



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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February 26, 2015

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

Dear County Board Members,

The Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) of the Planning Commission met on February 25 on the Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study (WRAPS). The LRPC used this meeting to review the issues that are likely to come before you at your forthcoming work session. The Commission does not take recorded votes in committees. This letter is an effort to capture the views of the Commission as expressed by participating Commissioners (Forinash, Harner, Iacomini, Gutshall and Cole).

At this meeting, the LRPC discussed six related issues:

- Joint County/Penzance development
- Fire station location
- Open space
- Pierce Street/Ode Street through-block connections
- School location
- Height/Density for the Queens Court Block

Following is a summary of our views on each issue. Attachment A provides a more detailed summary of the LRPC meeting convened for this review.

Joint Public/Private Development. There were mixed views with respect to the joint development. Comments included:

- One commissioner suggested that the quality and level of detail of information needed to make a thoughtful, well-informed decision simply has not been provided to the committee making it impossible to determine whether the joint development (and overall design of the study areas) is sensible. On a very constrained, urban site with complicated competing demands, it is critical to get to a more detailed level of urban design to see how the uses really work together before making irrevocable decisions on their arrangement.
- Another commissioner felt the County should not feel constrained to consummate a draft agreement that is not in the best interests of the County as a whole. Rather, the agreement should be executed only if all the citizen interests are accommodated to the greatest extent possible, e.g. open space for the neighborhood.

- Another suggested it is important to respect agreements between public and private sector organizations.
- Still another noted the opportunity of leveraging the County's assets.
- Several noted the need for a better balance between mixed-use development and open space.
- One idea expressed was to redesign the joint development to reallocate open space from the plaza to the park.

Fire Station. Assuming the joint County/Penzance development proceeds, the proposed location was not objected to by Commissioners. At the same time, it is not viewed as ideal.

- One view expressed was that, given the lower cost of a freestanding fire station, an alternatives analysis should be performed and other choices presented including other sites outside the WRAPS study area.
- Few details about fire station design or operations were provided. More work and public information seem to be required.
- From what was explained, one commissioner referred to the design as a kind of Rube Goldberg approach.
- There is not enough information about the various design options to know whether the staff preferred location is the most desirable.

Open Space. The general view expressed was the proposed open space, including interior and rooftop space in the school, will be seen by the community as a real loss when compared to today. There was a strong consensus that open space has been significantly and unnecessarily sacrificed for other plan goals. Specific comments included:

- This plan represents the loss of an opportunity. It would have been preferred to start with a design that made open space a priority and adjust other elements on the site to accommodate other needs.
- Expression that Rosslyn is significantly deficient with respect to open space and the proposal seems to make this situation worse. It was noted it is particularly difficult to acquire additional open space in the more urban areas of our County. It is therefore even more important to maximize open space on land already owned by the County.
- The plaza in the joint development is not generally seen as either public open space or quality open space. The idea was expressed that this area will accommodate and, in fact, serve outdoor uses related to interior retail and restaurant tenants, will be maintained by the developer with its own needs a priority, and not truly serve as public open space.

Pierce Street/Ode Street. There was general but not unanimous agreement that the preferred through-block connection would be at the eastern edge of the study area in line with Ode Street. Specific comments included:

- The design should provide for through block connections in line with both Pierce and Ode Streets.
- The complete street should be located in line with Ode Street and a pedestrian/bicycle path should be located in line with Pierce Street.

School Location. There was a consensus supporting locating the School on the Wilson Boulevard frontage. Three commissioners strongly supported locating the school on the Wilson Boulevard frontage. One Commissioner said they were leaning toward Wilson Boulevard absent a compelling argument for the 18th Street frontage. Another commissioner leaning toward the 18th Street frontage expressed the view that there was insufficient information to make the determination but that they could be convinced either way. Specific comments included;

