

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:	October 22, 2020
	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: Conceptual review of the height, scale and massing for two tower buildings within Block 32 of the Eisenhower East area.		
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 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 they read more as residential rather than commercial.
- Consider changes to the spacing of the grid on the face of the building.

Block 32 – DRB Concept Review

Background

The applicant, Carlyle Plaza, LLC, represented by McGuire Woods LLP, is requesting Design Review Board (DRB) review and comment on two new tower buildings at the northwest corner of Eisenhower Avenue and John Carlyle Street. The two towers are part of the larger Eisenhower Block 32 development (see Attachment 1 “Eisenhower East Block Map”), which extends from Eisenhower East to the north, Limerick Street to the South, John Carlyle Street and Bartholomew Street to the west and Holland Lane to the east, and had been previously designed and approved as a pair of office towers.

The DRB’s review of the Block 32 development began as early as 2008 when the City initiated a coordinated planning effort for “South Carlyle”, which included the AlexRenew office building, Carlyle Block P, and Eisenhower East Block 32. In 2011 and 2012, the DRB worked with the applicant to refine the site design of the Block 32 portion of the South Carlyle area and develop the Carlyle Plaza Design Guidelines. The DRB recommended approval with conditions to City Council on April 2012 (via DRB Case #2011-0003) and the development was subsequently approved by City Council in June 2012 (via DSUP#2011-0031) and extended to 2027 (via DSUP#2019-0024).

The Block 32 development approval includes four tower buildings (and a residential liner building along Bartholomew Street) consisting of 755,114 square feet of office floor area and 632,056 square feet of residential floor area. The approval includes a four-to-five story, above-grade parking garage that will provide parking for all the buildings and is designed to accommodate a green roof which will be open to the public as open space. The rooftop open space will connect the Block 32 development with the athletic field on the Alexandria Renew site, creating over 5 acres of integrated open space. The developer will also design and construct the parks created by the elimination of the Eisenhower Circle, referred to as North-Circle Park and South-Circle Park. The extensive rooftop public open space is connected to grade via a “transition zone” – a landscaped assemblage of overlooks, terraces and stairs that leads down to the South-Circle Park. Please see Attachment 2 “Approved Site Plan” for reference.

Approval Process

In addition to this DRB submission, the applicant has submitted a DSUP (Development Special Use Permit) amendment for the Carlyle Plaza II development that was approved in 2012 in order to provide for a shift in use from office to residential above and beyond the quantity currently allowed. Staff has received and reviewed the Concept submission from the applicant (received July 2020) and provided comments accordingly. The applicant may proceed with DRB approval and recommendation to Planning Commission and City Council of Tower One and Tower Two for the DSUP amendments.

The purpose of this DRB meeting is to determine if the DRB finds any fundamental flaws with the scale, height, massing, overall architectural concept, and relationship to the right-of-way with this concept submission. At a subsequent meeting, the DRB will review the completed façade architecture and may provide a recommendation for City Council in the DSUP amendment for the overall development.

Proposal

The applicant, Carlyle Plaza, LLC, proposes to construct two towers of varying height on the Block 32 development site within Eisenhower East, approximately 0.4 miles from the Eisenhower Metro Station. The applicant proposes residential units with ground floor retail in Tower One (the north tower) and residential units in Tower Two (the south tower). The towers are conjoined at the base by an above-grade parking structure that ascends approximately 4 stories above the ground floor retail and lobby space.

Form, Massing, and Facade

The two tower buildings are simple but dramatic in overall massing and orientation. Both towers are oriented with the long facades of the building facing north and south, and the end facades facing east and west. While Tower Two is rectangular in form and parallel with Savoy Street to the south, Tower One is a parallelogram with an acute angle towards Eisenhower Avenue that accommodates a larger pedestrian area along Eisenhower Avenue.

