

CRYSTAL CITY VISION PLAN 2050

COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM THE

**COMMUNITIES OF
ARLINGTON RIDGE AND
AURORA HIGHLANDS**

SUBMITTED TO

**THE LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE
OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
AND THE COUNTY BOARD
OF ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

BY THE

**ARLINGTON RIDGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION AND
AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

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Overview

In early 2006, the Arlington County Board created the Crystal City Planning Task Force to identify critical issues related to the redevelopment of the Jefferson Davis Corridor, an initiative driven at least in part by the potentially adverse impact of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) activities. As a result of recommendations from the Task Force, the County initiated a formal planning process for Crystal City to address critical issues related to the second generation of Crystal City's redevelopment. At this stage of the planning process, the analysis, findings, and recommendations are set forth in draft form in the 'Crystal City Vision Plan 2050' (Draft 1.1 dtd 05-29-2009) as prepared by the Arlington County staff. This draft Vision Plan is currently under review and comment by the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC). The LRPC is a component of the Planning Commission composed of citizens appointed by the Board to review, and provide comments and recommendations, on tasks and processes related to land use, urban design, long range plans, and the Comprehensive Plan, including the General Land Use Plan. This planning document is available for public download and review at www.plancrystalcity.com.

The LRPC is composed of diverse stakeholders interested in, impacted by, and potentially benefitting from the redevelopment of Crystal City and the Jefferson Davis Corridor, including members of the Planning Commission, developers and building owners, and the civic associations representing the communities within and adjacent to the redevelopment area (including the Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) and Arlington Ridge Civic Association (ARCA)).

ARCA and AHCA (hereinafter referred to in this document as the 'Community') have convened a Joint Working Group to study the proposed redevelopment plans and to craft recommendations on select issues. These Comments and Recommendations to the LRPC include the initial perspectives of the Joint Working Group (hereafter referred to as "the Working Group") and may be further supplemented in the future.

On behalf of their respective organizations, the members of the Working Group look forward to continuing to participate in this important planning process, and working collectively and collaboratively with the members of the LRPC and the Arlington County planning staff, to ensure the 'Vision' for the region appropriately reflects and integrates the diverse needs of all parties.

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Prologue

The Community recognizes and applauds the arduous task undertaken by the combined Crystal City Task Force to craft a redevelopment vision for Crystal City—a key component of the Jefferson Davis urban corridor. The process has been methodical: a vision statement was developed from which goals and objectives were derived, these were translated into policy directives, which in turn generated the guiding principles to craft the Illustrative Concept Plan (hereafter referred to as “the Vision Plan”). This plan and policy framework were presented to and adopted by the County Board in December 2008, and is intended as guidance for modifications to existing County documentation, including the General Land Use Plan, Zoning Ordinances, and the Master Transportation Plan.

We agree conceptually with the vision of Crystal City as a great urban center and understand the benefits derived from this important economic engine. We emphasize the synergism of the entire 22202 zip code, and are encouraged to see the Task Force demonstrate awareness of this synergism by establishing Goal 6: “Preserve the integrity of the single-family neighborhood to the west.” While we concur in principal with each of the seven goals and objectives set forth, as residents of said “single-family neighborhood,” we have understandably focused on Goal 6.

With this in mind, we have reviewed the current Vision Plan and have identified a flaw, which, if not corrected, compromises our ability to support the document and its conclusions: *Goal 6 has been interpreted very narrowly, and has **not** been adequately mapped into any of the policy directives.* This limited focus has allowed the Vision Plan to be developed without specific policy guidance relating to the inevitable effects of Crystal City redevelopment on us, the adjoining neighborhood. The guiding policies assume they apply only to Crystal City when in effect they have inevitable major impacts to the adjoining environs. This has led to a number of erroneous conclusions regarding transportation, zoning changes, and open space for **all** of the residential neighborhoods within the 22202 zip code. We have serious reservations about any changes to the General Land Use Plan, Zoning, or the Master Transportation Plan without adequate review of these considerations.

We did not identify this issue prior to the December 2008 submission to the County Board, as its ramifications only became clear to us as we reviewed the document in its entirety. Recognizing the hard work that has gone into this process, we are not suggesting that the task force “go back to the drawing board.” Instead we have made an effort to identify some areas of concern related to satisfying Goal 6. The Working Group requests that the Long Range Planning Committee consider our recommendations to meet these concerns by adding to and amending the text of the Vision Plan (including an additional chapter in development pertaining to the community-related impact of the Crystal City redevelopment), as well as our request for consideration or other offsetting community benefits where modifications to current planning may be infeasible.

