

Issues Raised by the Advisory Committee With Planning Staff Responses

During the November 17, 2008 meeting of the Landmark/Van Dorn Advisory Committee, members provided City staff with comments on the draft Plan. In addition, Committee members emailed comments to staff. This document contains staff responses to the issues raised by the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee will continue its discussion on December 1. Staff welcomes responses to the attached material, including clarification of Advisory Committee concerns.

Parking

The Advisory Committee raised a number of issues with the parking recommendations in the draft Plan. Committee members questioned the aggressiveness of the proposed parking maximums, both in terms of making sure there is sufficient parking for redevelopment to be successful as well as to reduce potential impacts on adjacent neighborhoods. The Committee asked about the source of the parking maximum recommendations and suggested Arlington County be used as a guide. There was some discussion about the experience of shared parking at Shirlington, and it was noted that during the evening peak period there had been parking shortages (when office workers had not yet departed but evening retail customers had begun to arrive) before the latest parking structure had opened. The Committee also discussed whether the Plan should require below-grade parking for “pioneer” or “catalyst” development. Some members of the Committee indicated that parking structures wrapped with active uses would better balance the need for quality development and reduced construction costs in the catalyst phase. There was also discussion about whether above-ground parking should count against permitted FAR.

Discussion of Advisory Committee Comments

The parking standards (minimum and maximums) in the draft Plan were developed to accomplish several objectives, including:

- To minimize parking construction costs,
- Reflect and support transit availability and usage that will increase over the life of the Plan.
- To have a parking policy that helps reduce traffic demand, especially in peak periods.

The parking standards were developed with the guidance of Nelson/Nygaard (one of the two transportation consultants retained by the City for the Landmark/Van Dorn Plan) and reflect the

consultant’s professional judgment and experience and local examples of reduced parking standards. The standards also received input from our retail consultant, Robert Gibbs.

The Advisory Committee requested information about Arlington’s approach. Nelson/Nygaard looked at Arlington’s parking strategy for Columbia Pike, which will be served by streetcar (comparable to Duke/Van Dorn transit proposals). The Columbia Pike concept divides parking into two types, *shared* and *reserved*. “Shared” parking means that the parking is available to anyone who drives to the area and wants to use it. “Reserved” means that there is some limitation on who is permitted to use the parking space – such as limiting parking in a retail center’s parking lot to persons who are shopping in that retail center.

The Columbia Pike approach is to set a minimum amount for shared parking and a maximum for reserved parking, along with metering of on-street spaces and residential parking permits for adjacent neighborhoods. There is also flexibility if the developer insists he needs more spaces. Some features of Arlington’s Columbia Pike parking strategy:

- Sites under 20,000 square feet have no minimum parking requirements.
- Sites over 20,000 square feet in land area have the following requirements.
 - Residential:
 - a. There is a minimum requirement of 1 and 1/8 parking spaces per residential unit, of which a minimum of 1/8 parking space per residential unit must be provided as shared parking. There are no maximum limits on shared parking.
 - b. A maximum of two spaces per residential unit may be made available for reserved parking. Reserved parking above the maximum may be provided upon payment to the County, which is based on the approximate cost to build structured parking.
 - Non-residential:
 - a. A minimum of one space per 1,000 square feet of non-residential Gross Floor Area (GFA) shall be provided as shared parking; there are no set maximum limits on shared parking. New on-street parking spaces created in conjunction with the development, which did not previously exist, may be counted toward the minimum requirement for shared parking. There are guidelines for reviewing developer-proposed limitations on the shared parking (time limits or hours of the day).
 - b. A maximum of one space per 1,000 square feet of non-residential GFA may be made available for reserved parking. Reserved parking above the maximum may be provided upon payment to the County, which is based on the approximate cost to build structured parking.

- In lieu of meeting minimum parking requirements, the County may accept a onetime payment per each space of shared parking, which is based on the approximate cost to build structured parking.

Arlington’s Columbia Pike residential parking minimums, at 1 and 1/8 spaces per unit, are lower than the proposed residential maximum (1.5 spaces per unit) for Landmark/Van Dorn during the initial or catalyst phase. It is higher than the proposed maximum for the “choice location plus transit phase” by 1/8 of a space, but that 1/8 space is required to be shared.

The Columbia Pike non-residential minimums of 1 space per 1,000 square feet is lower than the draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan’s maximums for non-residential development, which range from 2 to 4.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet, depending on land use (initial or catalyst phase) and range from 1.5 to 3.0 spaces per 1,000 square feet, depending on land use (choice location plus transit phase).

The draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan permits but does not require shared parking. Some development projects will have a unique potential for shared parking, such as offices with weekday daytime demand only, and retail uses with highest demand on weekends and evenings. On the other hand, residential and retail uses will often not be suitable candidates for shared parking because there are periods when both uses have a high parking demand. Transportation management plans may include shared parking as one strategy to help meet non-driver mode share goals.

Planning staff also notes that there will be a significant increase in the amount of on-street parking in the Plan area as the grid network of streets is implemented. On-street parking reduces the demand for off-street parking.

Planning staff is willing to increase the flexibility of the draft plan on the structured/below-grade parking issue, especially for office and retail uses during the initial or catalyst phase of development. Planning staff had intended to include language specifying that above grade parking structures count toward a development project’s FAR.

Planning Staff Recommendations

Planning staff recommends several changes and clarifications to the way that parking is addressed in the draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan to address issues raised by the Committee.

On parking standards issues, Planning staff recommends:

- Clarifying that additional parking over the maximum may be granted on a case-by-case basis if the developer shows to the City’s satisfaction that the maximum imperils the

development project's market feasibility. Parking over the maximum would require a special use permit.

- Increasing the maximum parking permitted in residential development by 15%. That 15% is to meet the City's current standard for visitor parking.
- Setting specific parking standards for hotels at 0.7 spaces per room, which is the same as in the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan.
- Setting specific parking standards for medical office, which has much higher visitor traffic than other office types, at double the rate of "regular" office (4 spaces per 1,000 square feet during the initial phase and 3 spaces per 1,000 square feet during the choice location plus transit phase). Typical suburban parking standards set medical office parking minimums at 5.0 spaces per 1,000 square feet.

On the structured parking issue, Planning staff recommends, in the initial or catalyst phase, permitting structured parking subject to the following requirements:

- Above-grade parking space is permitted in projects with at least 100,000 square feet of office or retail space. The number of above-grade spaces must be no more than the number needed to serve those non-residential uses. For projects with residential uses, the number of below-grade parking spaces must be equal to or greater than the number of spaces needed to serve the residential portion of the development project.
- At least one level of parking must be below grade. However, the developer may take advantage of changes in grade, if they exist, in meeting this requirement.
- The parking structure must be wrapped with active land uses, such as retail, office or residential space¹ and designed to engage pedestrians at the ground floor. This requirement may be lifted in cases where active uses are infeasible or unjustified, such as when the parking structure abuts a property line and there is no pedestrian access. An example: parking structures at the Landmark Mall site that abut the property line along the I-395 access ramp.
- The FAR in above-grade parking structures counts toward the overall FAR of the development project.

¹ The draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan ("Development Guidelines" chapter) offers this guidance for activating ground floor uses: "Ground-floor building use and design should engage pedestrians. Retail, office and institutional uses all can and should provide a high level of engagement. In residential buildings, including multifamily buildings, ground-floor units shall include individual street entrances and yards wherever possible. Buildings with frontage on public streets should locate any engaging uses—such as entrance doors and lobbies, accessory office space, and windows into actively used space—along as much of the public sidewalk as possible."

Transportation: Detail of Analysis and Description of Traffic Impacts

The Advisory Committee requested additional detail about the analysis of traffic impacts of the draft Plan. The City's transportation consultant is completing a detailed transportation technical report which contains considerably more detail on traffic issues, including the growth in the number of trips by purpose and by mode, the growth in the number of commute trips, the distribution of traffic through the Plan area, and the performance of intersections and arterials at buildout.

Although we believe that we have been clear that the growth in trips will be significant and that roadway travel times will increase, staff understands that this detail will provide the public with a fuller picture of future conditions. Although the final version of the technical report is still being completed, the transportation consultant will attend the Advisory Committee's December 1 meeting to answer questions.

Phasing of Development

The Advisory Committee asked for clarification on the phasing of development, developer contributions and transportation improvements in the draft Plan. Committee members also requested changes to the Plan's phasing discussion, including greater certainty about the beginning/end of each phase and the developer contribution at each phase. Committee members suggested that each phase be defined by square feet of development and that the developer contribution be shown as a range, in dollars per square foot. There was some discussion about when in the development process the contribution should be paid.

Committee members also requested a more detailed transportation-land use phasing plan with accelerated delivery of transportation improvements. There was discussion of secondary transit (DASH, shuttles) being instituted prior to the delivery of the dedicated transit line, and Committee members noted that Cameron Station began its shuttle service at 25% build-out and it continues to add additional shuttles as development increases.