The façades of both towers are nearly identical in form and design and feature a consistent façade treatment that varies only slightly from base to rooftop. The rooftop forms are similar as well but are angled in opposite directions so that the higher portion of the Tower One rooftop is directed west toward John Carlyle Street, with Tower Two being just the opposite. The two towers also have different heights, with Tower One rising two stories higher than Tower Two. While the façade treatment allows the two towers to read as a pair, the varied heights and angles of the buildings provide for differentiation between the two structures.

Parking & Open Grade Open Space

Due to site constraints, parking for the entire Block 32 development is provided in a 4 story above grade parking garage that spans the entirety of the Tower One and Tower Two portions of the site as well as the majority of Block 32.

The parking garage structure conjoins the two tower buildings along their base and is well integrated into the design of the two towers. The 4-story garage also underlines the difference in height between the 28- and 30-story towers, especially along the John Carlyle side of the development. On the John Carlyle façade, the parking garage is further separated from the towers via large areas of glass on either side of the 4 -story structure and by a slight protrusion of the structure forward of the two tower building facades. The applicant has thoughtfully lined the parking garage with residential units along the Eisenhower East façade and much of the John Carlyle Street façade so that only a small portion of the John Carlyle Street façade garage is presented to the public realm. The third and fourth stories of the 4-story structure along John Carlyle Street are not lined with residential units and the applicant has proposed spandrel glass and ventilation screens to better integrate the parking garage with the rest of the façade.

The parking garage structure spans almost the entirety of the Block 32 development and the above-grade open space atop the garage creates a significant pedestrian backbone to the overall Block 32 development. In contrast to the 2012 DSUP approval, the applicant is now proposing that the rooftop of the Phase 1 portion of the garage be open space that is contiguous with the open space provided throughout the center of the Block 32 development, which was previously occupied by additional levels of garage. The open space between the two towers is currently shown as private open space serving the residential and is illustrated on page 23 of the submission.

Site Access

The applicant is currently requesting one (1) point of vehicular access via a parking garage entrance on Savoy Street in Phase 1. Future phases of development will likely provide additional access points to the parking garage. All garage access points will be further refined during the DSUP amendment review process

Pedestrian access to the property is provided via the lobby entrances on John Carlyle Street and the retail storefronts along Eisenhower Avenue. While the applicant has proposed schematics for access to the above-grade open space deck from Eisenhower Avenue, the exact design of this access point will be determined during the DSUP amendment review process in which Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA) and Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) will be providing additional input.

Relationship to Pedestrian Realm

The City will likely be commencing removal of the Eisenhower Avenue and Holland Lane traffic circle in the Winter of 2020/2021. The removal of the traffic circle and transformation of the intersection into a “T” intersection will create two new open spaces areas directly north and south of Eisenhower Avenue called “North Circle Park” and “South Circle Park”. Block 32 is adjacent to the South Circle Park, and while only a small portion of the South Circle Park is included in Phase 1, the applicant has angled Tower One away from Eisenhower Avenue in order to create a diagonal street wall accommodating and facing the new park area. The space created by the building angle also provides a large pedestrian area directly in front of the ground floor retail spaces along Eisenhower Avenue that could be utilized for outdoor dining, events and gathering as illustrated on page 22 of the applicant’s submission. The Tower One building is closest to the street at the northwest building corner, and only provides limited pedestrian space in this area. The majority of the ground level pedestrian activity is oriented toward Eisenhower Avenue and to a lesser degree toward John Carlyle Street.

Carlyle Plaza Design Guidelines

In order to establish some certainty as to what that future design may be, City Council approved the Carlyle Plaza Design Guidelines as part of the original May 2012 approval. The applicant’s design team worked extensively with staff and the DRB to refine the guidelines to a point where staff believes that these guidelines will provide the necessary direction that will result in a high-quality level of design for the future buildings. The Design Guidelines include the following:

- A summary of the goals and principles for the development.
- A description of the concept plan, including identification of uses and publicly accessible open space areas.

