



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of July 19, 2008
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DATE: June 27, 2008

SUBJECT: Master Plan for new public square known as Penrose Square located on the north side of Columbia Pike between South Barton Street and future South Cleveland Street.

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the general location and approximate size of the public square elements as shown on the attached Penrose Square Master Plan and associated Phase 1 Interim Plan.

ISSUES: This is the approval of a master plan for Penrose Square and a Phase I Interim Plan that will guide future design and construction of the project.

SUMMARY: As envisioned by the *Columbia Pike Initiative – A Revitalization Plan* and the *Columbia Pike Form Based Code*, the proposed Penrose Square Master Plan (Attachment A) depicts the general location and approximate size of the programmatic features proposed for the new public square located along Columbia Pike at South Barton Street. The square’s major program elements include: sidewalks along all four sides; a tree-covered, upper terrace adjacent to South Barton Street and South 9th Road, featuring a pervious surface as well as movable tables and chairs; a large, flexible, paved plaza in the central portion of the square; a stepped seating wall which forms the boundary between the upper terrace and the central plaza; an interactive water fountain and public art feature located within the central plaza; and two mounded lawn areas adjacent to South Cleveland Street and Columbia Pike. The Phase I Interim Plan (Attachment B) will guide the final design and implementation of the initial development phase of the square. The future Super Stop located at the front of the square on Columbia Pike will have a strong relationship to Penrose Square; it is being funded and built independently of the public square project.

BACKGROUND: In March 2002, the *Columbia Pike Initiative – A Revitalization Plan* was adopted by the County Board. A major recommendation of that plan was to develop a new review process and zoning tool to evaluate redevelopment proposals in the Columbia Pike corridor and to achieve new public places, which became the Form Based Code (FBC). In February 2003, the County Board adopted the FBC, which made development sites within the “Columbia Pike Special Revitalization District” designated on the General Land Use Plan

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eligible for development following the FBC. Four development nodes were established within the revitalization district – Town Center, Neighborhood Center, Village Center, and Eastern Gateway. The FBC also designated a series of new public open spaces and specified purposes and design criteria for each space.

The Penrose Square is the first and largest of three new squares planned within the Town Center node. The proposed square responds to the goals and objectives set forth in the *Columbia Pike Initiative – A Revitalization Plan Update* (2005) which describes Penrose Square as an active and flexible public space where people can meet, congregate and recreate. The square is a destination as well as a link between the neighborhood and Columbia Pike. The location and size of the square is consistent with the General Land Use Plan and the Town Center Regulating Plan and Streetscape Standards of the FBC (Attachment C). The Town Center Regulating Plan calls for the Penrose Square to be approximately 33,000 square feet in size. The square is located on the north side of Columbia Pike between South Cleveland and South Barton Streets in what are now the existing surface parking lots of the Adams Square and Fillmore Shopping Centers. The square will face south, fronting on Columbia Pike. Its eastern edge will be formed by the face of a new mixed use building and an extension of South Barton Street. Its northern edge will be defined by the face of a new mixed use building and a new segment of South 9th Road. The western edge of the square will eventually be framed by the future redevelopment of the Fillmore Gardens LLC property and a future extension of South Cleveland Street.

County Board approval of the Penrose Square site plan application (SP #402) in October 2006 resulted in a 17,760 square foot parcel being dedicated to the County for the purposes of creating the first half of the public square. Following approval of the site plan application, the County Board appointed a twelve (12) member citizen Working Group and charged it with developing a master plan for the public square. Between January 2007 and September 2007, the Working Group and staff met monthly and developed a vision, goals and objectives to help guide the design of the square. The Working Group envisioned a vibrant, public square that would serve as a meeting and gathering spot in the corridor's new urban fabric, a place where the community could come together and socialize, dine, relax or recreate. The Group aimed to pursue a square that would: be scaled to relate to the adjacent buildings; form a synergy with adjacent retail shops; be flexible enough to address daily needs as well as host special events; be inclusive and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities; be oriented toward transit; provide strong visual and physical connections to Columbia Pike; offer a variety of seating opportunities; and adhere to the design guidelines for civic squares contained in the Columbia Pike Form Based Code.

In October 2007 staff initiated the required County processes to procure a design consultant to assist with the development of a master plan and construction documents for Penrose Square. In March 2008 the landscape architectural firm, Oculus, and the County entered into a contract for architectural and engineering design services. One consideration that played a role in the selection of the Oculus design team was their inclusion of an artist with experience in creating art for public spaces and working collaboratively as part of a design team. Per the County's Public Art Program Policy and Guidelines, the Arlington Art Commission's Public Art Committee (PAC) reviewed and approved the selection of the design team's artist.

