

Design Review Board Case # 20-0002
Block 32 – Carlyle Plaza II / Carlyle Park Towers

Application	General Data	
Project Name: Block 32 – Carlyle Plaza II / Carlyle Park Towers Location: Block 32 – Eisenhower East Applicant: Carlyle Plaza, LLC c/o McGuireWoods LLP	DRB Date:	March 25, 2021
	Site Area:	Block 32 – Eisenhower East
	Zone:	CDD #11
	Proposed Use:	Residential, Retail, Parking, and Open Space
	Net Floor Area:	1,387,170 square feet (entire Block 32 development)
Purpose of Application: DRB review and endorsement of the open space for the entire Block 32 Carlyle Plaza Two / Carlyle Park Towers development, including the open space deck, the transition zone, the South Circle Park, and the North Circle Park.		
Staff Reviewers: Robert M. Kerns, AICP robert.kerns@alexandriava.gov Thomas H. Canfield, AIA tom.canfield@alexandriava.gov Nathan Imm nathan.imm@alexandriava.gov Anna Franco anna.franco@alexandriava.gov		
<p>DRB HEARING, MARCH 25, 2021: The DRB voted unanimously to approve the overall open space for the Block 32 development, on a motion by Roger Lewis, seconded by Councilmember Del Pepper, carried on a vote of 4-0, with Mr. Alan Lynch absent.</p> <p>The Board supported the proposal and voiced several positive sentiments regarding the overall open space design, but particularly for the transition zone design. Councilwoman Del Pepper expressed that the transition zone and South Circle Park is like a work of art and something new and different that other cities do not have. Board Member Roger Lewis asked the applicant to consider what the transition zone and South Circle Park would look like in the winter. He stated that the form and shape of the transition zone would be a dramatic visual in the wintertime but that winter plantings should still be incorporated into the design. The applicant confirmed that evergreen plantings would be mixed in with deciduous plantings throughout the South Circle Park and the transition zone.</p> <p>Board Members Roger Lewis and Lee Quill recommended the applicant provide designated bicycle and electric scooter parking areas in the South Circle park as the park could be a popular destination for these users. There were also concerns amongst the commissioners that skate boarding could be an issue.</p>		

Board Member Tom Canfield noted staff recommendation to design all elevators in a similar manner to the elevator proposed as part of the transition zone so that these access points stand out from the rest of the building and are easily identified for wayfinding purposes. The applicant, Jeff Zell, noted this and proposed the elevators be different colors for easier wayfinding.

The Board inquired about the timing for completion of the North and South Tower buildings. The applicant is looking to start construction at the end of 2021 or the beginning of 2022 and estimates the North Tower will take approximately 18 months to 2 years to build.

Further, the Board reviewed the preliminary design for the North Circle Park, which will be finalized during Final Site Plan. Councilwoman Del Pepper stated that the park was beautiful in its simplicity and overall support of the North Circle Park design was included in the action so the Board would not need to review the North Circle Park design again in the future.

DRB HEARING FOR ARCHITECTURE, JANUARY 21, 2021: The DRB voted unanimously to approve the overall architecture for the Tower 1 and Tower 2 buildings, on a motion by Mr. Tom Canfield, seconded by Mr. Roger Lewis, carried on a vote of 4-0, with Mr. Alan Lynch absent.

The vote was followed by a work session on the open space, where the Board made observations and recommendations regarding the proposed open space for the development. Some Board members noted that many of the proposed changes were significant changes from the originally approved plan, which the DRB really liked. Some stated a preference for a wider space over Savoy Street and the “diving board” platform over the transition zone to the South Circle Park. Other members noted that the water features associated with the transition zone could be further incorporated into the ground level plane for the South Circle Park and asked the applicant to consider moving water elements in the South Circle Park off-center. The Board also emphasized the importance of elevator access to the above-grade elevated deck. The Board generally agreed that the applicant needed to create stronger visual emphasis for all three elevator shafts.

