Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan

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Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan
Meeting Summary
Work Session #4
January 7, 2008

INTRODUCTION

Robert Kramer opened the meeting, outlining the meetings that have occurred and describing where the community is in the overall process. Tonight's meeting will focus on the issue of transportation, beginning with an update from Tom Culpepper of T&ES, followed by a presentation by the City's consultants from Kittelson.... There will be an opportunity for citizens to weigh in on their reaction and preferences about certain improvements to the transportation system in the neighborhood. As to the BRT, there will be discussion and a request for your thoughts about the alignment of the southern end of the Crystal City/Potomac Yard transit corridor, as it travels south of the Monroe Street Bridge to the Braddock Metro Station. There will not be discussion or a request for your comments regarding the conceptual north south transit corridor as recommended in the draft Transportation Master Plan, as that will be aired and debated in the process regarding that plan.

Planning Update

Faroll Hamer addressed a series of questions that has arisen about the Braddock neighborhood schedule.

- The next and last scheduled work session will take place on Thursday, January 24. We plan to publish the draft plan sometime in February and are still on schedule for March public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council.
- The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Madison development last night, and the Council will consider it on Saturday.
- The Transportation element of the Master Plan will be considered by the Planning Commission on February 5. There will be a Council work session on February 12, and Council will consider it at its February public hearing.
- Several community members have asked about elements of the emerging Braddock plan , such as a new park, the 1261 site, and other improvements. I have decided that there should be an advisory or monitoring group consisting of citizens who meet to discuss and guide the City efforts to implement the plan. There will also be an internal staff working group who meet regularly and periodically to review the

implementation steps that have been or need to be taken. There will be a yearly report on the progress of the work docketed for Council, which will be reviewed by the advisory group, as well as quarterly reports to the advisory group and citizens. Everything will be posted on the web and make public. This process would be a regular and public way to show what the City is doing to implement the Braddock Plan. Its purpose is to report to you and get your input where it is appropriate, such as on priorities for the neighborhood, and on some of the details, for example, the programming of the new park. There will be some technical or code issues that are not open to debate, but even they will be reported to you. This new process does raise staff resource issues, but will be proposed to Council as part of the Braddock Plan.

- Finally, the nomination to make Parker- Gray a National Historic Register district was submitted on Friday. There will be a community meeting in February to go over the elements of the plan, and the historical facts about the neighborhood that have been uncovered as part of the nomination work. Some of those may be appropriate to incorporate into the Braddock Plan.

Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) Update

Tom Culpepper, Deputy Director, T&ES gave an update on a series of initiatives of interest to the Braddock neighborhood.

- As to the Transportation Master Plan, it is being presented to the Planning Commission and Council in essentially the same form as it was published last summer. There are a few minor edits. The revised version will be available two weeks before the Planning Commission hearing.
- The Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transit Corridor project is moving along, and we do want to hear your thoughts about the alignment of the southern end of it. Moving the route to the service road does appear to be feasible. With a favorable ruling from the Virginia Supreme Court regarding the bond money, it will be able to move forward. We are meeting with the owners of Potomac Yard to create a partnership in order to build the corridor. Construction could be completed by 2009.
- The Pedestrian/Bicycle Mobility Plan had its final community meeting in December and the plan is to incorporate it into the Transportation Master Plan for adoption.

In response to questions about moving the alignment to the service road, and moving the pedestrian connection east to go through the Braddock Place development, Faroll Hamer explained that the detailed design for those routes will not be part of the Braddock plan but will be worked out as part of the implementation work.

