the project related to height:

> **1. Restudy approach to the height of the buildings fronting North Columbus Street, exploring options for mitigating appearance of 4th floor, or explore deleting the 4th floor.**
>
> The applicant has responded to this condition by eliminating the residential units from the fourth floors of both Columbus Street buildings, changing the roof form of the building fronting North Columbus Street to a series of intersecting gables, so that most of the fourth floor is terrace area, removed from the face of the building. The greatly reduced fourth floor space that remains is used for mechanical and building commons areas. The total height of the buildings to the ridge is 45' 7 ½".

B. Style/Form: The proposal incorporates design cues from the neighborhood, and reflects architectural styles of historic buildings found along Washington Street, including Second-Empire, Italianate, and Colonial Revival. The roof forms include mansard and intersecting gables. The Board's conditions were:

> **1. Restudy approach to window shapes and lintel forms on North Columbus Street buildings, to avoid appearance of fragmented buildings.**
>
> The applicant has revised the buildings so that the building to the north end has primarily paired, arched windows on the outer bays and flat lintel paired windows on the center bay; while the building to the south end has flat lintels over paired and single windows. Staff believes that this approach is a sound design scheme, providing some elements that link the two buildings, yet providing some that distinguish them from each other.
>
> **2. Restudy the 4 story bay windows, change to 3 story bay windows on North Columbus Street buildings.**
>
> The applicant has revised this element so that the bay windows have been changed from 4 stories to three stories or less.
>
> **3. Restudy the paint color of the North Washington Street building.**
>
> The applicant is proposing to use a painted brick in a buff/off-white color.
>
> **4. Restudy the roof shape of the North Washington Street building.**
>
> The applicant has revised the roof form of the Second-Empire inspired building fronting North Washington Street to reflect a true mansard form, bringing the mansard roof out close to the building edge around the whole perimeter.

5. Restudy the pediment on the North Washington Street building.

The applicant has revised the Second-Empire inspired building on North Washington Street building and eliminated the pediment form.

Compliance with the Washington Street Standards Related to Design Details and Materials:

Sec. 10-105 A (3) (a)(1)

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

The Standard has been met. The project utilizes architectural styles, including Second Empire, Italianate, Federal and Colonial Revival, which are found on buildings of historic architectural merit along Washington Street. The mass and scale were found to be appropriate upon approval of the conceptual plan.

Sec. 10-105 A (3) (a)(1)(i)
Elements of design consistent with historic buildings which are found on the street shall be emphasized.

This Standard has been met. As refined, the project incorporates such design elements as bay and oriel windows, lintels and cornices, slate gable roofs, column-supported porches and porticos, and balconies, all of which are found along Washington Street.

Sec. 10-105 A(3) (a)(2)
Facades of a building generally shall express the 20– 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.

This Standard has been met. The applicant revised the project to reflect the traditional bay widths found in the District. The window pattern has also been revised to more traditional while assisting in mitigating massing issues.

Sec. 10-105 A (3) (a)(1)(viii)

New or untried approaches to design which result in new buildings or additions that have no historical basis in Alexandria or that are not consistent with an historic style in scale, massing and detailing, are not appropriate.

This Standard has been met.

Sec. 10-105 A (3) (a)(3)

Building materials characteristic of buildings having historic architectural merit within the district shall be utilized. The texture tone and color of such materials shall display a level of variety, quality and richness at least equal to that found abundantly in the historic setting.

This Standard has been met. The project is using brick, wood, and slate for its primary exterior materials.

Conclusion:

In staff's opinion, the project complies with the Design Guidelines for new construction, meets the Washington Street Standards, and complements and respects the architectural heritage of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

1) Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, railroad tracks or ties, 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.

2) The above statement 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.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

F-1 Buildings are proposed to be under 50 feet in height. Should buildings exceed the 50 foot height limit, ladder truck access will be required. Acknowledged and maintained under 50 feet.

F-2 The structure will be required to be equipped with an automatic fire suppression system. Sprinkler system provided.

F-3 Two fire department connections will be required. Provided.

F-4 At least one stairwell shall discharge directly to the exterior of the building. The current design does not facilitate this requirement. Stairwells redesigned and compliant.

R-1 Handicap parking spaces for apartment and condominium developments shall remain in the same location(s) as on the approved site plan. Handicap parking spaces shall be properly signed and identified as to their purpose in accordance with the USBC and the Code of Virginia. Ownership and / or control of any handicap parking spaces shall remain under common ownership of the apartment management or condominium association and shall not be sold or leased to any single individual. Parking within any space identified as a handicap parking space shall be limited to only those vehicles which are properly registered to a handicap individual and the vehicle displays the appropriate license plates or window tag as defined by the Code of Virginia for handicap vehicles. The relocation, reduction or increase of any handicap parking space shall only be approved through an amendment to the approved site plan. Acknowledged by applicant.