- A list of sustainable features that will be incorporated into the development, including reclaimed water use from Alexandria Renew and bio-filters to treat stormwater.
- A discussion of the open space framework that will be approved by the DSUP.
- A discussion and images of the architectural intent which addresses overall massing, architectural treatment of each building depending on use, tower expression and building tops, materials palette, and entrance and building base conditions.
- Diagrams depicting massing guidelines including ground floor conditions and building entrances, tower locations and building heights, and tower height variation.
- Guidelines for incorporating the parking, service, and loading entrances and areas within the design and how to treat the visible portions. A description of the architectural and landscape treatments to address the interim conditions of the phased project

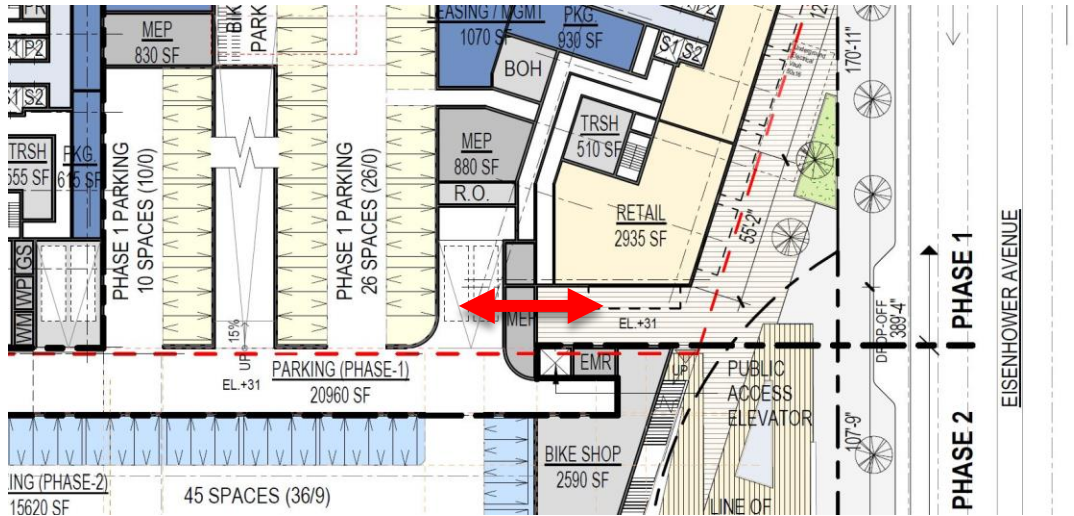
Eisenhower East Design Guidelines

The proposed project is located in the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan and will therefore also need to comply with the Eisenhower East Design Guidelines. While the Design Guidelines are currently being reviewed and discussed by the City for an update in the near future, Staff believes the proposed project should rely more heavily on Carlyle Plaza Guidelines but still adhere to the core principles of the Eisenhower East Design Guidelines.

Staff Analysis & Recommendations

Overall, Staff finds the scale, height, and massing consistent with the 2012 DSUP approval (see Attachment 2), with positive changes to the façade treatment and the building’s interaction with the ground level public realm. Staff recommends the DRB consider the following changes to the concept plans:

- Provide or label the location of the vertical venting for the parking garage on the open space terrace level.
- Consider removing 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.
- Other City staff have identified that the northwest corner of Tower One appears to be too close to the Eisenhower Avenue/John Carlyle corner. Staff recommends pulling back the footprint for the first and/or second floor(s) of the building to ease pedestrian movements but retaining the proposed building footprint for the floors above. This would create an inviting covered retail entrance at this corner of the building.
- Provide the gross floor area and net floor area for Phase 1 on page 2 “Zoning Tabulation”.
- Provide enhanced, direct access from ground floor level of the parking garage to the ground floor plaza for improved retail access. See diagram below.

