
Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) of the Planning Commission
Meeting Summary
July 27, 2021, 7:00pm

This meeting was a virtual public meeting held through electronic communications means.

Planning Commissioners in attendance:

James Schroll (Chair, LRPC)
Denyse "Nia" Bagley
Jim Lantelme
Elizabeth Morton
Leonardo Sarli
Sara Steinberger

Planning Commissioners absent:

Elizabeth Gearin
Stephen Hughes
Devanshi P. Patel
Tenley Peterson
Jane Siegel
Daniel Weir

Other Invited LRPC members in attendance:

Forestry and Natural Resources Commission: Steve Sockwell
Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board: Joan Lawrence
Park & Recreation Commission: Bill Ross
Transportation Commission: Davis Rajtik
Ashton Heights Civic Association: Jack Spillsbury
Ballston-Virginia Square Civic Association: Collier Cook
Lyon Park Citizens Association: Aaron Schuetz
Lyon Village Citizens Association: Bill Gearhart
Joyce Motors site and associated properties: David Orr
St. Charles Catholic Church site: Rashad Badr

Staff in attendance:

Jeanette Ankoma-Sey (DPR)
Kevin Casadei (DES)
Kelly Cornell (DES)
Lorin Farris (CPHD – Historic Preservation)
Walter Gonzalez (DPR)
Kris Krider (CPHD – Planning)
Matt Ladd (CPHD – Planning)
Irena Lazic (DPR)
Pablo Penades Lopez (CPHD – Planning)
Tim Murphy (CPHD – Planning)
Daniel Nabors (DES)
Bridget Obikoya (DES)

Jennifer Smith (CPHD – Planning)

Clarendon Sector Plan Update

LRPC Chair James Schroll opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Commissioner Schroll recognized the members of several other Arlington County boards and commissions and civic leaders in attendance, as well as staff members.

Matthew Ladd presented updates regarding building height and form, viewsheds, and historic preservation developed in response to feedback at the June 30, 2021, LRPC meeting. Matthew Ladd then presented new content related to public open space and transportation.

Once the staff presentations concluded, Commissioner Schroll solicited comments and feedback from LRPC attendees.

The Commission members offered the following comments and raised several clarifying questions:

Comments/Questions related to Building Height and Form:

- Clarifying question about why the proposed height on 10th Street is 75 feet on 10th Street, instead of 55 feet. *Staff indicated that the proposed 75-foot heights on the Joyce Motors and Bingham Center blocks are intended to create an intermediate step as heights taper from 55 feet on the south side of 10th Street to the maximum height of 110 feet. This height is also consistent with the Sector Plan's guidance for 75 feet on the block to the west (County-owned site).*
- Comments indicating that there is no compelling justification for increasing planned heights on 10th St.
- Comment about height increase not being requested by applicants and seeking clarification about why staff is proposing more height.
- Comments supporting the height increase on 10th St. because it is close to Metro and few areas within the County allow for greater height. This helps further the County's housing goals as density increases housing supply. Commenters also indicated that additional density will also increase community benefits that are negotiated through a future site plan process.
- Clarifying question about why staff is proposing step-back flexibility (indicated as a range of 10'-15') instead of a specific dimension. *Staff responded that most of the approved buildings within Clarendon have had step-back depths less than 20'. Staff recognizes the architectural challenges of 20' step-backs and proposes not to create an unrealistic expectation.*
- Comment encouraging to retain a recommended step-back depth of 20' because the County Board can modify this standard, and it could be reduced in exchange for community benefits.

Comments related to Historic Preservation (Joyce Motors Site):

- Representative for the Joyce Motors property indicated concerns about staff proposed step-backs and associated dimensions for this property, the challenges of applying the

proposal to the site's architecture and layout, and that a lesser step-back should be considered.