- An urban location calls for an urban school. From an urban design perspective locating the school on the Wilson Boulevard frontage is far superior. It provides an urban street wall and contributes to activating the block.
- Locating the school on 18th Street offers much better opportunity for achieving net zero energy. It also enhances the classroom experience by bringing more sunlight into classrooms.
- A design with a green space fronting Wilson Boulevard can be very successful.
- The alternative view expressed was that a fenced, turf field is not equivalent to green space as we typically think about it.
- Setting back the school only slightly from Wilson Boulevard offers the opportunity for a softer, greener edge condition.
- It was noted that there is strong support in the surrounding neighborhoods for the Wilson Blvd. frontage.
- Unanimity that the 7-11 should “go away.” However, as it will stay for the foreseeable future, its presence cannot be ignored in design decisions for the site.
- Concern for the nature of the Wilson Boulevard frontage if the school is located on 18th Street and the design for field containment. Concern that should the project budget become tight, desirable elements such as an “attractive” field enclosure would be sacrificed to preserve elements related to the educational program.
- Concern with the APS commitment on recreational space within the school.
- If the school is located on Wilson Blvd, the design of the building as it meets the street will be critical – the ground level uses and whether pedestrians will be able to look into the building and observe the activities. If not, the urban edge of this siting choice would not offer an advantage over the 18th Street siting.
- One commissioner noted the pedestrian experience along the W-L field frontage on North Quincy Street is not as good as the experience on North Stafford where the school meets the street.
- Locating the school along Wilson Boulevard could provide more design solutions for the school building itself that would honor the historic Wilson School presence.
- Locating the school on the Wilson Blvd. frontage would result in a larger field being accommodated on APS property. With a modest addition of County property, it could be possible to provide the school community with a regulation ultimate field, which it seems to strongly desire.

Queens Court. Views were mixed. Three commissioners would strongly support a development of up to 250 affordable units; a building of up to 12 stories in height, and appropriate re-GLUPing and rezoning. Two commissioners supported a development of no more than 6 stories, 150 affordable units, and appropriate re-GLUPing and rezoning. Specific comments included:

- A more modest development of six stories better fits into the surrounding context.
- A 12 story building does not seem to be achievable even if the site were re-GLUPed to the level on the rest of the block.
- The decision to change the height allowed on the space should be one made on sound planning principles and not on the appeal only of affordable housing. Sites can be sold without the initially intended structure being built.
- Information supplied related to the choice, especially average heights above sea level of the surrounding buildings and the proposed development, was insufficient.
- There is deep support in the community for the larger development.
- Need improved information of the per unit subsidy required of the County.
- Consideration should be given to earmarking some units for Arlington teachers.
- Very few opportunities exist to expand affordable housing in the Rosslyn Metro Station area. This is a rare opportunity and may not come again.
- Expanding affordable housing in this area offers housing close to many jobs and, importantly, transit.
- Given the amount of green space that exists on the site today, consideration should be given to including green space, a small park with a tot lot for example, in the site plan.
- Even the more modest development of 6 stories seems to exceed the density limit of the high-medium residential GLUP designation if it were to be extended to the site.

We very much appreciate your consideration of our advice as the WRAPS study approaches its conclusion. Please feel free to contact me should require additional information.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arlington County Planning Commission



Christopher Forinash
Planning Commission Chair

cc: Barbara Donnellan, County Manager, CMO
Robert Brosnan, Director, DCPHD
Robert Duffy, Director, Planning Division, DCPHD
Claude Williamson, Comprehensive Planning, DCPHD
Richard Tucker, Comprehensive Planning, DCPHD
Planning Commission

**Long Range Planning Committee Meeting
Arlington County Planning Commission
Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study
February 25, 2015
Meeting Notes**

PC Members Present

Steve Cole
Chris Forinash
Erik Gutshall
Nancy Iacamini
Brian Harner

Staff Present

Richard Tucker, CPHD
Lida Aljabar, DPR
Leon Vignes, CPHD
Ritch Viola, DES- Transportation
Joseph Reshetar, ACFD
Scott Prisco, APS

Other Attendees

Amy Friedlander
Nancy Ionedes
Stephen Powell
Steve Campbell
Stuart Stein
Stan Karson
Katherine Elmore
Jon Kinney
Paul Holland
Carolyn Haynes
Chris Gordon

Steve Cole opened the meeting at approximately 7:05pm and summarized recent actions for the group, including a recent Working Group meeting and the ongoing review of a request to designate the original 1910 Wilson School Building as a Local Historic District.

Richard Tucker, Planning staff, provided a presentation reviewing the WRAPS charge, community input, and staff considerations and recommendations. Afterward, Planning Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions.

