

**Crystal City Planning Process  
Task Force Meeting Summary  
04-15-08**

**Task Force Discussion on Draft Policies**

The following are comments and questions from the members of the Task Force shared at this meeting:

**Land Use Policies**

- M Bonanno/ LU1: In this policy, where does retail GFA fit into the various categories; is it within the 40% commercial space? Perhaps the policy would be clearer if it presented greater detail about the breakdown by specific category, such as office, residential, retail, hotel, etc.
- T Saks/LU1: The policy should clearly state that 60%-40% breakdown (or whatever breakdown is used) refers to Gross Floor Area (GFA), if that is the intent, so that there is no potential for confusion.
- T Savela/LU1: It appears that by counting hotel as part of residential, this policy works against the desired goal of seeking a balance between employee and resident labor force populations. Hotel is treated as a commercial property by the zoning ordinance, and this policy confuses that relationship. Once the hotel is deducted out of the residential, the ratio is likely to be inappropriate and ineffective at striking the desired balance.
- S Cooper/LU1: Agrees with the point that it is inappropriate to include hotel alongside the residential population.
- M Bonanno/LU2: Does the Use Mix diagram deviate from what had been planned for in the Vision Plan? Also, there should be some level of flexibility built in around the exact minimums identified for several of the categories.
- T Savela/LU2: Believes the Use Mix policy recommendation is a good one, but should be reconfigured in order to increase the residential share, with hotel not counting as residential.
- S Cooper/LU2: Is it correct to say that the Use Mix diagram does not include all public open spaces, just some of them? Additionally, residents continue to have concerns about some of the public open spaces depicted (for discussion at a later date) including Center Park and its size, the 15<sup>th</sup> Street park, and North Gateway Park.
- H Thompson/LU3: On the Retail Street Frontage diagram, it seems that designating between 1.0-1.3 million square feet of retail is a pretty specific range, and we may not want to get to that level of detail. With regards to the frontages it

seems like certain blocks are shown with too much, for example where an entire block is ringed 100% with a retail street frontage, which is just not feasible.

- M Bonanno/LU3: Perhaps there can be a note to clarify that areas designated for on-street retail frontage on the diagram are expected to provide retail along a certain percentage of the frontages shown. Or, if the diagram was presented more generally, and had built in flexibility that not every linear foot shown as retail needed to be retail, but could accommodate lobbies, etc. Also, some of the underground retail that's shown does not necessarily work with what's happening above ground – this needs more consideration.
- T Saks/LU3: Suggests that if an approach to depict a percentage of retail frontages that need to be retail is used, there should be different categories to distinguish between the different priority levels for retail. On that note, it's curious that retail is not extended along 23<sup>rd</sup> Street all the way to Fern St, for the full length of the block. Also suggests that street level retail should be promoted along Eads Street north of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, and perhaps even south of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street if it is supportable.
- M Almquist/LU3: It's important to note that as we have learned in other places, such as Ballston, not all ground floor spaces are aptly suited for retail activity, so there should be some flexibility to not require that 100% ground floor areas accommodate retail uses, even if they are shown as retail frontages.
- S Cooper/LU3: This policy certainly could use some clarification, but adjustments to the wording in the text and edits to the legend can help achieve that. Also, it appears that in the Retail Street Frontage diagram there may be conflicts between the planned retail frontages and the intermodal transit center.

With regard to the Underground Map, there have been significant changes to this diagram that result in a diminished interior walkway system. There are fewer street entries into and out of the system, there is much less interior corridor shown, and this is a significant problem. The underground was more fully developed in previous iterations, and this is such a minimalized view. The plan should show the underground as we would like to see it retain, with respect to exactly how redevelopment will play out.

- C Ahl/LU3: It appears that the plan has taken an opposite view on the approach for internal retail than it has to date. The current approach is a minimal approach for planning for the underground's future.
- M Almquist/LU3: It is important to keep in mind that the underground is not going to be a deciding factor in the revitalization of Crystal City. Physical changes above ground will lead and the underground will follow and adapt to what's going on above ground.

- T Savela/LU3: The Retail Street Frontage diagram should be revised to clarify what the exact direction is in terms of expectations for the extent of retail space in the future; if there are areas we'd be firmer than others, the plan should address this.
- T Saks/LU4, 5: As a 40 year vision plan, elements that we want to achieve in Crystal City need to be planned for now. Desired facilities, such as theaters, need to have an identified location, so that there is the motivation to implement them according to the plan.
- B Baden/LU4, 5: With the amount of growth in Crystal City, certain facilities will be needed and the plan needs to address them in greater detail than they currently do in policies LU 4 and 5. Facilities such as schools and medical facilities will be needed, and should be planned for so that they will be achieved.
- S Cooper/LU3: Believes that the underground should not follow, or adapt to what's going on above ground, but there needs to be a balance between underground and above grade development. Based on the current drawings, the underground needs much more attention, and is disappointing.
- S Cooper/LU4, 5: These policies could use greater clarification in terms of what exact services we are talking about when we say critical community services. To some extent these policies seem so general that it is not clear what impact they provide. From a content standpoint, perhaps LU 4 and 5 can be combined based on the similarity of topics, but the language needs more work.
- H Thompson: With regard to all policies, we should question whether there are things we want to map and don't want to map. Perhaps some elements can be aptly addressed in written text, while others do in fact need graphic diagrams to convey the spirit and intent of the policy.