Plan Framework Summary

David Dixon presented a series of slides discussing the Plan work that has been done by the community. Together we have been talking about the future of the Braddock neighborhood over the next 20 years. A lot of what we need for a plan has already been accomplished. We have been building an urban design framework together, with a series of interrelated and supportive elements, including:

1. A major new neighborhood park. The Plan will include alternative locations, and also indicate that there needs to be several smaller locations as well throughout the neighborhood.
2. A network of walkable streets with lighting, landscaping, retail activity and way finding. We will use the money generated from the new development to pay for the park and the new streetscape improvements.
3. As an urban design matter, along these walkable streets, development will step down (no more than three stories in some places) and be set back from the sidewalk with green edges. We will not have brick row houses immediately next to the sidewalk.
4. We will be able to add 40,000- 50,000 square feet of neighborhood, not regional, retail space. The Metro site is an appropriate place for a new neighborhood square with retail space. There is also the opportunity for smaller retail nodes to be developed as part of new development projects. And the plan will support enhancement and investment to strengthen retail opportunities on Queen Street, and money from development can be used for economic development in the area, for example to support Mom and Pop independent stores, rather than franchise or chain stores.
5. Redevelopment of all the public housing into mixed income housing, substantially for the people who live there, but also introducing a market mix. The large concentration of public housing here presents for the City an opportunity but also a responsibility. The planning must be for people, and must also make economic sense.
6. Building heights and massing must be appropriate. Mostly, the existing zoning will not be changed, and we will also add guidelines for example, for the shoulders of buildings. In the case of Jaguar there was support for an increase in size and height. At the Metro and Andrew Adkins development sites, there is controversy over the appropriate heights. At the Metro, our suggested 120' may not be right. We need to look at the tradeoffs and design options. At Adkins, while people agree about limiting building on the edges to 3 stories and allowing taller buildings in the center, there is not consensus on what the middle heights should be. The Braddock Plan needs to set the stage for redevelopment of Adkins, and give enough guidance to make it work as a component of the neighborhood. Further details can be addressed as part of the Braddock East plan. We will be looking further at these two sites at the meeting on January 24th.
7. We looked at examples of redeveloped public housing, including Tent City in Boston and others.

We have been able to translate this planning and neighborhood framework into a development program which anticipates approximately 3.14 million square feet (sf) of new development over the next 20 years. That includes redevelopment of all the public housing which accounts for approximately 600,000 sf of development. The development program amounts to about 2.4 million sf over what is permitted today by current zoning.

We needed to create this development program so that the transportation analysis and planning could take place and be realistic. We used these numbers to look at the transportation issues. Prior traffic studies, for example, did not include the redevelopment of public housing. As we review the very complex, detailed and multifaceted presentation by the transportation consultants, there are five key points that should be emphasized:

- Because of capacity constraints on Rt. 1 and elsewhere, any increase in local traffic volume due to new development helps to replace regional traffic;

- In our collective judgment, traffic 10 or 20 years from now will not feel significantly different to most residents;
- Traffic impacts should not be the primary criterion when evaluating development projects;
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs will make a difference and contribute – along with the other proposed amenities – to crating a livable neighborhood;
- The City is committed to monitor the traffic and parking impacts and ensure that the programs designed to mitigate traffic are working as planned.

TRANSPORTATION PRESENTATION by Kittelson & Associates

Brandon Nevers presented an analysis of the traffic impact from the development program outlined above, having assessed the roadway network and the future traffic generated by the proposed development.

Traffic Conditions
He referred to his October 29 presentation regarding the transportation conditions in the Braddock area, and the major streets, including the principal arterials, which include Washington Street and Route 1; the primary connector streets which facilitate travel from local streets to arterials and include West, Braddock, Wythe, Madison Montgomery and Pendleton; as well as local residential streets including Cameron, Columbus and Powhatan Streets. Route 1 is a workhorse, carrying both local and regional traffic. The neighborhood has a good street grid which helps disperse the traffic; and it has a combination of one and two way streets.

In terms of regional conditions, the neighborhood has a series of natural and physical barriers which constrain travel options. There are major destinations connected by Route 1 and that condition is not going to change. While there is already congestion during the peak hour going north or south, the east west travel options function fairly well.