Planning Commission Questions

Iacomini – slide 11 - up to 18 stories how does plaza fit? Not-to-scaleness makes it hard to understand

Iacomini - How wide is purple area of 18 story spot?

Tucker - Typical office footprint

Iacomini - Size of plaza space?

Tucker - 18,000 SF

Iacomini - Staff should show crosshatch on plaza to make it more clear

Forinash – 6 or 12 on APAH, reason? Stick or concrete

Gutshall – APAH 12 story option also includes open space, how it gets used as a park, but potentially off the table (based on staff analysis/recommendation)

Aljabar (DPR) - Not as useful want to see a real public space

Chris Gordon - APAH will have community room with open space / tot lot for residents – could make the open space public

Iacomini - 6 story open space option? Less room for footprint, currently garden apartment with lush open space – more units should have more open space

Forinash – Is there a reason, beyond the Charge language, guiding building the fire station on this site?

Tucker – no language in charge to site outside the study area; would need process to identify other potential sites; there are limitations on where it could go, for, example, due to fire response times, not west of Rhodes Street.

Cole - Cost of free standing fire station is about \$11M versus co-location, which is twice that.

Harner – Fire station in APAH is underneath building, is Penzance cost similar

Tucker – Response: Yes; however, the solution at the Penzance/County joint development site better meets technical and operational needs

Harner – Is there a timing difference between the two co-location options?

Tucker – If we were to reach agreement and execute with APAH, we'd still have to wait for the community benefits contributions to come from the potential Penzance joint development to make the payments supporting the APAH joint development. With Penzance, they have financing ready to go.

Harner – Is timing agreement in writing

Tucker – I'm not sure.

Harner – when was MOU signed?

Tucker – I believe it was early 2013

Cole – staff feels constrained by agreements of MOU, but that does not constrain what LRPC would like to say

Gutshall – The MOU is not a public document; it's a real estate transaction.

Forinash – On Slide 10, on the fire station - emergency vehicles would enter 18th street? Is there an emergency vehicle exclusive driveway?

Tucker – Yes.

Harner – open space on school field, discussion about community access to open space?

Tucker – as with all school facilities, there will be a joint use agreement.

Scott Prisco (APS) - most likely, the field will be lit, it would be youth soccer sized, not regulation size

Harner – Open Space – hard to evaluate open space by illustration, schools field raised? Program below field, any thought to putting fire station under field?

Tucker – The Charge precludes ideas of joint use/development of the school site if those ideas impinge on APS' schedule – school scheduled to open in 2019.

Harner – lots to fit on here, even harder without flexibility, maybe County needs to look further

Harner – WRAPS School discuss flexible community use of schools facilities?

Tucker – That has been on the table on table from beginning, however there is not really acceptance of in-building or rooftop recreation by community as adequate replacement amenities, due to limited access

Cole – School Board directed staff to build school for \$80.2 million dollars – generally have agreement that facilities will be open. While outdoor basketball court is not programmed (free play / pick-up games allowed) indoor gym would likely be programmed (less casual community use).

Harner – schools prefers location on 18th street, have they presented how fence would be treated

Cole – some diagrams shown but not thorough analysis. Wakefield where fence is 60' from curb. Fence is 40' high.

Prisco – lots of options for fencing – ivy wall, clear plastic, options would not include traditional fence.

Iacomini – how many net zero schools, how many do we have?

Prisco - Discovery elementary, Abingdon will be, then Wilson would be third.

Gutshall – what becomes of guiding principles; will become part of final report

Tucker – There will be a follow- up meeting with working group to review draft plan, and the draft plan would include guiding principles

Gutshall – spent a lot of time on guiding principles; working group was on priorities, balance between competing goals, not trying to bring them in, do not understand why they would not be shared with the County Board at the Work Session.

Iacomini – I don't see from slide 12 that we are improving situation, existing conditions "used" well, because not programmed, see shiny new stuff but that probably means less opportunity for community to access/use. There will not be a substandard condition, Quincy Park still useful but W&L ball field has no access

Tucker – DPR will do park planning public process, so the facilities/amenities within the park are subject to that follow-on process

Cole – 26,000 SF does not include parking lot, whereas in the TJ process the parking lot was counted. Only land not counted is parking lot?

