

## Site Plan Review Committee

Community Engagement Comments and Responses  
Crystal City Block W – 2451 Crystal Drive

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### Site Plan Project Information

**Project Name:** [Crystal City Block W](#) (RPC# 34-020-243, -244, -263)

**Items Requested:** Rezoning; Crystal City Block Plan – Block W; Minor Site Plan Amendment (SPLA23-00030); New Site Plan (SPLN23-00009)

**Engagement Session:** February 6 – February 16, 2024

**Review Focus Topics:** Land Use & Density; Site Design; Building Form & Architecture; Transportation; and Open Space and Landscaping



### About this Document

This document contains comments received as a part of the Site Plan Review Committee's (SPRC) online engagement opportunity for the Crystal City Block W project. A total of 119 participants provided comments during the Online Engagement Opportunity period between February 6 and 16, 2024. The feedback results and responses to common topics can be found below. All comments beyond the review focus topics are categorized as "Other".

### Feedback Results

- Feedback form
- All Participants
- SPRC Members
- Other Board, Commission, or Committee Member
- Community Members

## Responses to Common Topics

Below are common topics or themes received through the online engagement session that were identified by County staff. Please note that the topics have been summarized in order to provide an overview of the common themes and may not fully capture the concerns expressed by each individual participant.

- **Land Use, Density, & Building Height**

1. The majority of participants were supportive of a residential use with ground floor retail; however, several noted that they would prefer the existing open space not be developed at all. The aspect of the project that received the overall most comments is the proposed building height and density. Many participants commented that the building should be taller and include more units. There were a few comments that noted appreciation for the 'human-scale' size of the building.

*Staff Response:* The Sector Plan supports a mixed-use building on Block W, and therefore, staff supports the proposed use types. In regard to building height and density, the Sector Plan provides a maximum building height limit of 200 ft. on Block W. The applicant proposes a building that is 85 ft. in height. Although the proposed building height differs significantly from what the Sector Plan envisioned, the proposed height is not a deviation from the Sector Plan given that a minimum building height requirement is not provided. Regarding density, the base density for the site is 72 units per acre, and per the site's inclusion within the Crystal City Coordinated Redevelopment District, additional density above that base may be earned by provision of community benefits. The applicant's proposed density is 92 units per acre, and the density that is proposed above the established base will be earned via community benefits, which will be discussed in more detail at the second SPRC meeting.

*Applicant Response:* The Crystal City Sector Plan and the C-O-CC zoning district support mixed-use residential development in this site. The proposed mixed-use residential development aligns not only with the applicable planning and zoning, but also with current market demand in Crystal City. Currently, the Applicant's development pipeline includes seven high-rise residential buildings in Crystal City, which will deliver an approximate total of over 3,600 dwelling units. Generally, these high-rise buildings will provide comparatively smaller units and higher proportions of one bedroom and studio units. In order to introduce additional choice of housing to the market, the Applicant proposes variation in product type by delivering a project that will result in comparatively larger units and a higher proportion of family-sized units of two or more bedrooms. Moreover, the proposed building typology is most appropriate for Block W due to the development site's size, geometry, and constraints.

- **Site Design**

2. Comments regarding site design were mixed, with participants either supportive of the proposed design or in opposition of the proposal for various reasons, including the reduction to the public open space due to the mid-block service road or the location of parking and loading on the southern frontage rather than the eastern.

*Staff Response:* Staff acknowledges that site constraints exist on Block W that make particular aspects of developing the site challenging. Staff is currently studying the transportation-related impacts of the introduction of the service road between the open space and the proposed building, as well as the service and loading access from the intersection of 26<sup>th</sup> Street S., both of which will be discussed in more detail at the second SPRC meeting. Apart from the transportation-related aspects, staff notes that the current site design causes two Sector Plan deviations: the first being the introduction of the service road that reduces the amount of public open space provided, which, as of now, does not meet the minimum Sector Plan requirement of 38,000

square ft.; and the second being the parking and loading access occurring from the southern building frontage rather than the eastern frontage, where the Sector Plan recommends. We anticipate the findings of the transportation review currently underway to help further guide the site design decisions.

Applicant Response: The Applicant evaluated multiple site layout options, including the currently proposed layout and alternative layouts that shift the location of the building, the service road, and the parking and loading. The alternative layouts result in compromised site access and circulation, and require closure of the existing service road and tunnel during the construction phase, leaving the five Crystal Park office buildings without service or emergency access. Further, the site presents various constraints, including the airport access road viaduct to the south of the building, railroad track corridor, and railroad track underpass, that limit the Applicant's ability to implement the alternative layouts.

