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**Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) of the Planning Commission**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**Thursday, May 12, 2022**  
**7:00 p.m.**

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

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**Planning Commissioners in attendance:**

Denyse "Nia" Bagley  
James Lantelme (LRPC Chair)  
Tenley Peterson  
James Schroll

**Planning Commissioners absent:**

Elizabeth Gearin  
Devanshi P. Patel  
Leonardo Sarli  
Sara Steinberger  
Daniel Weir

**Other invited LRPC members in attendance\*:**

Omari Davis, Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)  
Stacy Meyer, Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA)  
Kevin Manual, Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC)  
Margaret McGilvray, Housing Commission (HC)  
Davis Rajtik, Transportation Commission (TC)  
Doris Ray, Disability Advisory Commission (DAC)  
Taquanda Dixon, Melwood Client Services Representative

\*ARCA and CCCA representatives were elevated to the LRPC discussion. Representatives from the PAC and CCCRC were also permitted to speak during the LRPC discussion.

**Staff in attendance:**

Angie de la Barrera (DES – Transportation)  
Kellie Brown (CPHD – Planning)  
Anika Chowdhury (CPHD – Planning)  
Walter Gonzalez (DPR)  
Matt Mattauszek (CPHD – Planning)  
Margaret Tulloch Rhodes (CPHD – Planning)  
Richard Tucker (CPHD – Housing)

**Applicant team in attendance:**

Scott Gibson  
Catherine Puskar  
Lauren Riley

## **Melwood Special General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Study LRPC Meeting**

Commissioner Lantelme opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Lantelme recognized staff and the applicant.

Margaret Rhodes presented the background and timeline for the study. She then reviewed the rationale of the requested amendment to the GLUP, as well as the rezoning request.

Cathy Puskar and Scott Gibson presented the applicant's requested amendment to the GLUP and rezoning, as well as the rationale for a Tier II review.

Once the applicant's presentation concluded, staff reviewed the staff analysis, while elaborating the County goals and adopted planning/policy guidance. Staff then shared discussion questions prepared for the LRPC discussion:

1. Does the evaluation of the request indicate that a Tier II study is warranted per the criteria established in the Process Guide?
2. What information would be helpful for the LRPC during a Tier II study?

Commissioner Lantelme recognized the members of the LRPC and other advisory commissions and civic leaders that had been invited to participate at the table.

Commissioner Lantelme solicited comments and feedback from LRPC attendees.

Key comments and summary points raised during the LRPC discussion are as follows:

### **Special GLUP Study Process**

- The Crystal City Sector Plan process provided for meaningful community participation, while the Special GLUP Study process does not. Traffic, parking, building height and precedent are key issues that need community discussion.

### **GLUP Designation, Zoning and Maximum Height**

- The requested amendment would allow for a building that is too tall and massive given the surrounding context. There are additional concerns about precedent, traffic, density and impacts on the adjacent park.
- Would staff consider alternative GLUP and zoning scenarios if there was a Tier II review responsive to the neighborhood's concern regarding height that could look at zoning categories that would allow for sufficient tapers?
  - Staff response: At this juncture, staff is proposing to focus on "Low-Medium" Residential and the zoning categories that would correspond with that, such as RA14-26 and RA8-18. Should the study advance to a Tier II review, there could be discussion on whether other GLUP or zoning categories should be considered and opportunities for tapering.
- Could a height lower than that allowed by a certain zoning category be established?

- Staff response: As indicated in the staff presentation, zoning districts that align with the requested “Low-Medium” Residential GLUP designation, (RA14-26, RA8-18, and RA6-15) include a provision that allow for consideration of additional height in exchange for affordable housing through special exception (site plan) review, subject to relevant adopted policies and plans regarding maximum building height. It is not anticipated that the Tier II study would include recommendations supportive of considering the maximum building height allowable through the RA district site plan provisions. Should the study advance to a Tier II review, appropriate height and transitions - responsive to the surrounding context - would be studied and there would be opportunities for the public to weigh in on appropriate height and transitions. The Pershing Drive Special GLUP Study process is an example of a study which recommended a building height, as well as tapers, below the maximum height in the zoning district.

#### Affordable and Accessible Housing

- Would this study advance Affordable Housing Master Plan goals, especially increasing the stock of accessible housing, the number of fully accessible units, unit affordability and building access. The study would need to look at the impact on the surrounding community and the disability community. Could the site be sold to a different developer?
  - Staff response: No amendment to the GLUP takes place as part of a Special GLUP Study process. A Tier II review concludes with a recommendation from staff that an amendment to the GLUP is or is not within the realm of consideration. An action to amend the GLUP would only take place if there was an appropriate site plan that complies with the recommendations of the Tier II review. The Tier I process would remain at a high level and the number of units and affordability levels would not be discussed unless there was a Tier II review, and then only in the context of a high-level land use review. Should a recommendation from a Tier II review lead to a site plan application, more project-specific discussions would take place during the potential Site Plan Review process.

#### Implications of Potential Recommendations on Lower Density Residential Sites

- There were a number of remarks regarding potential precedent that would be set in supporting changes in the GLUP designation for land that zoned for single-household residences.
  - Staff response: Although the site is designated “Public” on the GLUP, the existing designation is not appropriate given that the property has been privately owned and operated since 1981. This site can be differentiated from the surrounding sites, as it is designated “Public” on the GLUP which is an inconsistent designation with the R-6 and C-1 zoning districts. Since 1981, when Melwood’s predecessor took private ownership of the site, the “Public” designation was no longer appropriate. Reviewing the GLUP designation is appropriate given this inconsistency and the purpose of the study is to determine what the appropriate GLUP category and potential zoning districts could be.

