

**Potomac Yard Community Meeting Summary
Tuesday, October 20, 2009**

PYPAG Members in attendance:

Joe Bondi
Mike Caison
Richard Calderon
Allison Cryor DiNardo
Darryl Dugan
Garret Erdle
Bill Hendrickson
Deborah Johnson
Mark Krause
Jon Lindgren
Dan McCaffery
Jennifer Mitchell
Peter Pocock
Mariella Posey
Noah Teates
Eric Wagner
Maria Wasowski

PYPAG Members not in attendance:

Crystall Merlino
Frederick Rothmeijer

City Staff:

Jeff Farner
Faroll Hamer
Valerie Peterson
Claire Gron
Jessica McVary
Tom Canfield
Dan Imig
Claudia Hamblin-Katnik
Sandra Marks
Helen McIlvaine

The Perspectives Group Staff:

Doug Sarno

Approximately 56 Members of the Public were in attendance.

Open House & Overview of Model

The community meeting on Potomac Yard commenced with an informal open house at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Welcome

The community meeting began at 6:30 p.m. Eric Wagner, a member of the Potomac Yard Plan Advisory Group (PYPAG) and the Alexandria Planning Commission welcomed the attendees and acknowledged the work of the PYPAG members.

Setting the Stage – Overview of Plan Principles

Mr. Wagner provided a brief overview of the work completed by PYPAG over the last several months and introduced key principles of the Potomac Yard Plan (the Plan) including economic, environmental and social sustainability as well as transit-oriented development. Mr. Wagner noted that the Plan envisions Potomac Yard as a world class community and a gateway to the City of Alexandria. He also noted that the Plan is a vision for the future and it will take many years to achieve the vision outlined in the Plan.

Mr. Wagner then introduced Doug Sarno to provide an orientation for the evening.

Mr. Sarno described the purpose of the community meeting and noted that the primary purpose was to discuss the Plan principles, which were based on feedback and ideas received at previous community meetings and further distilled by PYPAG members.

Mr. Sarno noted that after a brief overview by staff, attendees will divide into three groups; one group will discuss open space and civic uses, a second group will discuss site planning and sustainability issues and a third group will discuss transportation, connectivity and mitigating neighborhood impacts. Conversations in each of the groups will be hosted by PYPAG members.

Mr. Sarno then introduced Valerie Peterson, a Principal Planner with the Department of Planning and Zoning. Ms. Peterson provided an overview of how the public input received during the meeting would be incorporated into the overall planning process. She described that the goal of the meeting was to obtain public input on the guidelines and principles that PYPAG and staff believe will implement the vision outlined in the Plan. Ms. Peterson further noted that the comments generated during the meeting would feed directly into the development of the Plan, a draft of which will be distributed to the public in December and docketed for public hearing in February.

Jeff Farner, Deputy Director of Urban Design with the Department of Planning and Zoning, then provided an overview of the neighborhoods, open space, street grid and transportation options recommended within the Plan. Mr. Farner

explained that the Plan proposes to break-down the 70-acre site into three distinct neighborhoods, primarily defined by a unique character, open space and a street grid which provides varying modes of travel. Each of the three neighborhoods proposed is within a five minute walk of distinct open space areas including Four Mile Run Park, Metro Square and Landbay K.

Within the neighborhoods, the Plan recommends that taller buildings be located in the center of development to ensure adequate transitions from the smaller scale neighborhoods across Route 1 and the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The FAA height restrictions limit heights within the flight path to heights between 100 and 110 feet. Though the Plan recommends taller buildings in the center of the development, Mr. Farner noted the importance of variation in height on each block.

Mr. Farner indicated that substantial discussion has occurred with regard to the location of the proposed metro; whether the metro should be constructed at the existing reservation or be moved farther north. He stated that there were challenges to relocating the metro farther north, specifically the cost of doing so and the scenic easement controlled by the National Park Service.

Mr. Farner briefly described the character of the proposed neighborhoods. He indicated that the Plan envisions the Metro Square neighborhood as predominantly office. However, to ensure viability during non-office hours, ground floor retail as well as entertainment venues are envisioned. The Plan envisions the Crescent Place neighborhood as a gateway to Alexandria on Route 1 and Potomac Avenue. A gateway element and open space are envisioned on both Route 1 and Potomac Avenue.

