



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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February 3, 2021

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

SUBJECT: 2020 Year-End Report

Dear Board Members:

This letter serves as the Arlington County Planning Commission's Year-End Report to the Arlington County Board for calendar year 2020.

Established in 1956, the Arlington County Planning Commission is a citizen advisory board authorized under the Code of Virginia to promote the orderly development of the Arlington County and its environs by advising the Arlington County Board on land use and related matters. It is the only advisory body so chartered and required by the Commonwealth.

The agenda of the Commission is largely driven by the needs of the County Board: if an item related to land use, development, or planning is coming before the County Board for action, it must first be considered in a public hearing by the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission hearings are streamed live online and along with the audio recordings are available on the [Commission's website](#). Electronic copies of Commission documents are also available [online](#), linked to hearing dates.

There were major changes to the Planning Commission's processes and operations that occurred during this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even given the challenges related to the pandemic, the Arlington County Planning Division staff and the Planning Commission were able to implement new processes and procedures for the review and consideration of Planning Commission items. Despite the cancellation of the April, May, and June public hearings, the Planning Commission was able to execute its purview in advising the County Board on important land use and development matters in extreme circumstances.

2020 Major Updates: There were two major changes to the review and processing of items that came before the Planning Commission in 2020. The first was the implementation of the PermitArlington system and the second were the pilot processes implemented as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. In addition, there were major changes to the Planning Division organization chart in the creation of several new positions and roles.

[PermitArlington](#): Phase 1 of the PermitArlington system, which included all Planning items (*site plans, site plan amendments, use permits, Form Based Code items, etc.*) was launched in September 2019. The PermitArlington system allows for the paperless submission, payment, review, and issuance of County permits and land use applications. The goals of the system are to:

- Streamline business processes
- Enhance technology and communication tools
- Deliver excellent customer service
- Increase transparency and accountability

While the system launched in 2019, it was not until the mid-point of 2020 that items submitted and reviewed through the system appeared before the Planning Commission. Such items included:

- New Site Plans
- Site Plan Amendments
- Use Permits
- Form-Based Code Items
- Rezoning
- GLUP Amendments
- Special GLUP Studies

In 2020, the Planning Commission considered *nine* items submitted and reviewed through the PermitArlington system.

[Pilot Process for Planning Commission Committees as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#): On March 12, 2020 Governor Northam declared a State of Emergency (EO No. 5) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next day, the County Manager declared a State of Emergency for Arlington County and activated the County's Emergency Operations Plan. On May 19, 2020, the County Board adopted emergency measures to ensure Continuity of Government Operations. The ordinance included the following:

- Authorization for public bodies that perform essential government function to conduct electronic meetings;
- Such meetings must be duly noticed in compliance with FOIA; the public must be offered the opportunity to attend and participate in the meeting virtually;
- Public bodies must comply with procedures established by the County Manager

Virtual Public Hearings: The Planning Commission reconvened in July 2020 and conducted a virtual public hearing using Microsoft Teams. Virtual Public Hearings were conducted for all meetings between July and December. In all, the Planning Commission held *seven* nights of virtual meetings.

Online Engagement and Virtual Committee Meetings: In order to respond to the need to advance applications during the pandemic, County staff and Planning Commission leadership designed a [pilot process](#) that allowed for the electronic review of applications by Planning Commission committees and the public. The process includes two elements:

- *Online Engagement Sessions* in which materials are posted to individual project/initiative web pages for review, and written comments are provided during a specified time window; and
- *Virtual Meetings* in which regular committee meetings are conducted using Microsoft Teams.

During 2020, there were **12** Online Engagements and **14** Virtual Meetings for the various Planning Commission committees.

Planning Division Organization: During 2020 two new positions were created to further the work of the County’s Planning Division including its interaction with the Planning Commission. In addition, staff continued work on several important focus areas.

Site Plan Review Supervisor: The Planning Division formalized the Site Plan Review team through the creation of a new Site Plan Review Supervisor. This position is charged with overseeing the County’s Site Plan Review Committee Process including supervising a team of Principal Planners who manage site plan projects. This position is also charged with being the liaison to the Planning Commission.

Comprehensive Plan Section Supervisor: The Planning Division created another supervisory position within the Comprehensive Planning Section charged with overseeing the County’s Comprehensive Plan and updates to its various elements including GLUP Amendments and Sector and Area Planning work.

Crystal City/Pentagon City Planning Coordinator: During 2020, the Planning Division’s Coordinator for the Pentagon City and Crystal City Planning Areas continued important [work](#) including the initiation of the [Pentagon City Planning Study](#).

