

Areas 1 and 5 LHA PC/CAC & PLH WG Meeting

*Lee Highway Alliance Planning/Community Advisory Committees
and PLH Working Group Meeting*

(5/20/21, 7 PM – 9:30 PM)

Area 5 West Panel comments by topic:

Land Use

Vanessa B. – Will there be school planning to correlate with increased density in this area?

County Response: The scenarios will be shared with APS to calculate student demand based on increase in population.

Rose – How will you interact with APS to address increased stress on schools? Will developers have discussions with hospitals or other downstream groups (other infrastructure and public services) to address pressure of increased population growth?

County Response: Staff has ongoing discussions regarding schools and other types of facilities (i.e. fire stations, libraries), so we will have a plan for those as well. Area 2 has a strong relationship with VA Hospital. We have had discussions with VA Hospital about redevelopment potential of their property along Lee Hwy. and how it may help provide for growing needs related to medical office and other health care uses.

Transportation and Connectivity

Tom K. – I like proposed cross section for Lee Highway in Area 5 west, which gets rid of 3rd lane on both sides, and would like to see that applied to the section of Lee Hwy. w/ 3 lanes in Cherrydale (west of Spout Run).

Mike P. – Appreciate comments earlier about reduction of traffic throughout the County. It's a testament to County's focus on other modes than single occupancy vehicles. What is the rationale of HOV lanes on Lee Highway, when I-66 is for that purpose during peak hours? Seems like reducing lanes on Lee Hwy. (and then restricting the outer lanes to HOV) would put pressure on other arterials like Route 50, to get east/west thru Arlington. Is the priority to put transit on the outer lane or really thinking about HOV?

County Response: The priority is to have transit during peak times, however, because there is capacity on Lee Hwy., we are thinking there is also an opportunity

to use the outer lanes for HOV traffic. During the rest of the day, it could be used as a regular lane of traffic.

Public Space and Stormwater

Daniel – I live close to Spout Run and Lee Highway and don't see major flooding problem, just big puddles. Renaming is negating history. Alliance could do something about proliferation of commercial signs.

County Response: In 2018, the stormwater issues were more than puddles. In the future it could become much more serious and can get worse. We don't want people in harm's way. We are coordinating with DES on efforts needed at this location.

Clair J. - Should take wildlife into consideration in use of culvert.

County Response: All of Spout Run will have to continue to go through underground. It is likely that the urban ecology will be improved overall, however, this Plan will not get into that type of detail.

Andrew D – Can you clarify the purpose of the proposed open spaces along I-66, which are adjacent to the Custis Trail and are heavily used by cyclists? Assuming you are not thinking of traditional gathering space under the highway? Suggest clarifying that on the maps. Also, there is a lot of green space being proposed where the Giant and Walgreens is located and would like to know purpose of that space.

County Response: The purpose of the green space along I-66 is to create a better environment along the trail so it's less secluded and more comfortable to be on. The proposed open spaces at Lyon Village SC and Walgreens sites will accomplish several things. It would be built above the Spout Run Culvert and provide overland relief during flood events. It can serve as a greenway, which can help to connect the Custis Trail under I-66 (on the west) to the development along Spout Run. Lastly, it can provide a place for outdoor cafes and gathering spaces adjacent to the businesses.

Building Heights

Daniel – I live close to Spout Run and Lee Highway. Appreciate work but not sure wants to see 8 or 10 story buildings at this corner.

Area 5 East Panel comments by topic:

Land Use

Ben K. – Vice Pres. of N. Highlands CA and house is on the map. Additional density makes sense. Building height is one detail, there is a mix of zoning districts in area 5 east. Current by-right zoning for the R2-7 areas south of 21st St. doesn't work. Most of the housing there is older and non-conforming, because it was built to different standards than what is permitted by the current zoning. To make older housing more viable for the future, need to enable it to have more opportunities under the by-right zoning. Additionally, some of the highlighted areas are under an approved site plan. If GLUP and/or Zoning is amended through the study, I think it would ultimately mean the approved site plans would have to be amended to get the density shown in the scenarios, which would be a good thing. That is the right way to do it and would be concerned if it was being done the other way around.