Traffic Analysis Methodology
For our traffic analysis, we assumed the 20 year build out outlined earlier, including 2400 new residential units. We did not delete anything for the loss of existing public housing units. I am going to spell out the steps we took to do the analysis so that everyone understands how we reached our conclusions. We asked the following questions:

- How many trips will new development produce?
- How many of those trips will occur as new auto trips?
- Where will the new auto traffic travel to/from?
- What is the impact of development traffic as a percentage of existing volumes?

Trip Generation Rates Generally and for Braddock
To determine the number of trips for a neighborhood we employed a traditional technical science based methodology. We used the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual. It is a nationally recognized database that predicts the number of trips various land uses will produce. Mr. Nevers presented a chart showing the land use codes for each land use considered, the size of the land use projected for the

Braddock neighborhood, and the trip rates and total trips for both the AM and the PM peak hours. The total for the Braddock development program is 2,060 new trips during the PM peak. This number represents all trips however taken, and includes redevelopment of all nine of the public housing blocks. The PM peak is higher so he chose that number as a worst case scenario. To put this in context, he compared the total building under existing zoning with the proposed Braddock program, and found that the difference is approximately 20% higher under the proposed development program. This is a relative comparison of only the Braddock trips. The difference between the proposed development and existing zoning comes down to the public housing, Jaguar and the Metro site.

Non Auto Trips
Next, Mr. Nevers discussed the percentage of trips that will be auto trips as opposed to walking, transit or bicycle trips. He first explained the difference in trip types, for example primary trips which carry people from home to work, and diverted or pass by trips. Because so much of the new development in Braddock will be residential, most trips will be primary ones. In addition, he presented WMATA data showing the number of people who drive today. Pie charts document the percentage of people who drive to offices (70%) and from residences (50%) within the Braddock neighborhood. These numbers, especially the residential, show a successful transit oriented neighborhood because of the Braddock Metro. In addition, existing mode share information for two residential developments in the neighborhood (Colecroft and Meridian) support the WMATA data. [Note: on the residential presentation slide regarding residential trips, the pie charts and labels for the DC Metro Area are reversed; outside the beltway there is a 62% auto share, and in the CBD there is an 18% auto share.) For both office and residential trips,
the slides show improved goals for the future: a 42% auto share for office and a 40% auto share for residential. Although the neighborhood is doing well today, he thinks it can do better. He then showed how the auto impacts from future development in the area break down by land use, and how achieving these auto mode share goals relate to those impacts.

Distribution of Trips
In terms of where the new auto trips will be felt within the neighborhood, using today's distribution pattern which should remain the same for the future, half of all trips will be oriented toward Route 1, and there should be a relatively even distribution in all four directions. As to individual streets, he broke down the increased auto impact by street and, given the projected distribution and amounts, assigned traffic to each street to show the increase in PM peak hour trips. The analysis assumes the 20 year development projection, and occurs over a 20 year time period. Even so, there should only be, for example, a 3-4% increase on streets such as Montgomery, Wythe, Madison and Fayette, although the increase is more on Route 1 and on Braddock Road. If TDM strategies (non auto trips) are successful, the percentages decrease.

Analysis Conclusions
What he can conclude from this analysis is that

- yes, there will be an incremental increase in new traffic
- congestion on Route 1 will continue
- the roadway system in place is adequate and appropriate
- the 20 year building program for Braddock will increase traffic on Route 1 by approximately 7-10% (which is less than .5% a year), but that is less than what

is expected to occur from regional growth, without any new development in Braddock, which is predicted to be somewhere between .5 and 3% a year.

- Because the roadway network capacity is limited and is not going to be expanded (not going to add more lanes to Route 1, etc), new trips added as a result of new Braddock development should displace trips on the network from regional traffic. In other words, congestion will remain but that the proportion of local trips will grow.

