

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE # 2011-0011

BAR Meeting
January 26, 2011

ISSUE: Request for new construction of 21 townhouse units (17 single-family and 4 triplexes), 3 multi-family buildings and park, and waiver of rooftop screening requirement for Phase IV of the James Bland Redevelopment Project

APPLICANT: Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority by Kenneth Wire (McGuire Woods)

LOCATION: 898 North Alfred Street

ZONE: CDD #16

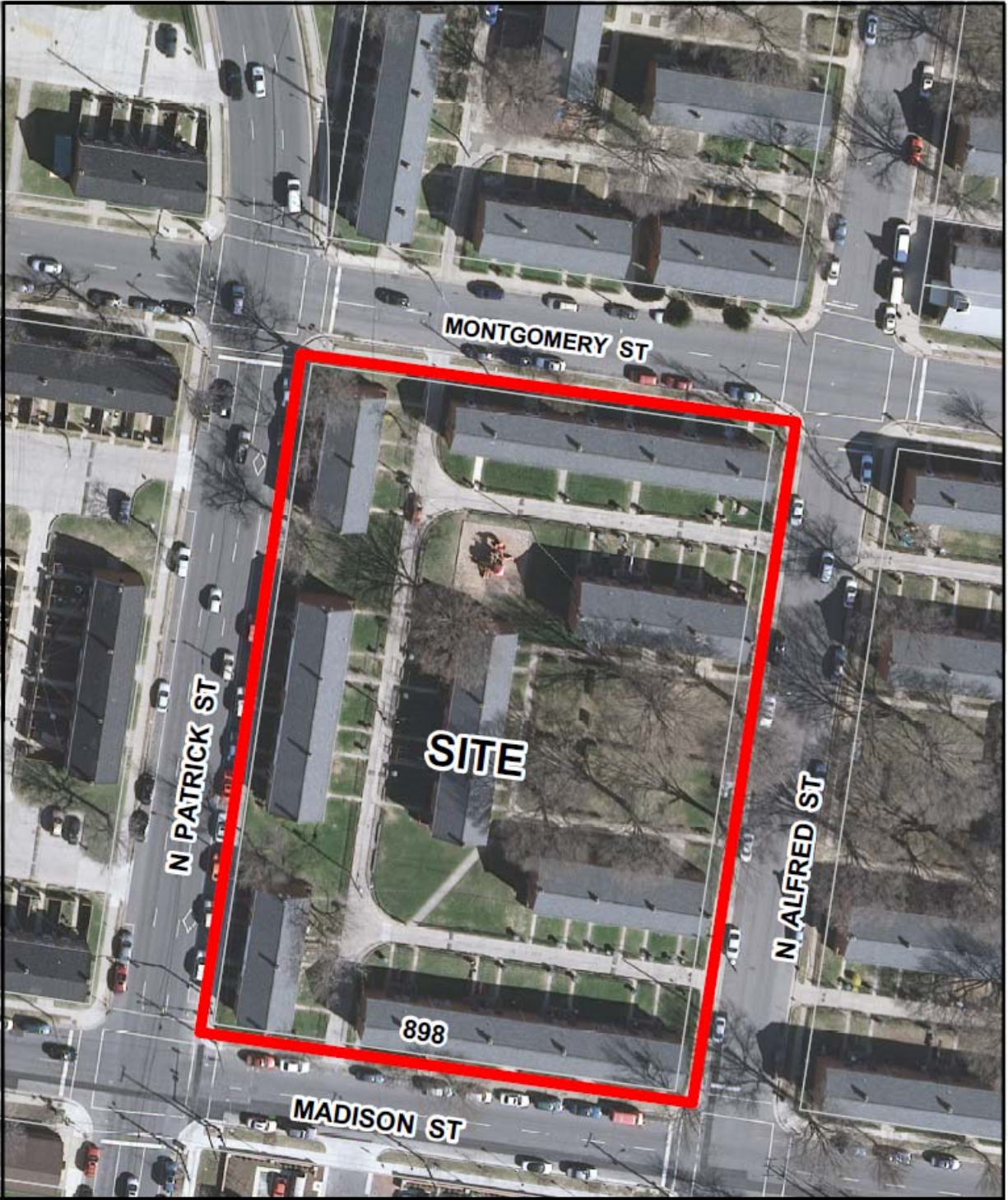
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Board defer approval of the application and ask the applicant to continue to refine the multi-family buildings with the following considerations:

1. Strengthen the differentiation between the end buildings and the center building through the use of architectural details and materials, while still maintaining a family resemblance;
2. Restudy the proposed arch entry feature at the entrances to the courtyards;
3. Strengthen the visual and physical projections on the buildings in plan and elevation and emphasize this through subtly different materials and colors;
4. Restudy the single fire exit doors on the west elevation of the center building to minimize its appearance as a door and to visually coordinate this element with the proportions of the surrounding fenestration.
5. Provide more information on the materials, colors and details of the multifamily buildings.
6. Provide additional information on the materials, colors and details of the townhouses and park.