County Response: Good points. The scenarios are trying to be consistent with the current vision in the GLUP for the sites that have approved site plans. The County will also respect what has been approved on those sites. The 2 family lots that are non-conforming will be looked at, to some extent through this study, and certainly through the Missing Middle study. Many of the types that we are encouraging are not necessarily permitted. The County is looking to provide new provisions in the code to allow those types of buildings in the future and encourage existing properties to be improved or expanded.

Aaron R. - Easternmost part of area 5 east is a 130 member HOA (the Palisades townhomes) where height is concentrated. Does this plan suppose a dissolution of that HOA or should it be interpreted in a different way?

County Response: The purpose of this plan is to give owners more choices on their properties and ideas for how they might be redeveloped, if they were consolidated. Consolidation and redevelopment is not required. The plan would only allow for it.

The reason we are showing more height/density there, is that the site is currently designated for medium residential density on the GLUP (which is higher than what is currently built today) and we wanted to reflect the current vision. There was a question in our minds whether it was important for the 2050 Plan to reflect the current vision in the GLUP or memorialize what is currently built there today. Because of the site's adjacency to the Air Force Association building and Marriott Hotel and proximity to the RB corridor, there is certainly an opportunity to look at increases in height and density, which is probably why the GLUP envisioned that

to begin with. These are only tests to understand impacts and opportunities. We are not suggesting that the homes be redeveloped. We encourage the residents to provide feedback on what the vision should be for that site.

Transportation and Connectivity

Chris F. - Traffic volumes in Area 5 west don't warrant more than 2 lanes in each direction, as it exists in other areas further west. Is that true in Area 5 east?

County Response: Area 5 east is a little different because the road is bifurcated by I-66, however, the total number of cars at peak times is lower than total numbers farther west. Area 5 segment is influenced more by commuter traffic because it is basically functioning as on-off ramp from I-66. A lot more cars moving east in the morning and west in the evening. Other parts of Lee Hwy. are more balanced so they will likely be more main street like. You are right though, this area has a few thousand less cars a day than the area by Harris Teeter.

Public Space and Stormwater

Tom K. – Are there any impediments for extending the Palisades trail east, behind the Palisades Townhouse and the Marriott, to connect to the Key Bridge and beyond? The National Park Service is doing work on Lee Hwy. to improve access and perhaps there is an opportunity to extend it on the back. Should also consider extending it west (along the north side of I-66 to connect to the Custis Trail near Irving St.).

County Response: Staff will consider.

Building Heights

Chris F. – Are there any FAA restrictions on height in this area due to the flight path to National Airport? Are we close to any heights in the scenarios that would necessitate FAA review?

County Response: No issues with proposed heights. This area is not close to the flight path.

Rose – It would be helpful to see a side by side illustration of the heights that could be built under existing versus proposed zoning. Increase is relatively nominal and would like to see that shown better in presentations.

County Response: Areas in pink (shown on heights map as up to 7 stories) are mostly zoned multi-family, which allows up to 4 stories today. The area in purple (shown on heights map as up to 10 stories) is mixed. Part of that area is zoned multi family, which allows up to 4 stories. The part currently occupied by the Air Force Association building is currently zoned CO-1.5, which is a mixed use zoning district. This building was approved through a site plan process and is 6 or 7 stories

tall today. The area south of 21st Street is zoned two-family, which is allowed up to 35' or 3 stories and the single family areas are generally allowed to be up to 35' or 3 stories, as well.

Area 1 Panel comments by topic:

