

22 March 2022

Subject: Crystal City Citizens Review Commission Priorities, Capital Improvement Program 2023-32

Dear County Manager Schwartz,

In accordance with our charter, the Crystal City Citizens Review Commission monitors the implementation of the Crystal City Sector Plan, now twelve years old. The increased pace of development in this area is driving an accompanying high demand for increases in and improvements to open space, community facilities and transportation. The Commission is happy to provide, attached for your consideration, our recommendation for Capital Improvement Program priorities in Crystal City for the coming fiscal year.

We've valued your insights and perspectives on the CIP priorities in past years and would be happy to have a short discussion with you on our recommendation.

Sincerely,

Michael Dowell

CCCRC Chair

Updated CCCRC Priorities for the 2023-32 CIP – March 2022

The CCCRC consensus view remains that open space, primarily in Crystal City but across the 22202 area, is the dominant overall priority for CIP funding in our area. This is in line with the Sector Plan goals. Several emergent factors contribute to our prioritization of this open space:

- The Covid-19 pandemic has revalidated the importance of open space not only for residents’ physical and mental health, and but also as a competitive advantage for both resident and business location decisions.
- The establishment of the green ribbon concept in the recently approved Pentagon City Sector Plan creates new opportunities to achieve synergistic development of open space across the area, with an emphasis on linking and connecting open spaces, both private and public, across the National Landing area.
- Recent site plan approvals in the Crystal City area have achieved delivery of the building and the associated open space almost concurrently, linking the delivery of community amenities closely with the additional development. We applaud these planning achievements, recognize the enormous effort by many parties required to achieve this, and urge the county to continue to push for this in upcoming projects.
- While noting that the Amazon HQ2 sites have set a welcome and high benchmark for the design and provisioning of open spaces associated with specific site plans, we recognize that most development companies do not bring the same resources to their respective projects.

Open Space Priorities

- **Metro Market Square.** With the JBGS commitment to fund the second Metro entrance, complementary CIP funding is needed to design and build the upper/western portion of this area.
- **Center Park.** This multi-purpose gathering space for workers, residents and visitors is now envisioned as an interim park, succeeded eventually with a final park as the surrounding area is developed over perhaps a decade or more. Although this will be an interim park, it is still a critically needed amenity in our community and CIP funding is needed to ensure synchronization with the ongoing construction at 1900 Crystal Drive to create the park
- **Virginia Highlands Park.** With the approval of the Pentagon City Planning Study, attention must turn to the holistic re-planning of Virginia Highlands Park, a centrally located open space critical to the broader 22202 community. The study stated that “dedicated County-led community planning process for updating Virginia Highlands Park is planned”. CIP funding is requested for this planning process.
- **15<sup>th</sup> Street and Clark/Bell Street.** There is still a need for redesign of the open space at 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Clark/Bell Street, so we request that resources remain in the CIP, so that the open space can complement the streetscape changes as soon as it is feasible.
- **Roaches Run connectivity.** Given the limited availability of new open space in the 22202 area, we support opportunities to increase access to existing open space. Access to the Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary and the immediately adjacent wooded parcels south of the Sanctuary have the prospect of creating a linear natural area accessible from multiple locations from Crystal

City. CIP funding is requested to explore the connection to this space if the prospect gains traction with the 2525 Crystal Drive site planning process.

- **Gateway Park.** Because the development of 101 12<sup>th</sup> St. S is on hold, the CCCRC strongly encourages that CIP funds proposed for Gateway Park be redistributed to the other Crystal City Parks listed above.

#### Transportation Priorities

- **Transitway Project.** CCCRC would like to see an accelerated completion of the remaining stages of the Transitway project in Crystal City and Pentagon City. Moreover, we urge progress on the endeavor to establish a genuine, 'one-seat' continuation through the entire Columbia Pike corridor, given the heavy commuter volume.
- **Army Navy Country Club Emergency Access Road.** We continue to strongly support this long time CIP item. Our understanding that the agreement to build this access road will lapse in 2030. Recognizing that the pandemic has created a backlog of CIP items, we urge that this item, with its sunset clause, be given priority.
- **East Metro Entrance.** We understand that there may be a gap between the WMATA budget and construction needs, we urge that funds be provided to ensure completion of this project.
- **23<sup>rd</sup> Street Realignment.** JBG Smith is committed to realigning 23<sup>rd</sup> Street from Crystal Drive to Route 1 but no funds are provided for construction of realignment across Route 1. We urge that this item be included.
- **CC2DCA.** Creating a safe, comfortable, convenient walkable/bikeable passage between Crystal City and DCA is critically important for visitors, employees, and residents. Although we understand that the state has committed to funding construction, the CCCRC continues to strongly support this project and to seek assurance that it is adequately funded.

#### Facility Priorities

We welcome the securing of the Crystal City Library and the Community High School facilities in recent site plan approvals. With multiple residential buildings in the pipeline, and the dedication of the Amazon Pen Place site indoor community site use as a Community High School, the community is looking for other possible locations where additional community facilities can be established.

- **Community Center, Fire Station Coverage, Entertainment Space.** Recognizing that the follow-on Pentagon City Planning processes may address none, several, or all of these needs, we urge the county to lay out a general plan for a community center, fire station coverage, and entertainment space facilities, lest the opportunities pass us by. Accordingly, CIP funding is requested to address developing these facilities.

Strong concerns about school overcrowding continue to exist in our area. Building a new, centrally located, walkable elementary school is an essential public facility needed to serve the growing student population in both Pentagon City and Crystal City, as described in the recently approved Pentagon City Sector Plan. We strongly support this, and the need to think broadly about how and where this school will be sited.

Finally, the CCCRC continues to support utilization of the Crystal City, Pentagon City, and Potomac Yard Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to deliver many of the transformational transportation and open space

projects outlined above. The CCCRC continues to support the utilization of creative TIF structures such as leveraging the future revenue through bonding as was done to support the redevelopment of the Ballston Mall. The County Board created the TIF as an additional funding mechanism that, in combination with other funding sources, could finance the extraordinary public infrastructure investments identified in the Crystal City Sector Plan and the CCCRC encourage the TIF to be maintained and utilized exclusively for transformational infrastructure projects in the immediate Crystal City, Pentagon City, and Potomac Yard neighborhoods.