

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 6, 2019

TO: MEMBERS OF THE CARLYLE/EISENHOWER EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD (DRB)

FROM: NATHAN IMM, PRINCIPAL PLANNER, PLANNING AND ZONING

SUBJECT: HOFFMAN BLOCKS 4 & 5, WEST TOWER HEIGHT MODIFICATION (DRB#2019-0004)

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### Project Background and Description

The Hoffman Town Center Blocks 4 & 5 project was last reviewed by the Board in January 2018. Various aspects of the project had been presented to the Board at five (5) other meetings, throughout 2017. The DSUP application (DSUP#2017-0023) for the project was approved by the Planning Commission and City Council in March 2018.

The project consists of three residential buildings atop a podium building with retail and parking encompassing the project footprint. The five-level podium contains retail uses including the approximate 80,000 square foot anchor grocery tenant, 129,000 square feet of other retail uses and 1,546 parking spaces. The applicant publicly announced that Wegman's would be the grocery tenant.

The residential buildings were originally described as three separate types of residential uses. A 10-story, 134-unit condominium building is located on the west side of the project. In the center of the project is a U-shaped apartment complex with 430 rental apartment units proposed. The eastern side of the project proposes a senior living building with 139 units.

A public plaza located on Mandeville Lane is a central feature of the project. Open spaces on the podium roof are provided as amenities for the residential uses. The project includes improvements to the entire surrounding street frontage, with road width and sidewalk reconfigurations to create a more active, attractive, and safe pedestrian realm.

### Proposed Amendment

Since receiving approval, the applicant has indicated that changes in market conditions have altered the feasibility of the project as originally proposed. Among these, the applicant determined that the building formerly known as the "condo building" during project

development would be more feasible as a multifamily rental product. The program change to the building, now referenced as the “West Tower,” also necessitates structural and architectural modifications in order for the project to be effectively marketed and financed.

Staff notes that since project inception and throughout the various cycle of reviews, the West Tower changed relatively little. The design was noted as distinctive with a strong vertical expression and was found to be an important design element in a very large and complex project.

#### *Height Change*

Exhibits submitted show a reduction in height of the West Tower from 200 feet 4 inches to 182 feet above grade at the south facade. This is a reduction in height of 18 feet 4 inches. The number of floors above the podium base is reduced by only one floor, from ten (10) to nine (9) floors, however the typical floor-to-floor height of the remaining floors has been reduced from 11 feet to 9 feet 8 inches.

#### *Footprint Change*

According to the applicant, the change from condominium to apartment use necessitates modifications to the size and configuration of units. These changes further influence hallway width and column spacing. Because columns must carry through the building vertically with minimal deviation, this also impacts parking space and drive aisle configurations on levels P1-P5 within the podium structure.

Overall, the entire building footprint has shifted east and has been slightly reduced in its overall length along the west façade at Stovall Street, as shown in the exhibit. The most prominent change of this shift is the setback of the tower from the podium edge on the west façade. The original design proposed an approximate nine (9) foot setback of the tower from the podium edge. The revised footprint means that the building is set about five (5) additional feet for a setback of around 14 feet.

#### Staff Analysis

##### *Height*

Overall staff finds the reduction in height acceptable. The West Tower remains taller than the low-rise portion of the multi-family building that faces Mandeville Lane, which is approximately 136 feet in height, and is shorter than the high-rise portion of the multi-family building located farther north which is about 222 feet. Thus there is now more height differentiation between the buildings, and there will continue to be height variation along the long south elevation of the project. Staff encourages the applicant to refine and highlight vertical design elements to visually emphasize the building’s height.

##### *Footprint*

Staff believes that the shift in the building footprint itself is negligible, but has some concerns how this modification may influence the architectural expression of the building. Throughout the evolution of the project a key objective has been to bring the tower elements as close as possible to the podium edge and create a continuous vertical façade that minimizes or conceals the parking podium levels to the greatest extent possible. The applicant will need to commit to

design features that address this concern.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

For this DRB review, no other architectural modifications are proposed. The change in height is considered a Major Amendment to the existing DSUP, and DRB review and recommendation is a prerequisite of DSUP public hearings. The DSUP Amendment is scheduled for public hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council on June 25 and July 9 respectively.

Adjustments to the exterior cladding, fenestration, and other architectural elements are anticipated as the project continues to evolve. Staff will recommend to the Planning Commission and City Council that as a condition of DSUP approval, additional architectural changes be presented for review and final approval at future DRB meetings.

Staff **recommends approval** of the change in height and footprint of the building.