

**PYPAG Meeting Summary  
Thursday, March 26, 2009**

**PYPAG Members in attendance:**

Allison Cryor DiNardo  
Darryl Dugan  
Garrett Erdle  
Bill Hendrickson  
Deborah Johnson  
Jon Lindgren  
Dan McCaffery  
Crystall Merlino  
Jennifer Mitchell  
Peter Pocock  
Mariella Posey  
Frederick Rothmeijer  
Noah Teates  
Eric Wagner  
Maria Wasowski

**PYPAG Members not in  
attendance:**

Joseph Bondi  
Michael Caison  
Richard Calderon  
John Porter  
Sherry Sadai

**City Staff:**

Kathleen Beeton  
Tom Canfield  
Bethany Carton  
Jeff Farner  
Claire Gron  
Faroll Hamer  
Daniel Imig  
Mark Jinks  
Sandra Marks  
Valerie Peterson

**The Perspectives Group Staff:**

Doug Sarno

**Cooper Robertson Staff:**

Jonie Fu  
Bill Kenworthy

**Kimley-Horn Staff:**

John Martin  
David Whyte  
Geoff Giffin

Approximately 22 Members of the Public were in attendance.

## **Introduction**

The Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group (PYPAG) meeting began at 7:04 PM with Eric Wagner, Chair, welcoming the PYPAG members, the attending public and city staff. There were 15 PYPAG members in attendance.

## **Meeting Goals and Agenda**

The facilitator, Doug Sarno, reviewed the agenda and goals for the meeting. One goal of the meeting was to provide Cooper Robertson with input, through an exercise with a block model, so that they can develop three conceptual options for the public workshop to be held in May (on a date to be determined).

Another goal of the meeting was to gain an understanding of transportation best practices and the scope of the Potomac Yard Transportation Study (to begin immediately). The Transportation Study will examine traffic, transit, and transportation issues in Potomac Yard. The Transportation Subcommittee will begin to examine the results of the Transportation Study in April.

The ultimate goal of the process is to provide staff with input so that they can prepare the Potomac Yard Small Area Plan over the summer.

## **Update on Planning for Landbay L**

Jeff Farner, City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z), gave an update on the status of the planning process for Landbay L. At the direction of PYPAG, staff is proceeding with a threshold study. He stated that P&Z has been meeting with other City departments, stakeholders, community and civic groups, and will be meeting with the [George Washington M.S.] PTA concerning potential planning efforts for Landbay L. Staff intends to present the findings of the threshold study to the Planning Commission and City Council in May.

Garrett Erdle, a member of the PYPAG, thanked staff for meeting with the Rosemont Citizen's Association on March 12, 2009. He highlighted a few concerns raised at the meeting, and detailed in a Memo from Rosemont Citizens Association to PYAG [sic] (attached). Mr. Erdle stated that the Rosemont Citizens Association voted to approve a motion to leave the playing fields in their current location at the George Washington M.S., and finds it unnecessary to include the George Washington M.S. property in the Potomac Yard Small Area Plan. He stated that if City Council were to direct P&Z to include the George Washington M.S. in the Potomac Yard Small Area Plan, additional stakeholders could be added to the PYPAG, or Landbay L could be removed from consideration in the Potomac Yard Small Area Plan.

Mr. Wagner reminded PYPAG members that, in response to issues raised by the community at the Community Workshop in January, PYPAG instructed staff to conduct a threshold analysis to see if the separation of Landbay L from the current Potomac Yard Small Area Plan warranted further research. He stated

that it is unfortunate that some members of the community feel that the trading and development of the existing fields was imminent. He stated that PYPAG requested a threshold study to examine if the idea of the separation of Landbay L from the current Potomac Yard Small Area Plan had any merit. He stated that the City was never in the process of swapping land between Landbay L and the existing fields.

Jon Lindgren, a member of PYPAG, and representing the owner of Landbay L, stated that Pulte-Centex is okay with the threshold study, but noted that they are not the drivers of the discussion, and are happy with the status quo.