The Board generally supported the proposed design changes but asked for supplemental material to be provided at the next DRB meeting, including information on the proposed pedestrian paving for the project, showing proposed building materials and how buildings interact with the ground plane on the open space renderings, and what measures could be implemented to invite park visitors up the transition zone steps. The DRB agreed the applicant shall present a revised open space plan at the next scheduled DRB meeting for review and endorsement.

DRB WORK SESSION, DECEMBER 17, 2020: Based on the feedback from the October 22, 2020 DRB meeting, the applicant worked to address the Board’s feedback and recommendations and made several changes to the building architecture, including:

- Changes to the front porch of the residential units to make them look more residential rather than commercial.

- Changes to the grid pattern on the building so the dimensions of the grid change throughout the building.
- Plantings incorporated at the top of the 4-story base along John Carlyle Street.
- Modifications to the façade of the 4-story base so that it is more difficult to distinguish between which levels have residential units which levels are garage.
- Removal of the LED lights that spanned the height of the two towers.

Overall, the Board found that the applicant’s materials and architectural design were acceptable. The DRB was prepared to approve the architecture, but due to timing and potential noticing issues, the Board decided to wait until the January 21, 2021 DRB meeting to formally approve the architecture.

DRB WORK SESSION, OCTOBER 22, 2020: The Board generally found the scale, form, and massing of the two tower buildings both effective and successful. The Board complimented the applicant’s massing and stated the two tower buildings accommodate excellent views from every direction and provide efficient light and air to all units in the building. The Board also commended the differing heights of the two tower buildings and the variety and limited shadows it creates. The board also supported the applicant’s placement of residential liner units along the above grade parking garage which screen most of the garage from the public realm. Overall, the Board stated they would approve an endorsement of the architecture in the future, but would like to see the following changes:

- Consider removal of the recessed LED vertical lighting that spans the entire height of both towers.
- Differentiate the 4-story base located along John Carlyle Street from the adjacent tower architecture by exploring darker building material colors and massing that creates the base as its own form on the building façade.
- Incorporate plantings on the façade of the 4-story base along John Carlyle Street so that pedestrians are more aware of the green space/open space deck above.
- Modify the façade of the 4-story base so that it is more difficult to distinguish between which levels have residential units fronting John Carlyle and which levels are garage.
- Alter the design of the residential liner units along John Carlyle Street so the read more as residential rather than commercial.
- Consider changes to the spacing of the grid on the face of the building.

Block 32 – DRB Open Space Review

Background

The applicant, Carlyle Plaza, LLC, represented by McGuire Woods LLP, is requesting Design Review Board (DRB) review and endorsement of the open space areas proposed for the entire Block 32 Carlyle Plaza Two / Carlyle Park Towers development. Open space areas mainly consist of:

- The **elevated open space deck**, which would run between the four towers proposed for the site and extend from the AlexRenew field and stadium seating to the edge of the parking garage at Eisenhower Avenue.
- The **transition zone**, which is the area between the elevated open space deck and the South Circle Park that includes staircases, terraces, and an elevated that provides a transition to from the deck to the at-grade South Circle Park. The transition zone is partially located on private land and South Circle Park, which is public land.
- The **South Circle Park**, which is located adjacent to the transition zone and is a half-circle shaped park created by the removal of the Eisenhower traffic circle. This area of land would continue to be owned by the City but maintained by the applicant in perpetuity.
- And the **North Circle Park**, which is located on the north side of Eisenhower Avenue and is a second half circle shaped park created by the removal of the Eisenhower traffic circle. This area of land would continue to be owned by the City. The applicant would install the improvements for the park, but the City’s Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities department would maintain the park.

Approval Process

The DRB has already approved the architecture for the phase one tower buildings located along the extension of John Carlyle Street and Eisenhower Avenue at the January 21, 2021 meeting of the DRB. The DRB also conducted a preliminary review of the proposed open space amendments at the January 21, 2021 DRB meeting and provided feedback as summarized earlier in this report. The DRB will consider endorsing the open space design at this March 25, 2021 meeting of the DRB. In addition to this DRB submission, the applicant has submitted a DSUP (Development Special Use Permit) amendment for the Carlyle Plaza II development, which was approved in 2012, in order to provide for a shift in use from office to residential above and beyond the quantity currently allowed. If the DRB approves this DRB submission, the DRB’s approval will be forwarded to Planning Commission and City Council for consideration in their review of Tower One and Tower Two and open space DSUP amendments.

