
Long Range Planning Committee Meeting Summary

February 18, 2015; 7:00 – 10:00 pm and February 23, 2015; 9:00 – 10:00 pm

2100 Clarendon Blvd. Lobby Level, Room C/D

Topic: Realize Rosslyn | Rosslyn Sector Plan Update

PC Members in Attendance: Steve Cole (Meeting Chair), Ginger Brown (2/23), Rosemary Ciotti (2/23)
Brian Harner, Chris Forinash, Jane Siegel, Steve Sockwell, Erik Gutshall,

Steve Cole provided introductory remarks. A presentation was given by Anthony Fusarelli. A summary of main points from the LRPC discussion is described as follows:

General Comments

- This meeting is the PC's opportunity to express its views to the County Board. The PC will be submitting a letter to the County Board prior to the work session on 3/4.
- The questions are designed to focus discussion on each topic.

Project Background and Overview

- Staff reviewed Plan Framework and Policy Directives
- Ground floor land use map (slide 6): How prescriptive will it be? *Staff response: Staff is reviewing current maps against the draft countywide retail action plan; sector plan recommendations may be framed more as guidelines regarding use but require that buildings in priority locations are built to be able to accommodate retail at some point.*

BUILDING HEIGHT AND FORM

General Questions

- Reviewed Rosslyn Process Panel subcommittees and their purpose of providing additional input on key issues and questions
- How is approved development treated? is it consistent with guidelines? *Staff response: Approved development is treated as a given; haven't considered alternative scenarios for development on those sites, or studied in detail how they do/do not conform with emerging recommendations.*
- What is total development FAR in Rosslyn if proposed scenario is built out? *Staff response: Total development is approximately 18-19 million square feet total, including existing, approved, and expected redevelopment.*
- Can you point out where the valleys are? *Staff response: The valleys are the areas around Wilson and Arlington Ridge, Dark Star Park, Oak and Pierce, and at a few places along Lee Highway.*
- What accounts for variation on buildable area vs. lot area? *Staff response: In many cases it is because the lot includes existing or proposed street areas.*
- Do heights include penthouse? *Staff response: Recommended heights noted on map are from average site elevation to main roof.*
- What is level of confidence that views in model are accurate? *Staff response: Views are based on a camera set at specific elevations, so we have confidence in the general level of accuracy.*
- Does the proposed scenario have the desired level of height variation or is it primarily driven by achieving minimum density? *Staff response: The scenario seeks to balance and address both goals.*
- What is the thinking behind 355' on the electrical substation site? We may want to consider as, a policy issue, allowing development on substation site in exchange for placing substation

underground? *Staff response: This height is the upper limit before intruding on priority views, but may not be warranted since we did not envision redevelopment on this site. Further study may be needed to see if an additional tower would fit well here.*

- It is interesting that the conclusion of the subcommittee on Scenario C (lowest density) was that it still doesn't achieve a compelling skyline. *Staff response: Additional height and density is needed to incentivize redevelopment; factors of flight path limitations and topography make it difficult to achieve a wide variety.*
- Why not recommend stepbacks along 18th street to allow more light in? *Staff response: This was considered, but we found that it had impacts on density that could make it too difficult to redevelop adjacent buildings needed to create corridor.*

Question 1 – Is there sufficient variation in building heights (peaks and valleys) modeled in the Proposed Scenario?

- What was the discussion in the subcommittee on meeting height and form goals within buildings? *Staff response: We considered aspects affecting livability from within, such as minimum tower separation, edge transitions, access to light/air.*
- With regards to the observation deck, we need to err on the side of getting a better view since there is so much public investment. Cutting off a few (as many as 3) floors from buildings in priority view corridors would have a big benefit in views toward the river.
- With regards to district energy, are we anticipating doing anything with the space reserved for penthouses if a mechanical penthouse is not needed?
- Are there any images looking from west into Rosslyn at the ground level? Was it the sense of the subcommittee that the variation along the ground level view corridors is adequate? *Staff response: The subcommittee did not focus significantly on view corridors adjacent to western edges of the RCRD. However, we tried to achieve 1:1 slope transitioning to the maximum zoning envelope for sites just outside the RCRD.*
- Can we please see more street views next time and 360 views from the observation deck?
- The subcommittee struggled with height variation as well; the previous taper policy had much lower densities than being proposed here. Some community members are concerned about building heights above 300', but it needs to be considered that many buildings are limited to heights lower than 300'. There is not much height variation at a macro level, but there is achievement of light and air and other goals at the micro level.
- Two things need to occur for Rosslyn to be more successful: more vibrant street activity and more people who want to live and work there. Among the development community, everyone wants to have a tall building to get the best views, but we don't want to have insufficient variation because it would constrain everyone's views and make it a less desirable place.