Land Use

Ben A. - Housing Commission liaison. Excited the additional density that is being proposed along the entire Lee Hwy. corridor will address the issue of affordability and attack the supply problem. Also excited to hear someone from Area 5 was asking about how we can preserve existing affordable housing and looks forward to hearing about concrete plans for how that is going to happen. Commission is concerned with geographic distribution of affordable housing. It is concentrated in certain neighborhoods. For example, Tuckahoe Elementary (in Area 1) only has 2% of its students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch, whereas, Carlin Springs Elementary (at the west end of Columbia Pike), has 80%. In general, all along Lee Hwy. is a rich part of the County. Disappointed that the County isn't considering more density in Area 1. Area 1 is most oriented for transit development, particularly the south side of the metro, which is mostly single family. Don't really understand why the kiss-n-ride lot precludes development in this area. The County has made the point that Area 5 is within 1 mile of the metro stations in the RB corridor and it makes sense to increase density there. The single family in Area 1 is much closer than ¼ mile radius of the station. It would be a huge missed opportunity to not up-zone the entire single family neighborhood (in a sensitive way that steps down from the metro). It would help to increase supply, and if we can get committed affordable, it will help to geographically distribute low-income affordable housing better which will benefit those kids.

County Response: Kiss and ride lot is difficult to develop. Comment about precluding development is specific to that lot, not the neighborhood. The reason we did not talk about redevelopment of the single family neighborhoods is because the 2011 EFC Plan did not include that area. The metro site itself is one of those places where density could be accommodated well and be well served by infrastructure.

Bill B. – County's CIP shows we are spending \$50 – \$75 million annually to support metro. This is one of the most underutilized metro stations and we are not recouping the resources that we should on that site. Should we be thinking about higher density, because metro is there, or should we just close it down because it doesn't serve enough

people and do something else? Not proposing to do either but think it's important to get input from WMATA because they are one of the gorillas in neighborhood.

Transportation and Connectivity

Bill W. – The traffic on Lee Hwy. and Washington Blvd. is already high and spills through the neighborhood, particularly 22nd Street. Need to work w/VDOT so that changes to Lee Hwy. and Washington Blvd. do not push more traffic to the neighborhood streets. Are you thinking of putting bike lanes on 22nd Street?

County Response: Yes, 22nd Street is a potential parallel route for bicycles. 22nd Street is already designated on the Transportation Master Plan as a bike route.

Mike B. – Where are traffic statistics from? People see increases in neighborhoods and on Lee Hwy. and Washington Blvd., especially after tolls on I-66 were implemented. Have you looked at Arlington's traffic studies from recent projects? This needs to be addressed as part of plan.

County Response: Data is from VDOT. The influence of tolls on I-66 is not something we can discern from the data we have at the moment. The important thing is to make sure Lee Hwy., Washington Blvd. and neighborhood streets are not an attractive cut-through and encourage commuters to stay on I-66 or find a different commuting pattern altogether.

Bill W. - Are 22nd and 26th streets wide enough for bike lanes, parking and traffic?

County Response: Community will need to decide which is more important, incorporating bike lanes or maintaining on-street parking. There are other ways of incorporating bikes, like with sharrows. This is less ideal for bicyclists, however, if maintaining the parking is more important than we will have to discuss that.

Public Space and Stormwater

No comments or discussion on topic.

Building Heights

Bill W. – I live on 22nd street N. EFC 2011 plan had maximum of 6 stories. Now seeing it is possible to have 9 and 15 stories. Has this been vetted through EFC CA? Is it still up to negotiation? Is the plan to have stepping down from 15 stories to single family?

County Response: The EFC Plan allows up to 9 stories along I-66 and 6 stories on the rest of the metro site. At the moment, the County is saying that to facilitate development of the metro site, and work with the existing conditions like the bus loop and the easements, it may take more height than what the EFC Plan allows.

One of the challenges of the EFC Plan is that it didn't address how the buses would interact with the metro. The fact that the bus loop is there, means there is less developable space. This is a metro site and it is important to place housing there. WMATA will be doing a feasibility study for their site in the near future. We don't know exactly when. The County is not making recommendations for specific heights at this moment. The County is only trying to bring to the front new information about the site, based on the analysis of the transportation and open space improvements, to help people understand that there are more challenges and issues than were previously considered through the EFC Plan. While some stepping down may be possible, it will probably not be much because the site is not large enough. The County wants to know what the community's thoughts are on studying additional height at the metro site, to explore opportunities for creating transit-oriented development and address the challenges. When WMATA conducts their feasibility analysis there will be opportunities for community input. This will be through a separate process and the County will assist with the community engagement.

