



To: Matt Mattauszek

Date: January 9, 2022

Subject: Pentagon City PDSP

Several members of the Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA) have participated in all the virtual presentations, comment periods and surveys of the PC PDSP drafting exercise. We have consistently supported the comments of the Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) and the Arlington Ridge Civic Association (ARCA), our partners in Livability 22202, as the proposed PDSP area falls within the boundaries of their associations. Major issues have included density, open space calculations, the preservation of the existing library and community center uses within the study area, the need for specific siting and timing for a new school site and transportation capacity.

Crystal City planning and development is governed by the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCSP). As a result, we have experienced the opportunities and constraints that an adopted County plan can have on growth and change in a neighborhood. Both AHCA and ARCA are primarily low density residential, so it is understandable that the substantial increase in density and height envisioned in the PC PDSP raises concerns about the impact on the low-density neighborhoods. Sector plans and PDSPs take a long time to develop and even longer to amend as conditions change, so getting it right from the beginning is important. Opportunities for input into the draft exercise have been robust, yet some concerns remain, including how specific and detailed the plan's requirements and guidance will be.

Pentagon City is planned for high-density development, as are other neighborhoods along the Metro corridors. Our experience with the CCSP shows that careful planning can minimize the impacts of increased office and residential density. It also has demonstrated that specificity can sometimes stifle creative thinking, especially regarding open space, transportation issues and planning for future community benefits.

The PDSP study area includes Virginia Highlands Park and Grace Hopper Park, existing resources about which Crystal City residents can only dream. These parks provide excellent continuous green space along South 15th and Joyce Streets and should remain in place while being studied to maximize their uses. There is no need to disrupt that area by relocating Joyce Street; the cost would be prohibitive with no apparent gain in open space.

The draft plan calls for meandering greenways, which may connect depending on future development. However, the study area includes several mega-blocks with existing PDSPs, including existing MetPark and proposed PenPlace. These two sites will have substantial park areas in their cores, which primarily benefit site users. Connecting them to other greenways in the study area to their west will require special signage at least. The green connections are further hampered by the fact that the Kimco (COSTCO) site and the Mall are NOT included in the plan, making it more difficult to apply some uniform standards and requirements in the study area.

As is often the case, community benefits are of special concern. We continue to maintain that site selection and planning for a new school to serve 22202 must be part of the PC PDSP. We recognize the political sensitivity and priorities around siting and funding for new schools. We urge cooperation between the County and APS to ensure that school population projections reflect the proposed new development in 22202 to minimize complications from overcrowding and to allow 22202 students to access their home schools with minimal busing. One site for a possible upper school would be the existing Aurora library and community center. Others have spoken to this site for collocating community facilities. Should the best use of the site not include the community center, it should definitely be located close to the residential neighborhoods without encroaching on public open space.

Finally, we remain concerned about planning for multimodal transportation uses, and discourage any proposal which allows for diversion into the single family neighborhoods. In Crystal City, we have seen what happens when an existing street becomes overloaded with many uses. In new development, buildings can be designed to allow for generous sidewalks and street planting. However, they don't widen the roads, so where street parking is retained for convenience the result is conflict between pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. It also makes exiting garages in a vehicle hazardous, which is already the case on many blocks. We applaud the effort to improve Hayes Street, making it more efficient and attractive with special emphasis on the entrance to Virginia Highlands Park.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the PC PDSP exercise and look forward to seeing more detail as the plan moves through the review and approval process.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Cassel".

Eric Cassel
President
CCCA