The site constraints, some of which were not contemplated by the Crystal City Sector Plan, also limit options for expansion of Crystal Park. However, the Applicant intends that the new public park will meet the 38,000 sf recommendation from the Sector Plan--the previous park easement has expired, but the Applicant will provide a new easement for 38,000 square feet of public park space to meet the Sector Plan recommendation. In order to achieve this despite the site constraints, the Applicant reduced the building footprint (as compared to the footprint envisioned by the Crystal City Sector Plan). The Applicant will further discuss open space during SPRC #1.

- **Building Form**

3. Overall, not many comments were received that addressed the proposed building form. Of the comments received, some noted that they disliked the deviations from the Sector Plan guidance regarding podium and tower composition, while others noted that the building should incorporate setbacks and a distinctive building top. Others were supportive of the building massing being broken up by various façade dimensions and materials.

Staff Response: Staff notes that the proposed building deviates from the Sector Plan's design guidelines regarding building podium, middle, and cap composition as well as regarding building setbacks. Staff also acknowledges that these form features may not be appropriate for a mid-sized building, as proposed.

Applicant Response: The Crystal City Sector Plan's guidance is designed primarily for high-rise tower developments with concrete construction, not for podium or wood-frame mid-rise buildings. However, based on Staff and community feedback, the building's design and architecture were revised to better emulate the Sector Plan's recommendations for tower development. Specifically, changes were made to the building's roofline to increase its distinctiveness. Additionally, the building's podium has a different color and materiality that differentiates it from the upper levels of the building. The Applicant will present these revisions during SPRC #1.

- **Architecture**

4. The comments received on the proposed building's architecture were split between support for the current design and opposition toward the design. Several in opposition noted that the architecture appeared 'boring' and 'generic.' Several commented noting the absence of an 'architectural feature' on the southern façade of the building, and a few suggested that the red brick masonry that wraps around the eastern façade should be carried over onto the other building frontages.

Staff Response: Staff notes concern regarding whether the proposed design properly achieves provision of an ‘architectural feature’ on the southern façade and a ‘coordinated frontage’ on the northern façade of the proposed building. The applicant has made design revisions that will be shown at SPRC #1 that address both required features per the Sector Plan’s guidance.

Applicant Response: The building’s design—including the architectural feature and coordinated frontage—have been improved based on County Staff and community feedback. At SPRC #1, the Applicant will present more details regarding these improvements, including precedent images and background information on the design inspiration for the building. The Applicant will also present samples of the chosen materials to give participants a better context of the building’s materiality.

- **Transportation, Parking, and Loading**

5. Numerous comments highlighted concerns about the inadequacy of upgraded bike facilities in the proposed cross-section of Crystal Drive. Respondents expressed a strong desire for protected bike lanes in both directions along Crystal Drive. There were also notable remarks related to site access, particularly due to the removal of Route 233's off-ramp, raising questions about pedestrian connectivity to the airport. Additionally, comments touched upon the garage and loading access points not aligning with the sector plan, potential conflicts with the open space area, and the impact of heavy vehicles traversing adjacent to a park. Parking adequacy in the garage and worries about pick-up and drop-off on Crystal Drive were common themes as well.

Staff Response: Staff is collaborating with the applicant to align potential bike facilities with recommendations from the Bicycle Element of the Master Transportation Plan and the Crystal City Bike Network Plan. The Master Transportation Plan suggests upgrading existing bicycle lanes and providing separation from motor vehicle traffic where feasible. Simultaneously, the Crystal City Bike Network Plan advocates for protected southbound bicycle lanes on Crystal Drive between 18th Street S and 26th St S. The applicant is actively engaging with VDOT to proceed with the removal of the ramp, in line with the vision outlined in the Crystal City Sector Plan, and is working on pedestrian enhancements for the Route 233 viaduct. Another existing pedestrian access point to the Route 233 viaduct is situated west of the site and just east of Route 1. Staff acknowledges that the location of the garage and loading access points doesn't align with the sector plan and is carefully reviewing traffic analysis documents provided by the applicant to ensure an informed decision without compromising operations or safety along Crystal Drive. The proposed parking ratio from the applicant complies with the Off-Street Parking Guidelines for Multi-Family Residential Projects in the Metro Corridors, and ongoing discussions with the applicant focus on optimizing pick-up and drop-off locations.

