

# POTOMAC YARD

## Planning Advisory Group

**Meeting Summary**  
**November 18, 2008**

**PYPAG Members:**

Joseph Bondi  
Michael Caison  
Richard Calderon  
Darryl Dugan  
Garrett Erdle  
Bill Hendrickson  
Deborah Johnson  
Stephanie Landrum  
Jon Lindgren  
Crystall Merlino  
Peter Pocock  
Mariella Posey  
Frederick Rothmeijer  
Sherry Sadai  
Noah Teates  
Eric Wagner  
Maria Wasowski

**City Staff:**

Faroll Hamer  
Jeff Farner  
Valerie Peterson  
Kristen Mitten  
Karl Moritz

**The Perspectives Group Staff:**

Doug Sarno  
Kristie Bergeron-Hale

**Cooper Robertson Staff:**

Jonie Fu  
Bill Kenworthy

Approximately 15 Members of the Public were in attendance.

Eric Wagner, Chair, opened the meeting and thanked the group for attending.

Doug Sarno, PYPAG facilitator, asked the group to introduce themselves and to provide a word or two about their overall impressions of the Potomac Yard tour that took place on Saturday, November 8, 2008. The group agreed that the tour was valuable and helpful to the process, and thanked the staff for setting it up.

Doug Sarno reviewed the agenda for the meeting. The City staff provided the group with numerous aerials and models of the Potomac Yard area to aid in the conversation. Doug stated that the City will present a further overview of the regulatory planning process. Doug told the group that the urban design consultants will provide an overview of their impressions, and that during the next few months, the group will move on to discuss basic design principles.

Doug explained that a year-long plan with final meeting dates for the group will be in place by the next PYPAG meeting on Tuesday, December 16, 2008 from 7-9:00 PM. Doug also proposed that the first public workshop be held on January 31, 2009 with the proposed topic of discussion being the creation and vetting of design principles. At the December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, the group will discuss the creation of a subcommittee to move the design principles forward and prepare for the first public workshop. The group discussed possibly holding the workshop at George Washington Middle School, with further details to be discussed at a later date.

Jeff Farner of the City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning provided the group with a presentation explaining the regulatory framework for planning in the City, including the Small Area Plan, Coordinated Development District (CDD), Development Special Use Permit (DSUP), and Design Guidelines. He also discussed the status of the DSUP applications in Potomac Yard. Jeff explained that the fact sheets and glossary of acronyms provided to PYPAG members are available on the project website ([www.alexandriava.gov/potomacyardplan](http://www.alexandriava.gov/potomacyardplan)). He also told the group that the Braddock and Eisenhower plans would be good references to review to aid in the understanding of recent Small Area Plans. Jeff noted that the public hearings for the DSUPs for Landbays G, I and J are scheduled as follows:

- City of Alexandria Planning Commission: Tuesday, January 6, 2009, 7:30PM
- City of Alexandria City Council: Saturday, January 24, 2009, 9:30AM

The group asked if the studies concerning Potomac Yard will assume the placement of a Metro station in the neighborhood, and discussed that it was assumed in the retail study. The group agreed that Metro was desirable, but wondered about the available funding and if the area would provide enough density for ridership. Faroll Hamer of the City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning stressed the importance of the Metro issue, and expressed that advice and guidance was needed from this group, as well as a technical group, on the issue of Metro. Eric Wagner expressed that the group should plan for both possibilities – with Metro, and without Metro. The PYPAG will discuss the

results of a traffic study, funding possibilities, and other transit options at a future PYPAG meeting to further inform this process.

Jeff Farner continued his presentation and provided the group with comparisons of the size of Old Town Alexandria blocks to those in the study area. Blocks from Georgetown, Old Town, Philadelphia, Chicago, D.C., and Del Ray were also overlain on a map of the study area. Sectional street views were presented to assist in understanding scale and walkability.

Jonie Fu of Cooper Robertson, urban design consultant, provided the group with a presentation of their initial views and thoughts of the Potomac Yard area, posed questions to think about, and discussed connectivity options through the study area. Jonie focused on the character of the area. Some potential questions include: Would this entail breaking Potomac Yard into several smaller neighborhoods or character areas? Would a system of small parks connect the areas? How would a Metrorail station influence the property? How would the river views, and those of the surrounding areas, be maximized? Could the Federal Aviation Administration adjust the height restrictions? What type of block patterns are desirable?

Jonie also presented the group with scale comparisons of areas such as Clarendon Market Commons, Bethesda Row, Dupont and Logan Circles, King Street, Santana Row in San Jose, The Grove in Los Angeles, Eastern Town Center in Columbus, as well as some new shopping mall structures.

Jonie discussed good urban design practices in the presentation, including the importance of pedestrian oriented streets, connections to surrounding neighborhoods, public transit, open space, hidden and underground parking, a varied environment through mixed-use and a mix of building heights and types, civic uses, meaningful gateways (including along Rt. 1 and the GW Parkway) and ecologically sensitive development.

The group then discussed what they liked and did not like in urban communities. Things they liked included:

- Street connectivity and grid
- Meandering street network
- Transportation choices
- Variety of stores that is in Potomac Yard now, but with walkability
- Places where people can get out of their cars
- Mix of uses, stacked
- Variety and character of buildings built over time (Paris, Michigan Ave)
- Country Club Plaza (Kansas City)—activity outside drawing people from one end to another
- Small blocks (Portland)
- Brussels, Siena, and Ponte Vecchio (connections to water)

Things they did not like included:

- Dead-ends (Clarendon Commons)
- Single uses (lack of mix)
- Lack of organic building over time
- Above-grade parking
- Bethesda (streets too tight)

Doug concluded by asking the group to bring pictures to the next meeting of areas that show examples of “great places.”

Eric Wagner asked if there were any public comments and one gentleman asked the group to design for both with and without Metro. He offered that it might be helpful to overlay Crystal City over Potomac Yard to see what works and what doesn't.

Eric Wagner adjourned the meeting at 9:00 PM.

**Important Dates:**

- PYPAG meeting on Tuesday, December 16, 7-9:00 PM at City Hall
- City of Alexandria Planning Commission: Tuesday, January 6, 2009, 7:30PM at City Hall
- City of Alexandria City Council Meeting: Saturday, January 24, 2009, 9:30AM at City Hall
- First Public Workshop on Saturday, January 31, 2009, time and location to be determined