

Conceptual Site Plan Review Report

Project Name: 1900 Crystal Drive
Applicant: CESC Mall Land, LLC c/o Vornado Charles E. Smith
Representative: Kedrick N. Whitmore
CPHD Staff Lead: Matthew W. Pfeiffer

Staff Meeting with Applicant: November 9, 2016
Report Issued: February 10, 2017

Site Information

Location: 1900 Crystal Drive (RPC# 34-026-037)

Site Area: 311,760 sq. ft.

Property Owner: CESC Mall Land, LLC

GLUP Designation: "High" Office-Apartment-Hotel (Up to 3.8 FAR Office, Up to 4.8 FAR Apartment, and up to 3.8 FAR Hotel), located within "Crystal City Coordinated Redevelopment District" (Note 1)

Sector/Area Plan: Crystal City Sector Plan

Existing Zoning: C-O, Mixed Use District and C-O-Crystal City, Mixed Use Crystal City



Project Information

Potential Other

Applications: Rezoning to C-O-Crystal City
Crystal City Block Plan
Site Plan

Final Site Plan Proposal: Two residential towers containing 1,039 units, and approx. 30,000 square feet of retail. 7.32 FAR at 300 feet of building height.

Modifications Requested: Increased density above standard GLUP limits (not specified how this will be achieved).

Preliminary Staff Comments

Land Use/Density

1. The County Board action amending SP #56 to remove 133,956 sq. ft. of site area (approved with SP #421 in September, 2012) did not expire concurrent with SP #421.. Therefore, the request to separate this site area from SP #56 is not needed.
2. In justifying increased density above the standard GLUP limits, the applicant should follow sector plan guidance for increasing affordable housing within Crystal City, and in providing sustainable building design.
3. The concept plan proposes residential with ground floor retail. The sector plan recommends that the upper floors of building area on this block comprise a minimum of 70% office space. However, the sector plan also recommends more residential than commercial uses in Crystal City, in particular on the east side of Jefferson Davis Highway. Furthermore, while the proposal is inconsistent with the land use map recommendations, the plan includes additional written guidance that could support flexibility in this regard. Use Mix goals: p. 102 includes text that notes: "*The Land Use Map does not specify the precise balance of uses for any given zone, beyond the minimums already described, and even then, there should be flexibility in meeting these minimums when doing so would further other goals of the Plan.*"
3. Determine, through the Block Plan process, the land uses for remaining future development of the block.
4. The sector plan shows retail on this site fronting the eastern edge of Center Park, with the goal of activating the park space. The concept proposal shows this as an entirely residential frontage on the park; retail is proposed only fronting Crystal Drive. This will need to be reviewed in light of the approach to implementing Center Park according to the sector plan's vision, and the overall retail strategy for Vornado holdings in Crystal City.
5. The site plan should include an interim condition plan in the event the property owner decides upon demolition of the existing building on site prior to permitting to build the new project.

Parks and Open Space

(As you know, staff met with the applicant team on January 30, 2017, to discuss park and open space elements more broadly in the context of the 1900 Crystal Drive proposal. While the items below reflect preliminary staff concepts specific to the review of the concept level proposal, the

attached letter provides more specific guidance and perspective on strategies the applicant may wish to consider and coordinate with staff on addressing the advancement of open space goals of the sector plan as part of proposed redevelopment of 1900 Crystal Drive as well as the balance of the Crystal Mall block and properties elsewhere in Crystal City.)

1. The challenges in implementing Center Park as described in the sector plan are acknowledged by staff; however, it remains adopted County Board policy. Further discussion with the County will need to occur in order to determine how the applicant could implement County policy in a manner that is feasible economically, or whether amendments to the policy are supported by the community. The applicant should coordinate with staff on the development of a block plan proposal to determine, through a long-range development time frame, whether implementation of Center Park is possible on the subject block.
2. Alternatively, are there opportunities for an interim condition for Center Park or alternate locations – not on the subject block – that accomplish the sector plan intended purpose for the park, which is to provide a large, centrally located and flexible gathering space for the community on the east side of Jefferson Davis Highway within the center of Crystal City.
3. The Applicant will need to work closely with AED, Planning, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the County Manager’s Office on meeting the open space guidance in the plan, and whether any potential solutions could include—in lieu of achieving the full Center Park in the near-term—off-site open space elements owned by the developer that could meet the specific programmatic guidance of the sector plan.
4. What other assets owned by the developer can meet the open space guidance in the plan? Could vacant space in other Crystal City buildings be repurposed for indoor recreation?
5. Policy Directives on P.28 of the sector plan recommend that infill development in front of 2121 Crystal Drive be permitted only after Center Park is provided. In addition, the sector plan recommends that the displacement of open space should be offset by provision of new open space or by the upgrading of existing spaces. Site Plans should provide open areas to accommodate the activity they will bring.
6. The previous site plan for this site included major open space amenities such as an interim park at the corner of 18th Street South and Crystal Drive, and a prominent connection from Crystal Drive to the Crystal Mall Block plaza. How would the proposed plan compensate for these two items?