Sandra Marks, a Transportation Planner with the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services provided an overview of the key transportation elements of the Plan. Ms. Marks indicated that a guiding principle of the Plan is creating a walkable, transit-oriented community. Ms. Marks noted that the metro station is a key component to the viability of transportation within the community. She also noted that a dedicated transit way, approved as part of the Transportation Master Plan, will connect Braddock to Crystal City. The Plan proposes that the dedicated transit will travel on Route 1 to Diamond Street and then continue north on Potomac Avenue to Arlington. In addition to transit, the Plan proposes an extensive street network with a new north-south street connection. Local busses, pedestrian, bicycle and trail networks are also proposed.

Ms. Marks noted that the Plan recognizes that traffic will result. However, she stated that if Potomac Yard does not develop as envisioned within the Plan, traffic on Route 1 and within the neighborhood will actually worsen. Without the development of the site, there will not be a metro, dedicated transit way or an expanded street grid, all of which contribute to reduced traffic on Route 1.

Mr. Sarno directed the attendees to divide into three tables to commence discussions.

Small Group Discussions

The attendees divided into three groups for detailed topic discussions on the following topics:

- Open Space and Civic Uses;
- Site Planning and Sustainability Issues; and
- Transportation, Connectivity and Mitigating Neighborhood Impacts.

Report Back, Discussion, and Public Comment

Group: Open Space and Civic Uses

Participants in the Open Space and Civic Uses discussion provided the following observations on questions facilitated by a PYPAG member:

- Are the locations and connections for open spaces effective? How do you think they could be improved?

The open spaces are well designed but are all of a similar character – namely “urban.” The spaces look good but are passive. The plan needs to identify and program small scale active parks and playgrounds as well as dog parks.

- Do you think there is adequate open space? How do you feel about rooftop open space (e.g. use public/private, sustainable features, etc)?

There is not enough green space. Rooftop open space is not really an alternative except for those renting and buying condominiums.

- The principles talk about ‘usable’ open space. How would you like to see these spaces used? What programming would you like to be considered in developing the master plan?

There is a need to make the open space work hard. This means that schools, recreation centers and community centers need to integrate programming and spaces.

- Would you like to see the idea of an urban form school pursued within Landbay F or do you think kids should attend nearby schools (recognizing that sufficient school capacity is a must)?

The 4,600 units are generators of children. If there is one child per every ten units, that means that a school for 460 children. There is no room in adjacent neighborhoods and Potomac Yard Landbay F needs to develop an urban school.

- Are there other civic uses that should be considered for the site? Do you agree with requiring that affordable housing be provided on-site?

Affordable housing should be located throughout the site with some provisions for off-site units as well. The units made available should have 2 to 3 bedrooms for families in all stages of life, including newlyweds, child rearing, empty nesters and singles.

Group: Site Planning and Sustainability Issues

- Which design around the metro station do you prefer?

In one scheme, no buildings are proposed on the eastern side of Potomac Avenue but in an alternate scheme, Potomac Avenue is slightly curved and buildings are shown on the eastern side of the street. The group did not reach any a conclusion on which scheme was preferred, but rather discussed the opportunities and drawbacks of both schemes. Discussion focused on the safety and sense of safety as a pedestrian navigating from the site and the BRT stop to the metro. Issues of safety were raised with the scheme which indicates buildings on the eastern side of Potomac Avenue as the clear line of site was reduced. The group also discussed that traffic speeds may be reduced on Potomac Avenue if the curvilinear street were constructed.

- Do you support the general land use distribution and distribution of heights? What key issues would you want to see stressed in the Master Plan?

In general, the participants were supportive of the land use distribution, density, and heights; however there were a few dissenting voices. There were a lot of discussions on how the density relates to the metro and the placement of retail. Some participants believed that the retail should be positioned closer to the metro, while others believed that the economics of office uses require closer proximity to metro. There was also some discussion that the density seems slightly far from the metro.

- Is this the right level of emphasis on sustainability? Is it progressive enough? What sustainability issues would you like to see stressed in the Master Plan?

