

## SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

### Crystal Houses (SP #13)

SPRC Meeting #2

Ellen Bozman Government Center | Cherry and Dogwood Rooms

1900 S. Eads Street | Arlington, Virginia 22202

May 20, 2019 | 7-9 p.m. (walking tour beginning at 6 p.m.)

**Planning Commissioners in Attendance:** Jim Lantelme (chair), Elizabeth Morton, James Schroll

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### MEETING AGENDA

- 1) Introduction from Chair
- 2) Informational Presentation
  - a) Staff Presentation
  - b) Applicant Presentation
- 3) Building Architecture
  - a) Design Issues
    - i) Building form (height, massing, tapering, setbacks)
    - ii) Facade treatments, materials, fenestration
    - iii) Roof line/penthouse form and materials
    - iv) Street level activism/entrances & exits
    - v) LEED Score
    - vi) Accessibility
  - b) Service Issues
    - i) Utility equipment
    - ii) Venting location and type
    - iii) Location and visibility of loading and trash service
    - iv) Exterior/rooftop lighting'
- 4) Open Space
  - a) Orientation and use of open spaces
  - b) Relationship to scenic vistas, natural features and/or adjacent public spaces
  - c) Compliance with existing planning documents and policies
  - d) Landscape plan (incl. tree preservation)
- 5) Comment from Crystal City BID

- 6) SPRC Wrap-Up
- 7) Public Comment
- 8) Next Steps

## INTRODUCTION

Commissioner Lantelme made introductions and spoke briefly about the meeting topics.

## STAFF PRESENTATION

**Matthew Pfeiffer, Arlington County CPHD Planning Division** presented information on the building form and design guidelines from the Crystal City Sector Plan, including staff identified issues with the building sculpting in relation to minor streets and public spaces.

**Diane Probus, Arlington County DPR Planning Division** presented information on policy contained in the Open Spaces Master Plan, and in the Crystal City Sector Plan regarding the two public open spaces on site. Also presented was an analysis of the existing conditions on the corner park site and initial staff analysis on design and programming for the space.

## APPLICANT PRESENTATION

**Luz del Mar Rosado, Lessard Design**, presented an overview of the building architecture, including showing renderings from various perspectives. Also introduced were façade elevations for the Fern Street units (CH-7 & 8)

**Trini Rodriguez, Parker/Rodriguez**, presented open space information starting with tree preservation information, and ending with updated drawings on the spaces in between CH-7 & 8 where the pedestrian trail will occur.

## BUILDING ARCHITECTURE

- An SPRC member inquired whether the top element for CH-5 serves a function or whether it is decorative. The applicant responded that the element is decorative, and also serves to frame the rooftop amenity space.
- An SPRC member asked whether the renderings are showing trees on the rooftop? The applicant responded that yes, they are proposing planting trees at the rooftop amenity spaces.
- An SPRC member commented that CH-3 & 4 are very similar architecturally. Which materials are different? The applicant responded that the similar vocabulary between CH-3 & 4 was deliberate; the applicant wishes to create a unified Eads Street design.
- An SPRC member asked whether the wood panel material had been tested for color fading. The member requested to see colorfast information at the Planning Commission meeting.
- An SPRC member asked whether the amenity area in CH-3 is able to be seen from the street?
- Another SPRC member opined that they were skeptical that private residential amenity spaces would activate the street.
- An SPRC member encouraged the applicant to incorporate universal design elements into the CH-7 & 8 units.

- Another SPRC member asked the applicant to explain the accessible elements of CH-7 & 8. The applicant responded that they are in the process of developing the designs and floor plans, but they do intend that the units will be accessible. The SPRC member asked the applicant to please have more information prepared on the topic at the Planning Commission hearing.
- An SPRC member asked the applicant whether they were set on townhouses for CH-7 & 8? Or would they consider stacked flats? The applicant responded that they are proposing townhouses.
- An SPRC member asked whether the townhouses have underground parking, to which the applicant responded that they do.
- An SPRC asked why the 9 parking spaces adjacent to CH-8 had to be in that location? They cut across the pedestrian path. Another SPRC member commented that they could change that parking area to parallel parking and solve the issue.
- An SPRC member commented generally that there is too much surface parking, and the areas taken up by parking could be used instead for planting and green space.
- An SPRC member commented that all of the parking should be below grade.
- An SPRC member asked whether there was permeability between CH-3 & CH-1, i.e. is it a breezeway or is it enclosed? The applicant responded that it's an amenity for the residents, and not a public access, so it'll be fobbed access that is enclosed.
- Another SPRC member commented that the applicant should really consider making it a breezeway. The applicant responded that they did not wish to break up the slab and wanted the ground floor to be continuous instead.
- AN SPRC member commented that the project needs a more architecturally prominent corner at 18<sup>th</sup> and Eads. Is putting a trellis on the roof the best that can be done? It just makes the existing building more prominent, when the applicant should be showcasing the new architecture. The applicant responded that they are continuing to work on this.
- Staff commented that the Crystal City Sector Plan emphasizes architectural features at prominent corners. Staff also commented that CH-3 and CH-4 should do a better job of integrating balconies into the facades. Staff also suggested providing a wider setback for CH-7 & 8 to provide more privacy. Finally, the sector plan calls for turning the corner with building mass at 18<sup>th</sup>/Fern, so CH-7 should wrap that corner.
- An SPRC member commented that the building at the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> and Eads should be the front door/main statement for the project to the location adjacent to the metro.
- Another SPRC member echoed that the 18<sup>th</sup>/Eads corner is the most important architectural portion of the whole site. The member commented that the 11 stories should be at that corner and not in the middle of the building to the south.
- Another member echoed sentiments about the architectural importance of the 18<sup>th</sup>/Eads corner, and also mentioned that the architecture of CH-3 & 4 is too similar.