Transportation

1. The plans show on both 18th Street South and 20th Street South side by side sets of garage entries, one for the existing building and another for the new buildings. We would recommend looking to combine and share entrances to the extent possible. Side by side garage entries next to each other can lead to conflicts with vehicles simultaneously exiting, and knowing/expecting the other vehicle coming out of the garage.
2. For 4.1 Application Submission, please be sure enough detail is provided in drawings to convey clear understanding of how residential loading will work; given proposed location just off-site where existing garage/loading exists.
3. The zoning provisions for the "C-O Crystal City" District require 1.125 spaces for the first 200 residential units in any structure, and 1 space per unit thereafter, unless modified by the County Board through special exception site plan approval.

Real Estate

1. Portions of 18th Street South, 20th Street South and Crystal Drive appear to be on owner's property. Is there garage in these areas? Please determine at the final submission whether these areas will be dedicated in fee to the County.
2. Is the water line vacation still needed?
3. Please provide information on the locations of vaults and the location of underground garage.
4. Please determine, if Center Park is to be implemented (in part or in full), what types of access easements will be dedicated to the County.

Urban Design/Architecture/Landscaping

1. The preliminary plans should contain a diagram as to how the proposal meets the sector plan recommended tower coverage (85 percent).
2. Please give consideration to having the residential terrace amenity for the north tower sitting atop at least a one story base, or pursue other effective means of better defining public space (i.e. Center Park) from private residential amenity space that immediately abuts it.
3. Please provide additional information on streetscape and rooftop, plaza, terrace areas. Are street trees to remain or be replaced?
4. Please reduce curb cut area along north side of site / 18th Street South.
5. Please provide a massing model and/or rendering views from west side of the site.
6. More trees and vegetation should be provided to better define ground plane and meet Crystal City sector plan goals.
7. Suggest maximizing function and design of retail area rooftops via greenroof plantings and creative amenity space – great opportunity to do something with high-visual impact.
8. There needs to be a better, more visible connection between the plaza and Crystal Drive.

Sustainability

1. Please submit a LEED v 4 scorecard and explanation of credits pursued and not pursued. Please also submit a preliminary energy model. Note the LEED v4 Integrated Design credit that comes into play at this point and can be aligned with the preliminary energy model.
2. Please evaluate the energy impact of façade decisions. Increased glazing and thermal bridges from concrete slab balconies will increase demand on the HVAC equipment. Consider reducing thermal bridging and using glazing more selectively to reduce heating and cooling loads.

Community Benefits

1. In 2012, the community benefits package for the now-expired SP #421 included a “Crystal City Redevelopment Credit,” which also included a sunset clause. This functioned as a waiver for any compensation for the requested 449,057 sq. ft. of additional density above the standard GLUP. The current proposal requests approximately 337,569 sq. ft. of additional density above the GLUP. The redevelopment credit was justified based on the project being the first major redevelopment proposed for the east side of Jefferson Davis Highway, which would generate market momentum for further implementation of the sector plan. The project was also found to provide critical infrastructure recommended by the sector plan, and generally implement the vision of the

sector plan. With the current proposal, there are some significant discrepancies with the sector plan recommendations for new infrastructure, such as the implementation of Center Park, and the fact that other projects have been approved and built (or are under construction) in Crystal City since the approval of this site plan. At this time, and for these reasons, it is unlikely that a similar redevelopment credit would be supported by staff.

2. The applicant should continue to work with staff on creative community benefits packages that are aimed at achieving the goals of the sector plan and that may leverage existing assets owned by the applicant.
3. Care should be taken to justify additional density above the GLUP with extraordinary community benefits, and a careful explanation of how the proposal meets plan guidance, in particular with respect to building form and massing, land use, and open space.

Conclusion

The proposal will require a rezoning, Crystal City Block Plan, and site plan. Potential major issues include how to meet sector plan guidance with regard to implementation of recommended open space, including Center Park. In addition, the developer should consider in more detail how the proposed project integrates into the subject block and surrounding development context in the present and over time. Finally, further thought should be put into the parking and loading locations and operation.

The information discussed in this report is reflective of staff comments only and should not be considered the official position of the County Manager, Arlington County Board, and/or of any Arlington County Commission or Committee.

