

**PYPAG Meeting Summary**  
**Tuesday, February 17, 2009**

**PYPAG Members Present:**

Joseph Bondi  
Michael Caison  
Richard Calderon  
Darryl Dugan  
Garrett Erdle  
Bill Hendrickson  
Deborah Johnson  
Jon Lindgren  
Jennifer Mitchell  
Peter Pocock  
John Porter  
Mariella Posey  
Frederick Rothmeijer  
Sherry Sadai  
Eric Wagner

**Absent:**

Crystall Merlino  
Allison Cryor DiNardo  
Maria Wasowski  
Dan McCaffery  
Noah Teates

**City Staff:**

Jeff Farner  
Valerie Peterson  
Kristen Mitten  
Tom Culpepper  
Mark Jinks  
Beth Carton

**The Perspectives Group Staff:**

Doug Sarno

**Cooper Robertson Staff:**

Jonie Fu  
Bill Kenworthy

**WMATA Staff / Consultants:**

John Thomas  
Jim Ashe  
Phillip Braum (P<sup>2</sup>D)

Approximately 15 members of the public were in attendance.

**Introduction**

The Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group (PYPAG) meeting began at 7:10 PM with Eric Wagner, Chair, welcoming the PYPAG members, the attending public and city staff. There were 15 PYPAG members in attendance. Mr. Wagner stated that before the group started the evening's agenda he wished to announce that the Saturday Community Workshop that was held on January 31<sup>st</sup> was an outstanding session and that staff and the PYPAG members that attended did an excellent job.

**Meeting Goals**

The facilitator, Doug Sarno, then reviewed the agenda and goals for the meeting. He also asked the PYPAG members to consider whether they had an interest in transportation issues and would like to volunteer for the transportation subcommittee that will be created at the end of the meeting. He explained that this subcommittee would look at the transportation issues at a more in-depth level in which to craft recommendations to present back to PYPAG.

## **Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group**

Tom Culpepper, from Transportation and Environmental Services, gave a presentation announcing the members of the Metro Feasibility Work Group along with the staff/consultants that will support the group and outlined the topics the work group will address in the coming months including:

### Phase I – Concept Development:

- Station Location - 3 locations to study
- Refine Concept Design of Station
- Determine Financial Feasibility
- Estimate Necessary Ridership to Accommodate Metro
- Environmental Scan of Potential Station Locations

Mr. Culpepper stated that the staff would come back to PYPAG in April with the pros and cons for each location, as determined by the Metro Feasibility Work Group. Once the preferred location has been determined, Phase II will include an environmental analysis of the station location.

The three station locations the Work Group will consider include:

1. Existing reservation location;
2. Shift station north; or
3. Locate station underground in main body of Yard.

Mr. Culpepper explained that the reason to look at shifting the station further north is to capture higher density areas since the ¼ and ½ mile metro walking sheds, in the current reservation location, overlap lower-density areas (townhomes).

Finally Mr. Culpepper announced that the first meeting of the Work Group will be held on Thursday, February 19, 2009 and will be open to the public.

The Metro Feasibility Work Group members include:

- Bill Euille, City Council
- Tim Lovain, City Council
- Eric Wagner, Planning Commission
- Jennifer Mitchell, Transportation Commission
- Noah Teates, PYPAG

Mark Jinks, from the City Manager's Office, briefly noted that the City will be looking at whether building the metro is even feasible since it will be very expensive and that over the last five years, estimates have ranged from \$75 – \$150 million. He pointed out that originally when the Metro system was built, the federal government paid 70-80% of the costs involved and the municipalities were only responsible for about 20-30%. Mr. Jinks did say that while Federal money may not be completely out of the question, it will be very difficult to obtain and the City will end up shouldering most of the costs and it will be expensive. He stated that the Feasibility Plan will look at the options, ridership,

consequences to the City along with the other matters to help frame decisions as to whether this station is something that can be built.

## **Plan Principles**

Doug Sarno then presented the Plan Principles crafted by the Principles Subcommittee to the rest of the group. He stated that this subcommittee has done a great job and really worked hard drafting the Vision Statement, the seven (7) Principles and finally the Working Plan Content (the bulleted details). He stated that the main decision focus for tonight's meeting was to decide if the group wants to adopt the principles or if they want to put the subcommittee back to work fine tuning any items.