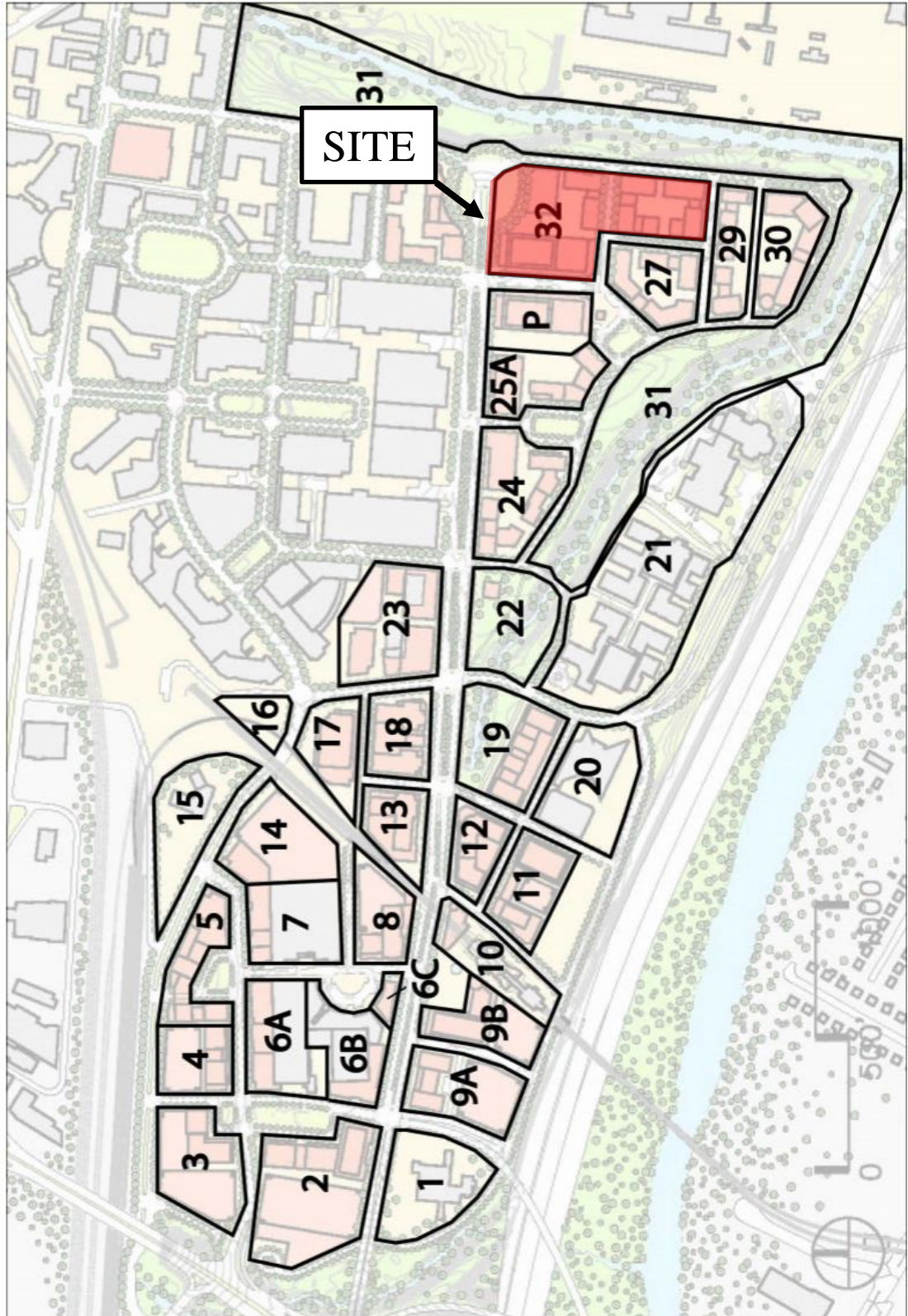


Conclusion

Staff recommends that the DRB vote to endorse the concept submission, subject to the suggested alterations above, and provide general direction to the applicant regarding the key issues to address in a future meeting. The applicant will return to the DRB to discuss refinements made to the plans to address these issues.

Attachment 1: Eisenhower East Block Map

Eisenhower East / Carlyle Blocks



Attachment 2: Approved Site Plan