The City’s Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) are also providing feedback on the proposed Block 32 open space design, with an emphasis on programming, amenities, and maintenance. The PRC reviewed the open space at their February 18, 2021 meeting and will vote to endorse the open space at their meeting on March 18, 2021.

DRB Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this DRB meeting is to is conduct a final review of the proposed open space amendments and vote on approval of the open space design.

Proposal

The applicant, Carlyle Plaza, LLC, proposes to construct two towers of varying height on the Block 32 development site in phase one of the overall development. The applicant is also making changes to the open space design with the DSUP amendment.

The applicant's proposal contains many of the elements included in the approved open space design, including an extensive public open space deck that extends from the Alex Renew stadium seating to a "transition zone" at the north end of the deck, still including a landscaped assemblage of overlooks and stairs, which leads down to the South-Circle Park. A playground at the south end of the park is also a continued element of the open space deck design.

Notable differences to the open space deck include a staircase and ramp connection over Savoy Street where there was previously a continuous over Savoy, the addition of an outdoor amphitheater structure near the Savoy Street connection, the addition of a covered pavilion just west of the amphitheater, the addition of two more public access elevators at Savoy Street and the transition zone (in addition to the one previously proposed at Bartholomew Street), the addition of interactive outdoor play and study areas on the northern half of the deck, a modified transition zone design, and the removal of the elevated bike ramp that lead from the elevated deck near AlexRenew, down to the at grade sidewalk near the intersection of Holland Lane and Eisenhower Avenue. Please see Attachment #3 "Proposed Site Plan" for reference.

Staff Analysis & Recommendations

Analysis

The applicant has proposed several significant changes to the overall approved open space design for the Block 32 development, most significant being (1) the removal of the elevated bike ramp that extended from the top of the elevated deck to an at-grade location near the location of Eisenhower Avenue, (2) the removal of a continuous slope on the open space deck, (3) the redesign of the transition zone, (4) the redesign of the North and South Circle parks, and (5) the addition of a large private open space area between Tower 1 and Tower 2. These changes are illustrated in Attachment #4 "Notable Block 32 Open Space Changes".

However, over the course of the DRB and staff review of the open space areas, the applicant has been responsive and made several changes to their initial application to create a balance between the approved open space and the changes outlined above. Most recently, the applicant has added a green area to the east of the transition zone elevator core and added color to the elevator shaft (see Attachment #5 "Green Area Near Elevator Core & Colored Elevator") and has provided pedestrian pavement information (see Attachment #6 "Pedestrian Pavement Information"). Staff is supportive of these changes and of the previous changes the applicant has made since their initial application in July 2020. While the loss of the elevated bike ramp is a significant change, staff finds that investment in other areas of the plan (i.e. the pavilion and additional elevators) and the potential construction of an at-grade bike lane along Holland Lane are sufficient improvements to justify progressing this design forward to the Planning Commission and City Council for their review.

The pavilion, on the open space deck, located just north of Savoy Street, is an especially exciting improvement to the plan that the applicant and staff worked together to develop. The proposed pavilion is a new component of the open space design for this development and was not included in the current development approval for the property. Staff is supportive of the pavilion and would like to see it used daily and into the evening for special events like concerts, fitness classes, and other appropriate functions.

The current design of the pavilion, shown in Attachment #7 “Open Space Deck Pavilion, is a placeholder design which would be modified with the applicant’s submission of the phase 2 Final Site Plan. Due to the intended active nature of the pavilion, Staff recommends that the pavilion include lighting so it may be accessed after dark.