Tucker – the fire station and fire station parking have been excluded.

Cole – for the sake of community, discussion should not look like we are trying to shave down the site

Forinash – create a map with parcels, parking, fire station, etc.

Gutshall – it would be most useful to have a table with a full accounting of ownership, county, parks, schools, active uses, etc.

Planning Commission Discussion on Specific Elements of the Staff-Recommended Concept Plan

School Location

Is the proposed approach to school location – preference for a Wilson Blvd frontage but with flexibility to locate the school on 18th St. if it adheres to certain criteria – supported by the working group?

Iacomini – preference for school on Wilson Blvd frontage. I walked up Wilson several times - pleasant experience is Colonial Village, a fenced off field separated from public realm not attractive. It would be more pleasant to walk by building, urban design, fact that fencing may be panels makes it more architectural.

Forinash – agree Wilson frontage urban school, field more appropriate on 18th contiguous

Harner - Don't have enough information, a lot of program on a small area, not a typical easy solution, schools has good architect could be convinced either way, but generally lean towards / cognizant of net zero building, don't want kids in shadow during school day, having sun is worth it, if

frontage on Wilson could be resolved as amenity could be activating, design resolution is important, cost and buildable

Gutshall – leaning towards Wilson for urban design standpoint but also swayed by net zero sunshine, no compelling argument for specific siting so falls to landowner, benefit of doubt to expertise of schools, Scott “don’t make me eat my shoe”

Cole - compelling element is urban design come down on side of Wilson blvd, no street is more important urbanistically, putting it behind field says trying to fit suburban school
School board will not commit reserve fund when push comes to shove too easy to replace with less costly alternative, having adequate field space important 18 street gives opportunity for larger field which schools wants an ultimate soccer field

Iacomini – ask schools for work session to be very clear about 7-11 a fact of life

Harner – not convinced that urbanistically field is bad, field that’s highly activated. Need to state that 7-11 has got to go.

Cole – Virginia law makes condemnation very difficult, have to pay the land cost, plus business revenue. If don’t build net zero energy now, 20-40 years from now may have technology to make it that way; we can’t do that with open space.

(All Commissioners agree 7-11 needs to go away)

Queens Court Site

Given the level of development surrounding the Queens Court site, what is the LRPC’s view of the appropriate height and density (number of units) to be located here?

Cole – preface - working group voted one shy of unanimous for 12 story, above average site elevation, queens court sits low, section shows relative, atrium 14 stories, school

Harner – hard to judge given sounding environment, without shadow studies or more study hard to , roads, TIA, adjacent townhouses, if we say 12 stories it would grow to that. With knowledge presented; difficult to say, if fire station is not co-located then disposition of this site is independent. Doesn’t see urgency to resolve this issue.

Cole – Devil’s advocate - This is a rare site in corridor to provide affordable housing; opportunity lost if not pursued; strong desire in broad community to distribute affordable housing more equitably around the county

Harner – staff has come down on side of 6 story

Tucker – 6 story development would increase number of affordable units by 4

Harner – cost per unit for subsidy?

Iacomini – agrees with Harner; do not have enough information, Key Blvd area lower GLUP, transition site, lots we don't know here; appreciate that this site is currently owned by APAH, but ownership can change, may find that they can do more good by selling site; not emotional but planning-level observation based on context of area. Pushing it to 12 is a bridge too far for this study. May have another bite at the apple; not a door closed.

Cole – this is opportunity. We do these studies to answer these questions; may not come back to this for a long time

Forinash – We are teeing it up for County Board discussion. Conditionally very supportive of 12 story development; need further information, better estimate of subsidy per unit. Not opposed to use of a year's worth of AHIF. We should explore lower parking requirements; possibly earmark units for teachers

Gutshall – align with Forinash's comments. Okay with 12 stories; community has shown support for 12; potential for tot lot should not be lost. Do not understand staff argument that it won't be public when add tot lot. APAH has been ready to move on this and waiting on this process, said they will move forward with 6 stories if that's all they can get.

Tucker – height is different than density. 6-story development is recommended, given the context of the land use plan.

