

## ADHOC PLANNING COMMISSION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

### Virginia Square Sector Plan/Virginia Square Site (Latitude Apartments - Site Plan #426) Meeting #1

September 17, 2013

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Charles Monfort (Chair), Karen Kumm Morris, Steve Cole, Nancy Iacomini

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### MEETING AGENDA

This was the first meeting of the Adhoc Planning Commission Committee to discuss Virginia Square Sector Plan guidance for the Virginia Square Site. Charles Monfort, who is chairing the item, provided introductory remarks.

The County Attorney presented an overview of the regulatory and policy documents that guide land use decisions, including the Zoning Ordinance, Comprehensive Plan, General Land Use Plan, and Sector and Area Plans. He gave remarks explaining the differences between these types of documents in their application and use when evaluating proposed projects.

- Regulatory Documents are basically the Zoning Ordinance and the Building Code and spell out what you have to do (“shall” statements).
- Policy Documents include the Comprehensive Plan, General Land Use Plan, Sector Plans, Area Plans, and other planning guides. These documents are not as prescriptive but are visionary (“should” statements). These documents lay out broad based principles that the community wants to achieve. The document should be viewed as a whole and analysis against the plan should consider whether its overall goals and objectives are being achieved. Departures from the plan may occur but take care not to undermine the plan and always take a consistent approach.

Planning staff presented a summary of the Virginia Square Sector Plan and Site Specific Guidelines, emphasizing the elements within these documents that directly pertain to the Virginia Square site. A handout was also presented which included a summary of the relevant sector plan guidance for the subject site.

### DISCUSSION

#### Regulatory and Policy Documents/Land Use Guidance

- Does staff have to make a finding about consistency with the Sector Plan? Yes
- Do we look at graphics and text the same way? Yes
- Do we take into consideration development that has taken place?
  - Yes, however the focus should be on the plan and its larger goals and objectives.

- What to do when there is a discrepancy or when we think something is a departure?
  - It's difficult to find a proposal that is wholly consistent with all plan guidance. However, if you find one that isn't and you still want to approve it, look at overall goals and principles and there may be considerations that could still warrant approval.
- What are the consequences for other blocks in the future if we approve something here that isn't completely consistent now? What about precedence if we say it's ok to deviate from sector plan?
  - Look at what the plan is trying to achieve, always refer to underlying goals and principles, and be consistent in that approach. Instead of focusing on a specific rule, focus on the reason behind the rule and how it ties back to plan goals.
  - If the development called for is different from what the plan suggests, evaluate if the plan goals will still be achieved by varying it to some degree.
  - We have to articulate our reasons why, either to approve or deny, through an analytical process. It shouldn't just be a decision based on a picture/drawing.
  - The reasons that may make approval acceptable on one site should be distinguishable from another site.
- What is the history of implementation of Virginia Square sector plan so far? Have we followed it to date?
  - Mostly yes
- Seems the question should be if the current proposal consistent with sector plan? Or are we asking if lack of consistency proposed is acceptable?
  - We are trying to determine that during this process. We have to consider if it further goals of the plan. Ultimately we may also have to develop criteria for deviating from a sector plan.
- Desire expressed to have sector plan guidance matrix expanded to include associated analysis against the site plan proposal; this would be useful to help PC members make decisions on site plans in general.

### Office Uses

- How is FDIC classified? Residential? Office? Hotel?
  - Staff will clarify this.
- Concern that FDIC is not "conventional" office, really just a training center
- Discussion of different types of office space, and how to differentiate between and define them (university, medical, etc.)
- Lot of vacant office space, maybe people don't need as much anymore; request for AED to discuss the proposal within the context of changing economic conditions (GSA shift, e.g.)
- Request for AED discussion about office market demand; concern expressed that current economic conditions should not impact long range planning.

- We may want to consider bringing in outside speakers/resources; Dr. Stephen Fuller-GMU was suggested, to talk about real estate market or larger issues.
  - Staff will look into this for a future meeting; may be more appropriate to ask for his expertise on a more forward-thinking planning exercise, not for a micro-level discussion of a particular site
- Medical offices are shrinking – is there a need for non-hospital owned medical office uses? Concern expressed about the impact of having a single, large medical office tenant

### **Cultural Uses**

- It would be useful to update the committee on what has happened since Sector Plan adoption with regard to cultural uses, not just for this site but throughout the station area. Comment on whether or not the arts/cultural uses listed in Recommendation # 17 still viable arts uses.
- The County doesn't have a master plan for the County with regard to cultural facilities, so how we determine what is a good community benefit?
- Concern that cultural facilities will actually be realized and if so, what they would include. The range of potential uses that could be considered "cultural facilities" could be very broad
  - Site plan conditions can be crafted to provide more specific guidance about what we consider to be a suitable cultural use, as well as requirements for things like transparency to ensure activated street frontage

### **Transportation**

- What is the impact of current construction and transportation projects on transit/transportation? Consider and assess the cumulative impact of residential development on Metro.
  - Staff can provide this information. In the near future, we may also have to consider where people will be traveling as a result of the Silver Line extension, we can't assume everyone is traveling to DC
- What is the ingoing/outgoing traffic at Virginia Square? Is there a County policy for a desired mix of uses at each station area?
  - We can provide a map showing ridership balance by station
  - WMATA policy encourages a balance of riders at each station and the County supports this general policy. DES evaluates proposals and their transportation impacts.

### **ADDITIONAL REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION**

- Please provide percentages for totals on the second table (Development Summary for Virginia Square)
- Please also provide the background data that comprises the totals shown in the summary

- Please provide the staff reports for the GLUP amendments associated with the site and let people know where to listen to the CB discussion
  - Room on first floor of the Courthouse building (library)
- Expand sector plan guidance matrix to include recommendations related to Fairfax Drive office uses that reference this site (p. 30-31 in site specific guidelines)
- Provide name tags for the committee members

**NEXT STEPS**

- The PowerPoint presentation, meeting materials, and requested items will be posted to the Site Plan project page for the Latitude here:  
[http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/planning/applications/site\\_plans/page87425.aspx](http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/planning/applications/site_plans/page87425.aspx)
- The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 1, 2013.