Planning Commission Members: Membership on the Commission was 12 members in 2020. Changes to membership includes the addition of Commissioner Sarli.

As of December 31, 2020, the [Planning Commission members](#) were:

Commissioner	Appointed	Reappointments	Term ending
James Lantelme 2021 Chair	2/07/2017		2/28/2021
Daniel Weir 2021 Vice Chair	4/25/2017		4/30/2021
Denyse “Nia” Bagley	7/16/2019		7/31/2023
Elizabeth Gearin	12/31/2015	12/15/2019	12/31/2023
Stephen Hughes	5/19/2015	5/21/2019	5/31/2023
Elizabeth Morton	6/19/2018		6/30/2022
Devanshi P. Patel	1/02/2019		1/31/2023
Tenley Peterson	7/16/2019		7/31/2023
Leonardo Sarli	4/28/2020		4/30/2024
James Schroll	5/19/2015	5/21/2019	5/31/2023
Jane Siegel	3/19/2013	4/04/2017	3/31/2021
Sara Steinberger	1/2/2019		1/31/2023

Officers: In December 2019, the Planning Commission elected Elizabeth Gearin as Chair and James Lantelme as Vice Chair for 2020. They served in these capacities throughout the year. On

December 3, 2020, the Planning Commission elected James Lantelme as Chair and Daniel Weir, for 12-month terms starting January 1, 2021.

Public Hearings: In 2020, the Planning Commission held 9 monthly public hearings; meetings for the months of April, May, and June were cancelled during the beginning of the pandemic. Three of the public hearings carried over to multiple nights. There was a total of 12 nights of public hearings for the year.

Despite the pandemic, staff was able to bring forward the following major items for Planning Commission consideration:

- **1** Policy Update (*Green Building Incentive Policy Update*);
- **3** General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Amendments (*2020 GLUP Reprinting; Shirlington Special GLUP Study and associated amendments; and the Crystal City Substation*);
- **9** Site Plans (*Veitch Street Townhouses; Crystal City PDSP; 1900 Crystal Drive; WhyHotel Carpool Site; Key Bridge Marriott; Artis Senior Living; WETA; Park Arlington; and Crystal Gateway*);
- **1** Use Permit (*Merion Pike West*);
- **5** Rezoning (*Veitch Street Townhouses; 1900 Crystal Drive; Artis Senior Living; Crystal Gateway; and the Crystal City Substation*);
- **6** Zoning Ordinance Amendments (*Elder Care Uses in the C-3 District; N-FBC Amendment to Heights and Setbacks; N-FBC Amendments for AHIF Contributions for Commercial Uses; Enable Expansions to Two-Family Dwellings in RA Districts; N-FBC Amendment to adjust AMI Limit for Affordable Homeownership; and Outdoor Cafes in the R-C District*);
- **2** Vacations (*1900 Crystal Drive; Key Bridge Marriott*);
- **3** Requests to Advertise (*Consideration of an Inflationary Increase to Development Fees; Shirlington GLUP Map Amendments; and the Residential Permit Parking Program*);
- **3** Informational Items (*Biophilic Cities; Presentation on the CMO Proposed CIP; and Presentation from the County’s Chief Racial and Equity Officer*)

The following table describes the site plans and Form-Based Code use permits that the Commission considered in 2019.

Use Permit/Site Plan	Density				PC Date	CB Date
	Office (sf)	Residential	Hotel	Retail (sf)		
SP #453, Veitch Street Townhouses		7 units			2/10/2020	2/22/2020
SP #421, 1900 Crystal Drive		788,416 sf 811 units		39,890 sf	3/9/2020	3/21/2020

SP #46, WhyHotel Carpool Site			125 units		3/11/2020	3/21/2020
SP #53, Key Bridge Marriott		636,717 sf 451 units	297,870 sf 445 units		3/12/2020	3/21/2020
SP #452, Artis Senior Living		166,544 sf 183 beds			3/11/2020	4/25/2020
SP #106, WETA	105,195 sf				7/6/2020	7/18/2020
SP #76, Park Arlington		180 units			10/5/2020	10/17/2020
SP #456, Crystal Gateway	234,417 sf			5,195 sf	11/4/2020	11/14/2020
U-3587-20-1, Merion Pike West		400 units			11/2/2020	11/14/2020
Totals	339,612 sf	1,849 units 183 beds (senior living)	570 units	45,085 sf		

Site Plan Features and Amenities

The site plan development process provides for amenities and benefits to the community beyond those that might be received from by-right development of the same properties. Site plan projects usually also deliver more formal benefits that are termed “Community Benefits,” which may include the undergrounding of utilities around a site by the developer, as well as street and certain other transportation or infrastructure improvements. The County has a valuation formula for items provided as these standard Community Benefits. When included as part of a site plan approval, the standard Community Benefits are noted in the staff report that accompany each site plan.

