



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting December 13, 2008**

### **SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT**

**DATE:** December 9, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Adoption of the 2008 Crystal City Plan Policy Framework and Illustrative Concept Plan.

**C.M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt the 2008 Crystal City Plan Policy Framework and Illustrative Concept Plan, with updates noted in this report.

**DISCUSSION:** This supplemental report discusses the recommendations from the Planning Commission and Housing Commission meetings on December 1, and December 4, 2008, respectively. This report also addresses additional refinements to the Policy Framework and Illustrative Concept Plan or clarifies expectations of additional elements to be included in the final Crystal City Plan based on the most recent community process and internal staff discussion.

Discussion at recent Planning and Housing Commission meetings generated recommendations for several key issues to be addressed in consideration of the Policy Framework and Illustrative Concept Plan, including clarification of: the plan's vision (including Jefferson Davis Highway); maximum building heights above 300 feet; expectations on how planning for community- and civic-oriented facilities will be addressed in the final plan; and long term goals for the number of committed affordable housing units achieved through plan build out.

The latest specific refinements or clarifications include:

- A new Policy Directive that calls for the transformation of Jefferson Davis Highway into an urban boulevard that better connects the east and west sides of Crystal City;

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- Clarification that potential needs and recommendations on cultural and community support infrastructure will be detailed as part of the final Crystal City Plan;
- Clarification that the Building Heights Map actually suggests, via a footnote, that an additional 20 to 30 feet could be approved above 300 feet in select areas;
- A new Policy Directive that establishes a goal for the desired number of committed affordable housing units to be achieved through plan build out and clarification that strategies to achieve a mix of housing options will be advanced in the final plan; and
- A new Policy Directive that calls for street trees to be installed in strategic locations prior to redevelopment.

In addition, property owners in Crystal City oppose newly proposed Policy P3 that ties the proposed infill at 2121 Crystal Drive to achievement of the Center Park, and continue to posit that a new complete street is needed between the proposed 18<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza and new development to the north.

Finally, staff has modified Policy P5 to address the need for strategically installing street trees in areas where redevelopment is not envisioned until the plan's later phases.

The discussion below details the key questions or issues surrounding each item, and proposes the corresponding staff response.

#### Planning Commission:

The proposed Policy Framework and Illustrative Concept Plan were heard by the Planning Commission on December 1, 2008. The Planning Commission voted 8-4 to recommend that the County Board adopt Attachment 1 (Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives) and accept Attachments 2 (Illustrative Concept Plan) and 3 (Policy Directives), with additional recommendations as follows:

- Add a new Policy Directive under Transportation that addresses the need to establish Jefferson Davis Highway as a unifying, rather than divisive feature of Crystal City (as outlined in the Planning Commission letter).  
*Staff Response:* To help reinforce the objectives under Goal 6, staff proposes a new Policy Directive T 13 to emphasize that strategic improvements will be implemented to eliminate impediments to connectivity between areas east and west of Jefferson Davis Highway (See Attachment 1).
- Add a new Policy Directive under Housing Mix and Affordability to advance the objectives of providing a mix of housing options to accommodate households with differing income levels, family composition, and accessibility requirements.  
*Staff Response:* Staff generally supports the language above and notes that it is included in the proposed Goals and Objectives. Staff is recommending Policy Directives H1-H3, supplemented by other policies throughout, to help achieve these objectives (See Attachment 1). In developing the final plan, staff will also consider implementation mechanisms to advance these objectives.

While not included in the specific language of their motion, the Planning Commission identified other key recommendations for consideration, including:

- Clarification that potential needs and recommendations on cultural and community support infrastructure will be detailed as part of the final Crystal City Plan;  
*Staff Response:* Staff concurs and proposes that the final Crystal City Plan will include a more detailed discussion of and recommendations for siting future facilities;
- Clarification that some areas proposed for maximum building heights of 300 feet, as proposed, could be considered for an additional 20-30 feet;  
*Staff Response:* The Building Heights Map has been revised to explicitly indicate that a maximum of 330 feet is planned for the areas with greatest heights, rather than 300 feet (See Attachment 2). However, staff will continue to study the proposed heights in these areas, especially between Jefferson Davis Highway and Clark/Bell Street, and may consider lowering heights in those areas to a maximum of 300 feet in the process of developing the final plan.
- Expansion of the Vision Statement to clarify what the overall mental image of Crystal City will be in the future;  
*Staff Response:* Staff concurs that the proposed Vision Statement, as developed with the Task Force, could be strengthened and suggests refining the Vision Statement accordingly as part of the final plan with Task Force review.