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The Long Range Planning Committee has a responsibility to ensure that the Vision Plan satisfies all of its seven stated objectives. Further, our County government has responsibility to prevent the sacrifice of fundamental quality of life issues in our neighborhood as a cost of Crystal City's growth.

Our Vision

Aurora Highlands, Arlington Ridge, Pentagon Row, the Pentagon, Pentagon City Mall, and Crystal City – the 22202 zip code – are all contained within the same discrete physical boundaries. This area is a diverse but seamlessly integrated community, and we strongly urge Arlington County planners to view it as such – as we do – when envisioning our future.

We envision a connected community. We envision infrastructure improvements and improved traffic controls to ensure safe pedestrian crossings and safe entry and exit from home driveways onto neighborhood streets. We envision safe, comfortable access between the neighborhoods and landmarks within the 22202 zip code through bike/walking paths, not just within Crystal City, but also within and between all of the neighborhoods in our community. For Crystal City to become the neighborhood envisioned by the County, while also protecting the neighborhoods in the larger community, we envision preservation of existing parks and green spaces, and proportional expansion of these areas as density increases. We envision a 23rd Street Restaurant Row that allows local businesses to prosper while preserving the neighborhood flavor that makes it unique.

We envision a revitalized community center located in the existing Aurora Hills Complex, as the geographic and symbolic center of the 22202 community, a perfect place to come together to strengthen community ties. This Center sits near the geographic center of the community, while the retired fire station within this complex -- the first station to send an engine to the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 – offers us a symbolic community tie.

As residents of Arlington County, we recognize and appreciate the opportunity for economic benefits offered by Crystal City. As its neighbors in the 22202 community, we recognize and appreciate the potential benefits to us of a vibrant Crystal City, with living space for families, hotels for tourists and business travelers, serviced by Metro and rail lines, graced by outdoor walkways, restaurants, parks, and fountains. We encourage plans to ensure it becomes a comfortable, convenient space in which to live and work.

However, we urge Arlington County planners to recognize and protect the long-established, stable, family-oriented neighborhoods of Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge. We offer a diverse and nurturing environment to upwards of 21,000 residents to our current and potential Crystal City neighbors. Crystal City redevelopment plans offer an opportunity for positive change to our community. However, we strongly believe that this positive change cannot be accomplished unless Arlington County planners address the impact of redevelopment plans on the entire 22202 zip code, before moving forward.

The Challenge

With this vision in the forefront, we address the challenges that come with the proposed development efforts in Crystal City. The Jefferson Davis Corridor is densely populated with high concentrations of both business and residential properties, generating significant tax and related revenues for Arlington County. It is one of Arlington County's two most significant economic "engines" (the other being the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor). However, in addition to its economic importance to Arlington County, the Jefferson Davis Corridor is also the central corridor to the multiple residential communities within the 22202 zip code, and a place where over 21,000 neighbors shop, eat, work and play. Crystal City is relative "newcomer" to an area where Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge were well-established pre-WWII communities planned when automobiles were a novelty, and traffic master plans were non-existent.

While the Vision Plan does acknowledge that Crystal City development must occur in the context of the larger Jefferson Davis Corridor, it does not adequately address the inherent challenges to the conceptualization of a viable, acceptable, integrated, long-term urban redevelopment plan in that larger context.

Most notably:

- As population densities increase, the adverse impact of increased traffic on the older local streets and intersections with underlying design deficiencies is significant;
- As population densities increase, the demands on such existing infrastructure throughout 22202 as schools; medical facilities; and fire and rescue services, among others, increase;
- As population densities increase, the lifestyles and aesthetics of living in the community significantly change; and
- As population densities increase, the surrounding natural environment is significantly impacted.



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Further compounding these challenges is the fact that the demand upon the infrastructure of the Jefferson Davis Corridor is not limited to its own utility as a center for offices, retail services, and residential living. The Jefferson Davis Corridor is a major north-south arterial thruway for literally hundreds of thousands of people within the greater Northern Virginia area and the Washington Metropolitan region, including:

- Tens of thousands of military and civilian personnel work each day at the Pentagon;
- Hundreds of thousands of persons travel through the 22202 communities on their way to or from Washington, DC and the surrounding region;
- Thousands of people travel each day for drop-offs or pick-ups at Reagan National Airport; and
- Thousands of people travel each day to shop at the Pentagon City mall, Costco and the dozens of other retail stores and restaurants in the community, as well as to stay in the dozens of hotels in the Pentagon City and Crystal City areas.

By failing to thoroughly explore the ramifications of Goal 6, the impacts of these challenges to the larger community have not been adequately addressed in the current version of the Vision Plan.

