

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Nancy Iacomini, Chairman, LRPC

DATE: September 21, 2019

SUBJECT: LRPC Report on Block Plan J-K

The Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) met on September 19, 2019 to discuss the submittal of a new block plan for Block J-K in Crystal City. This is a particularly important block as it will provide Center Park – the largest public opens space identified in the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCSP).

The task of the LRPC was to examine elements in the applicant’s proposal that deviated from the elements set forth in the CCSP. The task of the ensuing Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) would be to evaluate the project itself and look at design, streetscape, etc.. The LRPC is more macro in evaluation than the SPRC.

LRPC members “at the table” included Planning Commissioners, as well as some other representatives specific to this topic: Chris Slatt from the Transportation Commission; Bill Ross from the Park and Recreation Commission; Judy Freshman from the Crystal City Civic Association; Christer Ahl from the Crystal City Citizen Review Council (CCCRC); Mike Pickford from the Arlington Ridge Civic Association (ARCA );and Brent Spence from the Aurora Highlands Civic Association.

Staff gave a brief presentation that included background on Crystal City Block Plans, as well as an overview of the review process for these plans and the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCPS) Guidance for the block.

Staff had prepared a table comparing the applicant’s proposal with the sector plan guidance for the block in order to ascertain if there were any deviations from the CCSP and, if so, how might they be reconciled.

LRPC discussion centered around the following points of deviation:

**Coordinated Frontage:** The CCSP calls for coordinated frontage along the east side of Center Park. This was based on there being one building on a podium. The applicant, however, is proposing two buildings. Members of the LRPC and the other community representatives generally found that two buildings with a break in between were preferable to one building on a podium. Given this, there appeared to be general agreement that a coordinated architectural look is no longer necessary and, indeed, some found this to be a preferable alternative. The

architecture of both buildings, including the architectural feature called for in the CCSP, will be examined during the SPRC process.

**Surface Transit:** The CCSP was adopted before the demise of the streetcar and 18<sup>th</sup> Street is shown to include a dedicated streetcar/transit lane. The applicant proposes to follow the street design that was recently approved for adjacent Block G that eliminated the transit lane dedication. The LRPC found this was acceptable as a deviation. However, it did note that, sometime in the future, the street may need to accommodate a traffic lane not used by cars and so some ROW should be potentially reserved or identified for that purpose.

**Street Network:** The applicant proposed two new alleys for the block – one running North and South connecting 20<sup>th</sup> Street South and 18<sup>th</sup> Street South, and one running East and West from Crystal Drive to the North/South alley.

The North/South alley would provide loading and parking access to the proposed buildings, as well as pedestrian and vehicular access. The alley would be lower in elevation than the park to which it would be adjacent. LRPC members agreed with the CCSP guidance that supports the inclusion of alleys for loading and parking access.

The East/West alley is envisioned by the applicant to be a Woonerf and would provide access to the proposed entrances of the two new buildings, as well as connectivity to the North/South alley. LRPC supported a connection to Crystal Drive at this point, but did not want to identify exactly what form (Woonerf? Pedestrian Priority Street? Plaza?) such a connection would take. LRPC felt this was an issue for further study by DES staff and discussion at SPRC.

**Build-to Lines:** The applicant is proposing to provide a 90 foot build-to line on 20<sup>th</sup> Street South, as opposed to the CCSP's recommended 100 feet. LRPC found this acceptable given the placement of the existing building on the block that is not expected to redevelop any time soon, but deferred final support pending the outcome of the SPRC process. (The CCSP also shows it as a building to remain.)

**Street Sections:** Again, the need to deal with the elimination of the proposed streetcar influenced the applicant's proposal to follow the already-approved street section for Block G. Staff is concerned that there be on-street parking on 20<sup>th</sup> Street and the applicant said that they will in fact provide such parking. The LRPC was tentatively okay with the deviation of the street section from the CCSP because of the need to no longer provide a transit lane, but wanted more discussion in the SPRC process.

**Land Use Mix:** The applicant is proposing two residential buildings, instead of one larger office building. Staff noted the site is located in the CCSP's "Central Business District" and so was conceived as an office building. However, staff also noted that an overarching goal of the CCSP was to introduce more residential into Crystal City. After some discussion, the LRPC supported the proposed residential use, citing the need for residential uses and the knowledge that use mixes on blocks may change over applications. The LRPC did want staff to track overall

commercial and residential numbers in Crystal City, however, to ensure the desired use mix stays on track as additional blocks are redeveloped.

**Public Open Space:** The applicant is proposing to deliver the full square footage of Center Park in two phases linked to redevelopment. The LRPC was supportive of this, as long as easements for the entirety of phase 1 are provided with this site plan and that all of Center Park is able to ultimately be realized. The LRPC did not feel the introduction of residential to the site in anyway imperiled the programmability of the new park. The LRPC did want to see how the green “tail” of land noted in the CCSP that links Center Park to 18<sup>th</sup> Street would work, and noted this for the SPRC process. The LRPC also raised the issue of who will pay for the park – both the interim treatment and final.

In conclusion, the LRPC found there was no reason for the application not to proceed and that the deviations were either acceptable at this time or would likely become so during the SPRC process. The LRPC did want to have a brief discussion at the conclusion of the SPRC process to re-visit flagged items and view the revised block plan.

**Items to be Re-visited at the Conclusion of the SPRC Process:**

Architectural Feature

Street Network – configuration of E/W alley

Build-to Lines – 20<sup>th</sup> Street South

Street Sections – particularly on-street parking on 20<sup>th</sup> Street South

Public Open Space – revisit the green “tail” that is to provide visual access into Center Park from 18<sup>th</sup> Street side.