The participants discussed the possibility of generating power on the site through windmills or other methods of alternative energy. Participants also discussed retaining stormwater on-site and the importance of remaining flexible due to technological advances which are likely to occur.

- Other issues raised

Why is Potomac Yard more likely to attract development than other areas within the metropolitan area? The participants discussed that there are sound economic reasons for development in Potomac Yard, including proximity to Washington, D.C. and a location between the Pentagon and Fort Belvoir. In addition, the redevelopment of Potomac Yard offers an opportunity to create a great, sustainable community.

Group: Transportation, Connectivity and Mitigating Neighborhood Impacts

- Do you support expanding the street network for all users? Are there additional street connections you would like to see considered?

There was no consensus reached on the number and location of east – west connections.

- Is the strategy for connectivity sufficient? Phase I: Focus on the first block, mini-traffic circles at strategic points and Phase II: Provide additional measures as needed. Could they be improved?

There was 100 percent support for deployment of measures to minimize traffic impact on adjoining neighborhoods and agreement that measures should be phased as density comes online.

- Other considerations for routing of BRT?

There was general agreement on the need and route of BRT but the group also indicated that the route may need to move closer to the metro.

- Is the connection of Reed Avenue from Water Street to Potomac Avenue important? Is it important to maintain pedestrian access? Bus? Bike?

Pedestrians are a priority, especially at traffic lights. Bike access is a necessity.

- Other issues raised

Members of the group inquired if all the new riders generated from the redevelopment could use metro if WMATA does not add more rail cars. Members also discussed the need to connect new and existing bike networks and the need to provide connectivity between Commonwealth Avenue and Potomac Yard when the Jack Taylor site redevelops.

Next Steps

Mr. Wagner thanked community members for attending the meeting as well as PYPAG members and staff. Ms. Faroll Hamer, Director of Planning and Zoning, thanked PYPAG members. Mr. Sarno concluded the meeting by asking participants to provide staff any further comments they may have.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Detailed Notes from the Open Space and Civic Uses Group

A brief overview of the main principles and major open space areas within the planning area was provided to the participants. The open spaces within the planning area include: Landbay K Linear Park, Metro Square, the Finger Park at Reed Avenue and the Crescent Park, which ties into Four Mile Run. It was also noted that Main Line Boulevard is primarily a retail street and there is a pedestrian-only zone in the Metro Square neighborhood. The retail locations tie into Landbay G and the Town Center open space.

Are the locations and connections for open spaces effective? How do you think they could be improved?

- The proposed blocks and neighborhoods define character. The bridge at Four Mile Run, Crescent Park, ties into a greater piece of open space.
- Integrate the network of open space and coordinate with Arlington County, especially at Four Mile Run.
- Connect the parks throughout the system.
- Connect to the river.

Do you think there is adequate open space? How do you feel about roof-top open space (e.g. use public/private, sustainable features, etc)?

- With the loss of Simpson Fields, additional playing fields, turf fields and larger green spaces are necessary. Playing fields could be provided on rooftops.
- Both public and private open space is necessary.
- A roof top open space plan is needed.
- Provide dog parks on roofs that are dispersed throughout the site.
- The plan is deficient in active open space and it is necessary to think creatively about the open space that is provided.
- Encourage small scale recreation, open space on rooftops, interior ground level open spaces and a collection of small spaces.
- There should be less water and more recreational amenities.

The principles talk about 'usable' open space. How would you like to see these spaces used? What programming would you like to be considered in developing the master plan?

- The plan needs to consider how to accommodate the needs of all residents, including children (tot lots), young adults and dogs. Functional spaces are necessary.

- The design of the open space, specifically the Metro Square and the Finger Parks, needs to meet the needs of residents and be functional in addition to being beautiful from an urban design perspective.
- Provide amenities to attract a variety of groups.
- Consider programming spaces to serve multiple needs.
- Consider fields off-site, such as at the Jack Taylor site.
- Consider open space at Oakville Triangle.
- The Finger Park is narrow with limited utility.
- Consider commercial recreational facilities such as an ice rink.
- Provide indoor recreational facilities in the urban location.
- Provide community gardens.

