



JAMES SCHROLL  
CHAIR

ELIZABETH GEARIN  
VICE-CHAIR

## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

### ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

2100 CLARENDON BOULEVARD, SUITE 700  
ARLINGTON, VA 22201  
(703)228-3525 • [www.arlingtonva.us](http://www.arlingtonva.us)



COURTNEY BADGER  
COORDINATOR

GIZELE C. JOHNSON  
CLERK

December 10, 2019

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

### **SUBJECTS: Crystal Houses Site Plan**

- A.** Z-2611-19-1 REZONING from RA6-15, Multiple Family Dwelling District to C-O Crystal City, Mixed Use Crystal City District; for the parcel of real property known as 1900 S. Eads Street (RPC #36-018-014).
- B.** SP #13 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT to remove the parcel of real property known as 1900 S. Eads Street (RPC #36-018-014) from the subject site plan site area; located at 1900 and 1600 S. Eads Street, 590 15<sup>th</sup> Street S. (RPC #35-001-009; -010; -011 and 36-018-014).
- C.** SP #451 SITE PLAN to redevelop the site with four (4) new multifamily residential buildings and three (3) new sticks of townhouses for a total of 819 new units and 1,647 total on-site units and approximately 800 sf of retail, with modification of zoning standards for residential parking ratio, surface parking, above-grade structured parking, and all other modifications necessary to achieve the proposed development; located at 1900 S. Eads Street (RPC #36-018-014).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1.** The Planning Commission recommends that the County Board adopt the attached ordinance to approve the subject rezoning from RA6-15 to C-O-Crystal City.
- 2.** The Planning Commission recommends that the County Board adopt the attached ordinance to approve a site plan amendment to SP #13 to remove the site area (1900 N. Eads Street, RPC# 36-018-014) from SP #13, subject to all previously approved conditions.
- 3.** The Planning Commission recommends that the County Board adopt the attached ordinance to approve a new site plan for four (4) new multifamily buildings and three (3) sticks of townhouse-style multifamily units totaling 819 units and the retention of two

PC. #42.A-C.

existing buildings for a total of 1,647 total units within the development, with modifications of zoning ordinance standards for residential parking ratio, surface parking, above grade structured parking, and all other modifications necessary to achieve the proposed development plan, subject to the conditions of the staff report subject to the conditions of the staff report, and subject to the inclusion of site plan conditions that require: (a) any allowed surface parking be adjacent to or across from park space; and (b) any allowed surface parking be available for public use whenever any park located on the site is open.

4. The Planning Commission recommends that the County Board direct the County Manager to conduct a multi-department study of 23rd St. S. Restaurant Row District to address issues such as inconsistencies between the zoning ordinance and certificates of occupancy and make recommendations that can preserve and protect its continued economic viability as per the Crystal City Sector Plan.
5. It is the sense of the Planning Commission that should the County Board approve Site Plans #13 and #451, the County Board and County Manager not build the proposed Crystal House 5 under the approved entitlement, but rather begin a new SPRC process to take full advantage of the density available on the site and seek partnership with adjacent landowners in order to maximize the impact of affordable housing programming and set the appropriate amount of public parking to serve the area.
6. The Planning Commission further recommends the County Board direct staff to continue to work with the Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Civic Associations to consider further design options (mitigations) for the passageway (doorway) through Crystal Houses 3 site building that the applicant has offered that would provide direct access to the corner of South 18th and South Eads Street for all pedestrians walking through the site to Metro, Crystal City Underground, offices, and other key destinations.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Planning Commission heard this item at its December 5, 2019 public hearing. Matt Pfeiffer, Community Planning Housing and Development Department, Planning Division gave a presentation on the proposal. Additional staff present included:

- Jane S. Kim, Department of Environmental Services, Development Services Division
- Diane Probus, Department of Parks and Recreation, Parks Development Division
- Aaron Shriber, Community Planning Housing and Development Department, Planning Division

The applicant gave a presentation giving an overview of the project, highlighted changes since the SPRC process, and discussed the conveyance of the Crystal Houses 5 parcel to the County. The architect and landscape architect for the project discussed the site design, architecture, and open space.

## **PUBLIC SPEAKERS**

There were 7 public speakers on this item.