### **Building Form and Heights Policies**

- T Saks/B2: Generally the community is pleased with the changes in heights on the west side. There was an additional suggestion to lower the east side of Fern St between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets to 35 feet, but acknowledge the existing 45' by right potential height. Along Eads Street, the depth of the 35' height limit should be specified, so there is no confusion about the depth of that dimension. The 110' on the eastern end of Restaurant Row seems a little too high, and perhaps should be lower. It also eliminates an existing park.
- S Cooper/B2: Heights along Crystal Dr on the eastern side (Crystal Park) seem to high; there have been letters written that highlight the attractiveness of this area. The proposed heights at 200' and 250' at Crystal Park would generate more of a wall than what is there now.

- M Bonanno/B2: Understands the reasons for the lowered height on the north side of 12<sup>th</sup> Street, but is concerned about increasing constraints on the overall potential building envelope.
- M Bonanno/B3: This proposed language is concerning for the near term, given what plans we may want to submit in the short-term and the approx. 1 year time required for the FAA review process; requiring FAA acceptance in advance would greatly extend the entire process. Additionally, presuming changes occur during the county review process, an applicant would likely need to re-submit to FAA based on these changes. Perhaps this idea in concept could work in the long-term assuming a 3-party agreement can help bring solutions and clarity to the acceptable building envelope, but it appears problematic in the short-term.
- M Bonanno/B1: We still have some comment/disagreement on some of the ROW dimensions, but they may be addressed if some of the dimensions are adjusted as part of the Transitway Alignment study process.
- C Ahl/B2: The 250' heights shown at U2 are still problematic. Depicting 250' heights at the end of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, where the former PTO buildings are, does not make sense in the context of what was shown in the Vision Plan.
- S Cooper/B2: Acknowledges the reduction to 110' heights on the north side of 12<sup>th</sup> Street. However, in addition to the height, the breadth of the buildable area in this location is also a concern to residents; anything to shift the footprint to the west would be an improvement.
- M Bonanno/B5: 60 foot minimum for tower separation is a good figure.
- M Bonanno/B6: How does ownership come into play with regard to the potential impact of building heights on parks and plazas?
- T Saks/B6: The language in B6 needs more clarity to explain why its proposed as it is.
- T Savela/B6: Concurs that the language in B6 needs more clarification in how its to be applied.
- T Savela/B5: Would like to see examples from staff of towers that are 60 feet apart in Arlington, to help determine if this is enough separation. Specifically, would be curious about the closest point distance between the Westin Hotel and Continental in Ballston.
- M Bonanno/B6: Would ask that additional study be directed at the 45% component of this policy.

- S Cooper/B5, 6: Why is the tower separation only applied to buildings above the 5<sup>th</sup> floor? In addition to B6, there should be shadow requirements on interior spaces where people work and live, to address livability concerns.
- T Savela/B5, 6: Agrees that in an urban area like Crystal City we should be planning for continuous building bases, to frame the streets and open spaces. With regard to shadow impacts, impacts need to be limited on parks and plazas, not interiors of buildings. Parks need sunlight in order to have trees and plants thrive and grow. If shadow impacts on buildings were established it would likely hinder much if not all of the development envisioned in the vision plan.
- S Cooper/B5: This policy needs additional wording, in order to clarify separation requirements for buildings under the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, with some kind of wording that speaks to a balance between livability and the creation of an urban environment.

### **Density Policies**

- M Almquist/D2: Agrees that you can't establish base densities and not allow for optional increases in density. There needs to be a mechanism to allow for the balancing between benefits and density.
- T Savela/D2: Agrees with the approach of allowing for additional density when balanced by community benefits. B4 and B5 contribute more to livability, and may suggest or encourage that absolute building height limits be eliminated.
- M Bonanno/D3: In prior economic analyses, it was noted that existing Crystal City has different economics from other areas in the county where development is occurring on sites with low-rise, less dense development. AED's study did not account for buying density via community benefit, and does not speak to the special economic conditions in Crystal City. This also relates to the affordable housing policy of 20% (to be discussed at the next meeting).
- C Ahl/D3: Given conversations over the past year, about needing to keep the landowners whole, and why we need to accept the level of density, it is important to clarify what the significance of this policy is exactly, and what is meant by the tear down credit.
- H Thomposn/D2: There are situations where multiple owners under a single site plan complicate the ability to determine where unused density may be applied.
- T Saks/D2: We need to have an understanding of how the proposed TDR policy would impact the density levels in Crystal City, and potential adjustments under D2.
- S Cooper/D2: With regards to increases over the base density, if buildings can't go up, then they'd have to go out, which raises the question of where they go, consuming open spaces. This would mean that the limits on livability have been

thrown out the window. Also, need clarification on what is meant by extraordinary community benefits.

- B Baden/D2: How are the economics of the plan being addressed or not addressed by the density policies D2 and D3?