
Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) of the Planning Commission
Meeting Summary
Tuesday, May 23, 2023
7:00 p.m.

This meeting was a hybrid virtual/in-person public meeting held through electronic communication means.

Planning Commissioners in attendance:

James Lantelme (LRPC Chair) (in-person)
Leonardo Sarli (in-person)
Elizabeth Gearin (in-person)
Karen Guevara (present for item 2 only) (in-person)
Daniel Weir (virtual)
Sara Steinberger (virtual)

Staff in attendance:

Brad Baer (DES – Facilities) (present for item 1 only) (in-person)
Jennifer Smith (CPHD – Planning) (virtual)
Anika Chowdhury (CPHD – Planning) (in-person)
Lorin Farris (CPHD – Planning) (in-person)
Cynthia Liccese-Torres, CPHD
Valerie Maislin (DES – Facilities) (present for item 1 only) (in-person)
Margaret Rhodes (CPHD – Planning) (virtual)

Other

Ashley Smith (virtual)
Jim Schulman (virtual)

3108 Columbia Pike and Historic & Cultural Resources Plan Update Joint LRPC Meeting

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

Commissioner Lantelme recognized members of several other Arlington County boards and commissions and civic leaders in attendance, as well as staff members and the applicant.

A staff presentation by Anika Chowdhury (CPHD – Planning and Valerie Maislin (DES – Facilities) was followed by discussion with the following questions and comments, which focused on:

- Proposed interim and long-range uses supported through the proposed GLUP amendment and rezoning
- Consideration of the adaptive reuse of the existing building
- Anticipated timeline of the public process for additional uses to take place
- Design-related issues outside the scope of the proposed GLUP amendment and rezoning request, included:
 - Sidewalk improvements along Columbia Pike to meet the current Form Based Code streetscape requirements

- Preservation of trees, green spaces and stormwater improvements

Public Comment

A comment on the opposition to demolish the existing building was expressed.

Historic and Cultural Resources Plan

A staff presentation by Cynthia Liccese-Torres and Lorin Farris of the Historic Preservation Program was followed by discussion with the following questions and comments:

- Pleased to see the history section going back to the very beginning of the County.
- Lee Highway should now be referred to as Langston Boulevard (NOTE: this is in the HRI table, which contains the existing, unedited data]
- Some references to historic period dates (i.e., Colonial, Federal, etc.) are inconsistent throughout the plan
- The Arlington Cinema and Draft House (in the HRI Scorecard) is in the C-FBC not Clarendon Sector Plan
- Things are changing so rapidly in the County. Don't use "today" or "now," use "as of the date of this plan" instead
- Use more maps to show where things are in County. For example, show where the trolley lines ran, as they are key to understanding how our neighborhoods grew. Use the graphics in the plan as a teaching tool
- Label where images are from in captions (i.e., indicate neighborhoods) to anchor things in our County
- Pleased on references to nature and biophilia
- More maps and neighborhood reference points are a good idea
- Would like to hear more about the new Local Historic Districts and easements
- Good to integrate this plan with other Comprehensive Plan priorities and goals. The Forestry and Natural Resources Plan is currently being updated and there could be a tie to preservation in this plan
- Consider taking on interns to help with updating the Historic Resources Inventory
- Support for the idea of zoning and preservation and how they overlap. It is important to both preserve and create opportunities for redevelopment
- More inter-staff/departmental communication is needed
- Very attractive document
- Assume people do not know where properties are located
- Would like to have had more tools to preserve historic buildings in place (i.e., Joyce Motors) above and beyond just Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs). Maybe there is a way to allow for additional height. We need a lot more flexibility and compensation. Properties are so valuable in Arlington now that we need to have enough incentives and tools to save them. It is great the way equity is woven throughout the whole plan. We also need to make sure that preservation is not exclusionary. We should refer to a neighborhood's "physical character," as opposed to its "character," as we don't want this to be used by some to refer to something more than the architectural character. We don't want things to be hijacked by privilege.
- Need tools for developers and also tools for Planning Commission members to help better discuss preservation and architecture.

- A concern about the Missing Middle work is that our most affordable neighborhoods may also be our historically African-American neighborhoods. Wanted to hear more about the Program’s ongoing African American heritage study.
- In D.C., homeowners were not permitted to add solar panels in some historic districts, but we want and need them to be allowed. Don’t kill support for historic preservation by doing something like this. Be careful with what regulations we develop.
- We need to align historic preservation with other County priorities such as affordable housing and sustainability as much as possible.
- It is important to demonstrate a historical lens and show the art of the possible for future programming (e.g., walking tours).
- Glad to see references to different ethnicities in the Plan (e.g., Salvadorean community) and that we are thinking beyond just architecture.
- We need to protect legacy businesses and cultural traditions like Freddie’s Beach Bar. It is not the building so much as the people and their stories that are important. How do we protect something like this going forward?
- Parking requirements should be waived, as parking requirements kill preservation. There have been examples of how when parking requirements are waived, applications to repurpose historic buildings skyrocket. We should not require more parking than what was required when a building was built.
- Revisit language about the history of Crystal City because its construction was underway before Metrorail arrived.
- Some Planning Commissioners are advocating for a “spine approach” for our Metrorail corridors, as opposed to the “bull’s eye approach” we have now.
- Consider if the context section [in the “Retitling the Plan” chapter] is even necessary. We are changing the plan’s name as a matter of fact.
- Local Historic Districts are something the Planning Commission likes to see.
- Micro-districts could be exciting preservation opportunities.
- It is good to see that preservation should be considered in all our planning processes.
- There is interest in cemeteries and how to preserve them.
- The architectural typology of churches seems to be threatened, as many of these sites are ripe for redevelopment and occupy larger lots. We may need to pursue a combination of preservation and redevelopment. Joyce Motors was an unimaginative redevelopment. Developers like to bulldoze and start from scratch. Staff should educate the Planning Commission and LRPC on ways to preserve these resources.
- There may be first amendment issues related to zoning restrictions on churches.
- What institutional buildings do we need to include in the next generation of the Historic Resources Inventory?

Public Comment

Historic preservation can augment other County goals. It is not a zero-sum game. Preservation in most cases benefits other County goals. The 3108 Columbia Pike building should be reviewed from a historic preservation standpoint to see if it should be preserved instead of being torn down.

Next Steps

The 3108 Columbia Pike item will move forward for final consideration at the Planning Commission’s May 31, 2023, meeting and the County Board at its June 10, 2023, meeting.

The Historic and Cultural Resources Plan item will process community feedback this summer and make final edits prior to a second LRPC meeting anticipated in Fall 2023.

Chair Schroll adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:54 p.m.