The following table of approved site plans notes the Site Plan Features and Amenities generated by each plan (*excluding base benefits required by the Affordable Housing Ordinance for site plans*):

Site Plan	Affordable Housing	Transportation (utility underground, TDM, etc.)	Public Art	Open Space	Sustainable Design	Other
SP #453, Veitch Street Townhouses	\$45,544 base contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utility Underground fund: \$21,000 On-site streetscape improvements 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Home Choice Certification Tree replacement Fund: \$32,000 	
SP #421, 1900 Crystal Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$4,387,250 base contribution Conveyance of 41,470 sf of off-site units for 30 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site streetscape improvements Underground utility fund: \$107,726.81 	\$150,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45,000 sf public access easement for future Center Park \$300,000 for Center Park Master 	Commitment to LEED Sliver and ENERGY STAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space for a public library along with 5 years of operational costs

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced TDM program Design and construction of traffic signals and cabinets 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Efforts 7,200 sf space within Mall IV as a community facility 		
SP # 53, Key Bridge Marriott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$4,056,660 base contribution \$1.75m AHIF contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-Site Streetscape improvements Installation of on-site CaBi station Removal of Lee Hwy. Pedestrian Bridge 	\$75,000 standard contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$870,075 for open space improvements On-site open space improvements and public park easements for the esplanade 	LEED Silver and Gold Certifications	
SP #452, Artis Senior Living	\$356,528 base contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site streetscape improvements Utility undergrounding Fund: \$155,729 	\$75,000 standard contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10,000 sf public open space Community use of meeting rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to LEED Silver Tree Replacement Fund contribution 	
SP #106, WETA		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site streetscape improvements TDM Program 			Sustainable design elements	
SP #76, Park Arlington		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site streetscape improvements Improved pedestrian pathway Utility undergrounding fund: \$146,616.24 Enhanced TDM program 	\$75,000 standard contribution	Enhanced site landscaping and screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable design elements Reduced surface parking and permeable paving 	
SP #456, Crystal Gateway	Base contribution (unspecified)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site streetscape improvements Utility Undergrounding fund: \$60,050.15 Public utility improvements Enhanced TDM program Construction of new S. Ball Street connection 	\$75,000 standard contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim open space improvements on northwest corner of block \$300,000 contribution to Gateway Park planning efforts Conveyance of 54,500 sf of land for future Gateway Park 	LEED Gold certification	

Other non-standard benefits or amenities, such as indications of future open spaces, may be outlined in planning documents, such as sector plans and the Form-Based Codes. The Form-Based Code

development process also yields substantial community benefits, although they are embedded in the Code rather than negotiated as part of individual development projects.

Planning Commission Committees

[The Site Plan Review Committee \(SPRC\)](#), held 20 meetings in total during 2020. The Committee was managed by Commissioner Elizabeth Morton. Each Site Plan Review process was chaired or co-chaired by individual Commissioners. At the close of 2020:

Six final site plans remained under active review:

1. Ames Center
2. Courthouse Landmark Block
3. Crystal Plaza 1
4. Potomac Yard Landbay C-East
5. RCA Building
6. 1201 N. Vernon Duplex

One site plan is in the preliminary stages of review:

1. Park Shirlington

Seven site plans are currently on hold:

1. 2525 Crystal Drive
2. River House
3. TSA Brookfield
4. Joyce Motors
5. Crystal Plaza 5 (223 23rd Street)
6. Fort Henry Gardens
7. Garrison Residence

SPRC Meetings in 2020

DATE	PROJECT	SPRC Chair (PC Member)
01/06/2020	Artis Senior Living	Bagley
01/23/2020	Randolph St. Hotel Concept Plan	Schroll
01/27/2020	11th & Vermont	Schroll
01/30/2020	Key Bridge Marriott	Bagley
02/03/2020	Park Arlington	Morton
02/24/2020	Ames Center	Siegel
02/27/2020	CC PDSP	Hughes
03/02/2020	WETA	Patel
07/01/2020	Crystal Gateway (Online Engagement)	Peterson
07/16/2020	Ames Center (Online Engagement)	Siegel
07/27/2020	Crystal Gateway (Online Engagement)	Peterson
09/10/2020	Courthouse Landmark (Online Engagement)	Morton
09/14/2020	Crystal Gateway (Virtual Meeting)	Peterson
09/17/2020	Ames Center (Virtual Meeting)	Siegel
10/26/2020	Courthouse Landmark (Online Engagement)	Morton
11/09/2020	Fort Henry (Online Engagement)	Bagley

