

MEMORANDUM

TO: Stephen Hughes, SPRC Chair for Century Center Residential Site Plan

FROM: Ginger Brown, LRPC Chair for Crystal City Block Plan – Block Q

DATE: December 7, 2016

SUBJECT: Long Range Planning Committee Review of Proposed Crystal City Block Plan for Block Q

On November 7, 2016, the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) of the Planning Commission convened a meeting to review the proposed Crystal City Block Plan (CCBP) for the Century Center/National Center block (SP #65), otherwise identified as Block Q in the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCSP). This memorandum documents the principal findings of the LRPC review of the proposed block plan application for Block Q, and identifies outstanding issues pertaining to the site plan review of the associated Century Center Residential building. Reflecting the conclusion of LRPC's review of the proposed CCBP, information in this memorandum should help inform the discussion during the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) review of the associated Century Center residential site plan proposal.

I. Overview of Crystal City Block Plans

Block Plan Origins and Purpose

To facilitate coordinated and incremental redevelopment that advances the vision set forth in the CCSP, final site plan applications for properties located east of Jefferson Davis Highway must be accompanied by proposed CCBPs, to be acted on by the County Board concurrently with associated site plans. When proposed, each Crystal City Block Plan will be evaluated based upon the goals, recommendations, and other guidance set forth in the Sector Plan. Through its adoption, a CCBP provides a more refined but still general and guiding long-range plan than is expressed in the CCSP for existing and proposed general building locations, land use mix, tower coverage, transportation and other infrastructure, public open spaces and facilities, and utilities for individual large Crystal City blocks. For more information pertaining to the origins, purpose, and role of CCBPs, see Appendix 1.

II. Proposed CCBP Scenarios for Block Q

In June 2016, Lowe Enterprises filed an application for a CCBP for Block Q (or Site Plan #65), in conjunction with a proposed final site plan for a new Century Center Residential building near the corner of 23rd Street South and Crystal Drive. The proposed project would add a 23-story residential tower onto the first floor on an existing retail building base near the intersection of 23rd Street South and Crystal Drive. As conceived, the project would total approximately 327,000 square feet of gross floor area, in a building approaching 250 feet in height above average site elevation. Existing retail space in the ground floor would be retained, and additional ground floor retail area would be added elsewhere within the current first floor envelope.

Prior to the SPRC review of the proposed final site plan application, the proposed CCBP for Block Q underwent the requisite review by the LRPC. In conjunction with the block plan submission, the applicant and staff engaged other property owners on the block to notify them of the proposal, and to invite them to participate in the LRPC review of the block plan, if desired. The following presents a summary of the LRPC review of the proposed CCBP and key findings and issues from this review – to help inform the SPRC review of the proposed final site plan.

III. LRPC Review and Evaluation

The LRPC considered the proposed CCBP at its meeting on November 7, 2016. The proposed CCBP for Block Q is the third block plan proposed in Crystal City since the adoption of the Sector Plan, and the first on this block.

At the meeting, staff presented materials associated with the proposed CCBP as prepared by the applicant. Much of the presentation focused on describing the relevant CCSP guidance for Plan Q, generally summarized in Appendix 2. The proposed block plan submission culminated in one block plan scenario, largely reflecting the illustrative concept plan's depiction for the balance of this block as presented in the CCSP. Additionally, the applicant shared a brief presentation on the proposed site plan application for a new residential building at the northeast limits of the block, to provide additional context for the block plan review. In the staff presentation, three potential issue areas were identified with the proposed block plan as a result of the proposed site plan, including:

- *Deviation from the Crystal Drive recommended build-to-line:* The new residential tower addition proposed in the final site plan sits directly above an existing ground floor retail base, which is setback a range of approximately 60 to 80 feet from the Crystal Drive curb. Based on CCSP guidance for this block, buildings should meet a recommended build-to-line approximately 20 feet west of the curb.
- *Building heights exceeding bulk-plane angle limits:* Portions of the top of the new residential building would rise vertically beyond the bulk-plane angle limits set forth in the CCSP, which calls for a 50 degree angle beginning at 200 feet in height. Zoning provisions for the C-O Crystal City district allow the County Board to modify this component when projects can be demonstrated to still provide CCSP goals for adequate sunlight to the public spaces intended for protection through such bulk-plane angles.
- *Departures from preferred locations for service and loading:* The proposed new residential tower would continue to use existing garage and loading access points along Crystal Drive, while transforming an existing garage access point on 23rd Street South into the new residential lobby. Based on CCSP guidance for this block, the generally preferred locations for garage access and loading would be off of a new 25th Street or realigned Clark-Bell Street, neither of which has been implemented to date.

IV. Summary of LRPC Evaluation

Regarding the build-to line issue, the LRPC discussion focused on the ongoing challenge of achieving planned public open spaces identified in the sector plan. Some LRPC members said that the County should consider adding new spaces when redevelopment occurs even if the sector plan does not identify a public open space. On this block, the only new open space envisioned in the CCSP is the 25th Street plaza, which will require the redevelopment of other sites, creation of a new street, and realignment of Clark-Bell Street. The feasibility and future of realizing these sites is currently unknown. However, LRPC members broadly supported the idea of pursuing near-term, unplanned open space at the corner of 23rd Street South and Crystal Drive, instead of horizontally extruding the building base out to better align with the recommended build-to-line for Crystal Drive in the CCSP. There was also general agreement that the design of the open space, to be further detailed through the SPRC process, should have a retail-activating

nature to it, given that the space was originally envisioned in the sector plan to be ground floor retail at that location.