Dear JBG-Smith Team:

This letter responds to previous correspondence regarding the recent staff review of a Concept-level submission for a new site plan proposal for 1900 Crystal Drive, and follows up on a meeting held on January 30, 2017, involving representatives from the County and the JBG – Smith team. As discussed at that meeting, the current established planning and zoning framework for this block poses certain challenges to the pursuit of entitling new site plan development at 1900 Crystal Drive. While we believe these challenges can be resolved, they will likely require a collaborative partnership and creative thinking to address the broader question of how best to move forward with future projects on this block (and elsewhere in Crystal City) as they relate to implementation of Center Park and, more broadly, the entire public open space vision set forth in the Crystal City Sector Plan.

By way of background, after the County Board approved SP #421 for 1900 Crystal Drive in September 2012, County staff began working with the applicant/developer (Vornado) on developing a plan for the implementation of Center Park, as required by site plan condition. Through that process, County staff recognized that the County would not be in a position, in any realistic timeframe, to acquire the existing Crystal Mall 2 building and clear the site to achieve the full Center Park area. As a result, this effort evolved into an exploration of other sites that could be repositioned elsewhere in Crystal City as additional County public open space, at least on an interim basis. While a number of potential spaces were identified and discussed among the parties, no agreement or decision resulted from these efforts.

Well after the SP #421 approval expired in 2015, the County received JBG-Smith's submission for a concept level review proposal for a new project at 1900 Crystal Drive. The proposed development is located on the Crystal Mall block, immediately east of where Center Park is envisioned to be achieved. Given previous actions, there are existing obstacles to reviewing and approving a proposed development for 1900 Crystal Drive absent any specific proposal or plan to achieve Center Park in the future. As staff is interested in potential redevelopment proposals that can help advance implementation of the sector plan and associated goals, staff is committed to working with applicants to collaboratively resolve such challenges. In the case of 1900 Crystal Drive and working to address open space expectations and commitments associated with future development on the block, staff looks forward to engaging in a dialogue on this topic, which could include exploring a variety of potential strategies to resolve such issues, including:

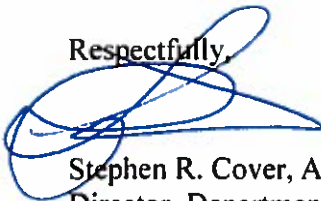
- The County and JBG-SMITH working together to identify public spaces in Crystal City that could be achieved in the near term, which would help advance the County Board directive to achieve four to five more acres of open space than is recommended in the sector plan east of Jefferson Davis Highway;
- Clarifying and managing expectations that while Center Park is still an important part of the Crystal City Sector Plan, it is inarguably a long-term venture with an implementation timeframe that cannot be specifically identified at this time;

- Addressing specific conditions for Site Plan #56 that currently require the development and County Manager's approval of a plan to achieve Center Park in order to submit additional applications for rezoning on the Crystal Mall block;
- Considering a potential County Board resolution that clarifies and specifies its expectations for the general timing and means through which Center Park may be achieved;
- Developing an approach for site plans approved with additional density (above the standard site plan base densities) that involves redevelopment credits associated with the applicant providing open space and land elsewhere in Crystal City, partly in lieu of cash contributions for other community features or amenities;
- Determining whether Phased Development Site Plans (or a similar tool) can be an effective means, for certain blocks with relatively uniform ownership, to achieve future density that can serve as the compensation/credit for achieving Center Park; and
- Commitment by JBG-Smith for the provision of improvements over the existing Center Park considering the presence of the buildings proposed to remain on the block if the Concept Plan submission evolves into a formal Final Site Plan without a plan to implement Center Park as envisioned by the Crystal City Sector Plan.
- As Center Park is a major element of the adopted Sector Plan, any deviations from implementation of this goal will require discussions, and potential action by the County Board, which could include potential amendments to the Sector Plan.

On a different note, it is also important to reiterate that the County is not currently supportive of the implementation of a Crystal City Redevelopment Credit as previously approved in 2012 and that additional discussions with staff about how the additional density above the base is achieved. This does not necessarily mean that there would not be any redevelopment credit with a future project, but rather, any credits supported for this project would need to be based on the own merits of this project specifically – independent of what was negotiated for the 2012 approval of 1900 Crystal Drive.

Staff looks forward to working with the JBG-Smith team to further explore these and other potential strategies for addressing open space goals in Crystal City related to future development proposals, especially on the Crystal Mall block. As we do so, it'll be important to keep in mind that any alternatives to achieving Center Park in the foreseeable future should reflect tremendous opportunities for new parks in Crystal City, have strategic locations, and be appropriately sized. At the same time, staff is open to exploring opportunities to take a fresh look at certain blocks in Crystal City, if doing so will still help advance sector plan goals.

Respectfully,



Stephen R. Cover, AICP
Director, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development