In response to a question about the technical assessment being based only on assumptions, it was explained that the analysis on which the conclusions are based used a scientific and nationally accepted methodology but, of course, it includes projections for the future.

Transportation Demand Management
Phil Worth, Kittelson spoke next and addressed Transportation Demand Management (TDM), describing it as a low cost approach of maintaining mobility. The goal of TDM is less reliance on the automobile by giving people more options to get where they are going. Originally developed to deal with work trips because they created the most congestion, it now deals with all trip types. He presented a chart showing that only a small percentage of total trips are actually work trips, especially in the PM peak.

To be successful a TDM program uses both infrastructure (HOV, transit, pedestrian paths, etc) and programs (carpool, transit incentives, parking management, etc). In Alexandria, there is already a toolbox of TDM programs. There is a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) requirement for major development projects that incorporates several TDM elements. In addition, the City promotes flex car programs, and provides other services to reduce auto reliance. As a result, today 58% of Alexandrians drive alone, compared to a national average of 80%.

Braddock Challenges
The Braddock area has a number of challenges, including congestion on Route 1, cut through traffic, a mixed pattern of one- and two-way streets, parking limitations, barriers to transit access, and retail services located out of the neighborhood. Other cities have met similar challenges and succeeded in their TDM strategies.

Lloyd District Example
In 1970, the Lloyd District of Portland, Oregon, was looking ahead to significant growth. It was planned for a 100% increase in employment and a 200% increase in residential units. It had a very constrained transportation system, similar to Braddock, with railroad lines, a river and limited points of access. It started with a 10% non-auto mode split, reflecting the fact that it had only limited transit. Since 1997, it has doubled its non-auto mode split, going from 20% to 41%, and reduced its auto mode share from 67% to 41%, taking approximately 1400 auto trips off the roads. One part of the success story in the Lloyd District was that they used a Transportation Management Association (TMA) as an organizing structure, and that may be appropriate for Braddock as well. It included businesses, residents and employees, and was run by those people, not the City. Although the City started it to get it going, when it was up and running it was run by people in the district and became more responsive than a city agency can be. A TMA is

better than individual TMPs linked to individual developments because it can use area wide contributions to support staff and joint programs for the neighborhood.

Parking
One of the other issues that the Lloyd District had in common with the Braddock neighborhood is a limited parking supply. The most important solution is to have "right-sized" parking. That means making sure there is the right amount of available for the right land uses, but no more than is necessary. Accessory parking is typically dedicated to only one use, but often the uses need the parking at different times. If, for example, a residential building has few cars in the parking spaces during the day, and an office building has few cars in the parking spaces over night, then a shared parking arrangement could make each of those parking spaces much more efficient. With underground parking costing as much as $50,000 a space to construct, reducing unnecessary parking allows you to take those costs and invest in other community assets. Ms. Takesian stated that the transportation consultants are still working on suggested parking ratios for Braddock and that will be part of the meeting on January 24th.

Transit, Pedestrian and Bicycle as part of TDM.
Yolanda Takesian, Kittelson & Associates, closed the presentation by talking about transit, pedestrian connections, and bicycle improvements, all key components of TDM. In Braddock, there is already a connection to a reliable transit system with a lot of historic investment. Metro ridership for Alexandria has increased significantly, and shows the 2nd highest increase in the region, behind only Washington, D.C. Bus usage has also increased significantly, and the DASH system is growing. As gas prices continue to increase, transit ridership will also increase even more. To support increased bus ridership, we need to see more convenient and better information at bus stops, and we need to make the bus rides more appealing. As to the cost of transit, while it is true that the cost of transit in Portland is much cheaper than here, it is also true that even the D.C. Metro costs come out to about half the cost of owning an automobile.

