



December 31, 2021

Subject: ARCA Priorities in the Pentagon City Plan; Improved Access to Public Facilities, Green/Open Space, and Transportation

Dear County Board and Staff,

The Arlington Ridge Civic Association (ARCA) has been a part of the Pentagon City Planning process since it began and is an active member in all Livability22202 efforts. We have welcomed engagements with County staff on the visioning of Pentagon City. While we were pleased to see some of our concerns addressed in the final draft of the Pentagon City Plan, we still have a number of concerns that we believe should be addressed before the plan is approved by the County Board.

As we stated previously, the ARCA Board understands the value of development to the County and its citizens. We also believe it is critical that development be paired with crucial public services and facilities, green/open space, and transportation infrastructure improvements that will equate to a high quality of life for local citizens. The plan should include clear performance metrics and risk mitigation plans should the assumptions regarding proposed density fail to address the heightened demand for public services and infrastructure.

ARCA solicited feedback on the Pentagon City Plan with our membership via one-on-one discussions, public meetings, and an online survey (see Appendix A). The concerns of our membership were broad, with many in opposition to any increases in density and others welcoming the increase in affordable housing with immediate access to public transportation. Across the membership there were consistent desires for improvements in public facilities, green/open space, and transportation. The comments below reflect the common concerns and desires of the ARCA Board and our membership at large.

Public Facilities:

- ARCA members consider the Aurora Hills Library/Community Center a hub of the community and feel strongly that increased density without an expansion of the facilities and services will lead to decreased access for all community members. ARCA is pleased with the addition of a Public Facilities section (1.6) in the Pentagon City Plan and the identification of a Virginia Highlands Park (VHP) Master Plan as a short-term action in the Implementation Matrix. We believe this is vital to drive the transformation of the district to meet pressing community needs.
- The community need for public facilities, like libraries, community centers, and schools should be more clearly articulated within section 1.6. While the timing of a new school, based on APS enrollment projections and new density to the area, is unknown, it is clear that local libraries, community centers, and schools are a critical element of thriving communities. Furthermore, metrics for “equity,” within the Vision and Guiding Principles section, should include measurable access to public facilities.
- Possible reconfigurations that would allow for the siting of a school at the existing Library/Community Center site should be included into section 1.6, similar to options identified for the Fire Department. Some possible options are:

- The inclusion of a Library/Community Center within a development planned to occur in the next 1-3 years as a community benefit, and the conversion of the existing site to a school.
- If efforts to include a Library/Community Center as a community benefit in the next 1-3 years prove unsuccessful, the county would consider the siting of a Library/Community Center and school in the VHP master planning effort, either at different locations or co-located within the same facility. The language should not presuppose a solution for the location of facilities, as this would fall under the purview of the master plan action.
- The language of the action plan in the Implementation Matrix should not presuppose solutions, and should instead impose the requirement to determine the feasibility of locations for the Elementary School and Library/Community center within the larger VHP master planning effort. Additionally, the possible movement of Joyce street to expand VHP should also be addressed within the master plan, in order to determine if it is an effective use of resources or if they would be better used to acquire additional open space or for other improvements within VHP.
- When the Plan is adopted, ARCA will actively engage in next year's 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) discussions as these recommendations are considered in the context of other County priorities.

Green/Open Space:

- ARCA members overwhelmingly support the need for green/open spaces, and feel as though the final draft remains vague with regard to this community priority. Many of ARCA's members occupy condominiums and access to green/open space is indispensable for their quality of life. With the expected increases in density, the Plan should aim for a minimum of 8 acres of new community open space in order to maintain existing open space access per capita.
- The RiverHouse property currently exceeds the 20% Arlington Urban Forest Plan standard, and members believe that increasing the percentage of tree canopy required for future development on the site would allow for the creation of a "green belt" buffer zone between the existing neighborhoods and new development. Additionally, the preservation of existing mature tree canopy should be encouraged, where possible, in the body and implementation matrix.
- ARCA continues to support the bike and pedestrian mobility opportunities provided by the green ribbon, but does not believe they should be considered green/open space. Lastly, biophilic design should not replace the need for green space or open space.