As is discussed in greater subsequent detail in these Comments and Recommendations, the Working Group is particularly interested in addressing the following 'macro' issues. Though the Vision Plan does touch on the items below, the assessments were limited to the Crystal City planning area alone, and not the entirety of the 22202 Community:

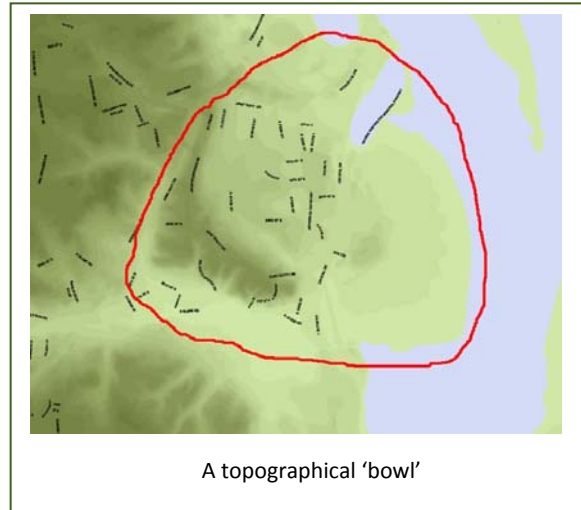
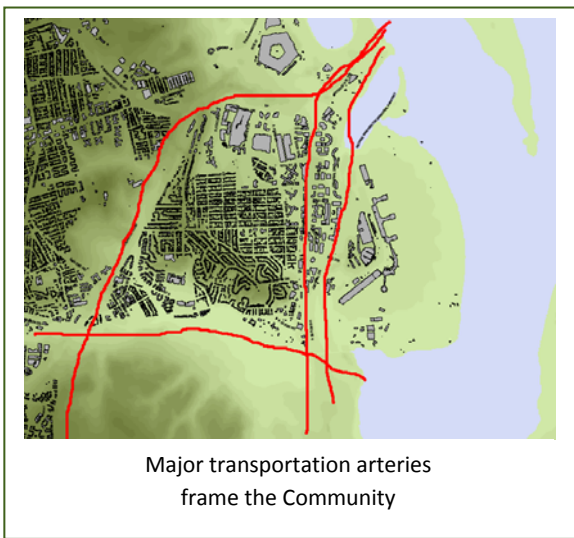
- **Impact on Residential Communities to the West of Crystal City.** Ensuring that the scope of the redevelopment plan adequately reflects the impact of changing and increased utilization of the Jefferson Davis Corridor on the existing neighboring residential communities, including neighborhood integrity, livability, aesthetics, walkability, and safety;
- **Transportation Planning and Traffic Management.** Ensuring that the fundamental assumptions pertaining to the transportation analysis and future impact of increasing population densities, both residential and work, are correct; reflect the current state of roads/traffic within all 22202 residential communities including the inadequacies (evident since post WWII) of the our streets and intersections to adequately support any high density development; account for adequate management of actual future growth; and effectively limit adverse impacts to the neighboring residential communities and to Crystal City itself;

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- **Community Infrastructure is improved.** Ensuring that with development, the common infrastructure within the community (including schools; libraries; parks and open space; recreation facilities; community centers; pedestrian and bicycle accommodations; urgent care; fire, police and rescue; and other core infrastructure) is improved and the 'livability' of the community is enhanced, not arrested or degraded due to the stresses of overutilization resulting from lack of consideration, appropriate planning, investment, and support; and
- **Community Benefit.** Ensuring that – in exchange for increasing density, economic utilization, and increasing demands on infrastructure – the community realizes tangible, quantifiable, enduring benefits associated with the growth and redevelopment of Crystal City and the Jefferson Davis Corridor.

Defining the 'Community'

As Crystal City and the Jefferson Davis Corridor are redeveloped to better enhance their utility as a business engine, tax base, and high-density urban area, the objective of the Working Group and the Community is to ensure that such development adequately and appropriately improves our 'home' and our community. This is where we live, work, learn, shop, play, walk, and drive. We are first and foremost invested in a beautiful,



successful, productive outcome to this process for the Community, which includes Crystal City, as well as the existing surrounding residential areas which are most directly impacted by each decision made in this process.

The district encompassed by the 22202 zip code is unique within the Washington metropolitan area, in that it already functions as a single integrated 'ecosystem'. From a topographical perspective, the area can be characterized as a 'bowl,' beginning with Arlington Ridge on the western side, descending down through Aurora Highlands, and ending

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in the reclaimed lands along the banks of the Potomac River that comprise Crystal City and Reagan National Airport.