1. Susan English, resident of Arlington Ridge, spoke of her disappointment with the plan that is being proposed. Ms. English was disappointed with the amount of surface parking, lack of direct access to the Metro, the undefined timeline for the affordable housing, and the type of open space being provided.
2. Natasha Atkins, officer of the Aurora Highland Civic Association, expressed her frustration with the SPRC process, the lack of timeline for affordable housing, the confusion about condo units, and the lack of clarity in the plans submitted. Ms. Atkins shared ideas about how to improve the plan by allowing Crystal Houses 5 residents access to amenities in the main Crystal Houses site, including affordable housing in the existing buildings until the Crystal Housing 5 building is built, designating EV spaces and ride share parking, conversion of some open space into a community garden, and advertisement that this is a public park.
3. Freddie Lutz, resident of Arlington Ridge and 23<sup>rd</sup> St Restaurant Owner, spoke about the need for parking along 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.
4. Rob Mandel, Crystal City Business Improvement District, discussed the need for increased housing supply in Crystal City. Additionally, Mr. Mandel discussed that the restaurants along 23<sup>rd</sup> Street are a valuable part of the community and need to have parking provided for them to succeed.
5. Mr. Stratus encouraged the Planning Commission to provide 95 parking spaces for Restaurant Row because there is insufficient parking.
6. Mr. Bains discussed the process and the success that has come out of it. He discussed the need to conclude the process by providing more parking to keep the restaurants in business.
7. Christer Ahl discussed the constraints of this property and his disappointment with how the sector plan is being applied to the project. Mr. Ahl discussed ways to improve the project.

### **COMMISSION REPORTS**

1. Pam Van Hine, Pedestrian Advisory Committee, discussed the great pedestrian aspects of the plan and highlighted aspects that could be improved. Improvements that were suggested include: increasing the sidewalk clear space on 18<sup>th</sup> Street and providing more detail on the plans regarding the clear zones of the sidewalks around the cafes, more landscaping instead of walls, and allowing a pedestrian walkway through the site to the Metro station by ensuring a passageway through the Crystal Houses 3 proposed building at the corner of S 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Eads.
2. Colt Gregory, Parks and Recreation Commission, gave a report about the discussion from the commission. The commission was pleased about the County getting two additional park spaces and a dog run within one park. Mr. Gregory talked about encouraging more

biophilic designs, making tight conditions that will regulate private open space, signing the public open space to make sure people know it is public, and encourage the elimination of surface parking.

3. Commissioner James Lantelme provided a report from the Transportation Commission and the Site Plan Review Committee.
  - a. The Transportation Commission was happy with the cycle tracks that were being proposed and felt that the parking ratio proposed was appropriate.
  - b. There were four SPRC meetings that were well attended. At the SPRC meetings, members discussed land use, architecture, site access, transportation, open space, and community benefits. Commissioner Lantelme gave an overview of the project and the compliance with the zoning and sector plan goals.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION**

The Planning Commission discussed the following topics with County Staff and the applicant:

- **Surface Parking**
- **Access**
- **Parking and Streetscape**
- **Open Space**
- **Architecture**
- **Crystal House 5 and Affordable Housing**
- **Site Plan Conditions**

#### **Surface Parking:**

- Commissioner Gearin asked for clarification about the C-O-Crystal City zoning district and how density is earned under that zoning. Staff responded with the information about zoning and language surrounding parking spaces.
- Commissioner Siegel asked about enhanced architectural facades wording that is in the Zoning Ordinance and where that is on the parcel.
- Commissioners discussed surface parking and the specific language that is in the Zoning Ordinance and Sector Plan regarding surface parking and the need for activation around above-ground parking. Staff explained how they got to a point where they are comfortable with the amount of surface parking: staff felt that the parking provided met the intent of the sector plan because the surface parking remaining is located between buildings and are only provided in parallel parking configuration, thus not taking away from the urban design. Commissioner Gearin disagreed with the allowance of surface parking provided given that the zoning encourages zero (0) surface parking spaces in exchange for greater density, and this development retains 62 private surface parking spaces. Commissioners Steinberger and Patel voiced their support for the parallel parking spaces but voiced their desire to have those spaces open to the public. Commissioner Lantelme stated that he believed the surface parallel parking contributes to urban design by making the internal site driveways “read” as regular streets thus breaking up the superblock and signaling to walkers and drivers that it is okay for them to go through the site. This he believes is consistent with the sector plan’s intent.

