

3.2 The Human Experience and Quality of Life in Crystal City

Building on the Vision Statement found in the Policy Framework in Chapter 2, this section describes, in more detail, what the human experience and quality of life in Crystal City will be with the achievement of this plan.

Under this plan, Crystal City is envisioned to mature into a more complete, urban community. In the simplest of terms, Crystal City will strengthen its position as a place where one can comfortably live, work, and play all in close proximity. More specifically, Crystal City will offer a multitude of lifestyle options that attracts a diverse population, where the daily necessities for living an active and fulfilling life are all within easy reach, with many accessible by foot, bike, or transit.

Crystal City's vibrant mix of housing, office, retail, hotel, cultural, and civic uses will help activate the neighborhood eighteen hours per day, seven days per week. In the future, one can imagine a young couple in Crystal City meeting a group of friends after work for drinks and a light dinner, before walking to a local nightclub to listen to live music into the late hours. At the same time, a retired couple living in a new apartment overlooking the Potomac River might be strolling by the Crystal Drive storefronts as workers and area residents pass by. This couple eventually sits down to dinner at one of Crystal City's white tablecloth restaurants before going to a local black-box theater to see the opening of a locally written play. Meanwhile, the addition of hundreds of affordable housing units and a more diverse mix of unit layouts and bedroom counts allows individuals from a wide range of socioeconomic groups to equally enjoy Crystal City's offerings.

In the future, Crystal City will be a place where people of all ages are found. Young professionals will continue to flourish in Crystal City, taking advantage of the increasingly vibrant scene, entertainment destinations, and urban amenities. However, as Crystal City evolves, it will include the array of amenities and services needed to support the full spectrum of the population. Imagine, for instance, a neighborhood resident who walks hand-in-hand with his child to a day care center en route to catch Metro to work. Also consider their retired neighbor, an active community volunteer and avid chef who loves having the convenience of the nearby grocery store for her daily trips to pick up fresh bread and produce for her home cooked gourmet meals. A few blocks away, also imagine an older retired married couple frequenting the local adult day care center on a regular basis to diversify their weekly activities. Each of these residents has the peace of mind knowing that urgent medical care services are just a short trip away.

The reconfiguration and rebuilding of the public realm significantly adds to the enjoyment and accessibility of Crystal City for all. In this vision, with its network of usable, high-quality and well-distributed open spaces, people will be able to choose differently programmed spaces to enjoy. It is envisioned that workers in the high-rise office buildings will eat their lunches in well-designed nearby plazas and then meet friends after work to maybe play bocce at Center Park. The market plaza along the north side of 18th Street will become one of the most vibrant spaces in Crystal City, a perfect spot to people watch when residents and workers pass through on their way to and from the

Metro station or when people congregate at the space to purchase locally produced food at the weekend farmers' market. Smaller, more intimate market plazas elsewhere in Crystal City will offer more convenient options to those who wish to descend from their high-rise residence or place of work and walk just a few steps to catch up with friends or colleagues over a bite to eat or great cup of coffee. In the northern end of Crystal City, physical improvements and programming for Gateway Park will draw neighbors to its mix of active and passive recreational facilities, while also offering a direct pedestrian connection to Long Bridge Park for recreational activities of a more regional nature. These open spaces collectively enhance the physical aesthetics of Crystal City while fostering a diverse mix of activities and vibrant civic life.

In addition to open spaces, creating streetscapes that are attractive, interesting, and that promote pedestrian activity is a high priority, partly to help foster increased retail activity and create a unique vibrancy among Crystal City's sidewalks, open spaces, and streets (the primary public realm components). In the future, one can walk down Crystal Drive and enjoy the variety of attractive retail and restaurant frontages, well designed benches and street furniture and interact with creative public art offerings. Over the course of a day there will be many people walking along these sidewalks doing everyday shopping, commuting to work, or just talking a leisurely stroll.