Housing Commission: The Housing Commission met on December 4, 2008, and voted unanimously to recommend that the County Board adopt the proposed Policy Framework and Illustrative Concept Plan. At the meeting, the commission noted the importance of discussing affordable housing this early in the conceptual planning process, as well as having a desired target or goal for the number of committed affordable housing units to achieve through the build out of the plan. The commission also supported the newly proposed Policy Directive H3 as a valuable element to the Policy Framework.

Policy Directive H3 establishes a goal of achieving between 550 and 1,200 more committed affordable housing units in the Crystal City Planning Area through the build out of the plan. With only 89 existing committed affordable housing units, this proposed range represents a five- to twelve-fold increase of committed affordable housing units in the planning area. While this increase may appear ambitious, the range is based on varying assumptions of how the Affordable Housing Ordinance could be applied to future development in conjunction with proposed Policy Directive H2 to yield committed affordable housing units on-site in Crystal City. At the high end of this range, 1,200 units (or almost 15% of total new units) could be achieved if every portion of affordable housing contributions generated by the Ordinance and negotiated through bonus density were met through on-site units. At the low end, provision of 550 on-site units (6.5% of total new units) would be supplemented with an amount of cash that combined would roughly equal the value of the 1,200 units without any cash reserve. In this context, this range could be used as a general target, which could change over the life of the plan should new unanticipated affordable housing tools come into play.

Additional Policy Revisions: One of the outstanding issues discussed at the October 18, 2008, County Board meeting involves the concept of the County taking a proactive role in planting street trees in order to create a cohesive streetscape environment earlier, rather than waiting for trees to be planted as individual site plans are considered. Staff continues to have concerns regarding resources for planting street trees in areas that are expected to redevelop in the near- to mid-term, given the likelihood that most of these trees would be disturbed or removed when new projects are developed in accordance with the plan's proposed street alignments. However, staff concludes that strategic near-term planting of street trees in areas where redevelopment is not expected for some time could make significant strides towards developing a cohesive streetscape network and boosting tree canopy coverage. Therefore, staff is recommending an expansion of Policy Directive P5 to include a strategy for planting street trees in select areas in the near-term.

Additional Issues Raised By Property Owners: There have been a number of issues raised by property owners in Crystal City following the December 1, 2008, staff report. Property owners have voiced their concern that proposed Policy Directive P3 removes the concept of two-sided retail on Crystal Drive for the preservation of an existing open space that was not included earlier in the process. Also, owners have raised concerns about the lack of a complete street to provide a front door address for new development fronting along the north edge of the proposed 18<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza.

As explained in the December 1, 2008, staff report, Policy Directive P3 is proposed as a direct response to specific concerns about the phasing of open space that were raised by the County Board at their meeting on October 18, 2008. Policy Directive P3 does not remove the idea of retail infill development on the open space in front of 2121 Crystal Drive, but rather establishes a requirement that the Center Park be achieved on Block J-K prior to the infill development of this retail space. Staff continues to support this approach as a means to allow for the ultimate goal of two-sided retail along Crystal Drive while ensuring that one of the existing open spaces most valued by the community is not lost prior to the creation of the proposed Center Park.

The question of whether or not a complete street is needed along the north edge of the 18<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza primarily relates to two other planning related questions: Should new development be allowed above public rights-of-way, and if not, can an urban plaza serve an effective front door address for an office building as this site? The proposed Policy Framework and Concept Plan envision three new buildings on the north side of 18<sup>th</sup> Street S. between Crystal Drive and Jefferson Davis Highway. While the proposed Concept Plan shows one new building fronting Crystal Drive and two other buildings fronting Clark/Bell Street, the property owner's preference is to maintain the ability to rebuild on the existing building footprints in this vicinity, including one footprint that currently exists above Clark/Bell Street. As the general location of new building footprints suggested by the Policy Framework and Concept Plan does not support new development over planned rights-of-way, front doors of these buildings are envisioned to occur on either Crystal Drive or Clark/Bell Street in addition to the plaza. If the 18<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza were constructed with the retention or renovation of the existing buildings, staff considers that a vibrant and active urban plaza between 18<sup>th</sup> Street and the buildings can serve as an effective front door presence for such buildings.