Notwithstanding the build-to line issue, the LRPC agreed that the following two issues are primarily site plan-related issues and should be addressed in the SPRC review:

- Bulk-Plane Angle considerations; and
- Service and Loading Access Point considerations.

The LRPC also generally concluded that there are no other block plan-related issues located outside of the final site plan area for the proposed new residential building.

V. Two Block Plan Scenarios for Advancement

While LRPC members broadly supported a scenario that includes unanticipated public open space at the street corner instead of ground floor building envelope that better aligns with the recommended build-to-line, staff transmitted a memo to LRPC following the November 7 meeting indicating their intent to advance two block plan scenarios at this time, as follow:

1. A scenario that generally reflects the build-to line along Crystal Drive as recommended in the CCSP; and
2. A scenario that depict an unplanned open space at that location, as conceptually reflected in the applicant's site plan proposal.

Updated exhibits of these two block plans scenarios are presented in Appendix 3, and should serve as a reference point for beginning the SPRC review of the proposed new Century Center Residential site plan building.

APPENDIX 1

Brief Overview of Crystal City Block Plan Origins, Purpose, and Role

For much of Crystal City, the Crystal City Sector Plan (adopted in 2010) recognizes the need for more detailed block level planning to facilitate coordinated and incremental redevelopment to advance and achieve the future vision for Crystal City. Although the Sector Plan recommends Phased Development Site Plans (PDSPs) as the mechanism to help implement the future vision for Crystal City, further consideration revealed limitations in trying to use PDSPs for this purpose. Therefore, the CCBP mechanism and planning process were created to provide an alternative approach to block-level planning in Crystal City that, as part of the development review process for proposed site plan applications, could help ensure:

- Crystal City’s future build out is generally consistent with Sector Plan recommendations;
- Proposed new buildings do not preclude any future planned, nearby improvements;
- Continued functionality of Crystal City systems and infrastructure throughout periods of incremental redevelopment; and
- Ongoing discussions and decisions regarding the timing and sequencing of desired community improvements relative to the overall build out.

Block Plan Role and Relationship to Sector Plan

Once adopted, a CCBP essentially represents an **updated long-range planning vision** for specific blocks in Crystal City. A proposed CCBP is ultimately adopted by the County Board; this action to “adopt” is in contrast to the action taken by the County Board to “approve” any corresponding final site plan application. As an adopted, updated County long range planning vision for a block, the CCBP does not entail any additional development approvals or entitlements beyond those achieved through associated final site plan approvals. An applicant may request variations from the Sector Plan, in which case discussions would be prompted to determine the appropriateness of such variations and their impact on achieving the overall vision for the block and the Crystal City area. These refinements may be determined to be suitable and recommended for inclusion in an adopted, updated vision for the block. There may also be times when an applicant proposes making no changes to the proposed vision outlined in the Sector Plan or in the previously adopted block plan.

Consideration of Multiple Scenarios

The *Administrative Regulation 4.1 Governing the Submittal of Site Plans in Arlington County* currently allows for the submission of “any number” of block plan scenarios. In practice, the LRPC reviews the scenarios to determine if one or more meets the Sector Plan goals. Through the review of the first several CCBPs proposed since adoption of the Sector Plan, LRPC members, through many of their comments, have suggested a preference for limiting the number of acceptable scenarios to no more than a few.

APPENDIX 2

Relevant Sector Plan Guidance for Block Q

The following table summarized the Sector Plan guidance for Block Q:

Sector Plan Element	Stated Guidance/Recommendations
Building Heights	250' limit along 23 rd Street and Jefferson Davis Highway, 200' along balance of block
Bulk Plane Angles	50 degree angle setbacks along portions of 23 rd Street frontage, beginning at 200' above a.s.e.
Build-To Lines	110' ROW for 23 rd St. S. 100' ROW for Crystal Dr. and 26 th Street S. 80' ROW for Clark-Bell, 80' for new urban center local (25 th Street);
Street Network and Typology	Realignment of Clark-Bell and introduction of new urban center local street
Tower Coverage	85% west of Clark-Bell St. / 75% east of Clark-Bell St.
Land Use Mix	Mixed-use, with no minimums or maximums
Public Open Space	One identified plan space at 25 th Street plaza
Retail Frontage and Underground	23 rd Street S., Crystal Drive, 23 rd Street, and 25 th Street Plaza edges
Base Density	3.8 FAR for commercial and 4.8 FAR for residential
Architectural Features	25 th Street Plaza coordinated frontage Designated features at 23 rd Street S. and Crystal Drive intersection
Surface Transitway	Near term: transit lanes on Crystal Dr.; Long-term: southbound transit lane on Clark-Bell; Transit stops near south end of block
Service and Loading	Preferred locations along Clark-Bell and along 25 th and 26 th Streets S.

In addition to above guidance that applies to specific areas per various Sector Plan maps, the Sector Plan also includes additional recommendations pertaining to the Crystal City planning area. Several of these are found in *Appendix 3 – County Board Guidance for the Implementation and Elaboration of the Crystal City Sector Plan*. As such, these area-wide goals were also presented for consideration by the LRPC in its review of the CCBP.

- Affordable Housing – 800 additional committed or market rate affordable units above the projected 1,200 units in/near Crystal City;
- Public Space - 14 to 15 total acres of publicly-available open space east of Jefferson Davis Blvd;
- Connectivity - Additional cross-streets and pedestrian passageways east of Jefferson Davis Blvd; and
- Energy - Design and construction with a preference for easy conversion to district energy systems

APPENDIX 3

Proposed Crystal City Block Plan Scenarios for Block Q (as of November 2016)



Scenario A (future buildout adhering to Crystal Drive build to line)



Scenario B (w/ unplanned open space at 23rd Street South and Crystal Drive)