- Some commenters support the proposed historic preservation recommendations to integrate the Joyce Motors façade materials at the corner of 10th and Irving Streets, with step-backs above the façade.
- Some commenters strongly recommended that the owner should fully preserve the existing building at its current location within the site, given the "Essential" HRI designation.
- Comment that preserving only the façade is possible and there are precedents of that in the County.
- Additional comments were stated in favor of, at least, preserving the façade and the sign.
- Comment that the proposed 75-foot height next to a lower step-back on 10th Street would create an uneven look.
- The applicant/contract owner of the Joyce Motors site described their current proposed approach to preserve the façade (including preserving and restoring the enamel panels which are currently in poor condition) and sign. He commented that it is necessary to have a viable development project to justify restoring and repurposing the historic building materials.

Comments related to Public Open Space:

- Comments appreciating the staff work on the refined concept for a linear park on Fairfax Drive.
- Design guidelines for Fairfax Drive Park should include more details on how the shared street will work and opportunities for tree canopy throughout the study area, including rooftops.
- Comment supporting Fairfax Drive Park, but noting it would be more of a passive, casual space. The Sector Plan recommends active uses for the proposed park on 10th Street which may not be achieved. Staff should provide options for an active park in Clarendon.
- Comments supporting park space on a portion of the County's 10th Street site if the fire station remains at that location. Also consider park space on the roof of the new fire station.
- Suggestion to add language in the Sector Plan Update about developers participating in the cost of converting Fairfax Drive to a park.
- Request for additional information to compare the square footage of the proposed public open spaces with the current Sector Plan recommendations.
- Comments supporting the proposed mid-block connection through the St. Charles Church site.

Comments related to Transportation

- Comment about adding a crosswalk in front of the church on 12th Street, noting that this will be a natural desire line for people to cross Washington Blvd.
- Comments supporting proposed 2-way protected bike lanes along Fairfax Drive, with questions about how it would connect to planned bike infrastructure on Kirkwood Road and continuing on Fairfax Drive through Virginia Square/Ballston.
- Questions about why protected bike lanes are not being recommended on Washington Boulevard and 10th Street. *Staff responded that the approved design for the Clarendon West site plan does not allow enough right-of-way on Washington Blvd. Bike facilities on 10th Street could be recommended as a follow-on study in the Sector Plan Update.*
- Comment in favor widening the streetscape next to Northside Social.

- Question about whether an additional transportation study or analysis would occur prior to a park master planning process to confirm the transportation needs.
- Representative of the Bingham Center site redevelopment remarked that widening the streetscape on Wilson Blvd. will add more development challenges to the site.

Public Comment

- Comment about defining ‘Extraordinary Community Benefits’ in the Sector Plan. Benefits should include the linear park, parking, and land acquisition. Concern that this process is setting a new baseline for development parameters that should be discussed through the SPRC process. Support preserving the Joyce Motors building. Recommends no changes to the current building heights and step-backs in the Sector Plan. Concern about how the new 10th Road will function.
- Representative of TJ Auto and Northside Social businesses commented that each business relies on Fairfax Drive access for business operations. Their operations, specifically for loading/unloading functions should be further considered in the future design for Fairfax Drive.
- Request for a shadow study to make sure trees on 10th Road receive adequate light.
- Comment in favor of the staff-proposed linear park. Clarendon needs more park spaces for dogs. Traffic calming is also an issue throughout Clarendon.
- Support for Fairfax Drive linear park, however concerns about people on bikes and scooters sharing space with TJ Auto tow trucks and delivery vehicles. Cycletrack adjacent to linear park should be on the north side to align with likely location of proposed cycletrack on Fairfax Drive to the west. Concern about removing Sector Plan’s recommended pedestrian connection from Wilson Blvd. to Fairfax Drive between TJ Auto and North Side Social. Support for bike facility on 10th Street.
- Support for active park space in Clarendon, possibly on the County’s 10th Street site on top of or next to a new fire station. Enclosed private open space areas within proposed residential building on St. Charles site should be visually and physically connected to public spaces.
- Request for wind and shadow studies for proposed heights along 10th Street.

Mathew Ladd wrapped up the presentation with a brief discussion of next steps.

Commissioner Schroll adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:30 pm.