*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 #2011-0011

Phase IV



I. ISSUE

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

Phase IV is an entire block that will have 21 townhouses, three multi-family buildings and a park. A private street with a public access easement will run north-south, approximately in the middle of the block. During concept approval, 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 three, four-story multi-family buildings instead of two, four-story buildings. 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. To the east of the private street will be the portion of the block with 21 mixed townhouse units. The northeastern portion of this block will have a small park that will be open to the public. The Board previously reviewed and endorsed the design of the park, in concept.

As in the two 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. As the multi-family buildings are a new element, this initial review will focus primarily on this component with review of the townhouses and relevant park elements will occur at a subsequent hearing. However, the applicant has provided strip elevations and a site plan including the townhouses to place the multi-family buildings in context.

Building Description

The two smaller buildings will each house 16 ARHA units and will measure approximately 70 feet by 76 feet. The center market-rate building will have 44 units and will measure approximately 172 feet by 76 feet. 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 both ARHA and market rate condominium units and will provide an opportunity for social interaction between residents on a daily basis.

Each building is four stories with a flat roof. The buildings have an industrial architectural character with a pronounced fenestration. The majority of the windows will have the effect of triple windows through the use of a double-hung over a fixed window and arranged in double and triple configurations. 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 with a split-face stringcourse separating the two. The top

floor, or capital level, will be lighter in color with a strong cornice line and HardiePanel wall material. All of the buildings will have alternating projections to break up the massing.

The materials proposed at this point include: brick, split-face block 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 is currently under construction and building permits are being reviewed and approved for Phase II.

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)

April/May 2011: Anticipated 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 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 has commissioned a new architect for the design of the multi-family buildings. This architect has brought a fresh approach which Staff believes will contribute to a sense of architectural variety in this large redevelopment project.

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. In addition, 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 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 multiple material and color changes help to break up the mass and bulk of the building which contributes to its compatibility with smaller scale buildings the district. However, the site plan shows that some of the projecting elements have very little depth to them. Staff recommends that the applicant consider strengthening the projection for the center bays on the end buildings and on the center building to the maximum extent possible.

Relationship among the Buildings

As previously stated, a 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, during the initial meetings with the applicant, 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. For example, the two smaller buildings have double-hung windows on the first floor where the middle building has three windows (a double-hung over a fixed window). The HardiePanel insets at the second and third stories are different colors, and the middle building has Juliet balconies in these recesses. However, Staff recommends that the subtle distinctions between the end buildings and the middle building be further distinguished to better articulate a rhythm in the street wall. For instance, differentiation at the first story could be strengthened by a change in material at this level, such as through the use of a rusticated or rough block on one building. Another option to differentiate the end buildings from the middle building is to consider using a different color mortar, a complimentary color brick or to further contrast the window modules.

Building Entrance

To foster social interaction among the residents, the design places the entrances to the buildings facing each other in two entry courts, rather than entering directly from either the private street or Route 1, although the two end buildings will also each have an entrance directly onto Madison and Montgomery streets. The space between the buildings will function as a landscaped courtyard with each entrance having a modern, cantilevered canopy above the doors. The applicant has proposed a metal framed arch on masonry piers at the four sidewalk entrances to the courtyards to identify the building entrances. The concept of an arch or pergola is an excellent way to announce the building entrance, to link the three buildings and to enclose the courtyards as semiprivate transition spaces. However, Staff finds the arch, as proposed, to be a bit too Postmodern and encourages the applicant to restudy this element. The northern courtyard also provides an opportunity to relate the building entrances and landscaping with the adjacent park.

Garage Entrance

The middle building will have a garage entrance from the private street, serving 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, the applicant has maintained the masonry openings of the fenestration pattern above but used decorative metal grilles in place of actual windows. Staff finds this to be an appropriate solution that minimizes the appearance of the garage but would like to see enlarged detail drawings of the grille design for the Board's review in the future. Aligning the garage entrance with the alley entrance across the private street minimizes the adverse effect of headlights from cars exiting the garage shining into neighbors living rooms across the street.