Recommendations

Overall, Staff finds the changes acceptable but recommends the DRB consider three changes to the plans. These changes do not require review at an additional DRB meeting but should be coordinated with staff in subsequent preliminary plan submissions for the DSUP amendment. Recommendations include:

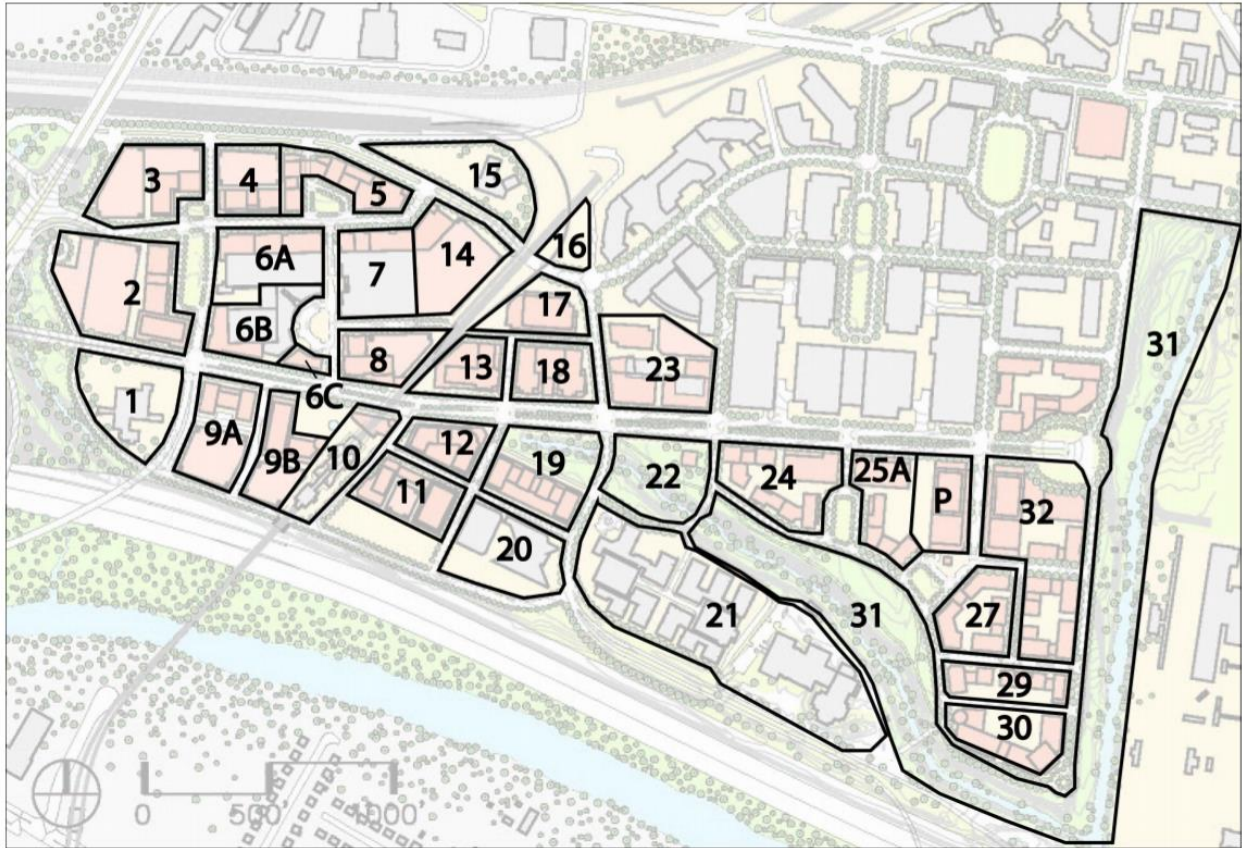
1. All elevators with access to the elevated open space deck should be called out in a similar manner with color or extensive use of glass, or both, to make them more identifiable to pedestrian and more inviting to visit the elevated park.
2. The Savoy Street elevator should be modified to stand out from the rest of the building. The shaft should be colored or otherwise accented per the recommendation above but also should be taller, project beyond the main building form, and possibly be separated from it by a strong vertical reveal. The applicant should also consider providing plantings around the base of the elevator shaft. (See Attachment #8 “Savoy Elevator Shaft”)
3. Change the vertical support for deck that covers the elevator and bike room area to something more dynamic that signals the presence of the functions beyond. For example, the support could be colored, be constructed of a difference material, and/or consist of multiple, angled elements. (See Attachment #9 “Bike Room Support”)