Area 1, 5 West, and 5 East Panel comments by topic:

Transportation and Connectivity

Mike B. – There is an expectation of more traffic in Arlington with building expansion and VHC expansion (more employees and patients). Have you done any studies for how to keep cars out of neighborhood streets? There are a number of schools in the area.

County Response: County will be crunching numbers for schools and transportation as part of the next steps to test how certain intersections work based on increase in population. Will look at traffic in more detail. One thing to keep in mind is that even though population has been going up over the last few years, number of cars has been going down steadily. It is possible to have new density especially if we provide new opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit. It is also possible to cluster the density in a way that it doesn't result in many more new cars on the road.

Mike B. - Is County working with CA's to put in traffic measures to prevent problems proactively, vs. in current mode, which is reactive? In other words, can the Plan identify traffic measures? For example, if we want to keep traffic off Highland Street, we won't be able to put in a "no left turn" sign (for a specific time of the day) on that street without seeing the after effect of the Plan and without traffic counts and lots of traffic studies.

County regulations do not allow you to do that. Will CB change the way the County operates so we can have traffic measures put in place before large new developments come in? In my own CA, with the VA Hospital Center expansion, the County has been intransigent about being proactive, in terms of traffic planning, when you have large new development. If you are lowering the number of lanes on Lee Hwy., it will likely push traffic on other roads like Washington Blvd. and other areas. Putting in proactive traffic measures to balance things before there is an issue is best, because there is a pretty lengthy process to fix things after the fact.

County Response: As part of PLH, the County will be making a list of things that need to be improved by both the private and public sectors. The list will be prioritized. The County will identify which items on the list need to be included on the Capital Improvements Plan, including improvements to mitigate traffic as a result of development. This will be through a separate implementation process.

In general, yes, we will be looking at how traffic affects the areas and will be planning for it beforehand. Traffic modeling will be done as part of the planning study to identify the traffic measures that should be implemented. This is a long-range plan and it is uncertain when development will happen and when improvements will need to be made. However, there are some nimble, quick build things we can do, to see how they work, and adjust the plan as needed over time. With vision zero, we can be a bit more nimble in managing traffic flow, especially on multi-modal lanes. Chicanes, for example, can be implemented to slow traffic in some areas, which can cause people to reroute by default.

Andrew D. - Many residential developments have Traffic Demand Management Plans that require multiple things including putting in ride-sharing facilities, bicycle improvements etc. If plan doesn't meet minimums, then there are monetary and punitive damages that go along with the plan and it is typically proffered.

Michael with Wells and Associates – This is a VDOT road. Will a traffic study be completed as part of the PLH study to understand impacts of proposed land uses?

County Response: Yes, traffic study will look at the movement along major streets and key intersections.

Chirs F. - Appropriate studies will be done in support of preferred alternative.

Community Improvements and Benefits

Clair – I am concerned with seniors and affordability and preserving MARKs and small businesses.

County Response: Preserving those buildings is one way to achieve goal. Can be difficult to upgrade or maintain these buildings. Property owner needs to have funds available for that. Also need to give property owners an opportunity to redevelop and provide new units that are affordable. Need room for both to happen. This type of development is desired, as well as, mechanisms that would allow small businesses to stay, even if there is redevelopment. Area 5 is one of the areas where there is opportunity for infill development, where new affordable units can be integrated well with existing affordable units.

Michael B. – Are there amenities that will counterbalance adding density to other areas (traffic restrictions, parking, etc.) as part of community process thru site plans? Enforcement of site plan isn't happening. Will you be looking to put in real incentives and disincentives on developers as they work through the site plans and putting enforcement actions into those plans? In the last year during COVID, it has been hard to get County staff to respond to well documented site plan violations.

County Response: New density will come incrementally over time and will be incentivized through site plan process, which will provide opportunities for the community to weigh in on the individual components of those projects. There is a desire to enhance the public space, connectivity and transportation system to be in balance with and complement the new development. New development will have to be able to provide parking for the people that live there. Through COVID, the County has found creative ways to engage the community on some site plans and are thinking about doing "lunches" to engage the community after we are out of the virtual setting. Generally, the County strives to balance the developer's plans with existing community's plans to get the most benefit for residents overall.