A Working Group meeting was held on March 18, 2008, during which the Oculus design team presented five different spatial frameworks for the square. After review and discussion, the Working Group directed the design team to combine two of the frameworks into a hybrid scheme that could be further refined. The Working Group requested level connections between the square at South 9th Road and South Barton Street, universally accessible entries where the grade allows, an L-shaped terrace space with low steps internal to the square, and that any retaining walls required along Columbia Pike or South Cleveland Street be minimized in height to the extent possible.

The hybrid alternative was presented to the Working Group on April 15, 2008. The alternative included two options for the central plaza area of the square. The Working Group supported the option that provided a larger central plaza and directed the design consultant to move forward in developing a Preliminary Master Plan based on this feedback. The design team also presented three public art concepts for the site. The Working Group supported further refinement of two of the public art concepts.

On May 13, 2008 the two public art concepts were presented to the PAC. The PAC unanimously endorsed both public art concepts, adding that either one would be a positive addition to Penrose Square. The Working Group also convened the same day to review a Preliminary Master Plan. The group expressed general support for the Preliminary Master Plan and voiced a preference for one of the public art concepts. The public art concept preferred by the Working Group is entitled "Echo." It consists of two, large, vertical stone sculptures which are designed and placed to create an interactive, "whispering parabola" affect within the square (Attachment D). The concept is an abstract interpretation of a communication theme inspired by three radio towers that were formerly located on the Navy Annex property. These towers played a significant role in the nation's trans-Atlantic communication capabilities during the first several decades of the twentieth century.

On June 3, 2008 a Final Master Plan was presented to the Working Group. The main elements of the design include: a Bosque (tree-covered) terrace with movable seats and tables; a centrally located paved plaza; a low seating wall and step feature; a zero-depth, interactive water fountain that can be turned off to allow for more flexible use of the plaza; two mounded lawn areas that provide casual seating opportunities; custom retaining walls along Columbia Pike and South Cleveland Street; and a public art feature that relates to local history and provides visual and acoustical interest. The Master Plan also conforms to the parameters set forth in the FBC for landscaping as well as pervious and impervious pavement.

DISCUSSION: In addition to continuous involvement and strong guidance from the Working Group, a public meeting was held on June 10, 2008 to present the Penrose Square Master Plan to the larger Columbia Pike community. Participants provided positive feedback and were generally supportive of the plan for the square. The Penrose Square Master Plan was also presented to the Park and Recreation Commission as an information item on May 20, 2008, and again on June 24, 2008 as an action item. The Commission unanimously voted to support a motion to approve the Penrose Square Master Plan and associated Interim Plan.

Implementation of the square is proposed to occur in two phases: Phase 1, which represents the eastern half of the square; and Phase 2, which represents the western half of the square. The phased implementation is a direct result of the incremental redevelopment of adjacent private properties. As a condition of the Penrose Square site plan application approval in October 2006, a 17,760 square foot parcel is being dedicated by the developer to the County. This parcel will be designed and constructed as the Phase 1 Interim Plan. During construction of the site plan project, the parcel will be temporarily used for staging purposes by the developer. Once the site plan project is complete, the parcel will be dedicated in fee to the County and Phase 1 construction can commence. The County intends that the second half of the square, which equals approximately 15,000 additional square feet, will be provided by and coordinated with the future redevelopment of the Fillmore Shopping Center site. Because the new public square will be built in two phases, an Interim Plan was developed to ensure that Phase 1 will be feasible in terms of functionality and constructability. The Interim Plan is roughly one half of the size of the full square. It includes the same programmatic features that are in the Master Plan, but at a reduced size and scale. The Interim Plan has been designed so that it can be more easily expanded upon in Phase 2, when the second half of the square is constructed.

Upon approval of the Master Plan, County staff will continue to work with the design team to determine final finishes, furnishings and their specific locations. Complete construction documents and specifications are anticipated by Fall 2009. As per the approved development conditions of the adjacent site plan project, County staff will continue to coordinate with the developer to ensure the successful integration between the project's approved landscape plan and the evolving design of the public square, including any updates to the landscape plan that the square's design may require.

FISCAL IMPACT: The future construction of Penrose Square is to be funded via Columbia Pike redevelopment funds previously allocated to PAYG and commercial revitalization bond funds. Preliminary conceptual-level cost estimates are based on the proposed Master Plan. The cost to implement the Phase I Interim Plan, with construction commencing in mid-2010, is estimated at \$2.2 million (2010 dollars). Phase II, for which an implementation date has not yet been determined, is projected to cost \$2 million (2012 dollars).

CONCLUSION: Staff recommends that the County Board approve the Penrose Square Master Plan and its associated Phase 1 Interim Plan. The plans have been developed in keeping with objectives set forth in County planning policy documents and in collaboration with the Working Group appointed by the County Board to represent stakeholder interests. The Master Plan shows the general location and approximate size of the various design elements and will be the guiding document for the implementation of the public square.