



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

**FROM:** Molline Jackson,  
*Art Review Panel Coordinator*

**PROJECT:** Alexander/Elizabeth House  
*SITE PLAN No. 81989071B*

**DATE:** August 15, 2016

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*The Art Review Panel has generated the following meeting minutes based on our discussion of the design concept for the public amenities on **July 20, 2016** for **Alexander/ Elizabeth House (Site Plan Amendment Applications)**. The Panel's recommendations should be incorporated into the Staff Report and strongly considered prior to the certification of the Site Plan and/or prior to the release of the first building permit. Should you have any additional questions and/or comments please feel to contact the Art Review Panel Coordinator.*

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**Attendance:**

Stephanie Dickel (Lead Plan Reviewer)  
Molline Jackson (Public Art Coordinator)  
Christopher Anderson (Panelist)  
Claudia Rousseau (Panelist)  
Damon Orobona (Panelist)  
Germano Gomez (Panelist)  
Judy Sutton-Moore (Panelist)  
Mark Kramer (Panelist)  
Ralph Bennett (Panelist)

Brain Kim (Applicant)  
Wilson Choi (Applicant)  
Bill Kominers (Attorney)  
Susan Reutershan (Attorney)  
Elizabeth Gallauresi (Art Consultant)

**Meeting Notes:**

1. Per the development phasing schedule, the Applicants (Housing Opportunities Commission and the Lee development Group) will enter into a public/private partnership in order to renovate the Alexander House and Elizabeth House.
2. This project increases the number of affordable units in Downtown Silver Spring (Arts & Entertainment District) and updates the public amenities.

3. The proposed density is 4.18 FAR; 49% on-site public amenity space and 20.7% public use space on 3-acres of land zoned CR-5.0, C-4.0, R-4.75, H-145T.
4. The development will be divided into two phases for Site Plan approval. Phase I is further broken down into sub-phases Phase IA and Phase IB. Phase IA will include the demolition of the existing commercial building and the construction of the new Elizabeth House III.
5. Phase IB will renovate the Alexander House (Limited Site Plan Amendment B) only.
6. Their proposal also includes the deaccessioning of the Watermark sculpture by Linda De Palma (built in 1992) at Alexander House (8560 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Silver Spring).
7. Linda De Palma has been contacted and issued a letter in support of this project. Per the letter from the artist, she has accepted option 2 with suggestions. Watermark belongs to the public and has become a landmark in Silver Spring.
8. The Applicant is currently in discussions to donate the artwork to a public agency.
9. The sculpture consists of three sets of elements; 1) the main gates, 2) a set of panel screens, and 3) railing around the pool deck.
  - a. The MAIN GASTES consist of 4 sections. Two moving gates measured at 8-feet x 11-feet thickness is up to 8-feet on the framed edges, overall 1.25-feet of overlapping plates of  $\frac{1}{2}$ " and  $\frac{3}{4}$ " aluminum. Estimated weight is 1,200 pounds. The gates hang on the anchoring sections with 4 simple pin hinges, and ride on a heavy-duty caster.



Main Gate: note two color tones



Hinge pin



Anchor mounting hardware



Hinge post set into masonry

*Image 1: Main Gates*

- b. The GARDEN SCREEN consists of 16 panels of pierced  $\frac{1}{2}$  aluminum, framed on the sides and center with 4" x  $\frac{1}{2}$ " aluminum plates. All panels are 7-feet tall; widths are either 5'-6" (3 panels), 5'-9" (2 panels), 4' (1 panel), 7'-6" (1 panel), or 8' (9 panels). The panels are mounted to the concrete structure of the pool deck with custom brackets set with stainless steel anchor bolts. Estimated weight of 7' x 8' is 400 pounds.



*Image 2: Garden Screen*



Typical large Garden Screen panel. Note the lack of top and bottom framing which could cause flexing and damage during transport if not stiffened with framing bolted-on to the existing brackets.

- c. The POOL RAILINGS consist of 22 panels of pierced ½” aluminum with side and bottom framing of ½” x 4” aluminum and a hollow aluminum top rail 2” x 4”. All panels are 39-foot tall and either 5’-10” (6 panels), 8’ (11 panels), 1’ (1 panel), or 4’ (2 panels). Estimated weight of an 8’ panel is 170 pounds. There are also 9 enter posts 4” x 4” x 46”. The posts may be set onto the concrete deck with standard anchor bolts, but most of the railings are obscured by a thick layer of soft caulk. The railing panels are hung from the flanking concrete posts with custom brackets and conventional stainless steel hardware.