### **Status of Metro Feasibility Work Group**

Mr. Wagner noted that the Metro Feasibility Work Group has met since the last PYPAG meeting. At the last meeting, Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager, provided new financial information, and there was discussion about whether the Metro station could be relocated to the north.

Jennifer Mitchell, a member of PYPAG and the Metro Feasibility Work Group, added that WMATA is doing a “fatal flaw analysis” (threshold analysis) for each of three different location alternatives. WMATA will report back at the next meeting of the Metro Feasibility Work Group, and will be able to inform the Work Group if any of the alternatives are not viable. The three alternatives include: 1) in its current planned location (dedicated area); 2) about 900 ft. north of the current planned location (near theater); and 3) underground in the middle of Landbay F.

Noah Teates, a member of PYPAG, questioned the source of the underground station alternative. Mr. Wagner stated that it is the result of discussions among members of PYPAG. He indicated that, based on discussions with WMATA, this alternative is likely not feasible. Mr. Farner added that the three alternatives were developed by City staff based on comments by PYPAG and other groups.

### **Transportation Study**

John Martin, consultant with Kimley-Horn, gave a presentation on the transportation study. He defined the study area and presented the scope of the study: the study will examine existing conditions, forecast traffic to 2030, assess the ability of the existing transportation system to accommodate new development, and recommend transportation improvements. He stated that they will examine two scenarios: two with a Metro station, and two without a Metro station.

Mr. Martin summarized initial findings: the existing development on Landbay F is auto-oriented, and not pedestrian or transit friendly. He summarized existing automobile, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian conditions. He then summarized next

steps, including conducting a traffic analysis (based on the land use scenarios) and the identification of multi-modal transportation solutions which realize the vision of PYPAG and the City, and which build on best practices.

David Whyte, consultant with Kimley-Horn, continued the presentation with a discussion of Best Practices in Transportation Planning. He stated that transportation networks are fine-grained, interconnected, and redundant. He stated that we should be thinking about streets in terms of carrying people and not just automobiles, and outlined how street function informs design in primary, Type “A”, Type “B”, and Type “C” streets. He stated that we have to change the way we think about transit as guiding development, and not as an afterthought. Mr. Whyte also discussed Transportation Demand Management (TDM), which is a set of strategies to influence travel behavior and encourage people not to drive. He then concluded the presentation with examples of jurisdictions employing best practices, and solicited questions from the audience.

A member of the audience commented that other modes of transportation should be the primary focus at Potomac Yard, not just streets. Mr. Whyte clarified that he meant “streets” to refer to the conduit for the movement of people, and stated that all streets must accommodate pedestrians. Mr. Farner added that it was important that Kimley-Horn be brought on early in the process to think about transportation, urban design, and uses in conjunction.

Another member of the audience commented that the City will need bus lines to serve the Potomac Yard station more frequently so people will take the bus. Mr. Wagner noted that it takes time for plans for improvements to unfold. Mr. Whyte stated that when you create a new destination for transit, it gives you an opportunity to examine how the system is deployed.

Another member of the audience commented that the City needs a complete, connected, on-street bicycle network.

### **Open Space Options and Creating Neighborhoods**

Jonie Fu, consultant with Cooper Robertson, gave a presentation on open space options and creating neighborhoods. She stated that the main goal of the presentation and the building blocks exercise is to create a 3-D vision for Landbay F. Steps include looking at: height and plan elements as opportunities to make special places, the size and location of open space, streets, streets and open space working together, and massing. She stated that PYPAG needs to provide input for the formulation of options.

Ms. Fu provided a brief recap from the last meeting, mentioning focus areas (Metro, river, Route 1, and core areas), heights, the Stamford model, and the public realm (open space and streets). She continued the presentation with a discussion of the size and location of open space, providing national and

international examples, including Market Square (Alexandria, VA), Rockefeller Center, Gamercy Park, Union Square, Battery Park City, and Forest Hill Gardens (New York, NY), Rittenhouse Square and Walnut Street (Philadelphia, PA), Leicester Square, Trafalgar Square, and Covent Garden (London, U.K.), Harvard Square (Cambridge, MA), and transit-only squares and streets in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and Zurich (Switzerland). Ms. Fu showed how these examples might look at Potomac Yard.