Discussion of Advisory Committee Comments

Phasing of Developer Contributions

The draft Plan sets the initial or catalyst phase of development as beginning immediately upon adoption of the Plan and ending when 300,000 square feet of office space, or 750,000 square feet of mixed-use development, of which no more than 50 percent is residential, has begun construction. At the end of the catalyst phase, which is the beginning of the "choice location" phase, developer contributions are increased.

In the draft Plan, developer contributions further increase during the *choice location plus transit* phase – when there is sufficiently enhanced transit service such that greater reductions in parking are possible.

The draft Plan currently has a provision that says the City may delay imposition of the increased developer contributions if it determines that market rents are not yet sufficient to support both continued and increased developer contributions. Advisory Committee members suggested that this language is not useful because it creates uncertainty.

The draft Plan does not specify a dollar amount of the developer contributions during the *choice location* or *choice location plus transit* phases, although it reports the results of the economic analysis conducted for this Plan. Advisory Committee members indicated that they believe that, to continue to encourage redevelopment through the choice location phase, developers will benefit from added certainty about the expected contribution.

Greater clarity on the *magnitude* of the developer contribution will also help address the Advisory Committee's concerns about *when* in the process the contributions would be made. Advisory Committee members suggested that developers know at the outset of the approval process the magnitude of their expected contribution. Committee members were concerned that, late in the process, a larger-than-expected contribution would be sought.

Planning staff has discussed the Advisory Committee's comments with Sarah Woodworth, the economic analyst. Ms. Woodworth advised staff that she is completing the analysis and the technical report on developer contributions and the dollar figures for the potential developer contributions will appear to be higher than previously reported to the Advisory Committee. This is solely because Ms. Woodworth was discounting future developer contributions to account for the fact that future revenues are not as valuable as current revenues. After some additional thought, Ms. Woodworth feels that expressing the developer contribution in constant dollars is more easily understood. Planning staff will provide those revised numbers as soon as we receive them.

Phasing of Land Use and Transportation

The draft Plan recommends that at least one of the new dedicated transit lines be in place prior to the construction of 50 percent of the permitted development. Planning staff included this recommendation primarily to ensure that reduced parking would be feasible for much of the new development. However, the Advisory Committee said that phasing should address the more fundamental transportation issues, and indicated that this could be accomplished with a more detailed, incremental phasing of transit improvements. At least one Committee member stated that the City should commit to providing both dedicated transit lines before 25% of development is built.

The draft Plan does include a phased-in requirement for limiting traffic impacts by requiring new development to achieve a 20 percent non-driver mode share prior to the completion of the Van Dorn Street transit line and 30 percent after it is completed. The Van Dorn Street line was selected as the more critical of the two lines for this requirement because it will provide the speediest access to Metro and serves the entire Plan area, so improvements to the non-driver mode share are more feasible when the Van Dorn Street line is running. These non-driver mode shares are enforceable as development approval conditions. They are also consistent with the City's move toward transportation management districts that focus on having development meet TDM performance standards, rather than the means by which those standards are achieved.

The draft Plan also requires that the High Street Bridge (or the at-grade alternative) be constructed before 500,000 square feet of development on the Landmark Mall site is completed. This is primarily to ensure that the existing flyover ramp be replaced, but Planning staff is reviewing the issue with City transportation staff and our transportation consultant to determine if a different phasing schedule would manage traffic impacts more effectively.

Traffic studies submitted by developers will help monitor the phasing of development and transportation by providing periodic assessments of traffic conditions over the life of the Plan.

Planning Staff Recommendations

Planning staff is developing text to specify the magnitude of the developer contribution in each phase. The dollar amount range, which awaits the completion of Sarah Woodworth's final report, may be expressed in 2008 dollars (to be adjusted for inflation at the time of development), as a percentage of development cost, or in some other format that provides certainty while adjusting over the life of the Plan.

Planning staff is working with our transportation consultant and T&ES to develop a more detailed transportation-land use phasing plan. The goal of the phasing plan will be to coordinate the timing of the delivery of transit improvements and infrastructure so that development is fully supported at each phase of the Plan and may involve the following phases:

- Increased circulators and shuttles;
- Increased bus service in mixed traffic along Van Dorn Street and Duke Street;
- Possibly two increments of dedicated transit implementation: dedicated transit within the current right-of-way, and dedicated transit within the proposed ultimate right-of-way.

We will also clarify the potential for intersection improvements.

In addition to the traffic studies required with new development applications, Planning staff is recommending that each development project be required to submit additional traffic analyses

with their applications to assess the cumulative effect of approved development on traffic. These will help determine if congestion levels are at the point that additional improvements are needed, ensure target mode shares are being and refine the infrastructure needs and phasing identified in the plan.