The diversity of Crystal City's future transportation system will successfully strike a balance among modes of transportation and will enhance Crystal City's role as one of the most accessible locations in the region. For residents of Crystal City, this same system provides unparalleled access to the region. With its array of urban amenities, Crystal City is often frequented by residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, who walk a few blocks along complete streets with safe and managed vehicular volumes to reach their destinations. For those slightly more distant, Crystal City is always a quick bicycle ride or transit trip away, given the ongoing reinvestment in bicycle and transit facilities that serve the broader 22202 zip code and beyond. Others can easily access Crystal City through an enhanced multimodal transportation network, including Metrorail and VRE networks that continue to upgrade their services to more efficiently meet increasing demands, and through a new streetcar system that will greatly improve local mobility within Crystal City while also linking to the Columbia Pike transit system and Alexandria's system to the south. With this array of transportation facilities, a typical rush hour commute will include people getting around by almost every imaginable mode, making Crystal City a truly multimodal community. In this vision, Crystal City has become one of the most mobile and truly transit-oriented, vibrant urban centers of a thriving Arlington County.

As with neighborhoods throughout the County, Crystal City is envisioned to possess a strong sense of community that is supported by an active civic and cultural environment. The creation of a new civic association in the Crystal City neighborhood has helped to give an organized and unified voice to the growing residential population. In working together with surrounding neighborhoods, Crystal City residents continue to ensure access to facilities needed to support the activities of community organizations. Up and coming new tools and technologies like neighborhood list-serves, electronic bulletin boards, and the like complement more traditional methods of fostering a sense of community within the neighborhood.

The future vision for Crystal City and the surrounding neighborhoods provides an illustration of how all the pieces of a physical plan supported by community activities and

infrastructure will create one of the more sustainable and energy efficient neighborhoods in the area. To explore the positive sustainability impacts of this vision, consider a potential future eco-minded Crystal City resident and the factors she considered in establishing residence in the neighborhood. The ongoing redevelopment and reinvestment in Crystal City attracted this resident as they help to prevent greenfield development and the disturbance of natural resources and ecological communities elsewhere in the region. Crystal City's balanced mix of commercial and residential uses offers superior opportunities for shorter vehicular trips and/or alternative modes of transportation, both of which were sought after by this resident. Crystal City also attracted her because of the inherent health benefits that Crystal City's walking and bicycling oriented lifestyle promotes. Knowing that she could easily live here without owning a car, she also enjoys her reduced transportation expenses which translate into more disposable income to purchase carbon offsets for the flights she takes out of National Airport. By relying on non-motorized travel modes or her occasional transit trip, she enjoys knowing that she's doing her part to help limit additional auto emissions and the associated environmental impacts. She also appreciates the fact that for her neighbors who take transit to work, there are over 700 daily transit trips offered within Crystal City to reduce automobile dependence while ensuring that people arrive on time to their appointed destinations.

3.3 Crystal City and Its Surrounding Communities

The Crystal City study area is part of the larger Jefferson Davis Corridor that includes Pentagon City. It is also part of an even larger area that comprises such places as the Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge residential neighborhoods to the west, the Pentagon and Long Bridge Park to the north, National Airport to the east, and the mixed-use Potomac Yard to the south. All together, these areas make up the 22202 ZIP Code. These surrounding communities were part of a planning context as the plan for Crystal City was developed with respect to development impacts, transitions, connectivity, synergy, accessibility, safety, and economic development. Below is a more detailed discussion of the physical, social, and operational interrelationships between these areas that will evolve as the Crystal City plan is implemented.

Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge Neighborhoods

Situated immediately to the west of Crystal City are the residential neighborhoods of Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge. Much of these neighborhoods predate the first generation of mixed-use development in Crystal City, when the area comprising much of Crystal City and Pentagon City was home to industrial and auto-oriented uses such as brickyards, junkyards, and drive-in movie theaters. As Crystal City and Pentagon City evolved over the past four decades, conscious decisions were made to establish transitions between the high-density growth pattern in these areas and the lower density residential neighborhoods to the west. This plan for the next generation of redevelopment in Crystal City is designed to carefully manage development patterns and land use characteristics to ensure the continuation of an appropriate, aesthetically pleasing transition between the high-density mixed-use areas of Crystal City, Pentagon City, and Potomac Yard and the lower density residential neighborhoods.