Perhaps partly due to this geography, the area has come to be ‘framed’ by major arterial roads – I-395, Glebe Road and Route 1. This framing physically defines the Community, the integrated neighborhoods and business centers which share physical space, roads, schools, restaurants, parks, shopping, sidewalks and other County services. From an urban planning perspective, this framing defines the boundaries for assessing the need, utility, cost, and impact upon the economic utilization and infrastructure requirements within the Community as measured by, for example:

- Location of police stations and fire stations;
- Emergency evacuation plans based upon population location and densities;
- Travel time (vs. physical distance) to hospital, emergency medical facilities, urgent care and other health care services;
- Population locations and utilization patterns upon utilities, water, and sewage infrastructure;
- Location and nature of utilization of major and minor transportation routes, including by form of transportation (such as car, Metro, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic);
- Distance to grocery store, pharmacy, retail shops, restaurants, etc.;
- Student population within the geographic area surrounding our schools; and
- Number of residents within the defined area surrounding libraries, parks, and community centers.

The Vision Plan touches on some of these concerns in Para 3.9.5 (Page 99) but limits solutions to the geographical footprint of the Crystal City Planning Area. By looking at the entire 22202 neighborhood, the optimal resolution may be found by leveraging existing facilities in the broader community.

Determining Community Benefit

The Working Group commends the Arlington County Staff and Planning Commission in recognizing the importance of attaining offsetting benefits to the Community as population densities in the region are increased, properties are rezoned, transportation loads increase exponentially, and our collective and common infrastructure is taxed under the greater load. Just as the County requests allowances by the community “in return for extraordinary community benefits” (pg 26, Para 2.3), we request reciprocal privileges when the County requests concessions from the Community. The Working Group further commends the Commission for proposing, and the Staff for agreeing to incorporate into the Vision Plan a discrete and discernible discussion of the benefits to the Community that must be achieved as Crystal City is redeveloped and revitalized. It is our intent that this document be used to facilitate that discussion and subsequent document modification.

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As residents within the Community, we assert that it is imperative for this development initiative to result in tangible and quantifiable benefits to the Community if and when zoning is amended to permit greater population densities and alternative uses, as individual development projects are evaluated and approved, and as the Community's common infrastructure absorbs the load of increasing needs and demands.

Requirements for Planning, Today and for the Future

The Working Group respectfully requests that the Vision Plan be amended or supplemented to include the following core principles:

- The Vision Plan must expressly mandate that, as development projects are reviewed and considered, a transparent formula is used (inclusive of appropriate Goal 6 policy-related directives) to ascertain the impact of such development on the infrastructure of the entire Community (inclusive of



the impact on roads, streets, sidewalks, open space, parks, schools, water, waste, utilities, public transportation, public services, and so forth); and quantifiable benefits must be extended to the Community to offset the adverse impact (including in the form of designated and allocated funds to be utilized for improvements to parks, recreational and community facilities, pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths, curbside improvements, landscape improvements, and so forth);

- The formula for measuring the impact of all future development must be based upon *current* zoning, use restrictions, height restrictions, and other associated planned development mechanisms utilized by Arlington County, rather than upon *proposed* zoning, use restrictions, height restrictions, open space requirements or other legal and administrative restrictions set forth in the Vision Plan; and

- Each civic association in the Community must have a 'seat at the table' – with rights equal to all other seats at the table – to duly assess and directly negotiate the community benefits or 'offsets' associated with approved development and redevelopment initiatives.

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Concerns of the Community

Limiting the focus of Goal 6 to Crystal City alone has resulted in inaccurate assessments of the potential impacts upon the Community is an integral part of 22202 zip code.

For example, with regard to the transportation planning portions of the Vision Plan, the assumptions rest significantly on trips associated with increased population density *within* the Crystal City perimeter, and simply do not consider increased traffic in the surrounding neighborhoods, or increased traffic resulting from simultaneous growth in Alexandria County to the south, Fairfax County to the west, or the greater metropolitan area to the north and east, all of which today move through the 22202 zip code.

As population densities increase within Crystal City, leaving aside population growth in surrounding areas extending from Washington, D.C. to Alexandria, Fairfax and Stafford Counties,

the impact upon the residential communities within the 22202 neighborhoods will be unmistakable and significant. The critical variable at stake is whether such impact can be



Figure 3.5: External Connection Points

Multi-modal transportation study points utilize
Development Plan

ameliorated, and even channeled for the greater community benefit in terms of livability and utility. Simple logic dictates that even without a redeveloped Crystal City, natural continuing growth in the greater metropolitan area demands a significant reconsideration of our transportation infrastructure given that **today** it is already heavily congested and regularly at saturation. This planning process represents an opportunity to develop immediate, near-term, and long-range plans for an appropriate transportation infrastructure that will meet the



The Arlington County Multi-Modal Transportation Study points upon which the transportation planning aspects of the Crystal City Vision Plan 2050 are indicated with the white circles, while the red circles indicate major traffic thoroughfares (that are not reflected in the transportation planning assumptions for the Vision Plan 2050), but which are further impacted by the increasing demands placed upon the community by vehicular traffic as Crystal City density increases along with increasing transit trips associated with growing cities and counties in the metropolitan region.