Conclusion

Staff recommends that the DRB vote to endorse the open space amendments shown in the attached as they are shown in the submission received on March 4, 2021.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Eisenhower East / Carlyle Block Map



Attachment 2: Approved Site Plan



Attachment 3: Proposed Site Plan



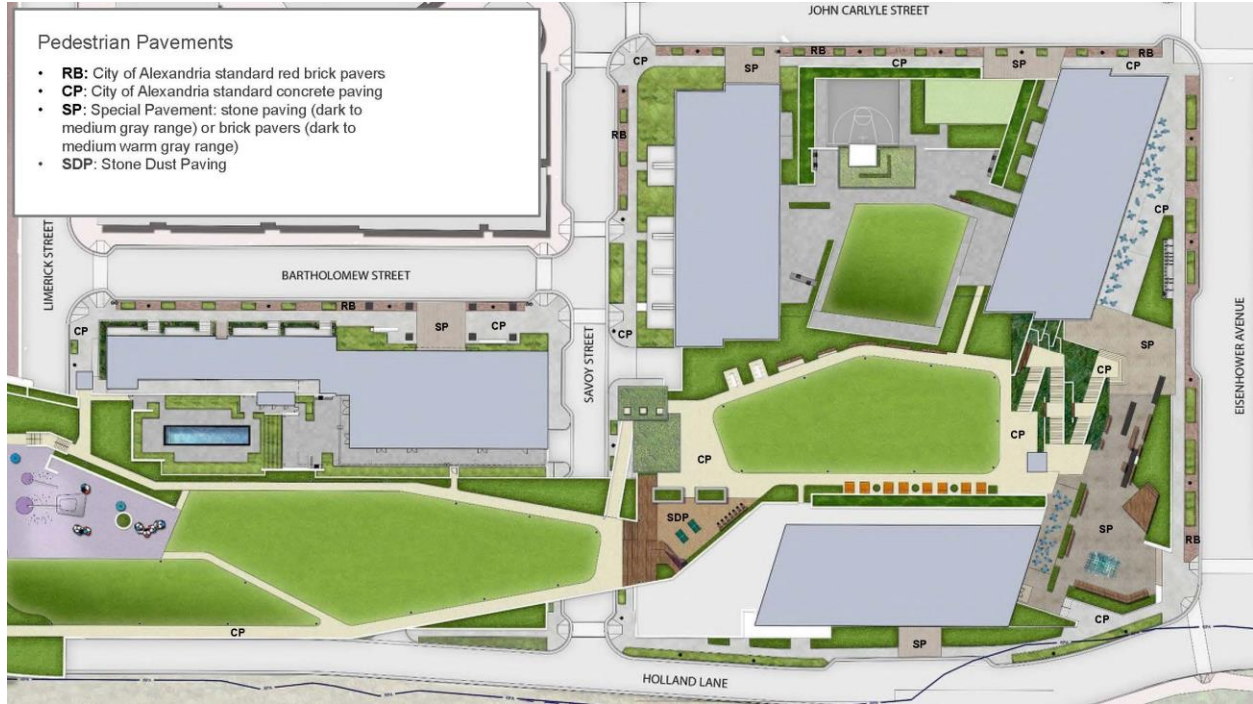
Attachment 4: Notable Block 32 Open Space Changes



Attachment 5: Green Area Near Elevator Core & Colored Elevator



Attachment 6: Pedestrian Pavement Information



Attachment #7: Proposed Open Space Deck Pavilion



Attachment #8: Savoy Elevator Shaft



Attachment #9: Bike Room Support