Materials

Staff encourages the applicant to use materials as a way to strengthen the industrial vocabulary and differentiate the buildings. The use of brick 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. The use of concrete block, whether it has a ground or rough face, can also provide contrast and texture. 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 multi-family buildings and generally finds the design architecturally appropriate and compatible with the surrounding area. 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 and the park.

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

***As this is a preliminary review, the design has not been fully routed for inter-departmental comments. The following are relevant comments from Phase II.

Planning & Zoning (Development):

The applicant must comply with DSUP condition #17 related to architecture/site planning. (The applicant has complied with many of these conditions already).

The applicant shall provide the following building refinements to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z:

General

- a. All HVAC units shall be located on the roof and not visible from public or private streets.
- b. All at-grade utilities shall be screened with landscaping or a fence/wall.
- c. The primary exterior materials for each unit shall be limited to masonry, precast, stucco, wood or cementitious siding. Secondary trim and accent elements may include composite materials if approved by the BAR. Samples of all materials shall be provided.
- d. Porches shall be wood and stoops shall be brick or metal and porch railings shall be a single material, either wood, or metal. Composite materials may be used in lieu of wood where specifically approved by the BAR.
- e. Chimney enclosures shall be brick, and watertables, exposed foundations shall be brick.
- f. Fireplace vents, flues, vent stacks and other similar protrusions shall not be permitted on any public street or private street frontage including corner units. Furnace vents shall discharge through the roof or the rear facade. HVAC vents or associated elements shall not be visible from a public street. Roof penetrations shall be confined to the rear of the building.
- g. Pitched roofs shall be standing seam metal (painted, galvanized or terne coated) and shingles shall be slate or metal, or a comparable high quality material approved by the Board of Architectural Review. (City Council)
- h. Fences located within the front and/or side yards shall made of painted wood or metal with a maximum of 30" to 42" height with a minimum of 50% openness.
- i. All retaining walls shall be brick or stone.
- j. Fixed plantation shutters shall be installed for all windows within the townhouse tandem garages facing the public or private street.

Townhouse

- k. Continue to work with Staff to enhance the side and rear elevations of the townhouse units and ARHA flats.
- l. Continue to work with Staff to reduce the actual or perceived height of the south facing facades of the market rate and ARHA units on Wythe Street.

- m. Useable front porches shall be added to 10-12 of the townhouses and/or ARHA triplex flats with the locations to be determined in consultation with Staff. All porches shall be 6 - 8 feet deep.

Alley Houses

- n. Continue to work with Staff to address the perceived mass and scale and refine details of these buildings.

