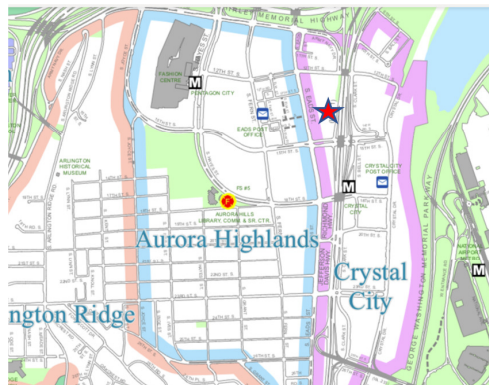


To: President of the Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA), Cory Giacobbe  
From: AHCA Zoning Committee, Stacy Meyer, *Chair*  
Date: November 3, 2022  
Re: Americana Hotel Redevelopment, 1400 Richmond Highway

## **BACKGROUND**

JBG has applied to the County for zoning exceptions for the redevelopment of the Americana Hotel at 1400 Richmond Highway, adjacent to the Aurora Highlands Civic Association boundary on the west side of Route 1.



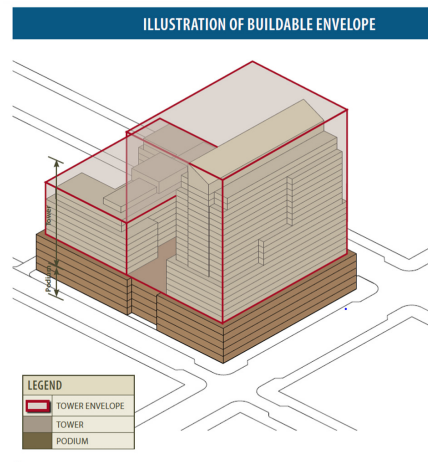
JBG calls to double the density approved for the site in the GLUP and build a 19-story building with 644 residences, and is seeking:

- 1) Reduced residential and parking ratios
- 2) Reduced loading space
- 3) Bonus density
- 4) Density exclusions

The project was presented to the Long Range Planning committee (LRPC) June 14, 2022 and was accepted for Site Plan review September 13, 2022. The Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) is scheduled for November 28, 2022, the Monday after the Thanksgiving weekend holiday.

The LRPC reviewed the project to determine if there was “consensus on the maximum building envelope”. While there was a representative from the Crystal City Civic Association, were no representatives of the Aurora Highlands Civic Association in attendance. Per the meeting summary the commissioners generally agreed the proposed plans were not setting precedent and are consistent with the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCSP) (Northwest Gateway, Block C.) The CCSP calls for building heights maximum of 200’ per Figure 3.8.5 which is consistent with a 19-story building, but also notes tapering as per Section 3.11 Design guidelines.

The staff presentation included a diagram of the setbacks required from the Crystal City Sector Plan – which tapers buildings from the main streets to minor streets.



### MEETING SUMMARY LINK

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/commissions/documents/lrpc/americana-hotel-site-plan-lrpc-meeting-summary-6.14.22.pdf

### STAFF PRESENTATION LINK

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/commissions/documents/lrpc/staff-lrpc-presentation.pdf

### OTHER OUTTAKE FROM THE LRPC MEETING

At the LRPC meeting, the staff presentation noted that a Block Plan is not required for the site's redevelopment, but it is unclear why it is not required. The site is in Block C in the Northwest Gateway section of the CCSP. The Zoning Committee would like to request more information from staff on the process and why a Block Plan is not required.

### CURRENT PROPOSAL ZONING COMMITTEE COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

The current staff and developer presentations on the Americana Hotel are available on the county website

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Site-Plan/1400-Richmond-Highway>

The Zoning Committee agrees with the LRPC consensus that the building maximum height, consistent with the CCSP is 200', and that is not precedent setting. However, the Zoning Committee has the following concerns and questions regarding the project as presented to SPRC:

1. The building maximum height is 200', but increasing height is not the same as doubling the density of the building, as the current density per the GLUP is FAR 4.5 and the requested

density is FAR 8.1 Increasing the density on the site requires thoughtful consideration of mitigation of the impacts of increased density. Increases in density, per 23.95 of the CCSP recommendations: *“For Crystal City to become a place that meets its population’s daily needs, it must offer an array of community and civic amenities.... As Crystal City grows, ongoing monitoring and planning is needed to ensure service provision keeps up with increased demands.”*

2. According to the staff report page 27, “the features and amenities that benefit the community have yet to be determined”. The increase in density being requested is large (+300K SF), and an understanding of the community benefits must be understood as part of the approval process. Aurora Highlands parks, schools, library, community center, etc. are in need of improvement and expansion to serve the increasing population.
3. The current proposal does not appear to taper to the west as per the CCSP. The current rendering does not appear to show much tapering at all. The apparent lack of tapering is a concern to the AHCA zoning committee.



4. The AHCA zoning committee is concerned that the proposed project lacks sufficient parking for the residential and for the commercial aspects of the development. Currently the retail areas in 22202 are underserved for parking.
5. The traffic studies (TDM) should be shared with the community as part of the public engagement process. The intersections around the proposed development have had poor (D) level of service (LOS) in older transportation studies particularly along Route 1.

#### **PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR THE COUNTY**

1. What monitoring has been done per the CCSP, and what is the plan for additional community services (the additional 30+ school children, parks (are dogs allowed?), safety services, utilities, transportation, etc.?)
2. What justification did the developer provide for the proposed increase in density (aka bonus density)?
3. How much affordable housing was included in the proposal? Will it be required for bonus density?
4. What home ownership opportunities are part of the proposal? If none, why not?

5. What community benefits are described as part of the development, particularly given the proposed increase in density? What are the local benefits to impacted 22202 versus countywide benefits?
6. How does the building meet the tapering requirements and other requirements of the CCSP for development? What measures is the county taking per the CCSP?
7. What is the rationale for less parking and no retail parking?
8. What studies have been done that ensure the proposed parking sharing is adequate for residents?
9. What data supports the parking assumptions?
10. What is the traffic LOS and pedestrian safety that is projected for the cumulative development along Route 1 and Eads?
11. Why is a block plan not required?

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Zoning Committee recommends that the AHCA withhold approval of this development until there is an adequate response from the County to the questions contained in this report.

The Zoning Committee recommends that the AHCA review this report and if AHCA approves the report, the AHCA position, with this report, should be sent to the County Board, the Planning Commission and county planning staff prior to the SPRC meeting to ensure that the questions are answered, and concerns addressed before approving of increases in density, or the other requests from the applicant.