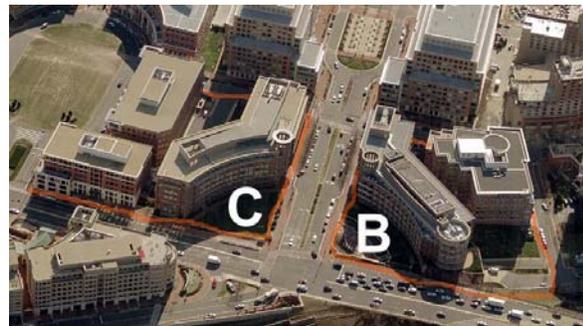
Cost of High Street to Developers and Effective FAR

Advisory Committee members asked if developers adjacent to the proposed “High Street” would be able to afford both the dedication of land and the cost of roadway construction. Advisory Committee members also asked for clarity on the issue of the net, or effective, density of development after land dedicated for roadways and other uses has been subtracted.

Discussion of Advisory Committee Comments

Planning staff notes that when a developer dedicates land for a roadway, he or she is permitted to use the density associated with that land on his or her remaining parcel. Take, for example, a one-acre parcel with a development potential of 2.0 FAR, or 87,120 square feet. If 10% (4,356 square feet) of the parcel is dedicated for roadways, and another 25% (10,890 square feet) is dedicated as open space, the remaining area of the parcel for development is 28,314 square feet. The developer is still permitted to build 87,120 square feet, even though on a footprint of 28,314 square feet seems like 3.0 FAR ($87,120/28,314=3.07$).

As a real-life example, the Carlyle development meets an overall gross floor area requirement of 2.0 FAR. The map below shows a portion of Carlyle: Blocks B and C along Duke Street. Taking out open space, the net or effective FAR on Block B is 4.7 and on Block C is 4.4. Parking is underground.



Retaining this density provides financial relief to developers who are required to dedicate land. In addition, the new roadways required in the draft Plan add value to the remaining land by increasing access and visibility of the new development. It is typical to require new development to build internal and adjacent roadways. However, staff is not expecting private development to pay for the major roadway improvements to Van Dorn Street and Duke Street.

Planning Staff Recommendations

Planning staff will add text to the Plan to make it clear that land dedications do not reduce the development potential of the land. Staff is also reviewing options for the Van Dorn Plaza site, in addition to the one in the draft Plan, which may have the effect of reducing the amount of roadway that the developer would be required to build. Planning staff will share the optional approach with the Committee as soon as it is available, which we expect to be by December 1.

Bicycle Improvements

The Advisory Committee asked for additional discussion about how bicycle travel would be accommodated on Duke Street from the transit center to various points in the West End including the EOS21 property and Ben Brenman Park.

A relatively short stretch of Duke Street is included in the Plan area. The draft Plan calls for a reconstructed Duke Street in a wider right-of-way; the widening is to accommodate two dedicated lanes for transit. The draft Plan shows a section of Duke Street with 18 feet of right-of-way on each side of Duke for sidewalk, of which 8 feet is for tree planting and 10 feet is for a shared use pathway (bicycles and pedestrians). The Plan calls for a 10 foot shared use path along this length of Duke Street, rather than a wider sidewalk or a separate bicycle path, in part because the right-of-way is already 170 feet in this location. That width is suboptimal from the standpoint of facilitating pedestrian connections across Duke Street.

A 10 foot shared path should be adequate for the likely levels of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. In addition, the users will have an enhanced sense of safety due to the 8 feet of planted separation between the shared path and the transit lane, which further separates bicyclists and pedestrians from automobile traffic by an additional 12 feet.

Planning staff is developing, in partnership with T&ES staff, language that expressly acknowledges bicycle travel along the grid network of streets in the draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan.

The adopted Transportation Master Plan for the City includes pedestrian and bicycle improvements to Duke Street to the west of the Plan area as it crosses I-395. The draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan contains language supporting these planned improvements. The Transportation Master Plan also calls for an on-street bikeway along Van Dorn Street and pedestrian/bicyclist-oriented intersection improvements along Duke Street. The Transportation Master Plan also recommends the multimodal bridge that is recommended in the draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan.

The Advisory Committee has discussed, in a different context, the utility of including language in this Plan on issues that are outside the Plan's boundaries. The Transportation Master Plan process is an alternate avenue for pursuing desired improvements to sections of Duke Street outside of the Landmark/Van Dorn Plan area.

Transportation Coordination

The Advisory Committee asked if the Landmark/Van Dorn Planning effort were being coordinated with the City's Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) and asked if the Plan's recommendations are consistent with the City's adopted Transportation Master Plan.