- A member commented that they are interested in seeing the accessible passageways between the buildings.
- An SPRC member criticized the color palette on CH-3 & 4, commenting that they did a good job of breaking up the massing, but the materials and colors need some rethinking.

## OPEN SPACE

- An SPRC member commented that they would like to have a more generous setback for CH-7 & 8 and to incorporate additional plantings into the yards.
- An SPRC member asked whether this was the final process for design. Staff answered that it is intended to be.
- Another SPRC member asked that we discuss open space again at the next meeting after parking. Staff answered that staff and the applicant can work on some concepts for participants to look at and provide feedback on.
- An SPRC member commented that the advantage of this site is that there is available open space that can be made public.
- An SPRC member asked whether more could be done to promote people moving through the space between CH-8? Could this be an opportunity to reinforce permeability? The applicant responded that this is still a very permeable site.
- An SPRC member asked about the size of the corner park. What is existing there now? The applicant answered that they aren't sure of the existing size, but the new park will be 20,000 sf.
- An SPRC member asked whether it was possible to get rid of the driveway along the edge of the corner park. The applicant responded that it is needed for internal circulation, as there is a loading dock adjacent.
- An SPRC member commented that the space between the two sticks of CH-8 appears to be offset from 20<sup>th</sup> Street. The applicant should keep this axis.
- An SPRC member commented that the open spaces are too organized. They really liked the existing, wild looking spaces. Also, there is concern about street trees making up for existing canopy trees, as they don't grow as large and generally don't do well.
- An SPRC member asked staff to elaborate on what is the demand for various amenities in the vicinity. Staff showed heat maps from the presentation.
- An SPRC member commented that dog parks shouldn't be in the public park areas and should be elsewhere on the site. The applicant responded that they are planning on providing private dog parks for their residents regardless of what occurs in the parks.
- An SPRC member asked a question about community gardens. Staff answered that they could fit approximately 20 on the corner park at 10' x 10' dimensions.
- An SPRC member reiterated concerns about loss of trees; staff will have to balance the recommendations of the CCSP with other plans, such as tree canopy.

- An SPRC member commented that the PSMP recommends a dog amenity, but this decision should be left for the neighbors. It could work as a small space in the corner park.
- An SPRC member commented that the corner park is a good space for a casual use park, such as pollinator gardens; or could be a place for a dog run if the dog run planned for the central park is removed.
- An SPRC member commented that they were confused about the tree save map presented by the applicant. This doesn't correspond to areas of the new buildings. The applicant responded that the map appears that way because they can't plant above parking garage areas, so trees in those areas have to be removed as well.
- An SPRC member commented that he applicant should work to create a grove of trees in between CH-7 & CH-8.
- An SPRC member asked about the accessibility standards for the park, and for the applicant to please consider the ADA 2010 Standard for Design. To elaborate, the furniture and signage should all be accessible, and there should be a lighting plan.
- An SPRC member inquired how much soil is in the green strips on the streetscapes? The applicant commented there will be 6-foot tree pits. Staff commented that comes to about 1200 cubic feet of soil per tree, and this will be worked out during the design process post-approval.

*Statement by Crystal City Business Improvement District: A brief comment was heard from **Rob Mandle** from the Crystal City BID who opined on the following topics:*

- The Crystal City BID likes the way the project is shaping up; like that the project is outwardly, instead of inwardly focused, and now has strong edges that connect it to the rest of Crystal City.
- Still feels there is an opportunity to remove surface parking areas and replace with trees.
- The creation of townhomes on the western edge of the site is great, and that housing typology is needed more in Crystal City.
- CH-3 is challenging from a massing perspective; the BID would like the applicant to do some more thinking about the corner of 18<sup>th</sup>/Eads Street.

### **SPRC WRAP-UP COMMENTS**

- **Bill Braswell, At-Large SPRC member.** Interested in usage of public and private spaces on the site. Interested in an analysis of the safety of the site. Is crime expected?
- **Elizabeth Morton, Planning Commission.** Request that at the next SPRC, the applicant should prepare section views for the townhouses.
- **Doris Ray, Disability Advisory Committee.** Would like to see standards for streetscapes to ensure accessibility.
- **Pamela Van Hine, Pedestrian Advisory Committee.** Would like to see streetscape sections. Also would like an update on proposed park program, with alternatives to consider.
- **Christer Ahl, Crystal City Citizens Advisory Council.** Who benefits from the public space? We need to make these parks a destination to attract users from the east across Richmond Highway.

- **James Schroll, Planning Commission.** Would like a justification for why nearly 200 surface parking spaces remain.
- **Elizabeth Gearin, Planning Commission.** Would also like to hear from staff regarding the surface parking.
- **Evelio Rubiella, Urban Forestry Commission.** Concern about the loss of tree canopy on site. Interested in seeing a biophilic design for the rooftop spaces. Still feel that there is potential to remove remaining surface parking areas and add trees.
- **Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) Representative.** Concern about keeping dogs away from street trees. Would like to see trees in the corner park preserved to the greatest extent possible. Also interested in seeing a biophilic treatment for the rooftop on CH-3.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Are CH-7 & 8 a done deal? Has something changed? Think the project works better without those buildings and would like to see that area used for reforestation.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- The next SPRC meeting will be held on July 25, 2019\*\*\*.

*\*\*\* The next SPRC meeting has been rescheduled to September 16, 2019.*