Gutshall – presumption of GLUP working, would like to see staff's analysis; comfortable with High-Medium Residential. Staff analysis may be skewed by AHIF budget considerations.

Cole – bonus density available, would support 12 story, rare opportunity, disagree w/Nancy

Through-Block Connection

Does the LRPC support the location of a through-block connection aligned with Pierce St. to the South of the site? If not, where would the working group suggest the connection be located? What happens with County Property?

Cole – working group choices limited, no choice for having fire station stay where it is
At public meeting both property owners neither stepped up, now Penzance has.

Iacomini – what is Fire Department preference for where they can serve their area

Cole – County Manager is speaking for fire department

Cole – Fire station require 45’ apron to wash, maintain, run equipment daily. Penzance does not want to use up that much valuable frontage on Wilson Blvd.

Iacomini – Fire station on 18th street would have residential above and across street at the Atrium Condominium

Forinash – One way arrow egress only?

Tucker – still determining; exit only onto Wilson Blvd is assumed.

Street Alignment

Cole – Pierce Street is taking up space that is currently parkland, that street would accommodate better circulation for school, makes building functions on the site work better

Iacomini – does the street have to be a “street”?

Cole – actual street type not determined - wide enough for school bus and car, trucks servicing private development

Mixed Use Development

Cole – ability to get benefits from public private partnership should not be passed up

Open Space

Iacomini – agree with that, concern use of open space on this lot. I feel like starting from MOU - if we didn’t go through with the deal would make us look bad. I disagree with that; worried about open space and community. Should have shaped things around that; don’t understand balance, Rosslyn is a tough neighborhood, urban site - can’t buy single family lots and add to park, open space is paramount.

Gutshall – started where she was but now; on street, strong community support for Ode Street, not compelling support for Pierce Street,

Fire Station

Gutshall – for staff concept co-location w/Penance, would not push for Board to put the station off site; feasible there; Board is right to leverage what we have to achieve fire station, what still has to happen is to achieve open space. Staff needs to present very clear data on what we have now. If we did Ode Street, do a ped/bike connection (path) at Pierce location. Getting rid of Pierce Street allows flexibility for open space; find a way to make plaza not with easement but real public space with public process; getting public open space on this site is critical; open tool box come up with other tools. Recreation facilities – make APS move beyond conceptual to specific agreement with conditions for site plan. School should confirm public use of facilities; pin down with commitment.

Harner – community expressed strong interest in real park for neighborhood and preservation of Wilson school; should honor that in some way; perception of loss by community need to find a way to minimize that loss. No way to judge what is right solution here, if committed to achieve all these on site need to come up with proposals to consider. How do all those uses actually work? Irresponsible to state a preference, given where we are; a lot of good intentions by those involved, but no idea how it all can fit together. Need to do the work.

Forinash – is that work something that would happen after work session?

Cole – after work session staff would draft plan

Forinash – for work session direction need more final design? (Question to Harner)

Tucker – not much more analysis to resolve design issues until site plan, we will not know more until those detail start to get hammered out

Harner – if we don't have the information that staff has, why do we have to make a determination, speculating on everything is discomfoting, not enough information need to look at detail design study.

Cole – school is going on its property, APAH is going on its site, are you willing to put a fire station on the County/Penzance site?

Forinash – support joint development on county Penzance parcels. Would be prudent for County Board to do study of fire station on another site, stand alone cost versus co-located cost. On streets – I support Pierce Street location and would support both, maybe a future Ode Street. Open space - Shave back residential building to increase park space

Cole – troubled by the deal County has made, this part of the county has starved for public space, park, strongly sought passive open space on this sight, if this goes forward the way it is proposed a sense of loss than what we have. Don't believe there is a way to program or design plaza to satisfaction. Penzance will want to make sure that it is what they want it to be. If it were up to me, take turquoise out and make it green, make sure green space east of Pierce is as large as possible. To give schools largest field possible, would not have Pierce Street go through the site, would not have Ode Street, but leave a right of way for future potential street. Fire station – Rube Goldberg machine - quality of life challenges for fire station location and quality of life for firemen. It's bad. School – On Wilson Blvd.

Cole – final conclusions – lots of synthesis required, will try to send something out tomorrow, challenging nature of project.

The meeting concluded at approximately 9:56pm.