Would you like to see the idea of an urban form school pursued within Landbay F or do you think kids should attend nearby schools (recognizing that sufficient school capacity is a must)?

- An urban school, with fields on the roof, is desired and should be provided. The City is moving toward families in multi-family buildings. If amenities are not provided, families will not move to the community. But, if amenities are provided, families will locate in the community.
- Possibly consider a non-public school.
- Consider co-locating with additional uses with extended hours.
- The school should have childcare facilities as well as uses for teens.
- Amenities in the school could be used by the community after hours.
- Need to provide joint-use recreation and community facilities with the schools.
- Provide day-care before and after school, as well as headstart programs.

Are there other civic uses that should be considered for the site? Do you agree with requiring that affordable housing be provided on-site?

- A concern was raised that civic uses will affect the viability and economic feasibility of the project by reducing FAR.
- An archaeological dig is necessary.
- Commitment to affordable housing on-site versus off-site units or contributions.
- On-site affordable housing, which is not concentrated in one location is desired.
- Affordable housing should accommodate families and be designed to serve a diverse range of households.
- There needs to be on-site diversity of residents and housing units.
- Provide stormwater management in smaller spaces.

Detailed Notes from the Site Planning and Sustainability Group

Which design around the metro station do you prefer?

- There are currently two options proposed adjacent to the metro station. The first option does not propose buildings on the eastern side of Potomac Avenue, but rather proposes Potomac Avenue adjacent to Landbay K. With this scheme, there is an opportunity for a multi-modal transit / drop-off station for BRT, local buses, cars, bikes and pedestrians. This option provides a clear line of site to the metro. This option lends itself to a festival space as it is rather open. It also offers an opportunity to elicit public art.
- The second option proposes buildings on the eastern side of Potomac Avenue in order to provide density adjacent to the metro and to ensure a better urban design. With buildings on both sides of Potomac Avenue, there is an opportunity to create an urban environment that simultaneously allows access for BRT, local buses, cars, bikes and pedestrians. A disadvantage to this option is that other transit options would be approximately 400 feet from the metro. Participants also voiced safety concerns with the second option as there was not a clear line of site to the metro. Ground level retail and entertainment venues are proposed near the metro to ensure an active streetscape at all hours of the day and increase safety. An advantage to the second option is the proximity of the office buildings to the metro. The second option also highlights Potomac Avenue as an important street, rather than a service street. The curved street and buildings invite the creation of a memorable space as the buildings are perceived differently as one travels through the space. Additional variation in building height should be introduced to the buildings on the eastern side of Potomac Avenue to ensure that the buildings do not create a “wall.”

Do you support the general land use distribution and distribution of heights?

What key issues would you want to see stressed in the Master Plan?

- A participant inquired if the level of density shown in the model is sufficient to accommodate a metro station or if a metro station could be provided with less density. PYPAG and staff indicated that more density is necessary to support the metro station. However, the density shown is the maximum that can be achieved within the constraints of traffic and height.
- The distance between the areas designated for height and density and the metro station appears significant. It is necessary to get the buildings and the density as close to the metro as possible.
- It was noted that flexibility, in terms of zoning for specific uses, is important as this is a long-term plan and there may be uses in the future which are unimaginable at this time.
- The primary retail street should be located to on the street with direct access to the metro. It is necessary to consider how the various uses interface with the metro as well as uses elsewhere in the Yard, specifically Landbay G.

- Are we tolerating all of this density to get metro? If we want a metro we need all of this? Yes, but given the location of the site, it lends itself to be an urban development.
- How do the densities and square footages contribute to an urban environment? There is no quantitative number that lends itself to a vibrant urban environment. But, having people living and working in an area lends itself to vibrancy.
- Density and a mixture of uses are necessary to ensure that the City is economically sustainable. If townhouses were built on the site, we would have a bedroom community rather than an economically sustainable community.

Is this the right level of emphasis on sustainability? Is it progressive enough? What sustainability issues would you like to see stressed in the Master Plan?