Questions 2 and 3

- **Is the regulatory framework under consideration (including the approach to density) to implement a “peaks and valleys’ building height and form policy in the RCRD moving in the right direction? and**
- **Is the proposed guidance for maintaining some flexibility for heights above the stated limits (in certain circumstances and only as modified by the County Board) appropriate?**
- Staff explained that we are looking to maintain the current ability, per “C-O Rosslyn”, to pursue up to 10 FAR within the RCRD; an additional layer of guidance is proposed, via a form-based approach

including buildable areas, maximum height, setbacks, and other measures. With this additional layer, it could mean that some sites may not achieve the maximum limit of 10 FAR.

- What are instances when we might consider allowing additional height? *Staff response: Additional height might be considered on sites modeled as office located in a valley, where additional height would help to not discourage residential development if pursued.*
- Will certain blocks be targeted for office and would these blocks be the only ones that would be eligible for additional height if it is built as residential? *Staff response: The emerging recommendation is to not prescribe land use at the site level, but an approach could involve only offering flexibility for sites located in valleys and modeled as office.*
- Would the additional height have to be a smaller floor plate than lower floors (as shown on the slide)? *Staff response: Not necessarily, but it could. An alternative approach to flexibility could involve allowing different heights for office or residential uses.*
- This approach may unwind our rationale for having height limits. If we can live with taller heights, we ought to because that will allow for more slender towers and better views.
- Almost every developer will go as high as they want to go. It was clear in subcommittee meetings that height has incredible value to the land owner. Can the regulation of height yield a better overall building form? We have seen instances of developers using open space and above grade parking to push buildings as tall as possible.
- If it's true that every builder will go as tall as possible, then why are we allowing exceptions?
- There is a remarkable imbalance of uses in Rosslyn today. It has been a challenge to incentivize residential. Is it a greater value to the community to have a more balanced mix of uses or to maintain lower building heights?

18th STREET CORRIDOR DETAILS

Question 4 – Do the proposed criteria and guidance. . . establish a desirable design for the 18th Street extension in the Sector Plan?

- 18th street is most transformative element of plan. We need a place to promenade, and this will enable one to walk all the way from Quinn Street to the river. Pedestrians and bicycles should have priority other than during rush hours. Car access should be limited at non-peak hours. This will create a more people-friendly environment.
- Agree with need to make 18th street a place where people want to be. How much attention has been given to regulating uses along frontages?
- Setbacks along 18th could mean a loss of density but could create additional value by creating a better place.

Question 5 – Should the Sector Plan Update include density tools or other special considerations to incentivize redevelopment of International Place to achieve the full vision for the 18th Street corridor?

- Very uncomfortable with idea of “resetting” density. Is there a precedent?
- How do you feel about consideration to incentivize redevelopment to create 18th street?
- In the case of Crystal City, there was a change in underlying zoning; not uncomfortable with increased density but by idea of resetting.
- How much density was transferred? *Staff response: there is a difference between 5.3 and 10 FAR for the entire site area.*
- Resetting density for a recent site plan should not be taken lightly; 18th Street is “make or break” in terms of making Rosslyn a successful place to attract people. We are hoping that there are other tools to make this work.

- Not uncomfortable with additional incentives, but I am uncomfortable with “reset” notion. Could we consider specialty zoning to require residential along 18th?
- Not sure that we want only residential on that corridor, but we want more housing close by.
- How would TDR work on Intl Place site? *Staff response: This needs more detail; overall opportunities for TDR are limited within the RCRD.*
- Could TDR be used to achieve density above 3.8/4.8 above 10 FAR? *Staff response: Conceptually, yes, though it'd likely be in lieu of community benefits.*
- Is it true that we can't transfer density above 3.8/4.8 because the property owner doesn't own that density? *Staff response: We could consider a scenario where an existing building gets rezoned to CO-Rosslyn but is not altered, and the unused density gets shifted to another building.*
- Could we consider a tool for residential buildings to transfer their unused density (that can't be achieved due to height restriction) to a site like International Place?