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needs of the Community and those in surrounding jurisdictions driving through the Community on a daily basis.

The failure to anticipate such inevitable demands of density and growth, and to develop an integrated development model throughout the geography, demonstrates the susceptibility of the Vision Plan to negatively impact the residential communities immediately adjacent to the development area

The areas of particular concern include: pedestrian safety, transportation and traffic; zoning changes; open and green space; schools; medical and emergency facilities. Concerns regarding each of these areas are described below, followed by recommendations in the final section.

Pedestrian Safety

Arlington County has stated its goal of becoming one of the nation's most pedestrian friendly. This goal is central to the current Crystal City redevelopment Vision Plan, but does not adequately account for the effects of these same redevelopment plans on the adjoining neighborhood. This concern is compounded by the fact that *current* traffic controls and pedestrian accommodations throughout the 22202 Community are seriously inadequate – we can only expect the increased density promised by the Crystal City redevelopment Vision Plan to further exacerbate this problem.

Currently, Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge are plagued by aggressive driving through our neighborhoods. Harried, aggressive drivers with no ties to our community speed through every day: bus drivers hurrying through their routes between other parts of Arlington and the bus barns on S. Eads; taxis, limos, and other auto traffic running to and from National Airport; employees and visitors to and from the Pentagon and Crystal City; shoppers heading to and from the Fashion Center, Pentagon Row, and Potomac Yards. The majority of these drivers come from Maryland, D.C., and other parts of Virginia, and they view our neighborhood streets as a way to beat the heavier traffic on the main roads. Our neighborhood streets are used as a “cut-through” for drivers in the know, hurrying to their destination.

These drivers pose unacceptable risks to our residents, many of whom are seniors walking for exercise, or simply enjoying a walk with their families, friends, or pets. Of most concern to us, though, are the risks posed to our children. The safety of children attending Oakridge Elementary School, Gunston Middle School, and numerous pre-schools, ***must*** be of paramount importance to Arlington County elected officials and their staff.

The current traffic management plan for Crystal City redevelopment increases traffic to these already hazardous conditions. Further, it also fails to properly assess risks posed by aggressive drivers -- those outside the 85th percentile criterion they use. While claiming to put “people first rather than cars first,” the “Traffic Calming” program relies on measurements of the comfort of drivers, and discounts the threat of outlier drivers – perhaps because they have no measure of the

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discomfort and fear of pedestrians and residents. This criteria seems flawed and inadequate if pedestrian safety is the priority. The Vision Plan asks for high pedestrian counts to justify changes at intersections that were turned over to cars decades ago, deterring pedestrian use. It uses accidents as a criterion to justify change, limiting its projects to only the most egregious problems in Arlington; and formal accident reports have proved to be a gross understatement of actual incidents on our roads.

The additional burdens brought by the planned redevelopment, coupled with issues of current road infrastructure create an unacceptable condition in the adjoining neighborhoods that neither the traffic calming program nor the Neighborhood Conservation program is equipped to address. It is paramount that this situation be acknowledged and tackled within the context of this redevelopment effort.

Transportation and Traffic

The transportation study underpinning the Vision Plan considered only impacts within the limited borders of Crystal City itself. By constraining the area of study in this manner, the Vision Plan analyses are unable to account for the external transportation feeds in and out of Crystal City and through the adjoining neighborhoods. Traffic on the Jefferson Davis corridor is at maximum capacity today during extended periods. According to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments forecasts, background traffic congestion in the region is projected to rise by 40%. Simple logic dictates that this regional increase in congestion coupled with the proposed redevelopment of Crystal City means that the impacts to the Community, including Crystal City *and* the adjoining neighborhoods, will necessarily be quite significant. This is of particular concern in light of the projected three-fold population and employment growth rate for Crystal City over the next twenty years (Figure 1). Without commensurate arterial improvements and substantial infrastructure planning and improvement to handle the projected volumes, debilitating congestion will occur on trains, buses, and roads. Without appropriate planning, the impacts to the 22202 Community will be disproportionately greater than the impacts to the region as a whole.