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**2008 Crystal City Plan Policy Directives**

**Land Use (LU)**

- LU 1) Attain an ultimate build out in the Crystal City Planning Area with more residential than office Gross Floor Area (GFA) to reach an evening population at least half the daytime population and to steadily improve the resident to employment balance.
- LU 2) Establish recommended land uses for each block in the Crystal City Planning Area as shown on the Land Use Map to guide actual use mixes proposed within block-level Phased Development Site Plans. Recommend some blocks to have specific minimum percentages for certain land uses, as outlined on the Land Use Map.
- LU 3) Designate specific areas in Crystal City for ground floor retail uses that are accessible from sidewalks, the interior pedestrian concourse, or both, as shown on the Retail Frontage and Interior Pedestrian Concourse Map, and strategically locate interior retail to not detract from street level retail areas.
- LU 4) Engage critical County service providers, such as police, fire, schools and emergency response services, in planning for and implementing the infrastructure necessary to accommodate future demand for service provision as Crystal City grows.
- LU 5) Create tools and incentives to establish a strong presence of desired cultural and community-oriented facilities (such as theaters, large format grocery stores, and day care and medical facilities) in the core of Crystal City.

**Building Form and Heights (B)**

- B 1) Establish build-to lines for the Crystal City Planning Area along the perimeter of development blocks as demarcated on the Build to Lines Map.
- B 2) Establish absolute maximum building heights (in feet) for all blocks in the Crystal City Planning Area, as shown on the Building Heights Map.
- B 3) Require proposed development projects in Crystal City to submit their projects for review by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) when they file a site plan application with the County, and secure notice from FAA that the project is not a hazard to air navigation before a County Board public hearing is scheduled for formal action on the site plan application.
- B 4) Undertake future study (as needed) to develop alternative physical planning parameters for achieving planned densities should the FAA determine that currently planned heights are not feasible for airport operations.

- B 5) Establish maximum building tower coverages, measured above the fifth floor, for all blocks within the Crystal City Planning Area, as shown on the *Tower Coverage Map*.
- B 6) Require minimum horizontal separation of 60 feet between building towers above the fifth floor to ensure light, air, relief, and respite to outdoor and indoor spaces.
- B 7) Apply bulk/plane height controls, as shown in the *Bulk Plane Angle Map*, near identified parks and plazas to limit shadows on and ensure natural daylight to such spaces.

**Density (D)**

- D 1) Establish base densities for each block in the Crystal City Planning Area, as shown on the *Base Density Map*.
- D 2) Allow for optional increases over the base density (as shown in the 2008 GLUP) within the maximum building height limits on sites in Crystal City, in return for extraordinary community benefits outlined in this plan, at the County Board's discretion.
- D 3) Utilize a tear-down credit (or similar mechanism) to encourage redevelopment that furthers Crystal City Planning goals and achieves public improvements, while retaining overall economic feasibility by recognizing the significant cost of demolishing existing major assets.

**Public Open Spaces (P)**

- P 1) Provide, at a minimum, all public open spaces as indicated on the *Public Open Space Map* in accordance with the general size outlined in the Open Space Inventory Table on the map.
- P 2) Address the displacement of existing public open spaces by concurrently providing comparable or enhanced spaces, either through development of new park sites or through improvements to existing open spaces along with public easement dedications.
- P 3) Allow low-scale infill development on the existing open space in front of 2121 Crystal Drive only after the Center Park on Block J-K is realized.
- P 4) Establish County control over all public open spaces shown on the *Public Open Space Map* through either public dedication/acquisition or public-use and access easements set in perpetuity.
- P 5) Increase tree canopy coverage in Crystal City by meeting or exceeding the most current applicable goals in the County's Urban Forest Master Plan, and by strategically installing street trees, where feasible, in areas where redevelopment is projected for later phases.