Pedestrian.connections
Walking should be seen as part of the transportation system. Arlington is a good example because when the Rosslyn – Ballston corridor was planned, pedestrian routes were a critical part of the plan and improvement package, and walking distances were used to measure appropriate locations for different land uses. As a result of Arlington's TDM package of tools, its non-auto mode share has increased since 1990 to 60%. In Braddock, it is important to retain the walking paths and connections identified for Madison, Wythe, Fayette and West Streets, and to enhance safety on the streets. The City's Pedestrian & Bicycle Mobility Plan identifies a series of improvements for the Braddock area to make it more walkable.

Bicycle Paths
Boulder is an example of a City which has succeeded in creating a bike network as part of its TDM strategy. There is no Metro service there, and seniors as well as college students, but the City has purposely created a public realm that speaks to the non auto user. For example, there is a lot of bike parking on every street, and good bus information. New development helped build the bike network. At Braddock, in addition to a bike path system, there needs to be additional bike parking throughout the neighborhood and especially at the Metro.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS FOR BRADDOCK AREA

Given time constraints, the group opted not to break out into discussion groups to go over and react to the list of potential transportation improvements suggested for the Braddock area. Instead, Bob Kramer led the group through the list.

1. Alignment of Southern End of Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transit Corridor

Of the three alignment options, the group's clear preference is for using the service road adjacent to the tracks for the transit corridor, with the route south of the bridge coming down Route 1 and going west on First Street. The group also made clear that it is broadly opposed to any BRT or transit corridor located within the Braddock neighborhood at all. However, if there is to be BRT the Blue route is preferred..

Other audience comments on this point included:

- The importance of the pedestrian/bike connection to the bike path in Potomac Yard should not be lost if we have to move the pedestrian path from along the tracks to another location to accommodate the CC/PY alignment choice.
- There should never be a transit corridor on Route 1.
- Why is there a plan for significant development on the west side of the tracks in Potomac Yard without any connection to the Metro? There has been discussion of a potential pedestrian connection from east to west at First Street, and that is the only place where the height of the tracks allows for access beneath the tracks, but a tunnel is a problem for pedestrian comfort and safety. In addition, there are evidently major utility lines at that location.
- As to the type of Transit Corridor vehicle anticipated, Jim Maslanka, Division Chief, Transit Services, explained that initially there will be 40' buses. In the future there could be 60' articulated buses or some other vehicle. As to power it will likely be CNG power at first, and then alternative fueled vehicles. The timing will be roughly 6 minutes during the peak times.
- The size of buses being proposed is too large for Alexandria. It may be right for Arlington. We do not have the volume of ridership to fill even our DASH buses.

2. Improved Pedestrian Crossing on Route 1

The group is in favor of this improvement.

- It is not Powhatan Park that is the generator, and it should be kept closed to Route 1 for the safety of park users.
- Having safe crossings at more than one location on this very long stretch of street is really important for people who live in North East.
- The intersections need to be visible for pedestrians, and the length of time for crossing extended.
- There was support for new laws requiring that vehicles stop for pedestrians and an acknowledgement that it is Alexandria City Council members who are trying hard to have a new law passed in Richmond to this effect.
- One person expressed concern that devotion of too much attention to pedestrian issues could result in increased congestion.

3. Study converting Madison and Montgomery Streets to become two way to enhance residential redevelopment, and at Queen Street to enhance retail shopping.

The group favored this idea, with some extremely strong support.

- The consultants spoke of pros and cons of one and two way streets, noting in summary that both can be good for pedestrians, residential and retail uses. However, the consultants pointed out that one way streets work best when they are part of a whole system of one way directed streets. Otherwise, if there is a combination of one- and two-way streets, there is confusion, high speeds, and other negative elements.
- Some in the audience recalled the success years ago with changing the one way pair on St. Asaph and Columbus to two way traffic and encouraged similar treatment here in order to slow down traffic.
- One resident supported Madison and Montgomery as one way because she can go faster there.
- The high speeds today on Montgomery and Madison are intimidating for pedestrians.
- On Queen Street, two way traffic will support retail better than one way.
- To enhance walkability on Madison, and throughout the neighborhood, we need better lighting. And it would be nice to have nice ones, similar to the lights on King Street.
- Even if it is better to change these one way streets for this neighborhood, the change has to be studied to ensure it doesn't cause problems elsewhere in the system.
- If the price of going from one way to two way is losing curbside parking, then it is not worth it.

