

ADHOC PLANNING COMMISSION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Virginia Square Sector Plan/Virginia Square Site (Latitude Apartments - Site Plan #426) Meeting #2

October 1, 2013

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Charles Monfort (Chair), Steve Cole, Brian Harner, Inta Malis, Jane Siegel, Rosemary Ciotti

MEETING AGENDA

This was the second 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.

AED staff presented information about the office market in Arlington County, including a comparison of Virginia Square to neighboring office clusters in Clarendon and Ballston. The presentation included an analysis of the characteristics of Virginia Square and the Virginia Square site with regard to locating office uses.

Planning staff responded to questions raised at the first meeting regarding cultural facilities developed in Virginia Square since adoption of the sector plan and presented an analysis of remaining office capacity in the station area.

DES staff gave a presentation about transit usage in Virginia Square as compared to the larger Metro network as well as to other similarly-sized stations. The presentation included a discussion of station balance, platform design, WMATA's plans to address future system capacity concerns, and the impact of the proposed development on peak travel.

Lastly, a handout was also presented which included an updated summary of the relevant sector plan guidance for the subject site.

DISCUSSION

Office Uses

- What is the demand for smaller office buildings?
 - Larger tenants tend to want 20-25K square foot minimum floor plates
 - Smaller tenants utilize 10-20K square feet per floor; typically these tenants include nonprofits, contractors, and starter tech firms
- Why not reserve this site for a smaller office tenant?
 - Clarendon is an existing market for these types of tenants
- What about the reasons why the site should be office?

- AED is neutral regarding office uses on this site. However, it's not a critical location for office due to the proximity two adjacent office clusters to the east and west.
- What about this site makes it less valuable for office?
 - It's not as close to existing office markets nearby and office uses like to cluster together
- Concern was expressed about not being able to reserve other sites for office and a lack of mechanisms available to do so. Also, there seem to be mixed messages on the office outlook with regard to the proposed impact of the Silver Line
- Does this site have a viable footprint for office use?
 - The footprint for an office building would have a different form than residential, and would generally be more boxy with less punctuation and opportunities for open space
- What about the office buildings to the west?
 - AED supports their continued use for medical office uses
- What about a more long term perspective (beyond 2015) on the office market?
 - Will take 3-5 years to stabilize, hoping to cap vacancy rate at 20% and work our way down
- Medical cluster that exists now – what about attractive new medical offices here? This appears to be a good location for them
- With regard to remaining office capacity, identify which sites are stronger than others (i.e., which are more likely to go office vs. mixed use or residential); the sites to the south seem less likely to redevelop as office due to their proximity to residential uses.
- Would an office building attract different rents if located on a Metro station vs. off-site?
 - It could add value if there was demand for the space

Cultural Uses

- What is the cost to the County of the cultural space proposed?
 - No cost; this space would be developed by the applicant and would be leased via a private tenant/landlord relationship. The applicant has offered to lease it to a cultural facility rent free and the County would be willing to help facilitate the selection of a cultural user.
- What would this space add? How would it support the sector plan?
 - It would support a widespread goal for the station area to have more cultural uses in general. There isn't an inherent identified need for a specific use/facility here.

Transportation

- Silver Line is an "outdoor" line; we should be looking at the ratio of eastbound traffic
 - It's not appropriate to try and address a system-wide issue on a site by site basis
- There currently is not sector plan guidance that speaks to a desire for station balance at Virginia Square
- The site plan would not have a measureable impact on the Orange Line

- What about a comparison of residential vs. office uses with regard to traffic for the larger area? The analysis presented was focused on Metro, but what about other modes of transportation?
 - Traffic study submitted by the applicant included an analysis of a larger area and of the proposed transportation impacts of all development projects planned nearby. The questions raised with staff regarding this project were limited to transit usage, not traffic impacts. Generally speaking, office uses tend to have more acute traffic impacts than residential uses during peak AM travel.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

- Update the matrix to include a staff determination of compliance with the sector plan for each issue, remove redundancy, and use consistent language throughout in how issues are framed.
- Distribute the letter submitted by the Monroe Condominiums to members of the committee.

NEXT STEPS

- The PowerPoint presentation, meeting materials, and handouts 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
- The next meeting will be held on Monday, October 14, 2013 at 7pm in Room 311.