Bill Kenworthy, consultant with Cooper Robertson, continued the presentation with a discussion on the quantitative aspect of the plan, by looking at the percentages of parks and streets in large planning areas and comparing them to Potomac Yard. Examples included Old Town (Alexandria, VA), Stamford, CT, Battery Park City (New York, NY), and Celebration Town Center (Celebration, FL).

Dan McCaffery, a member of PYPAG, and representing the owner of Landbay F questioned the daytime populations surrounding the parks shown in the examples, indicating that the populations surrounding the examples in London, Paris, and New York City may not be comparable to Alexandria. Ms. Fu stated that she did not have this information; the focus was on the experience of how we make a special place. Mr. Wagner suggested that in addition to gathering the requested information, that Ms. Fu also examine examples in Washington, D.C., that are local and are less dense.

### **Planning Exercise**

Ms. Fu then led the group in a planning exercise. Cooper Robertson prepared an interactive 3-D model of Landbay F built at a 2.25 FAR, including surrounding areas, and illustrating a street grid similar to the grid in Old Town, and in keeping with the grid in Landbay G. Moveable wood blocks formed the floors of the buildings. She began the exercise with a “flat” model, making reasonable assumptions about buildings, building types, distances, parking, etc. Both in leading the group (using examples from the presentation), and being led by the group, Ms. Fu moved the wood blocks from block to block within the model, exploring different options for the location of uses, the location of parks, and increasing and decreasing heights. Comments made by staff, consultants, PYPAG members, and members of the public during the exercise include:

#### *Heights*

- Buildings should “step down” towards the river to maximize views
- Building design should be sensitive to the George Washington Parkway
- Height should be focused in the center of the site (away from Route 1 and the George Washington Parkway). Approximate building heights are 12-14 stories at the center of the site, and approximately 10 stories near the Metro

- Taller buildings are generally preferred, and result in more open space
- Building heights along Route 1 should be tiered in consideration of the surrounding neighborhoods
- A variety of building heights should be provided throughout the site
- A section of Route 1 through the site should be studied. “Dinky” buildings do not properly frame a wide road
- Taller buildings should be provided at special places

### *Uses*

- Office uses should be clustered near the Metro
- A vibrant mix of uses should be provided throughout the site so that there are no dead zones at different periods
- Both the N/S and the E/W orientation of retail should be explored
- The feasibility of a pedestrian mall should be examined
- The development should accommodate big box retailers and shoppers by providing parking
- The relationship between anchors and smaller retail shops should be considered in their placement
- The provision and location of collector parking garages should be considered
- The character of Route 1 and Main Street needs to be defined
- The provision of a cultural or civic facility should be considered, potentially connected to open space and/or Four Mile Run
- Special neighborhoods should be created

### *Parks/Open Space*

- It is important that a visual element be provided on Route 1 to capture attention and pull people into the development, such as a park or cultural space
- Open space near the Metro should be surrounded by people and uses
- A pocket park should be provided near the Metro
- The location of open space or cultural space on Route 1 should be examined
- A large park should be provided at the center of the site area
- A park should be provided in the vicinity of Four Mile Run
- The development of the site should incorporate a variety of park types and sizes
- The future use of parks should be considered in their design

### *Additional Comments*

- Buildings should not turn their back on Route 1. The development must interact with Route 1
- It is important that the development of the site be based on a study of what has worked historically, but also an examination of future trends

- Innovative ideas should be considered, such as roof-top parks and bike sharing
- Development between Landbay G and Landbay F should be seamless
- The development of the site should support traveling to the site by automobile, but make it so that people only park once and then explore by foot or other transport
- The “center” of the site should be shifted south towards Landbay G
- It is important to look at places where Potomac Yard can push the envelope of future development with basic principles that will allow for development to actually happen

Following the conclusion of the planning exercise, Mr. Farner and Mr. Sarno provided a brief summary of key points.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 pm.