The group discussed several details of the principles, agreed to several changes and ultimately tasked the subcommittee to revise some additional principles or bulleted details. Some main points discussed by the group were:

- Concern that one of the principles that stated "minimal auto use" would adversely impact a sufficient supply of parking necessary to support the retail.
- On-street parking provides a buffer between the autos and pedestrians on sidewalks.
- Concern with traffic and parking spillover into surrounding neighborhoods.
- Parking next to metro needs fewer parking spaces.
- Provide shared parking between retail and office.
- Consider all transit options: metro, buses, shuttle, transit corridor, etc.
- Need to reduce auto dependency.
- Neighbors want to know traffic impact. Need density to add a metro, but need to minimize number of cars generated by that increased density.
- Need to prioritize the pedestrian.
- Minimize auto impact.
- Maximize use of existing (under-utilized) metro.
- Promote goals of Economic Sustainability Work Group Report. Needs to be an asset for City instead of just "no impact".
- Appropriate to and protective of surrounding neighborhoods.
- House of worship, healthcare and private schools are not specifically included under uses in the principles, but are not precluded either.
- Concern that if we're too specific on use, we may exclude others inadvertently.
- The 7 Principles do not stand alone and need to be applied holistically (e.g. the economic sustainability principle would also apply to providing sufficient parking for the retail).

Jeff pointed out that the details of the working plan content (the sub-bullets under each principle) are fluid and can be adjusted as we move forward.

## **Public Comment**

No comments.

## **Community Workshop Themes**

Jonie Fu, Urban Design consultant with Cooper Robertson, reviewed the results from the four table exercises considered at the Saturday, January 31 Community Workshop:

1. Streets / Connectivity (Landbay F)
2. Open Space (Landbay F)
3. Uses / Amenities (Landbay F)
4. Landbay L

She showed slides graphically representing the exact sketches from each table and overlapped them so that the results from each table could be viewed by theme. Jonie then stated that they distilled some of the ideas to come up with a more conceptual framework plan and to list the main ideas. She emphasized that some of the more conceptual ideas are difficult to represent graphically (for example - keep the grid flexible).

Jonie also pointed out the synergy between office, retail and metro and that as we think about land use, we should look at creating distinct neighborhoods within Landbay F to establish a sense of place.

Jonie then discussed Landbay L and acknowledged that seven (7) out of nine (9) tables suggested swapping the Landbay L density to the existing baseball field south of GW Middle School (Braddock Fields) located next to the Braddock Metro Station. Landbay L could become open space and playing fields whereas the land next to the metro station would be developed.

Refer to the meeting handout [Notes from Planning Exercise \(Connections/Streets, Open Space, Uses and Amenities\)](#) from the January 31 workshop for all of the comments and ideas represented on the sketches made. In summary, Jonie stated that as we study the plan, we will keep all of these good ideas in mind.

## **Landbay L Density Transfer (Land Swap)**

Jeff Farner asked to speak on the issue of the Landbay L density transfer that emerged as a clear idea out of the Saturday workshop. He posed the question of how should we address Landbay L as it relates to process.

Jeff Farner and Faroll Hamer, Director of Planning & Zoning, outlined some of the issues that may be involved with a Density Transfer:

### Advantages

- Many community members appear to be interested in the density transfer.
- Maximizes use of existing metro station by increasing density on west side.
- Braddock Fields is a natural extension of Potomac Yard.
- If we don't look at it now, we may not have another opportunity in the near future.
- PYPAG currently has representation from the neighborhoods surrounding Braddock Fields and from Alexandria City Public School (ACPS).
- By condition, Landbay L cannot submit a development plan until January 2010 to give the City time to explore options for Landbay L.

### Challenges

- We have a finite amount of time for the current planning effort (approx. one year).
- There would be additional impacts to analyze beyond what the existing Potomac Yard Plan has now (traffic, etc.).
- This would be another large task for the PYPAG and staff to assume—additional costs and staff involved with increasing scope of current planning effort.
- Would need to increase community outreach as this has been a controversial topic in past. Need to involve other communities.
- Would need to bring in ACPS to maintain needs of GW Middle School.
- City Council would need to formally expand boundaries of Planning Area.

