
Zoning Committee (ZOCO) of the Planning Commission Meeting Summary, April 12, 2016.

PC Members in Attendance: Jane Siegel (ZOCO chair); Ginger Briggs Brown; Rosemary Ciotti; Elizabeth Gearin; Erik Gutshall; Stephen Hughes; Kathleen McSweeney; and Stephen Sockwell. **Process Panel Members (invited to participate in the Rosslyn discussion) in Attendance:** Stan Karson (RAFOM CA); Paul Quirk (North Rosslyn CA); Tim Helmig (Rosslyn BID); Andy Van Horn (Rosslyn BID); Katherine Elmore (PRC). **Staff:** Deborah Albert; Matt Ladd; Elizabeth Weigle.

Rosslyn Sector Plan Zoning Implementation. Staff gave a brief overview of the preliminary draft of amendments to the C-O Rosslyn zoning district. Comments from ZOCO, Rosslyn Process Panel members, and audience members are summarized below.

Building Height and Stepbacks

- At the 2/24 meeting, there was a strong preference for certainty, predictability, and efficiency as opposed to flexibility and creativity; staff should continue to consider an option with the height map codified which would address these preferences
- Please provide copies of the letters/emails staff has received in addition to what is in the matrix
- Is it staff's position that both options are consistent with the Board resolution?
- Is "consistent" synonymous with compliant (line 91)?
- Who determines "equally or better" (line 104)? Is that a quantitative objective for qualitative findings? Do other districts have that language?
- There should be a stronger reference to the Plan height map in draft text
- Consider a reference to County-wide and other policies (urban design, open space) in the zoning
- Prefer reference to map over codification of the map; this provides upfront flexibility and allows for more creativity for an applicant's design team
- Findings will ensure peaks and valleys are maintained (map does not need to be codified); professional staff will evaluate the plan and will not recommend approval if it doesn't meet the objectives
- Codifying adds risk in addition to the many other levels of risk a development project faces; this could make Arlington less competitive than other jurisdictions
- If there is too much flexibility, every SPRC will take a lot of time and lack predictability for developers and the community
- Are there precedents for Peaks and Valleys in other cities that we could look to?
- Codifying vs. referencing the map doesn't have a practical difference; need to focus discussion on findings related to exceeding the Plan's recommended heights
- Plan text on 153 references 470' as an assumption. Why set the zoning max there?
- Is goal to elevate the findings as more important than other plan recommendations related to building height?
- How do we enforce varied heights? If a variation occurs, would staff look at impacts on neighboring properties?
- Findings don't include impacts on building occupants as referenced in the Plan's policies (B1.b)

- The proposed text takes away predictability and reopens heights agreed to during the planning process
- Would like to see more hypothetical examples of the difference between codifying the map and not codifying the map
- Concern that the findings are not specific enough and at the discretion of the Board; this does not provide predictability
- With this proposal, all applicants will ask for more height. Any examples of a developer not asking for more height?
- Strike “equally” from line 104 and consider repeating findings or otherwise providing guidance as to how the Board will find a proposal “better”

Density

- Concerned that goals of TDR policy (e.g. affordable housing) may outweigh competing Plan objectives; need to reinforce that Plan goals and findings must still be met with TDRs
- Could TDRs be used to create open spaces in Rosslyn?
- What sites would be eligible to request density above 10.0 for transformational infrastructure/18th Street?
- Why define transformational infrastructure as 18th Street? Why not second metro station or the bicycle-pedestrian bridge to the river?
- Reluctant to limit transformational infrastructure to 18th Street
- Consider expanding definition of transformational infrastructure but limiting it to elements that would need to be physically built on a site (e.g., second Metro station); other benefits are primarily funding needs
- Be clearer about density and height regulations and how they work together; preliminary text is not clear regarding what height or other provisions do/do not apply when density exceeds 10.0 FAR

Other Proposed Changes to ZO

- By removing 20% open space requirement, are we at a disadvantage in achieving contributions toward parks in community benefits? Need some requirement for achieving the Plan’s goals for parks and open space
- Does landscaped open space have to be public? Staff responded that the ZO does not require that open space be open to the public
- Did modeling for sector plan include 20% open space?
- Plan recommends soil volume for street trees; could there be a soil volume requirement in ZO?
- Would there be an equivalent 20% monetary contribution to landscaped open space if the zoning requirement is eliminated? Concerned that park spaces in Rosslyn won’t keep up with demand
- LRPC discussion on PSMP update asked for more articulation of park priorities that could be used for site plan process
- Keeping the requirement could lead to spaces we don’t want/need in Rosslyn

- There is a mechanism for collecting contributions toward off-site parks and this needs to be prioritized during site plan review
- Please provide more information on how this requirement has been used and mechanism for implementing off-site parks

Comments from General Public in Attendance

- It's very important to ensure that the Zoning Ordinance will work long-term, and, therefore, it shouldn't be too prescriptive
- The ZO should have a requirement for contributing to the park network or else it won't happen
- Do other plans have such a strong suggestion of modification as this?
- TDR should be required in order to exceed 10.0
- Need to be clear that the Plan recommended height is in no way guaranteed; if there is an argument for lower height for a specific project, that should be considered by the County Board
- Support the preliminary text as drafted which provides the Board the ability to respond to unanticipated changes while still meeting Plan goals
- Developers are not trying to get out of Plan recommendations; site-specific issues come up during design and engineering that may result in variations
- Provide a map that demonstrates how tall buildings could be if maxed out at 470'

Wrap Up

- Encourage staff to keep both options open; would be helpful to see a version of the zoning text with the map codified
- Codify the soil volume requirements
- Provide more discussion of transformative elements and how they get paid for and built
- Strike "equally" from line 104; the standard should be better if a project proposes to go beyond heights in the Plan
- Explore mechanism for requiring parks and/or park contributions
- Would like to see what elements could be considered transformative leaning towards only allowing additional density for 18th Street
- The Plan process resulted in a heights policy but it did not contemplate how the Zoning would be structured; support the text as drafted that requires justifying heights above the base rather than codifying the map and ways to modify it
- Getting the Zoning right is in some ways more important than the Plan

Next Steps

- Staff will consider input received from ZOCO and members from the public and make changes to the draft amendment as warranted
- Next ZOCO meeting is scheduled for May 25