

Goodbye, big glass box. Old Town condo plan has a new (or old) look.

By Karen Goff – Staff Reporter, Washington Business Journal
Mar 2, 2017, 2:33pm EST

The owners of 1604-1614 King St. in Old Town Alexandria have scrapped plans to build a big glass box in the otherwise traditional neighborhood.

Architects from Michael Winstanley Architects and Planners submitted plans to the Old and Historic Alexandria Board of Architectural Review on Wednesday with a last-minute design change for the controversial condo building.

Gone is the wall of glass featuring a design called too modern and out of place by neighbors and “jarring,” “frenetic” and “uncomfortable” by BAR members.

The new renderings have a decidedly Old Town-friendly red brick facade and industrial-style windows. The top floors feature metal tracery arches.

“We heard everything they have said,” said architect **Leejung Hong**. “We went back to the drawing board. I think we came up with a good solution for us and the neighbors.”

The 17,480-square-foot property is owned by Dechantal Associates LLC, a family trust. In December, Winstanley pitched a plan to the BAR that retained five of the six townhomes (1604-1612 King) and replaced 1614 King with a glass walkway. A 56-unit condominium building was proposed atop three levels of underground parking on the lot behind the row.

The plan now calls for a maximum of 50 condos, Hong said. It also suggests keeping and restoring 1614 King.

The Upper King Street Neighborhood Association, not a fan of the glass box at the December hearing, said the new proposal is contemporary and unique while still maintaining historical character.

Dechantal acquired the six townhomes in 1986. Five of the homes, 1604-1612 King, were constructed in 1912. The home at 1614 King was built in 1918 and was seriously damaged by arson in 1999 during the construction of the adjacent Hampton Inn. It has been vacant ever since.

The townhome row, two blocks from the King Street Metro station, was annexed into the Old and Historic District in 2007. There have been several redevelopment pitches over the years.

Residential is the only feasible use for the property, the owners claimed in the most recent application, pointing out that the Alexandria office market is weak.

“After several years in which the economic recession has made it impossible to obtain development financing for this site, now, a residential use, condominiums or rental apartments, does appear to be potentially financeable and marketable,” per the application.



Dechantal Associates and Winstanley Architects & Planners have scrapped a very modern design for a 50-unit building.