Planning staff have worked closely with T&ES staff throughout the Landmark/Van Dorn Planning process, not only on issues of transportation but also on environmental issues including stormwater and sewer capacity. The answer to the previous question highlights pedestrian and bicycle recommendations in the draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan that are consistent with the City's Transportation Master Plan. Of course, a centerpiece of the Transportation Master Plan – a new network of dedicated transit lanes – is also one of the critical issues in the draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan.

An issue raised by the Advisory Committee was whether the Landmark/Van Dorn Plan should take a position on the type of dedicated transit (light rail, bus rapid transit, etc). Planning staff suggests that this is a Citywide issue.

Population – Amount of Residential

Advisory Committee members questioned the amount of residential development permitted by the Plan, citing impacts of increased population as well as the City's goals for increasing the non-residential tax base. There was also a request for an estimate of the increase in population associated with the net increase in housing proposed.

Planning staff includes residential development in the proposal for several reasons, and they include:

- *Success of future development.* Mixed-use projects succeed (financially and as quality places) when there is sufficient activity throughout the day and evening. A daytime/evening population needs to be large enough to support a variety of retail and other amenities. Having residences in nearby neighborhoods is often not enough; there also needs to be some on-site residential development to ensure 18-hour activity.

- *Economic feasibility through various development cycles.* As we have seen throughout the Landmark/Van Dorn process, the redevelopment economics are challenging. Limiting redevelopment to non-residential land uses, or significantly reducing the potential for residential development, will mean that redevelopment will only take place when the market for non-residential uses is strong. During the life of the Plan, the market for different types of land use will vary. Allowing flexibility in land use types helps to ensure that redevelopment is feasible in different market cycles.
- *Market potential.* Although staff recognizes that office and retail development are important to the economic vitality of the City, staff also recognizes that even within the City limits there are locations that out-compete some parts of the Landmark/Van Dorn area as retail and office space locations. If the Plan greatly increases the minimum requirement for office and retail in Pickett Place, it reduces the options for redevelopment and makes it less likely to take place.

The draft Landmark/Van Dorn Plan meets the goal of the Economic Sustainability Work Group to increase the non-residential tax base in the City, in that non-residential development is about half the square footage, and more than half of the expected City revenue from the redevelopment.

It may be useful to review how Planning staff approached the density and mix of uses for the Landmark/Van Dorn Plan:

- Existing uses are generating income, so to encourage desired redevelopment, the Plan must provide sufficient additional density to persuade landowners to risk their current income stream by redeveloping. Any increase in density, however, must be bound by the ability of the transportation network to handle the additional trips. These two factors brought us to the density envelope included in the draft Plan.
- Within the density envelope, Planning staff looked for every opportunity to maximize office space and believe we have added as much office potential as the market (and the transportation network) will bear and in every location where office will succeed. Staff then maximized the amount of hotel and retail, with the remaining FAR allocated to residential. Finally, staff evaluated whether the residential densities in each area were sufficient to create a sense of community.

The draft Plan contains an estimate of 5,000 additional housing units. The average household size in Alexandria is 2.04 persons per unit, but the average household size for multi-family units is a bit smaller: 1.88 persons per unit. The 5,000 housing units would contain about 9,400 people.

School Age Children

Some Advisory Committee members believe that the increase in students as a result of the planned redevelopment will be higher than is estimated in the draft Plan. The Committee suggested that there is evidence that student generation rates from multi-family buildings will be higher in the future than in the past.

Planning staff strengthened the discussion of student generation and school facilities in the draft Plan as a result of the Advisory Committee's discussion of the issue in October. The draft Plan now provides for increased participation by Alexandria City Public Schools in the development review process, and provides opportunities to secure developer contributions for new or expanded schools facilities as well as a school site. The draft Plan does not require the City to use one set of student generation rate figures if it determines that multi-family units are generating a greater number of students than in the past.

Community Amenities

Advisory Committee members questioned why the Plan includes a community/recreation center as a key community amenity. Committee members indicated that other amenities, such as a theater or ice skating rink, should be considered. There was also a question about whether the City would pay the operating cost of a developer-provided recreation facility.

Planning staff included a community/recreation center in part as a result of input received over the past year as staff met with community groups, which included a request for more recreation opportunities. The City's Parks and Recreation staff concurred that a community or recreation facility is needed in the area. Their Strategic Master Plan documents a need for a community/recreation facility in the West End, as the area is deficient in parks and recreation amenities. As development and density increases, the need for such facilities is going to continue to increase. The expectation is that the community/recreation center would be provided by the developer and would be operated by the City.

Planning staff will include language in the draft Plan expanding the possibilities for community amenities. The Advisory Committee may wish to discuss this issue further on December 1 to help ensure that the list is complete.