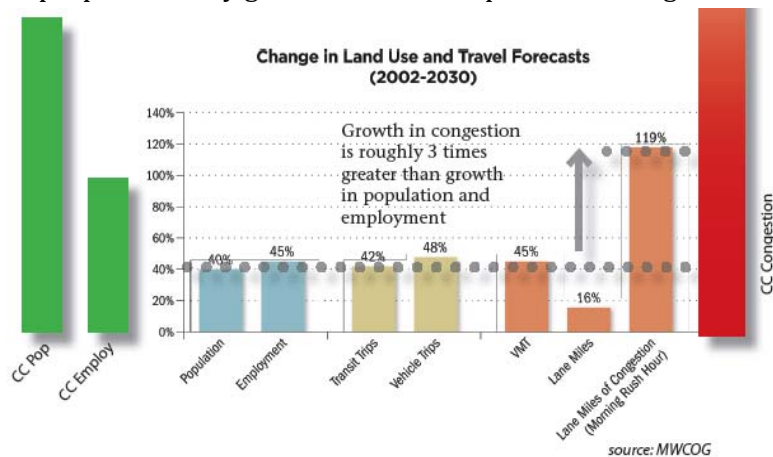


Figure 1

CRYSTAL CITY VISION PLAN 2050

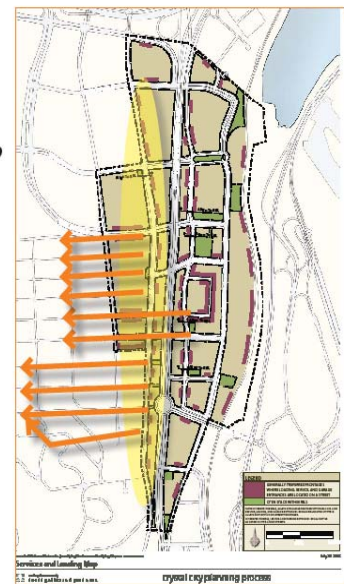
As the major arterial routes that surround and cut through the 22202 zip code reach capacity, both as a general trend and for ever-increasing periods during the day, drivers naturally seek alternative routes. In other words, when our major roadways reach capacity, congestion ensues, and this naturally and predictably places strains upon the Community. In these days of GPS, cut-throughs by commuters into previously “unknown” areas is an increasingly frequent occurrence and becomes a major concern for safety and security in the community. Without appropriate infrastructure planning, the neighborhoods adjoining Crystal City inevitably bear the brunt of cut through traffic as our roads are the only relief conduits to commuters attempting to escape the bottlenecks resulting from volume increases along Jefferson Davis Highway and I-395. For the County to argue that the increased traffic due directly to the redevelopment of Crystal City will have a minimal impact on the arterial streets in the Community; that some 85% to 90% of the trips transiting the Community in fact originate and terminate outside the Community; and that therefore, there is nothing that can or should be done from a planning perspective to address these overall transportation and traffic demands in the Community, is deeply flawed logic.

Finally, for the expanded and additional high-rise buildings resulting from zoning changes proposed in the plan, the garage entrances are arrayed against—and aimed at—our residential neighborhoods as shown on the diagram to the right.

The Community, including Crystal City, will not thrive if traffic congestion precludes residents and workers from easy access. Further, the goal of preserving the integrity of the single-family neighborhoods adjoining Crystal City cannot be preserved if the streets in the Community are gridlocked with daily commuter traffic.

Buildings fronting the west side of Route 1 unload onto Eads Street

The path of least resistance leads through local neighborhoods



Open & Green Space

An important aspect of living and working in Crystal City is the quality and quantity of open space. The Vision Plan projects an increase in total within the Corridor of 61 percent over the coming 40 years. As this density increases, the demands upon open space and parks will increase, and it can naturally be expected that residents and office workers within Crystal City will utilize the open spaces and parks within the Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge neighborhoods.

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Furthermore, the open space planning in the Vision Plan inadequately addresses use of fields for, for example, such popular sports in our international community as soccer and baseball/softball. Additionally, though the Vision Plan addresses a “desire for future cultural elements,” the proposed proportions seem to reflect the population of Crystal City with little consideration of the larger 22202 community. With this larger community in mind, additional venues for the performing arts, as well as an additional outdoor facility should be considered.

A truly integrated plan would therefore appropriately inventory, utilize, improve, and invest in the existing open and green space in the communities of Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge, as their utilization will inevitably increase as Crystal City density increases. For example, Eads Park. Is directly across the street from the defined boundaries of the Vision Plan. Its use as a soccer venue, informally by the residents in the neighborhood as well as formally by the Arlington County, is already significant. While the Vision Plan proposes a new park/plaza directly across from Eads Park at Eads/Ft Scott Drive, which is aesthetically a plus, this new park cannot satisfy the current (much less expanding) athletic requirements. Therefore, the demands on Eads Park will inevitably increase, and its infrastructure necessarily should be improved to support such increased demands. Consideration should be given to installing an all-weather surface for soccer and other sports utilization, and potentially to designing such infrastructure improvement to have the cross-purpose of a community-oriented outdoor performing arts facility for music, theatre, dance and the like. The failure to anticipate such inevitable demands, and to limit solutions to the boundaries of the Crystal City planning area could negatively impact the residential communities immediately adjacent to the development area as well as lead to less than optimal usage of current infrastructure.