12/07/2020	Courthouse Landmark (Virtual Meeting)	Morton
12/17/2020	Landbay C (Online Engagement)	Hughes
12/21/2020	Fort Henry (Virtual Meeting)	Bagley
12/28/2020	Crystal Plaza 1 (Online Engagement)	Weir

[The Long Range Planning Committee \(LRPC\)](#), chaired by Commissioner James Schroll, held 20 meetings during 2020. Many agenda items focused on completing several planning studies, as shown below.

LRPC Meetings in 2020

DATE	AGENDA
01/21/2020	Shirlington Special GLUP Study
01/22/2020	Missing Middle Housing Study and Pentagon City PDSP
2/12/2020	Planning Division Work Program
02/18/2020	Shirlington Special GLUP Study
07/27/2020	Crystal City Block M (online engagement)
09/10/2020	Crystal City Block M (Virtual Meeting)
09/29/2020	Clarendon Sector Plan (Online Engagement)
09/29/2020	Virtual Meeting 1. Green Building Policy 2. Crystal City Substation
10/08/2020	Pershing Drive Special GLUP Study (Online Engagement)
10/13/2020	Office Conversions (Virtual Meeting)
10/19/2020	Crystal City Block M (Virtual Meeting)
10/27/2020	Pershing Drive Special GLUP Study (Virtual Meeting)
10/29/2020	Clarendon Sector Plan (Online Engagement)
11/10/2020	Forestry and NR Plan Update (Virtual Meeting)
11/12/2020	Crystal City Building Heights (Virtual Meeting)
11/19/2020	Clarendon Sector Plan (Virtual Meeting)
12/08/2020	Pershing Drive Special GLUP Study (Virtual Meeting)
12/18/2020	Clarendon Sector Plan (Online Engagement)
12/21/2020	Pershing Drive Special GLUP Study (Virtual Meeting)

[The Zoning Committee \(ZOCO\)](#), chaired by Commissioner Daniel Weir, held two meetings during 2019 including the three-joint meeting with LRPC. Agenda items focused on a variety of proposed zoning ordinance amendments.

ZOCO Meetings in 2020

DATE	AGENDA
03/03/2020	Columbia Pike N-FBC Housing Affordability
09/23/2020	Columbia Pike N-FBC Housing Affordability - AMI Requirements for For-sale units

Planning Commission Representation on Other Committees:

Individual Planning Commissioners have volunteered their time, provided valuable input, and represented the Planning Commission on various additional groups. During 2020, the [Public Facilities Review Committee \(PFRC\)](#), chaired by James Lantelme, held a total of 5 meetings to review three projects (*Career Center, Fire Station #8, and Art Bus Shirlington Road*).

In addition, the Pentagon City Planning Study chaired by Jane Siegel and James Lantelme was initiated in 2020. The Phased Development Site Plan dates to 1976 and the area is approaching buildout. The study is a strategic community planning process for Pentagon City to reevaluate long-term goals for this important area with an emphasis on its transportation network.

In closing, the Planning Commission would like to make special note of and express its continued appreciation for the support of Arlington County staff across multiple departments who are involved in the planning process and invaluable aided the Commission's work this past year, especially during unprecedented circumstances. The staff's commitment to excellent planning has been instrumental in educating and assisting the Commission in the making of recommendations to the County Board. In addition, the Planning Commission is especially indebted to Gizele Johnson, for her direct, responsive support of the Commission's business.

On behalf of all members of the Planning Commission, I want to thank the County Board for the opportunity to serve Arlington County. This past year saw the completion of new zoning ordinance amendments, new policies, GLUP amendments, and nine major developments and redevelopments. Arlington County, with its commitment to sensible, thoughtful and progressive planning, continues to be a place where businesses want to be and people want to live.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arlington County Planning Commission
Elizabeth Gearin, 2020 Chair



cc: Kendra Jacobs, Clerk, Arlington County Board
Mark Schwartz, County Manager, CMO
Jill Hunger, Deputy County Manager, CMO
Claude Williamson, Director, DCPHD
Bob Duffy, Planning Director, DCPHD

Jennifer Smith, Comprehensive Planning Manager, DCPHD
Aaron Shriber, Current Planning Manager, DCPHD
Matthew W. Pfeiffer, Site Plan Review Supervisor, DCPHD
Gizele Johnson, Clerk, Planning Commission, DCPHD