- Commissioner Peterson asked the applicant to clarify the need for surface parking. The applicant responded that the only surface parking that is remaining is for the existing buildings and for guests visiting the property. Additionally, the applicant responded that they have maxed out the amount of parking that can be put underground.
- Additional Commissioners asked about the parking and the specific language in the code that would allow for the modification. Staff responded that Section 7.16.5 (h) of the ACZO allows the Board to modify the parking requirements. Commissioner Weir noted that the applicable ACZO district requirements preclude surface parking unless the County Board determines that surface parking is consistent with the purpose of the district guidelines specifically requiring surface parking in this district be adjacent to programmed active open space or enhanced architectural features, and said he remained unconvinced that staff had sufficiently engaged the substance or intent of those requirements. He further noted that restricting the on-site surface parking to residents only was inconsistent with both the purpose of the zoning district requirements, the strategic directions of the Public Spaces Master Plan, and equity concerns.
- Commissioners asked about the public parking spaces and where they are located. Staff and the applicant responded about the parking spaces on site are private parking spaces. Some commissioners voiced their desire to have public parking on the site to serve public access to the parks.
- Commissioners discussed the parking ratio of the site and staff responded that they felt the surface parking is appropriate for this location.

#### **Access:**

- Commissioners asked about the access to the metro through Crystal House 3. The applicant provided graphics that showed the walking paths of pedestrians through the site and showed the differences in distances between the pedestrian paths on the site.
- Commissioner Iacomini discussed the conflict between the urban design guidelines requiring building placement to the build-to line at the corner and the recognition that current pedestrian desire lines could be accommodated by open space at the 18<sup>th</sup> St and Eads corner to allow pedestrian access through the site. She voiced that she may not be able to support the proposal because of this access issue.

#### **On-Site Parking and Streetscape:**

- Commissioner Morton asked about the transportation study and the Certificate of Occupancy history of the restaurants on the site. Staff responded that the Certificate of Occupancy research has been conducted and the transportation study is still in its early scoping phase. One of the first phases of study will be to identify the mode split of the uses. The study will help the County to know how to program the area's parking meters for length of stay and to identify different curbside management practices.
- Commissioner Lantelme encourage county staff to move quickly on the parking study.
- Commissioners discussed with staff the timeline for the Crystal House 5 parking to be built out and given access to the public. Staff stated that there is more review needed to know exactly the time frame and amount of parking build out.

- Upon questioning, staff stated that the applicant was not asked to pay for the transportation study.
- Commissioners discussed with staff and the applicant the possibility of extending the clear width of the sidewalks. Commissioner Siegel asked why staff had not used the Crystal City Multimodal Transportation Study, which had recommended 8 feet clear width for 18<sup>th</sup> Street, not 6 feet. Staff responded that the Sector Plan succeeded the Study, implying that it is the controlling document. There was discussion about changing the condition about clear width space to be seven feet instead of the proposed six feet. The applicant agreed to the update.

### **Open Space:**

- Commissioner Steinberger asked about the review of public art and the water fountain located within the open space. The applicant agreed that they will look into that in the post approval process.
- Commissioner McSweeney asked about the park planning process and why it is different than other recent parks that have been under review. Staff responded that since this park is publicly accessed, but privately owned there is a different process for review.
- Commissioner Siegel asked about the public access and signage for the park and other guidelines for privately-owned public easement open space as set forth in the Public Spaces Master Plan. Staff stated that this will be reviewed in post approval process and they have provided the applicant with the guidelines that they will be using during the review.
- Commission Siegel asked the applicant about the open space/park at the corner of S. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and S. Fern Street, in particular regarding the community's request for a canopy tree on that park site. Applicant responded by showing further slides indicating that a number of existing canopy trees will be preserved at this corner.
- The applicant clarified the types of plantings and the number of pollinator plantings and tree canopies.
- Commissioners asked about clarification about the orchard proposed. Staff discussed the process and stated that it followed the typical process. Through that process, the community stated that they were interested in community gardens, however, there was only space on the site for twenty gardens. The fruit trees were proposed to accomplish a similar theme with the fruit trees. Although there may not be rodent proof fruit there are some species are less appealing to rodents. Additionally, this space could be used as a programmed space to teach pruning, harvesting, etc.
- Commissioner Weir referred to the strategic directions in the Public Spaces Master plan that specifically aim to enhance equitable access to public spaces and parks and juxtaposed that Comprehensive Plan language with the applicant's proposed private resident-only restrictions for the surface parking sought under site plan approval.