4. Redesign of the Braddock/Wythe/West Street Intersection.

There was consensus that the goals of any redesign should:
1. be safer, more convenient pedestrian access to the Metro
2. support for existing and potential new retail near the intersection
3. ensure that speeds through the intersection are kept low.

Additional comments:
- Removing the roadway jog could allow increased speeds, so keeping the jog is important. It is a form of traffic calming. There is no benefit to Rosemont people or people near the Braddock Metro to having faster traffic.
- Consider opening up access to the Metro from Wythe and Madison, so people do not have to walk all the way around. The hedges are a barrier for pedestrians.
- This intersection is really confusing and awkward for pedestrians. You cannot tell whose turn it is to cross when the light turns.
- What are Del Ray and Rosemont willing to give up keeping the traffic snarl in the Braddock neighborhood?
- Crossing in the middle of blocks can be safer than crossing at the end of a street.
- This is a dangerous intersection. That jog is terrible for pedestrians. There is no signal on West Street that works for pedestrians. If you are crossing West Street at Wythe Street, the pedestrian gets the light to cross at the same time that traffic on Braddock gets a green light also.

- Also, there needs to be a full stop at the turn lane onto West Street. It is very dangerous for pedestrians.
- Retail will be in the plan for the development on the Metro site and that should also influence the design of the intersection.
- But we should not wait for the Metro development to improve the intersection.
- A traffic circle has been considered here, and that solution is typically appropriate where there is speeding and an unusual geometric arrangement. The consultants have not studied this to know whether it could be appropriate here.
- One citizen shared her experience living on a traffic circle, identifying crashed cars and terrified pedestrians as problems.
- There was a discussion of the original purpose of traffic circles and the changes in their geometrical design and philosophy in recent years. Kittelson & Associates has been involved in the modern accepted designs for traffic circles.
- There is not enough room for a traffic circle here. But Wythe and West Streets are very dangerous.
- Here and elsewhere in the neighborhood we need pedestrian countdown machines for safer crossings.

Bob Kramer pointed out three area wide improvements that have been suggested by citizens during the prior meetings, and the group agreed that they should be pursued:

- manage cut through traffic
- better DASH service
- provide marked bicycle lanes (some suggestions for lanes in the Ped/Bike Mobility Study).

SUMMARY

David Dixon closed the session summarizing the transportation analysis: Traffic generated from Braddock development can be managed and the trade offs from the proposed development can be the source of funds for making desired improvements in the neighborhood. The changes being proposed in this plan will not change the quality of life for the neighborhood residents.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The group was invited to email comments, changes or questions to the Kittelson consultants. Participants were also invited to add their comments to those already included in the discussion. The following comments were added after the meeting:

- We do not want BRT in the neighborhood at all. There is no benefit to bringing the BRT down Route 1 to Madison. If there is to be BRT, then it should go over on First Street to the tracks.
- All on street parking should be preserved.
- Both hot rights at Braddock and West should be removed.
- Pedestrian use of the West/Braddock/Wythe crossing will increase if the access to the Metro opens up.
- The crosswalk at Braddock Metro and bike/pedestrian pathway is non-functional. Traffic seldom stops or slows when the light is pushed that flashes along the crosswalk. A stop sign is needed here until state law can be changed that vehicles have to stop (not yield) for pedestrians in a crosswalk. Yielding amounts to merely not hitting the pedestrian.

- Vehicles need to be taken off the roads. City Council should put additional fees and surcharges on parking decals and permits after the first vehicle. If you have no vehicle or do not use it, you should be rewarded with Metro fare subsidy.