ROSSLYN PLAZA

- The staff presentation only shows the open space and street connectivity option that is preferred by staff. What is the other option? *Staff response: The alternative approach proposed in the Rosslyn Plaza PDSP application includes two large open spaces that are more separated with a focus on retail along Kent Street. The PDSP application also proposes a separate Arlington Ridge Road that would be located below a wider Esplanade and would not connect to the Esplanade, 17th Street or 18th Street.*
- Does the proposal shown in the staff presentation include service access under Arlington Ridge Road? *Staff response: The proposal could accommodate that.*
- Having Arlington Ridge Road at the same level as the park, plaza and buildings is exactly what I want to see. It doesn't detract from qualities of park to be adjacent to a small, quiet street. I also like the mix of hard and soft shown in the park concept and having a retail pavilion to enliven the space
- Is this design illustrative or are there tools to achieve this vision? *Staff response: The primary tool is to include details on typology, program ideas and other characteristics of each park in the Sector Plan without prescribing exactly what will happen and what it will look like.*
- There needs to be some criteria to evaluate how a PDSP meets our intent.
- I don't feel strongly about where the park is located on the site, but I do think having Arlington Ridge Road connect with the park and the overall development makes sense.

AIR RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT

- Some commissioners agreed with the approach laid out on Slide 53 of the presentation. We should focus on redeveloping the core first and developing the place and identity of Rosslyn.
- How did Gateway Park come to be? And what is the structural integrity of the deck under Gateway Park? *Staff response: There is a use agreement between the County and the Commonwealth that requires public use on Gateway Park. The decks and superstructures have been visually inspected but will require additional analysis to determine if and when they might need significant maintenance.*
- How would we bring air rights sites into the long range planning process? *Staff response: Expanding the scope at this point would have time and resource implications on the completion of the Sector Plan, but implementation actions adopted with the Sector Plan could include tangible steps to continue conversations with Commonwealth on air rights post-Sector Plan adoption.*
- We could raise a question with the County Board as to whether the Sector Plan should call out Site 3 since it seems to have the most near term potential for redevelopment.

- We need to make a statement for ourselves and for the regional development community that Rosslyn has great potential. The Sector Plan needs to convey how it can become a great place. The message should be that Arlington is thinking outside the box and is open to developer who are willing to invest in air rights development. There is no downside to embracing air rights. If air rights are done well from an urban design and placemaking standpoint, it could help the core rather than take away from it
- What is the basis for study's conclusion that air rights would hurt efforts to revitalize the core? *Staff response: That conclusion is somewhat speculative. Whether a specific site will redevelop (either on land or on air rights) is largely dependent on that site's economics.*
- Air rights development is an issue largely for market to determine, not for government to determine. The government can reap some benefits from development, but we don't want to discourage private investment that could benefit the County. We should change the GLUP and zoning for the air rights parcels and review any site plans that are submitted. The County is not required to approve a site plan.
- The work to change the planning tools doesn't need to be done now. It can follow the Sector Plan adoption.
- Suggest that Slide 53 would say that the County will commit to a planning process to consider air rights development. This could be a follow-on process, post Sector Plan, to develop the tools.
- 18th Street is a transformative part of the Sector Plan. To the extent that 18th Street can connect to the river as a result of development over I-66, we should try to make that happen.
- The number of responses to the Commonwealth's Request for Information suggests that there is private interest in developing air rights.
- How do we open the door to discussions on air rights? There is already a lot of interest in other long range planning efforts. Concerned that we would add this to the top of the work program ahead of other areas.
- Washington D.C. is currently considering two air rights projects, demonstrating that it can be physically and economically feasible.
- The alternative to a long range planning study is a series of special GLUP studies, and we would prefer to look at it the issues holistically.
- We should appreciate the Commonwealth for its vision in bringing this opportunity to us.

Meeting adjourned at 9:54 pm. Committee discussion will resume on Monday, February 23, at 9:00 pm.

Meeting continued at 9:00 pm on Monday, February 23, as follows.

Steve Cole provided introductory remarks. A summary of main points from the LRPC discussion is described as follows:

Introductory Remarks

- The committee will review and revise draft consensus statements as a basis for providing input, in the form of a letter, to County Board for Realize Rosslyn work session on Mar 4.
- Not seeking unanimity; though would like to work toward agreement, if an item has no consensus, it will be dropped.

