

***Design Review Board Case #2019-0007
Hoffman Town Center – Blocks 4 & 5 West Tower***

Application	General Data	
Project Name: Hoffman Town Center Blocks 4 & 5 West Tower Location: 2410 and 2460 Mill Road Applicant: HTC 4/5 Project Owner, LLC	DRB Date:	July 18, 2019
	Site Area:	5.07 acres (220,940 sf)
	Zone:	CDD#2
	Proposed Use:	Residential, Retail
	Gross Floor Area:	1,021,711 sf
Purpose of Application:		
DRB review and approval of architectural changes to the West Tower in the Hoffman Town Center mixed-use retail and residential complex.		
Staff Reviewers: Robert Kerns, AICP, robert.kerns@alexandriava.gov Thomas H. Canfield, AIA tom.canfield@alexandriava.gov Nathan Imm, nathan.imm@alexandriava.gov Bill Cook, william.cook@alexandriava.gov		
DRB ACTION, JULY 18, 2019: The DRB voted unanimously 3-0 to approve the proposed architecture revisions conditioned upon the further alteration of the façade architecture per staff’s recommendations in the staff report. Motion presented by Mr. Quill, seconded by Mr. Lewis, Councilwoman Pepper absent. The applicant agreed that the issues outlined by staff in the analysis section could be addressed. In addition to those issues, the applicant and staff discussed additional modifications to the vertical element on the Stovall Street façade. This would address the opening at the top, including the possibility of a modest height reduction, and potentially changing the thickness of the feature from ground to top.		

I. OVERVIEW

The applicant is requesting final Design Review Board (DRB) **approval** of the architectural design changes to the West Tower building in the Hoffman Town Center Block 4 & 5 project. The applicant proposes a change in program from condominium to multi-family rental.

Changes to only the building height and footprint were recently reviewed separately by the DRB and subsequently approved by the Planning Commission and City Council. Per a staff-recommended condition of approval, the DRB was given final approval authority for the architectural changes.

This application applies only to the West Tower, formerly known as the Condominium Building in previous applications.

II. BACKGROUND

Final DRB approval of the Hoffman Town Center Blocks 4 & 5 project was given by the Board in January 2018. Various aspects of the project had been reviewed by 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. At present building permits have been approved to commence site work and foundation-to-grade construction.

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 residential buildings in the original application were described as three separate types of uses. These consisted of a 10-story, 134-unit condominium building located on the west side of the project. In the center of the project was a U-shaped apartment complex with 430 rental apartment units proposed. The eastern side of the project proposed 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.

Recent Actions

Since receiving DSUP approval, the applicant indicated that changes in market conditions altered the feasibility of the project as originally proposed. Among these, the applicant determined that the building formerly known as the “condominium building” during project development would be more feasible as a multifamily rental product. The program change to the building, now called the “West Tower,” also necessitated structural and architectural modifications in order for the project to be effectively marketed and financed.

The Hoffman Town Center Blocks 4 & 5 project was last reviewed by the Board at its special meeting in June 2019. At this meeting, the Board approved two changes pertaining only to the West Tower:

- Height Change: The height of the West Tower was reduced from 200 feet 4 inches to 182 feet above grade at the south façade, for a total height reduction of 18 feet 4 inches. The

number of floors above the podium base was reduced by only one floor, from ten (10) to nine (9) floors, however the typical floor-to-floor height of the remaining floors was reduced from 11 feet to 9 feet 8 inches.

- **Building Footprint:** The overall building footprint of the tower atop the podium base was reduced slightly overall. In addition to the volumetric change, the tower shifted to the east. The original design proposed an approximate nine (9) foot setback of the tower from the podium edge along the Stovall Street facade. The revised footprint means that the building is set about five (5) additional feet for a setback of around 14 feet.

The change in height and building footprint were significant enough changes to require a return to Planning Commission and City Council public hearings to amend the original DSUP approval, thus DRB review was also required in advance of those hearings. DSUP#2019-0018 was subsequently approved by the Planning Commission on June 25 and City Council on July 9.

Additional minor architectural changes were expected to result from the programmatic change from condominium to rental apartment, and the aforementioned structural modifications to the building. Adjustments to the exterior cladding, fenestration, and other architectural elements were anticipated by the applicant. As a condition of approval of DSUP#2019-0018, City Council accepted staff's recommendation that the DRB be authorized to approve the final architecture of the West Tower building.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In response to changes in the building program, architectural changes to the building exterior were also necessary for structural and economic reasons. A few general changes are located throughout the building façade, while more specific modifications are found along the west (Stovall Street) façade, and on the top of the building including the penthouse and tenant rooftop amenity areas.