Zoning

Maintaining a “friendly” perimeter around the lower density neighborhoods is of paramount importance and the proposed changes to zoning regulations are of concern to current residents. Specifically, the zoning modifications proposed for two streets—South 23rd Street and South Fern Street—significantly eradicate the perimeter by changing its transition characteristics.

Current zoning provides for visual relief, step down from commercial to residential areas, and accommodations for churches and preschools. Proposed rezoning would remove the current open space know as “Cheerios Park”, allow high-rise buildings to abut single family neighborhoods, and remove the requirement for graceful transition from high to low rise structures. Modifications to current zoning would allow infringement or elimination of this protective transition buffer that now surrounds the single-family neighborhoods. The proposed changes for Crystal City require further analysis to ensure the protection of the Community and to stabilize the perimeter surrounding lower density neighborhoods.

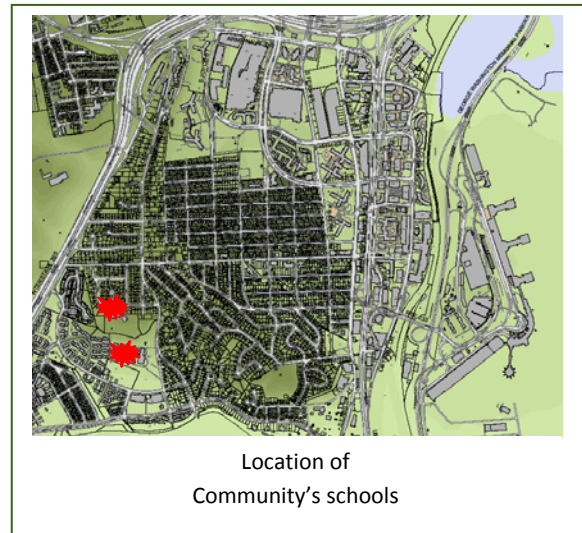
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Neighborhood Schools

In the past, Arlington Public Schools (APS) have operated under the assumption that families with school-aged children will not live in the high-rise apartments/condos being built in the County. However, high-density residences such as Pentagon City's Metropolitan, Pentagon Row, and Avalon Bay (formerly Arna Valley) all had families with school-aged children committed to move in before the complexes opened. The high-density residences of Crystal City and Pentagon City are home to many families, among them diplomatic missions' families and military families. The number of school-aged children is expected to rise and the Vision Plan envisions an increase in the number of families with children in the Community.

Overcrowding is a particularly sensitive concern to the parents of our neighborhood's students. Families experienced first-hand and remember the tremendous overcrowding that led to a decline in neighborhood confidence in Oakridge Elementary and drove some families who are otherwise very engaged in the Community to enroll their children in private or Catholic schools. These concerns have only been alleviated in recent years with the opening of Hoffman-Boston Elementary and the establishment of Claremont as a freestanding language immersion elementary school program.

Today, Oakridge is no longer overcrowded and it once again enjoys neighborhood confidence. Even at this steady state, the APS is again considering redistricting and re-drawing Oakridge's boundaries within our neighborhoods. This would have the effect of requiring children in our contiguous



Location of
Community's schools

neighborhood to be bused to different schools in the County. APS has a historical pattern of addressing overcrowding in schools after the fact, rather than taking action to prevent overcrowding of classrooms in the first place. Such an approach will ultimately jeopardize Arlington County's reputation as home to some of the country's top public schools. Directly pertinent to Crystal City development is the mandate to plan appropriately for elementary, middle and high school capacity, as well as libraries, community and recreation centers, and other requirements associated with maintaining and evolving a vibrant community that addresses the needs of school age children within Crystal City.

Recommendations

In response to the observations, issues, and concerns raised in this document, the Working Group and the Community propose the following recommendations:

Transportation, Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

Sub-Regional Travel Study

When travelers suffer delays they look for shortcuts. The principal arteries for moving traffic (I-395, Route 1, Glebe Road) are already heavily congested and no meaningful capacity increases are in the offing. (The same is true of Metrorail, but fewer options exist for expanding metro transit availability.) The increase in traffic through and around the Community, based on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments projections, will be compounded by increased density in Crystal City. Furthermore, little consideration appears to have been given to current development in Potomac Yards, expansion currently occurring in and around downtown Washington, continuing growth in northern Virginia, and in parts of Maryland. This significant and continuing development in the area strains the system and the system physically comes together adjacent to Crystal City at the 14th Street Bridge crossing the Potomac River.