### Three Options

1. Delay planning Landbay L and Braddock Fields, and revisit in 2011-2012. There is a chance that the landowner will build on Landbay L before it can be revisited.
2. Incorporate Braddock Fields to the current Potomac Yard planning effort at the same level of detail as rest of Potomac Yard.
3. Create a schematic placeholder establishing the framework streets (and possibly the density) in plan tentatively endorsing land swap. Additional study would be necessary later on that deals with rezoning, heights and uses (similar to the Braddock East Plan).

Mr. Farner noted that a development plan for Landbay L cannot be submitted to the City until January 2010 per condition of approval of the CDD amendment that was approved last summer, in anticipation of this group looking at Landbay L as part of the PY Plan.

Jon Lindgren, PYPAG member and representative of PYD (Landbay L landowner), stated that PYD is intrigued by land swap, but timing and financial pressures are a consideration. He also noted that PYD does not build density, but if the land swap was part of the plan, his team would study the trade-offs involved. Eric Wagner suggested that PYD would likely sell the property to someone who did build density, similar to the density transfer that was done last year for a potential buyer of Landbay H.

The floor was opened up to public comment and David Fromm, a resident from Del Ray, stated that his idea for the land swap stemmed from the need to enhance the amount of open space within the City and that this odd parcel could provide much needed parks

and open space connected to existing parks. He believes that 17 acres of townhouses in this location would be a waste. We should explore the opportunity for a swap or stacking fields on parking. No other comments from the public were received at this time.

After additional discussion, Faroll Hamer stated that since there would need to be other communities involved, a sub-committee could be created to include additional community representation along with PYPAG members so that the recommendations from the subcommittee could be folded back into the PYPAG process. She emphasized that if this goes forward now, it has to go forward with the current planning process since staff is already stretched thin.

Doug asked for a hand count and found that the PYPAG members were interested in pursuing a schematic (threshold) analysis of the land swap. Doug and Eric both stated that during the course of the planning process it may be decided that the land swap is just not feasible, and if that happens the issue could be put to bed.

## **Heights Discussion**

Jonie Fu and Jeff Farner gave a presentation and led discussions regarding height influences best practices. Jeff stated that we will not necessarily talk about specific heights tonight, but rather a general height diagram.

Some Best Practices Relating to Heights:

- Street width relative to height of buildings
- Shoulders on buildings can be provided to “step down to street” to minimize perceived height from street.
- Taller buildings can be placed around parks, along wider streets, at corners or other strategic locations for interest and variety.
- Buildings can step down in height to existing neighborhoods.
- Tall buildings behind shorter buildings can still take advantages of views.
- Provide a variety of heights within the same block to add interest and to minimize clustering of monolithic blocks.
- Maintain streetwalls and provide for vistas.
- The buildings need to address the street, the corners, etc.
- As we think about creating special places it is important to consider the quality, character and function of streets.

Character Areas:

- There are two different gateways entering Alexandria with very different character areas – GW Parkway and Route 1.

Mr. Farner stated that as we continue discussing the different options for heights, the next steps will include massing models and photo montages to examine the height implications. Staff is asking the PYPAG to provide direction as to the parameters for

height, setbacks and relationships that we should examine with the model. Doug also instructed the group to review the height principles and to comment if any in particular did not make sense.

The PYPAG members proceeded to discuss height and suggested the following ideas:

- Recognize residential uses across Route 1, but consider a wide variety of heights on Route 1, including some taller buildings since this is our widest street.
- Provide for variety of heights throughout, with opportunities for taller buildings to puncture the “tent” at strategic locations.
- Avoid buildings with monolithic height and a monolithic look.
- Tall buildings need to be offset by the inclusion of additional open space, not just wider streets.
- Revegetate the National Park Service land to restore the landscaping buffer along the GW Parkway.
- Provide tall, dynamic buildings (similar in quality to the Mt Vernon estate) along the GW Parkway to provide interest.
- Need additional information to be able to discuss the subject of height properly.

### **Public Comment**

No Comments

### **Development of the Transportation Subcommittee**

Doug then asked who among the PYPAG members would like to volunteer for the Transportation Subcommittee. Five members volunteered including: Garrett Erdle, Joe Bondi, Mariella Posey, Jennifer Mitchell and Darryl Dugan. Doug stated that the first Transportation Subcommittee meeting would likely be in early March and that the first meeting may occur on-site at Potomac Yard. He stated that the dates of the subcommittee meetings would be publicly announced.

The meeting ended at 9:45 p.m.