R-2 The applicant of any building or structure constructed in excess of 10,000 square feet; or any building or structure which constructs an addition in excess of 10,000 square feet shall contact the City of Alexandria Radio Communications Manager prior to submission of final site plan. The proposed project shall be reviewed for compliance with radio requirements of the City of Alexandria to the satisfaction of the City of Alexandria Radio Communications Manager prior to site plan approval. Such buildings and structures shall meet the following conditions:

a) The building or structure shall be designed to support a frequency range between 806 to 824 MHz and 850 to 869 MHz.
b) The building or structure design shall support a minimal signal transmission strength of -95 dBm within 90 percent of each floor area.
c) The building or structure design shall support a minimal signal reception strength of -95 dBm received from the radio system when transmitted from within 90 percent of each floor area.
d) The building or structure shall be tested annually for compliance with City radio communication requirements to the satisfaction of the Radio Communications

Manager. A report shall be filed annually with the Radio Communications Manager which reports the test findings.

If the building or structure fails to meet the above criteria, the applicant shall install to the satisfaction of the Radio Communications Manager such acceptable amplification systems incorporated into the building design which can aid in meeting the above requirements. Examples of such equipment are either a radiating cable system or an FCC approved type bi-directional amplifier. Final testing and acceptance of amplification systems shall be reviewed and approved by the Radio Communications Manager. Acknowledged by applicant.

R-3 Based on a history of sound transmission complaints, it is recommended that all dwelling units have a STC rating of at least 60. **Alternatives that demonstrate equivalency to this requirement will be considered on a case by case basis and are subject to the approval of the Director of Code Enforcement.** Acknowledged by applicant.

C-1 A separate tap is required for the building fire service connection. Condition met.

C-2 Applicant must provide Emergency Vehicle Easement on front entrance of building #3. EVE not provided. Because the main entrance and fire department connection are located in the proposed drop off area, an emergency vehicle easement is required that meets the minimum width and turning radii for fire apparatus. The easement shall maintain a minimum width of 22 feet with an R-25 turning radii. Approved signage for emergency vehicle easements are required on both sides of the proposed roadway. Elevated structures used for this purpose shall conform to AAHSTO H-20 loading requirements. **Entrances for Building #3 have been provided on Montgomery Street. Relocate FDC on Building #3 to Montgomery Street and provide an additional hydrant on Montgomery Street, mid block which will service both Building #3 and Building #2. Hydrant shall be spaced so as not to exceed 100 feet of maximum travel distance from each FDC to the hydrant. Relocate proposed hydrant on Powhattan Street to within 100 feet of FDC for Building #1. Hydrant shall be no closer than 40 feet from the building.**

C-3 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). Condition met, shown as Note 34 on Sheet C-2.

C-4 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. Code analysis is incomplete. Construction type and Fire Protection Plan not provided (sprinkler design standards). **Change Code edition from 1996 USBC to 2003 edition of the USBC.**

C-5 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 on 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. Turning radii not provided. A minimum radii of R-25 is required for Emergency Vehicle Easements. See C-2 above. **EVE no longer required due to relocation of FDC and entrances for Building #3.**

C-6 The final site plans shall show placement of fire easement signs. See attached guidelines for sign details and placement requirements. See C-2 above. **EVE no longer required due to relocation of FDC and entrances for Building #3.**

C-7 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application. Acknowledged by applicant.

C-8 Prior to submission of the Final Site Plan #1, the developer shall provide a fire flow analysis by a certified licensed fire protection engineer to assure adequate water supply for the structure being considered. Acknowledged by applicant, but not provided**.**

C-9 A Certificate of occupancy shall be obtained prior to any occupancy of the building or portion thereof, in accordance with USBC 119.0. Acknowledged by applicant.

C-10 The public parking garage (Use Group S-2) is required to be equipped with a sprinkler system (USBC 903.2.11). Acknowledged by applicant.

C-11 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. Acknowledged by applicant.

C-12 Enclosed parking garages must be ventilated in accordance with USBC 406.4.2. Show vent locations. Vent locations shown, however, the vertical exhaust vent is located directly under windows for a residential dwelling. Vent locations shall not discharge outdoors at a point where it will create a nuisance and from which it can readily drawn into occupied spaces. (USBC - IMC 501.2) **Vent locations revised, condition met.**

Historic Alexandria:
No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:
F-1 During the nineteenth century, the Alexandria Canal Company owned much of this property with the exception of a small strip along the southern edge parallel to Montgomery Street. In 1877, the Hopkins Insurance map shows structures belonging to Richard Burke in this southern strip. Buildings associated with the canal were situated on the property to the west of this lot, and Powhatan Street was the Alexandria and Washington Turnpike with a railroad track running down the west side. In the twentieth century, the property was part of the Smoot Planing Mill, and some of the mill structures

were replaced by a service station. This twentieth-century development would probably have destroyed evidence of most of the nineteenth-century activity on the lot, but it may be possible that portions of some deep features, such as a well or privy, could remain intact.

R-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, railroad tracks or ties, 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.

R-2 The above statement 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.