Applicant Response: As indicated above, the Applicant evaluated multiple site layout options, including the currently proposed layout and alternative layouts that shift the location of the building, the service road, and the parking and loading. The alternative layouts result in compromised site access and circulation, and require closure of the existing service road and tunnel during the construction phase, leaving the five Crystal Park office buildings without service or emergency access. Therefore, the currently proposed location is the most appropriate option for parking and loading. This location meets the Crystal City Sector Plan’s intent that parking and loading be located in alleys rather than principal streets and roads. Additionally, this location is shielded from view by the airport access road viaduct, which minimizes the visual impact of parking and loading activities in accordance with the Sector Plan. (The Sector Plan expresses a clear preference for alley locations, providing that “[i]deally, these functions would be located on alleys” in order to “limit the visibility of loading facilities, service entrances, and garage doors on or from the street.”) Should the parking and loading entrance be relocated and the building shifted south, retail or residential uses located in the southern façade would be compromised by lack of light and visibility as a result of the viaduct. The Applicant will further discuss parking and loading during SPRC #2.

PUDO spaces will be provided on the north frontage of the building, to be accessed from the service road; this eliminates the need for PUDO spaces on Crystal Drive. The proposed building has a lateral exit on the northern façade that can be utilized by residents, as it leads directly to the PUDO spaces. Further, the service road can absorb the traffic generated by the PUDO spaces without causing traffic issues, as it is internal to the site and only facilitates service and emergency access—this feature is unique to this project, as many developments in Crystal City lack such dedicated PUDO spaces within the development site. Finally, the location of the PUDO spaces is ideal for parkgoers, as it is located across Crystal Park. The Applicant can add additional signage that clearly identifies the PUDO location and designates it for rideshare passengers. The Applicant will further discuss PUDO during SPRC #2.

The Crystal City Sector Plan has contemplated the removal of the airport access road off-ramp since its adoption in 2010. The Applicant will further provide an update on the process for the removal of the Airport Access Road off-ramp and pedestrian improvements during SPRC #1.

The Applicant is evaluating, and discussing with County Staff, design options to provide a northbound protected bicycle lane on Crystal Drive. The Applicant will further discuss bicycle infrastructure during SPRC #2.

- **Open Space and Landscaping**

6. Many comments expressed concern that the proposed open space may not meet the Sector Plan minimum requirement of 38,000 square feet. Others were completely opposed to any development on the site that would reduce the size of the current sand volleyball courts and workout park. Of the ranked choice questions asking how participants currently use the park, here are the results in order of most-used to least-used existing park feature:

- 1) Hang out/eat
- 2) Use equipment
- 3) Sand volleyball
- 4) Playground
- 5) Basketball
- 6) Musical play equipment

Of the ranked choice questions asking what features participants would like to see in the future public open space, here are the results in order of most-desired to least-desired park feature:

- 1) Casual area/open lawn
- 2) Playground
- 3) Sand volleyball
- 4) Workout equipment
- 5) Basketball
- 6) Musical play equipment

Staff Response: The current plans submitted show a public open space of 34,837 sq. ft. The applicant has identified additional area to the north of the site that may be able to be incorporated into the space so that the open space is increased to a size of approximately 37,000 – 38,000 square feet. The County will need technical plans resubmitted to determine exactly how much open space can be provided for Crystal Park before determining whether staff would be supportive of a park size smaller than 38,000 square feet. Staff thanks participants for providing their input regarding the current and

future utilization of the park, which will be used to help guide the park master planning process that will take place after decision is made on the site plan for Block W.

Applicant Response: Currently the open space on Block W is privately owned and not subject to a public access easement. The Applicant intends to meet the Crystal City Sector Plan's recommendation for a new easement for 38,000 square feet of public park space. The Applicant is still coordinating with Staff on the final configuration of the new park easement, and will further discuss open space during SPRC.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the underlying mechanisms of the observed phenomena. This involves a thorough review of the existing literature and a clear identification of the research gaps. The second part presents the methodology used in the study, which includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data collection process is described in detail, along with the statistical analysis performed. The results of the study are then presented, showing the key findings and their implications. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

The study was conducted in a systematic and rigorous manner, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the variables studied, which has important implications for the field. Further research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms and to test the findings in different contexts.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and provides valuable insights for practitioners and researchers alike. The findings suggest that a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms is needed to effectively address the issue.