### **Architecture:**

- Commissioner Gearin asked if the building will be bird friendly, noting that Arlington is on a migratory flight path. The applicant stated that they are going to pick glass that takes that into consideration.

### **Crystal House 5 and Affordable Housing:**

- Commissioners expressed excitement about the proposed use and conveyancing of this building to the County.
- Commissioner McSweeney asked about the process to select a developer and build the building. Staff responded that there are many different options that will be reviewed once the property is given to the County. The timing is still being worked out.
- Commissioner Hughes expressed that he was concerned about the County owning this land and asked how staff has decided that housing is the best use at this site. Staff responded that it is not necessarily the intent of the County to hold it in fee-simple and that housing is consistent with the sector plan goals for the site. Commissioner McSweeney said that she has no doubt this land will be used for affordable housing as that is a top County and area priority right now. Subject to the funding mechanisms, there would be an obligation that any housing created here would be committed affordable for a specified time period. It is conceivable that after that period, the County could then determine that some other use for that land is a priority, and they would be within their rights to use it differently. The Commissioner stated having the County obtain this land is novel, a good deal and that she supports it.
- Commissioner Lantelme said that this is a rare opportunity to increase the stock of affordable housing especially because of the proximity to the metro.
- Commissioners and staff discussed the income level break down for the affordable housing. Staff also commented that this building is still a part of the development and is not seen as segregated from the property. Commissioners expressed varying views on the having one fully dedicated affordable housing building as opposed to having affordable units scattered across the site.
- Commissioner Steinberger asked if there was a way to condition the development to have affordable housing on site until the Crystal House 5 building is built. Staff responded that the timeline is separate, and Crystal House 5 may be delivered first. If there was a problem with the transaction of the land the applicant would be required to provide the minimum number of affordable housing units in the buildings on the site.
- Commissioner Steinberger asked about having affordable housing units on Crystal House 5 for rent and ownership. Staff responded that that will be looked at during the building process.
- There was extensive discussion about the amenities on the site and what amenities would be available to Crystal Houses 5 versus the amenities provided to residents of the other buildings on the site. The applicant stated that the Crystal House 5 building residents would have access to amenities common to the other buildings on the site.
- Commissioner Iacomini asked if the standard site plan condition is included here that the affordable housing would stay affordable for 30-years. Staff responded that once they have a partner, they will choose an appropriate limit, typically the length is 60-years. The County Manager's recommendation is to provide affordable housing and parking. There was discussion amongst Commissioners about the ability for the County to use the land for purposes other than affordable housing.

#### **Restaurant Row Parking:**

- Staff clarified the legally nonconforming status of the S 23d St properties and the analysis that has been done regarding their parking requirements. With the data that comes from the transportation study, there is the ability for staff to recommend changes.

**Site Plan Conditions:**

- Commissioners asked about any outstanding conditions that have not been finalized yet. Staff responded that there was a condition about surface parking being provided in a parallel formation with grass-crete and other conditions regarding public open space.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS**

Commissioner Lantelme moved that the Planning Commission recommends the County Board adopt the attached ordinance to approve the subject rezoning from RA6-15 to C-O-Crystal City.

Commissioner Siegel seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission unanimously supported the motion 13-0-0.

Commissioner Lantelme moved that the Planning Commission recommend the County Board adopt the attached ordinance to approve a site plan amendment to SP #13 to remove the site area (1900 S. Eads Street, RPC# 36-018-014) from SP #13, subject to all previously approved conditions.

Commissioner Iacomini seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission supported the motion 12-0-1, Commissioner Hughes abstaining.

Commissioner Lantelme moved that the Planning Commission recommends that the County Board adopt the attached ordinance to approve a new site plan for four (4) new multifamily buildings and three (3) sticks of townhouse-style multifamily units totaling 819 units and the retention of two existing buildings for a total of 1,647 total units within the development, with modifications of zoning ordinance standards for residential parking ratio, surface parking, above grade structured parking, and all other modifications necessary to achieve the proposed development plan, subject to the conditions of the staff report.

Commissioner Steinberger seconded the motion.

Commissioner Weir moved to amend the main motion to replace the words “subject to the conditions of the staff report” with the words “subject to the conditions of the staff report, and subject to the inclusion of site plan conditions that require: (a) all on-site parking be below grade; (b) any allowed surface parking be adjacent to or across from park space; and (c) any allowed surface parking be available for public use whenever any park located on the site is open.

Commissioner Gearin seconded the motion.