General Changes

Number and Placement of Balconies

According to the applicant, the market for apartments does not justify balconies to the same extent that the condominium market does. The original design featured balconies within nearly each bay, along the west and east sides of the building as well as the north and south ends. Balconies are now placed on the corners and ends of the building, with two columns of balconies for selected residential units on the east and west sides of the building, depending on the unit size and type.

Window Openings

Generally, windows and window bays have changed in size and height corresponding to the reduction in floor-to-ceiling heights. The original design had uniformly sized window bays on each side of the building. Window bays continue to be uniformly sized on the west façade facing the street, while on the eastern façade the window bays are wider in the center while still presenting a symmetrical façade.

Stovall Street Facade

Vertical Feature Above the Garage Entry

Due to the shift in the tower footprint to the east, this feature is more prominent and visually projects further forward of the main tower structure. This feature formerly had balconies within it but no longer does. Because of the increased setback between this feature and the tower wall it connects to, there is a more prominent section of wall facing south. The original design had slim windows within this space.

The top treatment of this feature has changed throughout the project cycle. It is now shown as a floating one-sided open frame, whereas the “before” elevation shows the element enclosed on all sides. Staff notes that since the original DSUP approval, this element evolved per conditions of approval that staff and the applicant continued work refining this feature, which has been one-sided throughout most of the post-approval project evolution.

This vertical form previously consisted of two strong verticals, in a single color of brick (“chocolate”) with windows (and balconies) spanning the full width between them. An inner frame of darker material has now been added, making the form more complicated, and reducing the width of the glass. Staff recommends studying this issue to see if it can be simplified to more closely resemble the original design.

Brick Facade

Staff also notes that since original DSUP approval, the masonry used on levels P4 and P5 on the part of the building façade south of the vertical feature has changed from dark to light, which helps maximize the vertical expression of the tower above and minimize the visual setback distance of the tower from the base.

Penthouse and Amenity Level

The penthouse structures appear to have been reduced in height and occupy less visual mass than previously. The top of the façade on the south elevation (Mandeville Lane) now has an open boxed element whereas before it was glass-enclosed. Located adjacent to the west of this, an enclosed amenity space on the south elevation extends farther north along the roofline. The top of the façade on the north elevation retains an open boxed element, but the open portion has been reduced in depth.

IV. ANALYSIS

Since project inception, staff and the DRB have found the massing and architectural treatment of the West Tower to have the most consistent architectural expression among the different components within this very large and complex project. Comments on its design were relatively few.

Some members initially questioned the dark chocolate and cream color scheme, but later comments cite that the tower design, color, and materials successfully integrated with the podium and transitioned well from the vertical tower to the horizontal podium. The vertical elements in the dark contrasting color were found to effectively penetrate the podium, came completely to ground, and identified the points of entry for the condominium entrance on Mandeville Lane and the garage entrance to the designated grocery parking on Stovall Street.

In reviewing the changes for the West Tower, staff's focus was on retaining the original design elements as much as possible, while ensuring that the vertical expression of the building architecture was retained despite the physical shortening.

Based on the current submission, staff offers the following thoughts and recommendations for finalizing the design of the west tower:

General Changes

Staff has no comment on window openings generally, but provides recommendations regarding windows in specific places, listed below. With regard to balconies, staff recommends studying the feasibility of flipping one of the vertical balcony tiers on both the east and west facades to create an asymmetrical overall composition and avoid a "centered" look. Staff understands that this might impact unit layouts, but requests that the applicant see if it is feasible.

Stovall Street Facade

Vertical Feature Above the Garage Entry

1. Use light colored brick instead of dark on the south wall connecting the feature with the main tower. This further differentiates this feature and would make it consistent with the brick treatment used on the corresponding north side.
2. Within the south wall, include fenestration, spandrel glass, or some other form of recesses, possibly in multi-story groupings, to decrease the appearance of a solid wall, and recall the windows in the approved design. The larger expanse of blank wall appears out of context in the building massing.
3. Consider ways to visually extend the garage opening vertically so there is the appearance of less solid wall between the garage opening and the openings above at levels P4 and P5. The garage opening as depicted appears compressed, as if the huge mass of masonry above is pressing down on it.
4. Consider architectural treatment to the P4/P5 opening in order to reduce the appearance of a two-level void. Formerly this area was glazed and made a stronger connection to the street.
5. Study adjusting the north wall adjacent to Unit Type A far enough north to eliminate the need for the "inner liner" in the vertical feature. This might allow making this unit tier big enough to re-introduce windows in the south-facing wall in the bedroom (as discussed in comment 2 above.)

Grocery Corner Entry

6. Elevations now show floors with shadow-boxes at the 4th and 5th levels. Staff believes that the extra height that was previously shown within the corner glass element is important to the visibility of the anchor tenant, for interrupting the podium appearance, and is a good

opportunity for visual reinforcement of the anchor tenant. Reinstate the open design as originally approved.