- P 6) Achieve dedicated publicly accessible pedestrian routes through large urban blocks that provide for safe and attractive passage and connectivity between buildings.

### **Sustainable Design and Development (S)**

- S 1) Maximize the energy efficiency and minimize the carbon footprint of Crystal City, through actions such as maximizing vegetated areas, efficient use and conservation of all resources, and provision of exceptional access to transit, in order to align with County goals and to enhance its overall economic and environmental position in the region.
- S 2) Uphold the County's then current highest and best environmental sustainability standards for renovation and redevelopment projects throughout Crystal City.
- S 3) Design, construct, and manage all public and private spaces, streets, infrastructure, and buildings to help the Crystal City Plan meet minimum certification standards under the United States Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED Neighborhood Development program.

### **Transportation (T)**

- T 1) Address and manage the Crystal City multimodal transportation system to accommodate future planned growth in the area.
- T 2) Establish a revised street network for Crystal City as shown in the Street Network and Typology Map, in accordance with and to be reflected in the County's Master Transportation Plan.
- T 3) Expand County control over all streets and rights of way through public ownership, dedication, or public-use easements set in perpetuity.
- T 4) Improve the safety and quality of pedestrian travel by providing elements such as sufficient sidewalk clear zones, adequate space for street trees and landscape elements, and reduced pedestrian crossing distances.
- T 5) Maintain continuity and safety and minimize temporary disruptions for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit users during all phases of construction throughout Crystal City, including in the interior pedestrian concourse.
- T 6) Maintain an interior pedestrian concourse from 12th Street to 23rd Street, as shown conceptually on the Retail Frontage and Interior Pedestrian Concourse Map that extends the reach of transit, provides frequent connections to sidewalks, and is adequately flexible to permit creative design solutions for new development.

- T 7) Locate and consolidate building loading and service access points to secondary and tertiary streets and alleys where feasible, as recommended in the Services and Loading Map.
- T 8) Implement the proposed alignment and enhanced surface transit technology (streetcar), as shown on the Surface Transitway Map, and design stations as integral elements of the built environment.
- T 9) Establish additional access points to the Crystal City Metro Station in the vicinity of the Crystal Drive and 18th Street intersection.
- T 10) Create a multi-modal transfer area in the short-term on 18th Street under Jefferson Davis Highway, while working to integrate long-term future development adjacent to the existing Metro Station entrance with an enhanced multi-modal transfer facility situated at the ground floor.
- T 11) Establish near-term parking ratios for new projects that range from a maximum of 1 space per 750sf and/or a minimum of 1 space per 1,000sf for office uses and between 1 and 1.125 spaces per residential dwelling unit (or apply the County's most current parking management policies), while maximizing the sharing of parking space by various users and addressing short-term visitor and retail parking needs in Crystal City.
- T 12) Apply Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures that reinforce the use of a smaller parking supply.
- T 13) Implement strategic improvements to transform Jefferson Davis Highway into an urban boulevard that unifies Crystal City into a single, seamless community by sufficiently and effectively eliminating impediments to pedestrian, vehicular, bicycle, and transit connectivity between the neighborhood's east and west sides.

**Housing Mix and Affordability (H)**

- H 1) Increase the committed affordable housing stock in Crystal City by developing implementation tools that encourage the provision of on-site or nearby off-site affordable units.
- H 2) Apply the Affordable Housing Ordinance and create special provisions for bonus density that achieve up to 20 percent of Gross Floor Area (GFA) above the GLUP to increase Crystal City's affordable housing stock, and allow affordable dwelling units to be provided in new or existing buildings.
- H 3) Leverage existing and potential future tools to add a total of between 550 and 1,200 committed affordable housing units in the Crystal City Planning Area by 2050.

### **Improvement Implementation (I)**

- I 1) Develop financing tools beyond traditional community benefit to pay for infrastructure and public improvements essential to the spirit of the illustrative plan in recognition of (1): the transformational nature of the Crystal City redevelopment and (2): the limitations of developer contributions due to the high cost of demolition-replacement projects.
  
- I 2) Review future redevelopment activities in Crystal City at a Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) level, in accordance with the block boundaries outlined in the *Phased Development Site Plan Block Map*, either prior to or concurrent with final site plans to ensure overall feasibility of achieving major plan improvements.