Rosslyn Plaza

- May be worth noting the esplanade north of 19th Street and south of Wilson Blvd. would not be a responsibility of the Rosslyn Plaza project;
- Text revisions could speak to provisions for an esplanade that parallels and provides for the eventual extension north and south;
- No other comments, seems like unanimous agreement

18th Street Corridor

- Should the text say Metro or Central Plaza? What is staff's intent here? *Staff response: may not matter in effect, but last week's presentation referenced Metro Station plaza when speaking to points west of Fort Myer Dr., and Central Place Plaza for points east of Lynn;*
- On second bullets, should we be clear that this is for the segment between Oak and Fort Myer? West of Oak, 18th Street is different, the Atrium, etc. may have concerns with ground floor retail uses. We haven't discussed this. Not sure there is full consensus on desire for retail in that stretch of 18th Street;
- What is staff expectation for 18th between Oak and Penzance building regarding retail? *Staff response: haven't prepared cross sections for that area. We have established build to lines on along the southern edge of 18th. More attention could be paid to convey the vision for this area.*
- 18th Street should extend from Quinn all the way through and connect to the river; in second bullet, should be limited to Oak to Fort Myer; happy to revise specific language;
- On view corridors, is the idea for a series of connected segments? N Quinn to N Oak; N Oak to Central Place? Then Central Place to Arlington Ridge?
- Text was drafted intentionally; priority is extending from Oak to the Plaza; topo may limit possibilities to extend all the way through; can wordsmith to improve clarity
- On first bullet, setbacks between building faces, staff had min 60', we added the word consistent. Why? Should every block be the same? Perhaps variation could be okay, so long as 18th Street extension can be experienced as a unified corridor of a consistent or coordinated character; will need to have good design guidelines;
- Is our recommendation that this be looked at carefully; first develop a unified character, then apply that in carefully crafted urban design guidelines
- Need to allow staff to define it; hard to say it is a build to line
- Can rework text based on what was said

- On International Place, text is essentially straight from staff recommendation in presentation;
- 'By right' reference may not be necessary, since they already area a site plan;

Air Rights Development

- Currently no language about working with the state; need 3rd bullet about encouraging staff to work with the state on next steps on this;
- The core point here is that this says it should be done now; not later – that same recommendations can apply to air rights area. Everyone okay?

Heights, Building Form, and Density**#1**

- What does last sentence of #1 mean in terms of density?
- This is the crux – combination of FAA limits and developer desire for maximum density is squeezing height variation. Need to consider what density level do we set as an expectation and what variation can we get as a result. More height variation requires lower density yields. Earlier

staff analysis has found the tent pole concept has lower yield than what is currently on the table. Also need deference to the surrounding communities, what can we do to help the neighborhoods get a quality urban environment.

- If current policy applied, average would be between 7 and 8 across the RCRD. So if we apply Peaks and Valleys (and opportunities for taller buildings) and hold current policy FAR, then we would get more variation;
- Perhaps “low” should read “relatively lower”
- No objections to these points, because I just don’t see variation in scenarios currently being proposed

#2

- Don’t want to compromise the view eastward; need to be extremely conservative; notion is that you can see the western shore of Theodore Roosevelt Island;
- We have been nudging heights lower to see more; don’t know how low they would have to go to see what we want to see;
- There are unintended consequences; want to preserve views, but as we lower heights we get fatter buildings;
- Buildings don’t need to get fatter if lower densities are maintained;
- We can control this at the ground level through our streetscape standards;
- The Plan Framework endorses key view sheds;
- We need to make judgment call on what we want to see;
- Advocating that we want to see western shore, will revised text accordingly;

#3

- This gets to notion of the bargain with the neighborhoods. If final plan has higher densities and higher heights, what assurances can we give to neighborhoods that results are not negative? Need to say that we have strong set of guidelines to mitigate impacts;
- On guidelines, if the key is specificity, we should mention that;
- We will see the urban design guidelines before they go for RTA;

#4

- Addresses staff recommendation for measures that promote residential. We are saying here that we are not comfortable with where/how it is currently being applied.
- Staff question says “only as modified by County Board”. So we want to clarify the circumstances under which it could be modified. We are seeking more specificity.
- We are also saying, that in order to modify it, the County Board needs to make a number of findings.

Next Steps

- We will update text and circulate in next day.
- Then, we will send out complete revised document and distribute on Wednesday.
- Then, a letter will be drafted to be sent to the Board.
- Staff to provide full summary of both meetings by Thursday.
- This timeline should provide opportunity for County Board to digest and for staff to respond.