7. Clarify the glazing and/or resolve the inconsistent color rendering of the first column bay north of the grocery entry along Stovall Street.

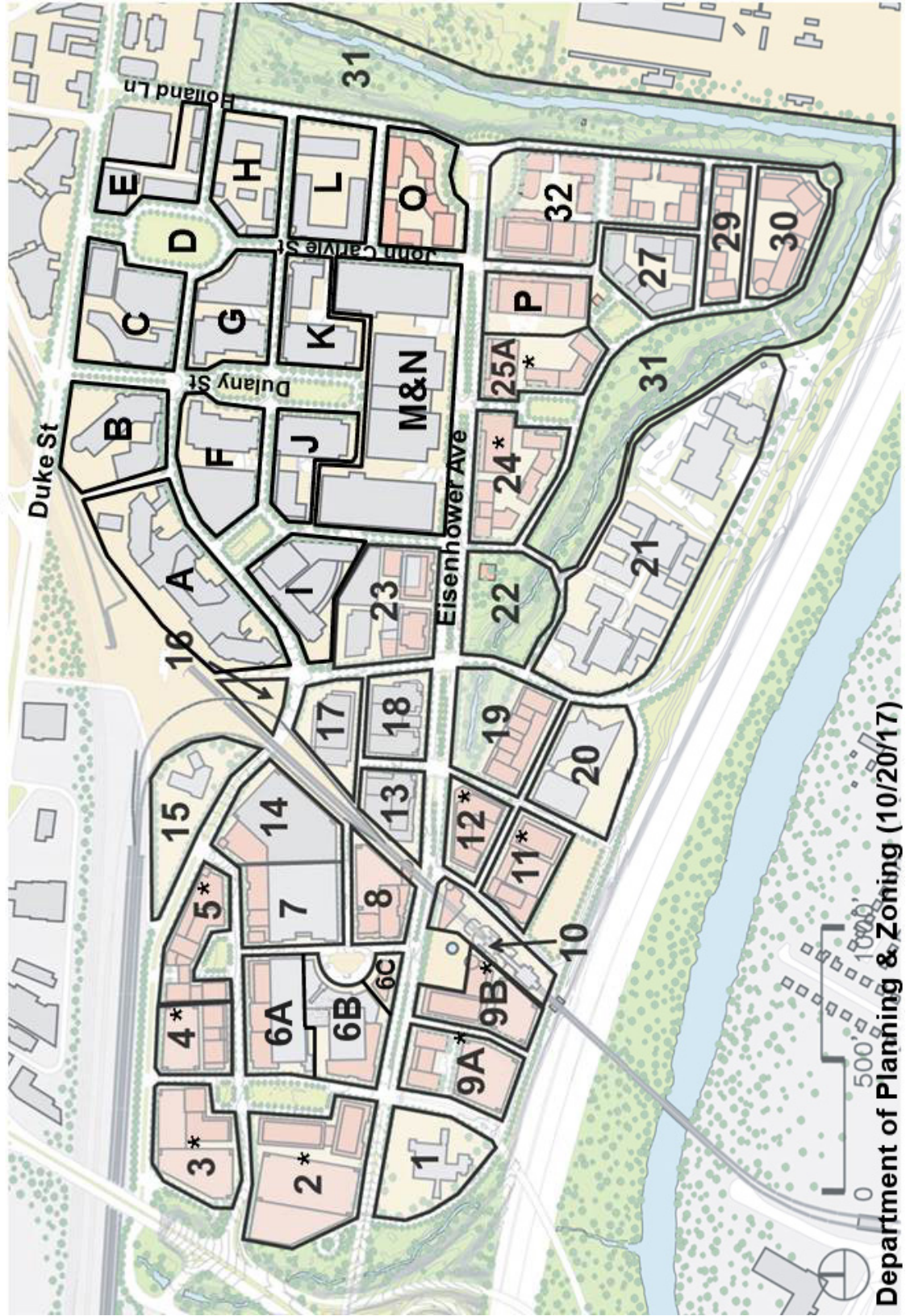
Penthouse and Amenity Level

8. Reinstate additional openings on the east and west facades of the penthouse.
9. Consider enlarging west and east openings on the open box element on the north façade. Consider louvers or spandrel glass if the space cannot be fully open or does not require ventilation.

VI. CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the DRB **approve** the architectural revisions for the West Tower in the Hoffman Town Center Block 4 & 5 project, subject to further minor refinements of the items noted above, and direct the applicant to continue to work with Staff to resolve all identified items prior to Final Site Plan approval.

Eisenhower East / Carlyle Blocks



Department of Planning & Zoning (10/20/17)