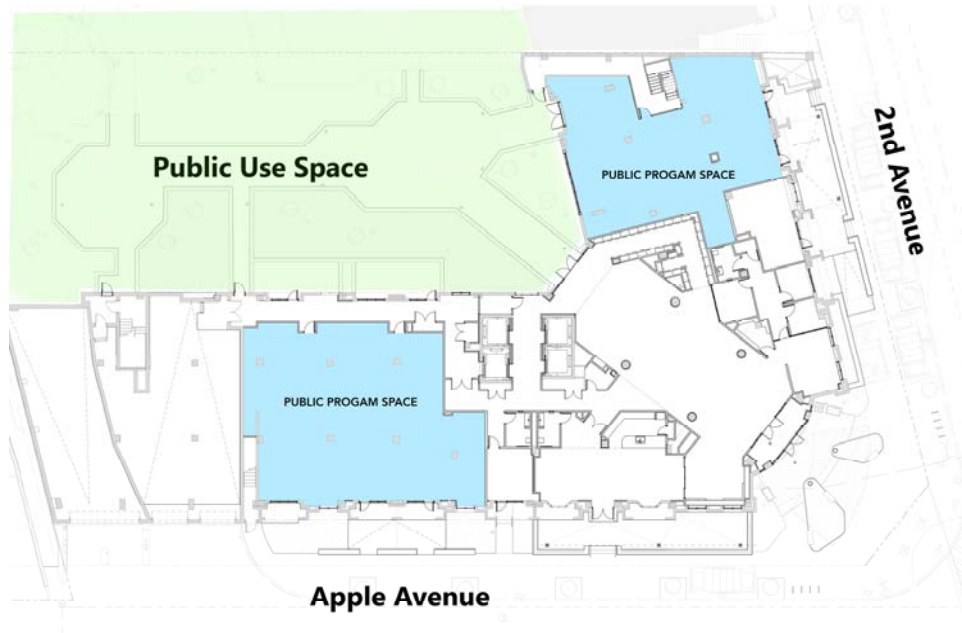


*Image 3: Pool Railings*



Typical large Pool Railing panel.

10. Overall the sculpture is in good condition, and no structural failures or losses have occurred. All the hardware appears to be intact, and the main gates appear to be used regularly.
11. Regular maintenance cleaning is recommended to prevent the buildup of soiling that could damage the painted surface.
12. In exchange for the deaccessioning of the Watermark sculpture, the Applicant will provide the following public facilities as indicated in the plans (*Image 4 – Site Plan Diagram*). The public facilities will be located on the first floor of the building.



*Image 4: Site Plan Diagram*

- a. Studio/exhibition space (3,425 square feet, general open from 10am to 6pm Monday through Friday) dedicated to emerging and experienced documentary filmmakers. In exchange for free rent, the tenants are required to offer 1) free classes/workshops (2- hours) for the general public, 2) public viewing space, and 3) free screenings/ discussion groups designed to introduce the general public to the film industry.
- b. A media arts, TV and broadband media space (2,632 square feet) dedicated to media and television production. In exchange for free rent, the tenant will be required to provide: 1) 3 monthly classes to the general public that focus on entry level skills associated with production of media and technology, 2) production of a media channel that highlights activities, events, and art programming in the surrounding community, and 3) public viewing of the production of video and media content for broadband and TV.
- c. Discounted educational classes on studio production open to the public from 10am to 6pm (daily). Students will be trained to utilize media equipment to produce their own programs for air on public media and online. Classes will include hands on field technician training, directing, editing, green screens, and backpack/video journalism.

**Panel Recommendations/ Conditions of Approval:**

1. The Panel strongly supports the renovations to the existing Alexander House and the increase of affordable housing within the Downtown Silver Spring (Art and Entertainment District). The Panel recommends approval of the deaccessioning of the Watermark sculpture and acknowledges the economic impact on the County and within the surrounding community.
2. In accordance with the Public Art Guidelines (page 22), detailed notification will be given to the Artist (Linda De Palma), the Planning Board, and the Public Art Coordinator with regards to the new owner and final location of the existing artworks.
3. The Panel recommends approval of the proposed public facilities including, but not limited to: the studio/exhibition spaces (combined total of 6,057 square feet), the training and educational classes, and the media channel.
4. However, the Panel does not fully understand the “artistic” physical elements within the public realm (within the public use space as originally proposed). The Applicant should also consider bringing some of the artistic physical elements and programming (on the interior of the building) out into the public use spaces.
5. The public benefit of having the “*Watermark*” sculpture in the public use space (i.e. public realm) is the general public has access to the artworks outside of business hours. This public benefit has not yet been fulfilled. With the exception of the television channel, most of the public facilities will be accessible during the day for 7-hours; Monday and Friday (approximately 40-hours a week).
6. The Applicant should incorporate public artworks into the public use spaces. The Applicant should strongly consider hiring a professional public artist to offer a different perspective as well as propose specific art elements to be included in the plan.
7. The Panel recommends that public art (video and production themed) be interwoven into the context of the proposed design by a public art professional; that is, an artist, not a designer. The panel feels strongly that its role is to review public art. While it opines on the quality of the settings for such art, and while the elements of such settings may be public amenities, they are not the equivalent of or a substitute for art required under the optional method.
8. Public art is an important public amenity that was used to establish the place and draw attention to specific points on-site (e.g. focal points and way-finding features). The professional artist would work closely with the Landscape Architect to specifically focus on functional elements already proposed within the park designs, in order to add more value (unique aesthetics) to the overall experience. By focusing on functional elements (e.g. seating, lighting, tree grates, water features, retaining walls, etc.), the construction schedule should not be significantly delayed. The artistic items could thoughtfully follow the same installation schedule.

9. In the initial stages of development and so as not to delay construction, a general note will be included on the Certified Site Plan indicating which functional site elements will be evaluated by the public artist.
10. With regards to future installations of artistic functional elements the Certified Site Plan will be amended to reflect specific site details. The site details will include the overall dimensions, prescribed materials, necessary lighting fixtures, footers, and fasteners to ensure adequate safety and proper inspection of the artworks by the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County (“AHC MC”) and Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (“DPS”). The Panel recommends that the site details of the artwork be drawn by a certified professional.
11. Signage of the newly installed artworks should be clearly visible, specifically identifying the title of the piece, artist name, materials, completion date, and overall dimensions.
12. Prior to final inspection of the public artwork(s), the Applicant must submit to the Public Art Coordinator with the Maryland – National Capital Park and Planning Commission at least three images of the artwork(s) on-site and information regarding the 1) associated project number, 2) title of the piece, 3) date of completion, 4) description of materials used, and 5) address. This information will be added to the existing inventory of the public artworks throughout the County (<http://www.mcatlas.org/art/>).