While these transition areas are critical to ensuring compatible development patterns along neighborhood edges, they are not meant to become physical barriers. On the contrary, with Crystal City's envisioned numerous improvements, more people from these residential neighborhoods are expected to come to Crystal City via the area's streets, sidewalks and trails to enjoy its urban amenities. Likewise, with existing attractions such as the Aurora Highlands Community Center and Library, and Virginia Highlands Park, Crystal City residents will travel a few blocks west to enjoy these community resources. The same can be said for visitors, workers, or residents of Crystal City crossing Jefferson Davis Highway to support the prospering local businesses along 23rd Street's "Restaurant Row". This interaction depicts the natural flow of people across the area and should inform future planned improvements to transportation infrastructure that better accommodate the local movement of people to various neighborhood destinations.

Pentagon City

The Pentagon City Metro Station Area comprises 234 acres to the west of Crystal City. Pentagon City has easy access to Crystal City as well as Interstate 395, the Blue and Yellow Metrorail lines, and is home to major retail development, including the Fashion Centre at Pentagon City and Pentagon Row. Over time, Pentagon City has redeveloped with a rich mix of office, retail, hotel rooms, and residential units. The recent approvals of the Metropolitan Park PDSP and Pentagon Centre PDSP will

enhance the development mix in Pentagon City. Portions of Pentagon City lie within the boundaries of the Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge Civic Association boundaries, underscoring the interrelationship and overlap among these neighboring areas.

Pentagon

As the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense, the Pentagon is located immediately north of the Crystal City Planning Area across Interstate 395. While the Pentagon is the world's largest office building by floor area, it is also a major transit hub including a Metro station as well as a recently completed major intermodal transit center. Even though it is isolated from Pentagon City and Crystal City by Interstate 395, there are opportunities for enhancing pedestrian connectivity among these areas. The federal government has long-term plans that envision a more environmentally friendly and sustainable development on its property and Arlington County intends to cooperate with the Pentagon to capitalize upon any such efforts.

National Airport

National Airport is the nearest commercial airport to Washington, D.C. and is centrally located within the greater Washington region, serving approximately 18.5 million passengers per year. For many visitors arriving by air, it serves as a gateway into Arlington County, Crystal City, and the metropolitan area. Its proximity to Crystal City offers many benefits, such as immediate access to destinations throughout the nation that are just one Metrorail stop and one flight away. The airport also ensures a strong market base for the neighborhood's hotel operators. This plan for Crystal City and future implementation actions regarding this plan will help to maintain and protect the viability of the airport's continued operations.

Long Bridge Park

Long Bridge Park, formerly known as the North Tract Project, will be a new state of the art aquatics, health and fitness facility and park on the north end of Crystal City. Current plans envisions a swimming and exercise venue set within a dynamic recreational complex that will feature four full-size athletic fields overlooking premier views of Washington, D.C. As a project that is being built in response to Arlington residents' desire for more opportunities to recreate, especially using indoor swimming pools and trails, Long Bridge Park's proximity to Crystal City will offer its active-minded residents convenient access to the facilities array of both active and passive amenities.

Potomac Yards

Potomac Yard is envisioned to be a special place that is transit- and pedestrian-oriented, reinforcing an urban lifestyle with a rich mix of uses comprising: 2.1 million square feet of office space, 225,000 square feet of retail space with a grocery store, 1,500 residential units, and 600 hotel rooms. The proposed development features a transportation network that creates an active and memorable pedestrian environment that is well-connected to public transit. This will be accomplished by providing a street network to accommodate pedestrians, bikers and vehicles; a complete network of sidewalks and trails for pedestrians, and a dedicated transit-way, to ultimately accommodate a streetcar system. At nearly two acres, Center Park is envisioned as the grand outdoor room of Potomac Yard and is intended to serve as the focal point of public life there, with public art and opportunities for special events and programs.