



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

DATE: October 3, 2023

TO: Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC)

FROM: Planning & Zoning Staff

SUBJECT: Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) – Block A (First Review)

Introduction

The applicant, Hilco Redevelopment Partners (HRP), have submitted their Concept 2 submissions for Block A as part of the redevelopment process of the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS). The applicant team is seeking UDAC's feedback on the proposed site configuration, architectural approach and conformity with the PRGS Design Excellence approach. The UDAC website contains a link to the applicant's presentation.

In addition to the presentation on the UDAC website, the applicant team has completed the Design Excellence Matrix for the sitewide prerequisites (to be confirmed by City staff) and the criteria (to be reviewed and potentially endorsed by UDAC) for each building and their justification for each building's compliance with the criteria. For this initial submission, staff has responded to each Design Prerequisite with our confirmation that the building complies, or in areas where compliance is not clear, suggested a continued refinement for the proposed building or site design to meet the Design Excellence Criteria. Please see staff responses below in addition to the Design Excellence Matrix.

Broadly, each building is either achieving or working towards achieving the Design Excellence Criteria and staff will provide with the next UDAC submission where we find continued work on the building or site design is important and still needed to achieve the Design Excellence Prerequisites and Criteria's intent for excellence.

Prerequisites:

Prerequisite 1: Superior Urban Form

- **Staff Response:** Staff appreciates the applicant's efforts to successfully design a building with an unusual lot shape and size yet does not find the proposed design fully achieves a unique and memorable urban place. Recognizing the prominent location of this building on the site (an identified gateway) and adjacency to two significant park spaces, staff recommends that the design be further refined to incorporate a more dynamic building

form, in keeping with the applicant’s design reference to a ship, and to engage the public and connect this building to other buildings on the site and the publicly accessible open space. Specifically, the glass “sail” elements (actually the primary building enclosure on the east and west) should be angled slightly outward as they rise, and the glazing system carefully detailed to achieve the correct balance between surface and transparency; second, staff feels strongly that, with the remaining four towers on Blocks B and C privatized by their proposed use (residential) that Block A should be designed not to preclude the incorporation of some degree of public use of the rooftop on Block A, whether through the inclusion of a food and beverage outlet, or even a public river overlook that is only accessible during select hours.

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Prerequisite 2: Environmental Innovation Leader

- **Staff Response:** *Will satisfy.* As the PRGS site includes a Coordinated Sustainability Strategy that each block will employ, staff is comfortable that this will be achieved yet notes that sufficient information has not been provided.

Prerequisite 3: Quality and Durable Building Materials are Specified

- **Staff Response:** *Satisfied.* The proposed materials are high-quality, durable, and will withstand the test of time.

Prerequisite 4: Off-street Parking is located below grade.

- **Staff Response:** *Satisfied.*

Prerequisite 5: Exceptional Site Response

- **Staff Response:** *Working towards.* The applicant team should continue to work on this prerequisite to ensure that the building is integrated with its waterfront setting, has a welcoming and has a dynamic interaction with the adjacent public open spaces. This includes the building relation to North Fairfax Street at the ground level and above (including the relationship of the overhang balconies and sails to the sidewalk below), and the creation of unique amenities, such as rooftop open space with some public accessibility (separate from a perpetual public access). Staff cautions that this building should be designed to engage with the public rather than unintentionally privatize the adjacent open space, since it is the building that most clearly constitutes a gateway for people entering the development from Old Town North along North Fairfax or North Royal streets.