Commissioner Steinberger moved to amend the main motion to replace the words “subject to the conditions of the staff report” with the words “subject to the conditions of the staff report, and



subject to the inclusion of site plan conditions that require: (a) any allowed surface parking be adjacent to or across from park space; and (b) any allowed surface parking be available for public use whenever any park located on the site is open.

Commissioner McSweeney seconded the motion

The Planning Commission supported the motion 8-4-0, Commissioner Lantelme, Siegel, Peterson, and Patel opposed.

Commissioner Lantelme moved that the Planning Commission recommend that the County Board direct the County Manager to conduct a multi-department study of 23<sup>rd</sup> St. S. Restaurant Row District to address issues such as inconsistencies between the zoning ordinance and certificates of occupancy and make recommendations that can preserve and protect its continued economic viability as per the Crystal City Sector Plan.

Commissioner Morton seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission supported the motion 11-0-1, Commission Peterson abstaining.

Commissioner Lantelme moved that the Planning Commission recommend that the County Board direct that the County Manager, should the Corner Park Urban Orchard be planted, conduct a review five years after the first fruits to determine if it has an impact on rat infestation.

Commissioner Steinberger seconded the motion.

The motion failed 4-9-0, Commissioners Iacomini, Hughes, Gearin, Schroll, Siegel, Peterson, Bagley, Patel, and McSweeney opposed.

Commissioner Lantelme moved that it is the sense of the Planning Commission that should the County Board approve Site Plans #13 and #451, the County Board and County Manager not build the proposed Crystal House 5 under the approved entitlement, but rather begin a new SPRC process to take full advantage of the density available on the stie in order to increase the number of affordable housing units and set the appropriate amount of public parking to serve the area.

Commissioner Hughes seconded the motion.

Commissioner Hughes moved unanimous consent on the motion amended to add the words “and seek adjacent landowners” in the last sentence as shown below:

That it is the sense of the Planning Commission that should the County Board approve Site Plans #13 and #451, the County Board and County Manager not build the proposed Crystal House 5 under the approved entitlement, but rather begin a new SPRC process to take full advantage of the density available on the stie and seek adjacent landowners in order to increase the number of affordable housing units and set the appropriate amount of public parking to serve the area.

Commissioner Steinberger opposed the motion.

Commissioner Hughes moved that between the words “site” and “in” add the language “and seek partnership with adjacent landowners”

Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission supported the motion 10-2-0, Commissioners Patel and Steinberger opposing.

Commissioner Patel moved to amend the language of the motion to state “Should the County Board approve Site Plans #13 and #451, the County Board and County Manager not build the proposed Crystal House 5 under the approved entitlement, but rather begin a new SPRC process to achieve the County’s goals including but not limited to affordable housing, parking, traffic, and community concerns addressing issues on the site and partnering with adjacent land owners to achieve the purposes set forth in the County Staff Report dated December 3, 2019.”

Commissioner Siegel seconded the motion.

The motion failed 5-8-0, Commissioners Morton, Iacomini, Hughes, Gearin, Schroll, Peterson, Bagley, and Steinberger opposing.

Commissioner Weir moved to amend the language of Commissioner Lantelme’ s amendment to substitute the language “increase the number of affordable housing units” with the text “maximize the impact of affordable housing programming.”

Commissioner Morton seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission supported the motion 8-3-1, Commissioners Lantelme, Siegel, and Patel opposing and Commissioner Peterson abstaining.

The Planning Commission supported the motion as amended 12-1-0, Commissioner Siegel opposed.

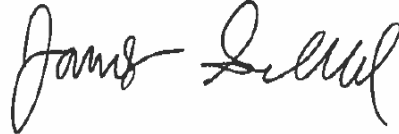
Commissioner Siegel moved that the Planning Commission recommend the County Board direct staff to continue to work with the Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Civic Associations to consider further design options (mitigations) for the passageway (doorway) through Crystal Houses 3 site building that the applicant has offered that would provide direct access to the corner of South 18<sup>th</sup> and South Eads Street for all pedestrians walking through the site to Metro, Crystal City Underground, offices, and other key destinations.

Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission supported the motion 9-2-2, Commissioner Patel and McSweeney opposing and Commissioners Steinberger and Morton abstaining.

The Planning Commission supported the main motion as amended 11-1-1, Commissioner Hughes opposing and Commissioner Iacomini abstaining.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Arlington County Planning Commission  
James Schroll, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Schroll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Schroll".