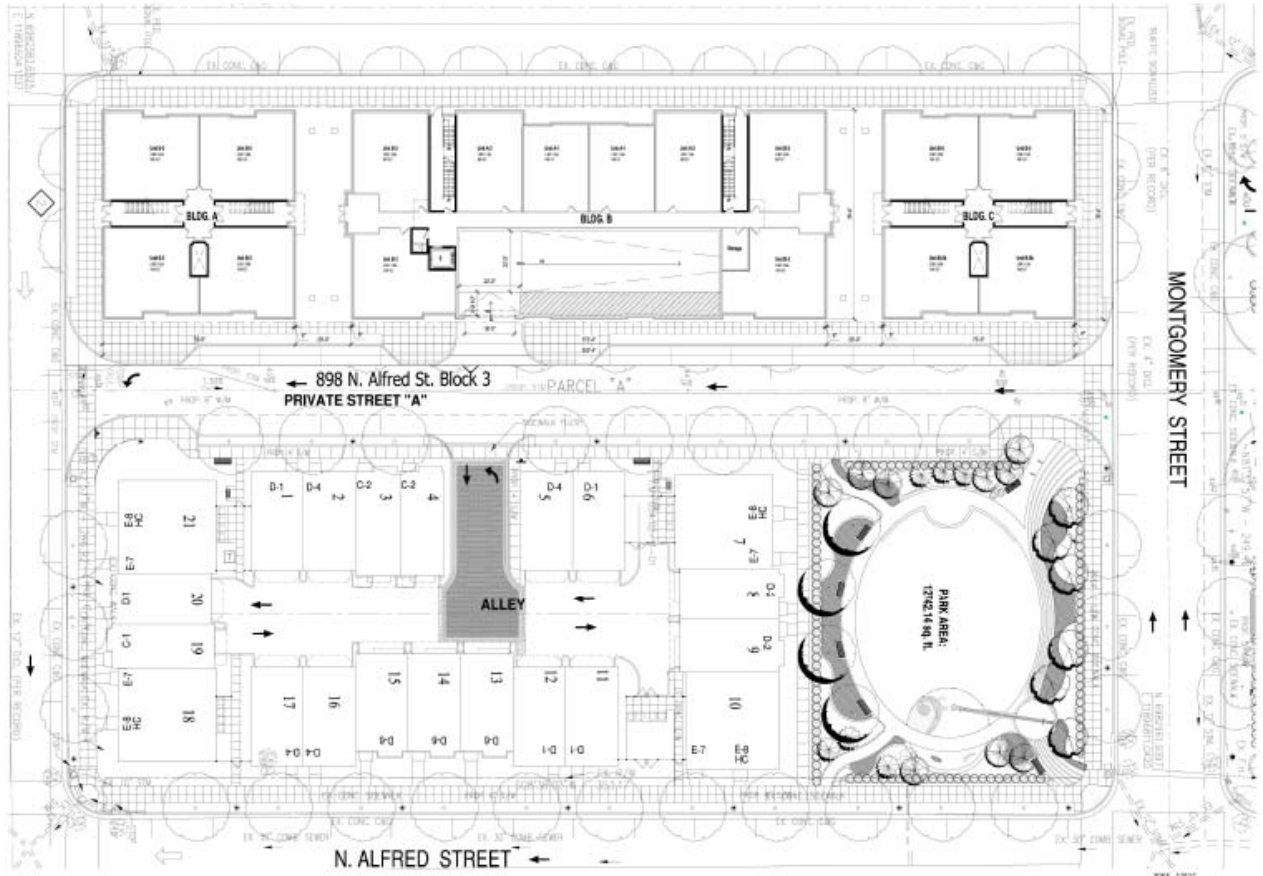
Multifamily Buildings

- o. Continue to work with Staff to enhance elevations of the multi-family buildings.
- p. North multifamily building: This building shall be refined by breaking its expression into subunits so that each of the architectural expressions has a consistent relationship to the geometry of the curved street, without modifying the footprint of the building.
- q. Architectural expression, multifamily buildings: the three proposed multifamily buildings shall be redesigned to the satisfaction of the Director, P&Z, such that each building expresses a clear and identifiable architectural style; further, the two south buildings shall be redesigned not to appear as twin buildings, and the north multifamily building shall be redesigned to express a smaller scale through subdivision of its mass into three visually distinct units.
- r. Entries at multifamily buildings: Building entries shall be designed to create a prominent and welcoming presence for all three buildings.
- s. The design of the multi family buildings shall be subject to the requirements herein to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z and the issues shall be addressed prior to public hearing before the Parker-Gray BAR. (P&Z) (PC)

Code Administration:

- F-1 The applicant must comply with the Code Administration conditions and comments set forth under DSP2007-00013.

V. IMAGES



EYA Companies

James Bland Phase IV Block 898 | Site Plan
Alexandria, VA | January 18, 2011



Copyright © 2011, KTGY Group, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



EYA Companies

James Bland Phase IV Block 898 | Elevation from Patrick Street
Alexandria, VA | January 18, 2011



EYA Companies

James Bland Phase IV Block 898 | Elevation from Private Alley
Alexandria, VA | January 18, 2011





Elevation from Madison/Montgomery Street



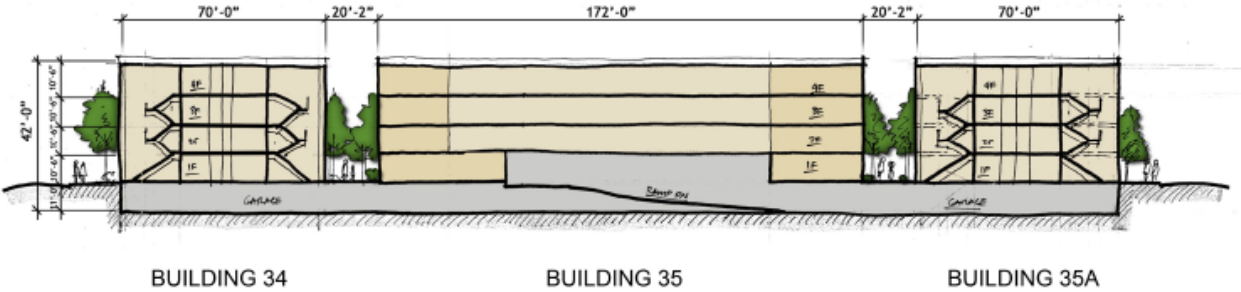
Elevation from Courtyard

EYA Companies

James Bland Phase IV Block 898 | Side Elevations

Alexandria, VA | January 18, 2011





EYA Companies James Bland Phase IV Block 898 | Building Section
Alexandria, VA | January 18, 2011