- Stormwater could be treated with porous pavement and green roofs.
- Green buildings built now produce more than they consume. Rooftops should be green but also allow for active uses.
- Green roofs are often private spaces – while good on a sustainability front-it will not generally be open to the public.
- There is no way that we can know what the technology will be in 20 years. Would like the community to be cutting edge green technology
- Are we mandating a percentage of the electricity to be produced on-site? The principal is that this must be a flexible plan. Build-out will be in 20 to 30 years. In that time, we have no idea what technology will occur with energy conservation or production. But this technology must be considered and addressed within the planning area as it moves forward.

Other issues raised

- A participant voiced concern that manufacturing locations are limited in Alexandria and inquired if small scale manufacturing could occur in Potomac Yard. Many participants believed that manufacturing should not occur here due to the location of the site.
- Traffic is a concern. Even if half of the possible traffic uses the metro, there will still be substantial volume on Route 1.
- A participant inquired if more cars will be generated by the development than the traffic currently generate by the shopping center. PYPAG and staff indicated that additional traffic will be generated but many people will use the metro, BRT, local buses, bikes or walk rather than drive.
- Is the proposed location the best location for the metro station? There were several spots considered for the metro station but all the other station locations weren't as practical. This location is as far north as the station could go due to the curve in the tracks and the NPS reservations.
- What is the route for the BRT? The current plan is to travel north on Route 1 to Diamond Street and then turn on Potomac Avenue to continue into Arlington.

- Why is Potomac Yard more likely to attract development than other areas within the metropolitan area? The participants discussed that there are sound economic reasons for development in Potomac Yard, including proximity to Washington, D.C. and a location between the Pentagon and Fort Belvoir. In addition, the redevelopment of Potomac Yard offers an opportunity to create a great, sustainable community.
- Pay attention to the architecture that is approved and maybe the City could win an award.
- Is there sufficient sewer capacity to handle the development? Capacity will need to be built in order to sustain development. In terms of stormwater runoff – it is the intent to keep as much of the stormwater on the site as possible. There is a conveyance issue – from the site to the plant. The other issue is the capacity of the plant. The City is currently working on a capacity study of the plant. The plant will have to accommodate this.
- Is there any idea of having an affordable housing component in all of this? Yes, affordable housing is being considered. Each block will have to go through an entire development review process. What percent of the housing will be affordable? Affordable housing is roughly a \$20 – 25 million contribution. Whether units are provided on-site or off-site will ultimately be the decision of City Council.

Detailed Notes from the Transportation, Connectivity and Mitigating Neighborhood Impacts Group

Do you support expanding the street network for all users? Are there additional street connections you would like to see considered?

- Need to consider thru versus local traffic.
- Look at all arterials for potential traffic impacts.
- Provide better dispersal of traffic among streets.
- Concern about overflow parking on Evans.
- A concern was expressed about opening Reed Avenue and not other closed streets. The plan may want to consider opening all streets.
- Evaluate looking at opening additional side streets to have traffic dispersed on more streets (i.e. road connecting Route 1 and Commonwealth at the Jack Taylor site).
- The Route 1 Bridge is a constraint as all traffic comes back to Route 1.
- Is it possible for additional lanes on Route 1?
- Is it possible to provide an additional connection to the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- Concern about additional delay on Route 1 with additional signals.

Is the strategy for connectivity sufficient? Phase I: Focus on the first block, mini-traffic circles at strategic points and Phase II: Provide additional measures as needed. Could they be improved?

- Consider greater connectivity in the neighborhood.
- Suggestion about pedestrian bridge to cross Route 1. Staff indicated that this would be a substantial investment for the amount of use.
- Importance of scale crossing at Route 1. Need to give pedestrians the priority.

Other considerations for routing of BRT?

- There was general agreement on the need and route of BRT but the group also indicated that the route may need to move closer to the metro.

Is the connection of Reed Avenue from Water Street to Potomac Avenue important? Is it important to maintain pedestrian access? Bus? Bike?

- Reed Avenue provides a bike connection to the neighborhood.

Other issues raised

- No bridge over Commonwealth.
- Protect neighborhood character.
- Does metro have the capacity to handle additional riders? Need to consider moving from 6 to 8 cars.
- The metro is in the wrong location.
- Make pedestrians a priority in the design.