#### Summary Comments on Whether to Proceed to Tier II Study

- The LRPC Chair commented that should the study move forward to a Tier II review, the proposal should consider lower height and less density than the maximum allowed under the requested RA8-18 zoning district via site plan.
- The other Planning Commissioners also expressed support for proceeding to Tier II review, noting that Tier I concerns, including the maximum height appropriate for this site, tapers, and transitions to the adjacent park, could be addressed in a Tier II Study, and community members should stay engaged to help shape potential change.
- The AHCA representative referenced the 2019 process guidance from the County on Special GLUP Studies and requested that staff deny the application and have the applicant reapply with a more appropriate proposal.
- The ARCA representative said that their neighborhood shares some of the concerns about traffic and the park and agreed with the AHCA representative that the study should not move forward.
- The representatives for the CCCA, CCCRC, DAC, HALRB, HC and TC were in support of moving forward with a Tier II review, as the criteria for a Tier II review have been met.
- The TC representative said that this is worthy of a Tier II review. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street South is an underdeveloped asset and Restaurant Row would benefit from more density. Affordable housing and the disabled community are important.
- The HALRB representative supported a Tier II review. Issues related to the streetscape, preservation and educational markers can be brought up during the review.
- The PRC representative said the biggest concern is the increase of traffic around the park and near the green space. He said it is a proposal he supports as a commissioner and resident of Aurora highlands.
- The Melwood client representative is in favor of moving forward with a Tier II review and believes this will be a good opportunity for the people that Melwood serves.
- The PAC representative said that she lives close by and supports the PRC and TC comments and recommends moving to a Tier II review.

#### Other Comments

- Several discussion items focused on general access to the building, impact on the surrounding community in terms of height, tapers and setbacks, as well as potential traffic impacts.
- The importance of achieving the County's goals for affordable housing and accessible housing, as well as the importance of being an inclusive community, were also further discussed.
- Community concerns are related to the size of the project and not the potential for additional affordable or accessible housing.
- The CCCA representative asked a clarifying question on 104 units being proposed by the applicant and the logic behind the specific number of units noted.
  - Staff response: This is a discussion regarding the high-level land use, not a project-specific discussion, which would occur only should the project advance to a Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting.
- The Affordable Housing Master Plan includes a map which does not include this area as a location for additional affordable housing.
  - Staff note: The Affordable Housing Master Plan includes Appendix C Map: 2040 Forecast of the Distribution of Housing Affordable up to 60% of the AMI (MARKs

and CAFs). As described in 1.1.4 of the AHMP, this map is a forecast of the anticipated and desired distribution of affordable housing throughout the County. However, it is not intended to limit support for affordable housing in other parts of the community.

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### **Public Comment**

- Six speakers were in favor of the proposal and the advancement to a Tier II review, with many supporting Melwood bringing affordable and accessible housing to the community, especially benefiting the underserved population. They would like to see additional staff analysis of the project's land use, density, zoning and transportation. In addition, several speakers in support expressed that advancing to a Tier II review would allow for potential changes to what the applicant is currently proposing through further discussion which could address many of the questions the AHCA representative raised during the Tier I review.
- Specific concerns/requests raised by speakers in support include the need for building height restrictions, housing dedicated to senior units, the incorporation of universal design features and an "affordable" note updated on the GLUP Map.
- A speaker in support of a Tier II review expressed that the potential project would provide affordable housing and supportive services for people with disabilities, which aligns with the County's goals for housing and people with disabilities. Although the host civic association is in opposition to moving forward with a Tier II review, due to concerns regarding building height and mass, not moving forward would be to forego an important opportunity for affordable housing.
- Eight speakers expressed concerns about the proposal and opposition to a Tier II review, due to building heights exceeding the existing surrounding buildings and the potential oversight of the adjacent park. A five-story building seems out of proportion with the surrounding neighborhood. The neighborhood is being swallowed up by additional density. Why was affordable housing not added to the buildings developed in Crystal City?
- Several speakers expressed opposition to the proposal and stated that the commissioners seem to support a program that is not fully developed. It is their job to represent the community.
- One speaker expressed opposition to the advancement of a Tier II review stating that she disagreed with how the meeting had been conducted, as 93 percent of residents the neighborhood had surveyed were against the proposal. In addition, she clarified that just because they are against the proposal does not mean they do not treat the disabled population equitably.
- One speaker in support of a Tier II review expressed misrepresentation of the community's position, with many residents in favor of the proposal not in attendance during the meeting. In addition, it was mentioned that the survey several speakers noted was not sent out to the general public, but only to a relatively small group of people who were largely opposed to the project.
- Several speakers expressing opposition to the advancement of a Tier II review urged that the application should be denied as proposed and that Melwood should reapply with an appropriate application, since the civic aspect of the building was not being preserved and the proposal is not one hundred percent affordable housing. In addition, several

referenced the Crystal City Sector Plan, which calls for “preserving the integrity of the single-family neighborhood to the west.” They noted that a large five-story building surrounded by single-family homes would be unprecedented. It was expressed that this would be an invitation for other property owners along the corridor to propose much larger buildings on their properties that would not be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.

**Next Steps**

Staff will process the feedback shared at this meeting and will determine if the study should advance to a Tier II review.

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Chair Lantelme adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:03 p.m.