Transportation:

- Concerns about multi-modal transportation represented a significant number of comments received by ARCA across all engagements. Some of the consistent issues cited were present-day traffic bottlenecks and diversion through local streets, pedestrian/bike safety on streets and at PUDO locations, and the need for multi-modal mobility for the elderly and disabled. ARCA does not believe these concerns were adequately address in the latest draft of the Plan.
- While Arlington County and its partners conduct ongoing monitoring and management of traffic, there is not a clearly identified requirement in the Implementation Matrix. A baseline study of traffic flow into and through Pentagon City and neighboring areas to identify bottlenecks and areas of safety concern should be conducted with strategies to resolve issues in the short-term. Periodic status updates should be produced to confirm trends and identify potential issues. Transportation monitoring should not be conducted at the individual site level, but instead as part of a more comprehensive plan that

evaluates the system as a whole. Some specific areas concern for short-term assessment are:

- Intersections of Arlington Ridge/23rd St, Army Navy Drive/26th Rd, Eads/23rd St, Joyce/15th St, and across Route 1
- Residential streets connecting Arlington Ridge Road to Army Navy Drive
- S Hays/12th pick-up drop off at Pentagon City Metro and Bus stations
- Coordination between Arlington County and VDOT on roadway improvements spanning the entire region should be included as a short-term action in the Implementation Matrix. Coordination is required in order to effectively identify existing areas of concern and potential improvements. These transportation concerns need to be addressed before density increases and changes are considered for Route 1. According to VDOT, 60% of Route 1 traffic is passing through the area and proposed plans to bring Route 1 to grade are shown to significantly impact local traffic.
- The Plan notes that the transportation network impacts of increased density in residential, commercial, and retail establishments will require an evolution in the multi-modal transportation network in order to effectively serve existing and future community members. This is addressed within the transportation section of the plan, however the recommendations in the Implementation Matrix fall short of identifying a means to achieve this evolution. Transportation modeling needs to be supplemented with analysis of all transportation modes for a full picture of what travel behavior will change and what will remain the same. Metrics for success should be developed with risk-mitigation plans and strategies for resolution - to include an additional entrance to the Pentagon City Metro Station, traffic cameras, additional stop signs, speed bumps or other traffic calming devices, and/or temporary cessation of future growth.
- ARCA continues to be concerned about the pedestrian safety, mobility degradation, and traffic congestion implications that multiple aspects of the plan will have on the area surrounding the entrance to the Pentagon City metro station. The plan acknowledges and highlights the unresolved safety and mobility concerns including the clustering of many users and multiple modes of travel directly at this location, creating conflicts and safety concerns. It also identifies the area as a High Injury Network Corridor and the Army Navy Drive and S Hayes Street intersection as a known "Bicycle Hot Spot". The plan presently proposes multiple changes that will exacerbate the problem:
 - By increasing transit ridership dramatically with the added density
 - Upgrades 12th Street to an arterial and creates a transit-way, funneling more traffic and riders into a congested area
 - Routes the Green Ribbon bike and pedestrian corridor directly through the Metro Entrance area
 - Proposes a new Pentagon City Center Bus bay project that will increase pedestrian connections to the Pentagon City Metro station
- The plan should outline specific mitigation measures to maintain mobility connections to the metro, alleviate pickup and drop-off congestion, and ensure the safety of increased bike and pedestrian traffic

We look forward to continued engagement with the county to ensure the Pentagon City Plan meets the current and future needs of community members.



