

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 31, 2023

TO: GLORIA SITTON
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK AND CLERK OF COUNCIL

THRU: KARL W. MORITZ, DIRECTOR
PLANNING & ZONING

FROM: STEPHEN W. KULINSKI, CHAIR
OLD TOWN NORTH URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (UDAC)
FY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

This is the annual report for the Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC) for Fiscal Year 2023, as required by City Code Section 2-4-7(i)(1).

UDAC “review[s] applications to the City for Site Plan approval and Special Use Permits for compliance with the urban design guidelines for Old Town North when such guidelines are adopted by City Council” per section 6-505 of the Zoning Ordinance. UDAC provides guidance to staff and makes formal recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council on new development proposals that are located within the Old Town North Small Area Plan boundary for project sites that are not also within the City’s Old and Historic Alexandria District.

The guiding document for UDAC is the Urban Standards & Guidelines for Old Town North (UDSG), adopted by Ordinance on September 16, 2017 by City Council. The standards and guidelines in the UDSG are “intended to provide requirements and guidance in written and graphic form to implement the vision” of the Old Town North Small Area Plan. Additional guiding documents for the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) site, the PRGS Urban Design Standards and Guidelines addendum and PRGS Design Excellence Prerequisites and Criteria addendum, were approved by City Council on July 5, 2022.

Website:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/boards-and-commissions/urban-design-advisory-committee-serving-old-town-north>

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Policy and Membership Accomplishments

The Committee is comprised of five (5) members, each permitted to serve two (2)-year terms. Membership of UDAC consists of the following categories:

- Two (2) representatives of the Old Town North business community
- Two (2) residents representing the Old Town North residential community
- One (1) qualified professional skilled in urban design, architecture or landscape architecture

FY2022 Committee Members:

Member	Representation	First Appointed	Term End
Katherine Bingler	Resident	04.09.19	04.30.25
Thomas Soapes (Vice Chair)	Resident	10.05.18	10.31.24
Stephen Kulinski, AIA (Chair)	Business Community	02.10.15	02.28.25
Abbey Oklak, AIA, AICP, LEED AP (Secretary)	Design Professional	09.13.16	12.31.24
Zaira Suarez	Business Community	11.09.22	11.09.24

Staff Liaison(s):

Michael Swidrak, Planning and Zoning, served as the staff liaison at the start of FY23 through the end of the 2022 calendar year.

Daniel Welles, Planning and Zoning, acted as the staff liaison to UDAC starting at the beginning of the 2023 calendar year through the remaining course of FY23 and will continue in this role.

Membership and Leadership

Committee membership was remained unchanged over the course of the year, with the exception of the resignation of Theresa del Ninno in early July 2022. Ms. del Ninno was appointed to the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and resigned prior to joining her first BAR hearing on July 6. The vacancy for a Business Community member was filled by City Council in November 2022 by Zaira Suarez. Stephen Kulinski, Thomas Soapes and Abbey Oklak were re-elected as Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, respectively, at the October 25, 2022 City Council Legislative Meeting.

Meetings

UDAC meets monthly at its most frequent, but only meets as needed if no applications have been submitted for review. Additionally, extra meetings may be scheduled as needed. Meetings are generally scheduled for the first or second Wednesday of a given month at 9:00 a.m. in the City Hall Chet and Sabra Avery Conference Room, Room 2000.

UDAC held four (4) meetings in FY2023. The meetings were scheduled as “hybrid” meetings in City Hall, with most members attending in person but also providing a virtual option to facilitate online viewing and participation in the meetings. Zaira Suarez attended virtually via Zoom for the November 2022 meeting, while Abbey Oklak attended virtually at the June 2023 meeting via Zoom.

The proceedings are summarized below. The full meeting notes for each meeting are located on the UDAC website:

July 13, 2022:

- The applicant for the Montgomery Center redevelopment site presented to UDAC for the second time. The presentation included a letter from a resident of the community expressing concerns about the height and the scale of the building. The Committee noted that the design had improved but expressed some concerns about on-site parking and the safety and functionality of the proposed paseo.

November 16, 2022:

- The applicant for the Montgomery Center redevelopment site presented to UDAC for the third time. The Committee and applicant discussion focused on slight alterations to the height and more light introduced to the amenity space. The Committee voted 3-0 that the development proposal met the standards and guidelines in the UDSG. Zaira Suarez did not vote as she had to leave early due to a scheduling conflict. The applicant would be returning to the Committee one more time for the final endorsement letter.
- Staff gave a brief presentation that outlined the two design pathways for design review for projects the Committee would be reviewing on the PRGS site. A new set of Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (UDSGA) as well as Design Excellence Prerequisite Criteria (DEPC) were introduced as supplemental guidelines created for the PRGS site specifically based on the Old Town North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (UDSG).
- The applicant for the redevelopment of the PRGS site presented to UDAC the Infrastructure DSP (IDSP), which included the general street and public realm layout for the site.

February 1, 2023:

- The applicant for the Montgomery Center redevelopment presented the updated draft endorsement letter to the Committee. The endorsement letter was approved by the Committee on a 5-0 vote.
- The applicant for the redevelopment at the PRGS site presented the IDSP to the Committee after it was briefly introduced by staff at the previous meeting. The applicant highlighted new roads and blocks that would be constructed on the site. The Committee raised concerns about making the streetscape more pedestrian-friendly. The Committee voted 5-0 in support of the IDSP.
- The applicant for the redevelopment at PRGS site presented the overview and design approach for the DSUPs for Blocks A, B, and C to the Committee. Questions were raised by the Committee regarding green roof features and overall rooftop amenities.

June 7, 2023:

- The applicant for the Tidlock redevelopment site (1033, 1055, 1111 North Fairfax Street) returned to the Committee to discuss removing the second floor and accessible rooftop from the retail and arts building, Building C, due to increasing construction costs. The discussion between the Committee and applicant centered around the reduction of floor area to building C causing a loss of character to the site. The Committee was understanding and overall supportive of the changes brought forward, but encouraged the applicant to explore new design features to Building C.

GOALS FOR THE COMING YEAR

1. Continue to standardize the UDAC process for hybrid meetings that prioritize in-person meetings but allow for an adequate virtual participation option.
2. Prepare UDAC members for review of projects tied to the PRGS site, including the utilization of the UDSG Addendum and Design Excellence Standards for each project as applicable.
3. Continue to plan a yearly walking tour of previous UDAC-reviewed development sites.
4. Discuss, present and share ideas on urban design principles with UDAC members, including at Committee meetings.

ATTACHMENTS

1. FY2023 Attendance Sheet

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING ATTENDANCE REPORT**

JULY 1, 2022 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2023

CHAIRPERSON: _____ **STEPHEN W. KULINSKI, AIA** _____

MEMBER'S NAME	July 2022	November 2022	February 2023	June 2023
Abbey Oklak	X	E	X	X
Zaira Suarez	N/A ¹	X	X	X
Thomas Soapes	X	X	X	X
Katherine Auth Bingler	X	X	X	X
Stephen Kulinski	X	X	X	X

INDICATE: X - FOR PRESENT E - FOR EXCUSED U - FOR UNEXCUSED

LIST OF THOSE WHO DID NOT ATTEND 75% OF MEETINGS:

N/A

**FORM MUST BE SIGNED BY CHAIRPERSON
(APPROVED)** _____



(Chairperson)

¹ Zaira Suarez was not appointed to the Committee until November 2022.