Kateri Garcia, President
Arlington Ridge CA

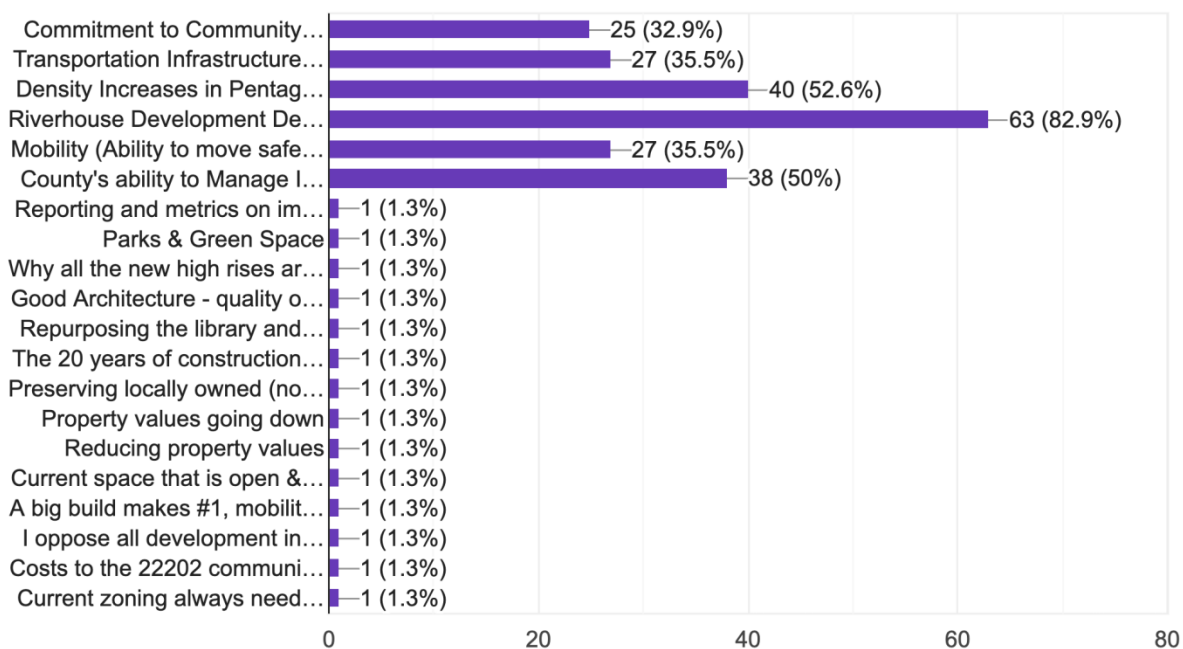
Appendix A: ARCA Membership Online Survey Responses

In addition to one-on-one engagements with members, the Arlington Ridge Civic Association (ARCA) gathered member inputs and views on the final draft of the Pentagon City Plan via an online survey conducted between December 24th - 28th. The responses of the 78 members to the single and multiple choice questions are below. The long answer text responses have been incorporated into the concerns listed above.

Complete survey can be found at <https://forms.gle/JhH7xh8mspu1EV6M7>.

Which aspect(s) of the Pentagon City Plan are you most interested in and/or concerned about?

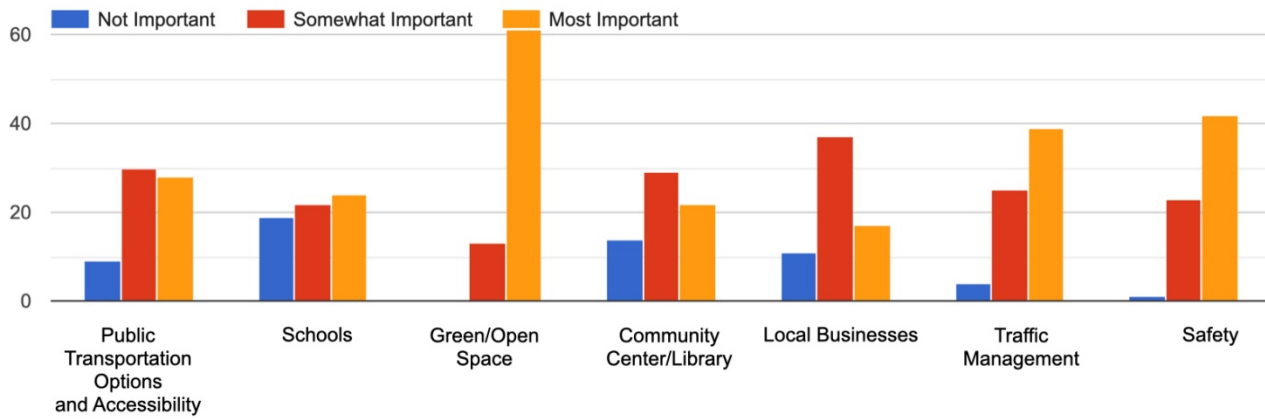
76 responses



(Multiple Choice Answers)

- Commitment to Community Benefits (i.e. community center, affordable housing, open space, etc.)
- Transportation Infrastructure not sufficient
- Density Increases in Pentagon City
- Riverhouse Development Density Increases
- Mobility (Ability to move safely through Pentagon City- bike, walk, metro, drive)
- County's ability to Manage Impacts of Density (fire, police, schools, traffic enforcement)

What community benefits are you most interested in seeing improved?



How informed do you feel about the Pentagon City Plan?

78 responses