The Community has a reasonable expectation that the existing infrastructure (road, transit, etc.) will be appropriately prepared to accommodate the increased demand resulting from the proposed development. ***A sub-regional travel study (based on a regional travel model) is required to adequately understand the traffic impacts and to form the basis for long range traffic infrastructure planning and management.*** The model must be responsive to the behavioral changes the County contends that people will make in order to meet their needs on a day-to-day basis, such as when they work, where they work, and how they travel to work. The model must also be able to account for minor capacity improvements and traveler responses to transit-oriented neighborhood design, such as that proposed for Crystal City. It must be demonstrably capable of showing not only growth in transit, but also the substitution of transit, walk, and bicycle trips for auto trips. Such a plan cannot conclude that simply because traffic congestion becomes overwhelming, people will therefore opt for public transportation. Existing behavior indicates otherwise.

Neighborhood Traffic Management & Beautification

Much can be learned from areas that have already grown along the lines proposed for Crystal City—some growth in transit and walk share is probable, but not in the numbers touted by the County thus far in the planning process. Congestion will grow and people will be forced to adapt. This is

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the basis for the Community's fundamental stance: *The County has the responsibility to protect the Community from paying too steep a price for Crystal City's future growth.*

In the 1990s, Lyon Village faced a similar problem when faced with growth in the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. In response to the situation, the County and Civic Association teamed together to develop a comprehensive traffic-calming program for the neighborhood. The program is proudly highlighted on the County web site at:

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/EnvironmentalServices/dot/planning/ntc/lyonvill/EnvironmentalServicesLyonmap.aspx>, and is discussed in further detail in Appendix A.

Unfortunately, none of these measures utilized in Lyon Village are currently considered within the transportation analysis underpinning the Crystal City Vision Plan. The simplistic assumptions and back of the envelope analyses offered are insufficient to the scope and scale of growth and investment contemplated. And these are not solutions that can be considered or applied after the fact. They must precede the development itself.

The Working Group is particularly focused, for example, upon the following issues:

1. Arlington County's reliance upon baseline measurements for current vehicular traffic loads, capacity, and behaviors which are flawed.

a. For example, the measurement of 'trips' per day by residents and office workers within the Jefferson Davis corridor assesses trips only by residents of the high-rise developments and offices within approximately one-quarter mile of the Crystal City metro stop and the Pentagon City metro stop. More than 85% of this survey group are in households of a single person or at most two people. This baseline (which is utilized to argue that the traffic patterns will be 'urban' in their nature rather than 'suburban' with higher vehicular trips per day), by its very definition, fails to consider the single-family residential neighborhoods of Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge which are immediately outside this narrow radius of the survey area. Naturally, by their distance from the metro and the type of residence (largely families), the single family neighborhoods that are sharing precisely the same streets in and around those in the transportation analysis are clearly more dependent upon vehicular 'trips' than are high-rise residents closer to the metro and other public transportation nodes, and of a decidedly more eclectic type of resident.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- *Speed Indicators*
- *Pedestrian Bollards and Brick and/or Painted Crossing Paths*
 - *Bicycle Paths*
 - *Random Speed 'Traps'*
- *Landscaped Neighborhood 'Entrances'*
 - *Stop lights, and other measures to improve driver behavior*

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b. For example, the inability of the current Plan to explain how drivers behave in fact when major arterial routes reach capacity or otherwise are congested. Given that Jefferson Davis Highway is currently at capacity; that there are no plans to increase its capacity; the number of people who will reside in Crystal City alone will triple; the growth and density in all surrounding counties in the Northern Virginia and Washington metropolitan area are similarly expected to grow; the Working Group finds it logical to believe that drivers will resort to utilizing secondary routes through the 22202 zip code. Instead of anticipating this trendline, and building in an integrated structural plan for dealing how traffic flows through the 22202 zip code in fact, the impact of increasing load is not addressed at all.

2. The transportation planning pertaining to the redevelopment of the Jefferson Davis Corridor fails to consider alternative scenarios in the event that its base case projections prove inaccurate. As any student of statistical modeling will tell you, what is projected is rarely what occurs in fact. Therefore, what strategies have been put into place to ensure that the transportation infrastructure in the 22202 zip code will be sufficient to accommodate a higher load than anticipated? It is reasonable, and standard procedures in statistical-based planning, to include sensitivity analysis utilizing multiple hypothetical scenarios to ensure that core structural determinations are sufficient and 'future-proof'. There is no indication that any sensitivity analyses have been conducted, and in fact, County transportation staff has at one point argued that it is necessary to take a 'leap of faith' about the future. This is not a comforting basis upon which long-lasting decisions can or should be made.

3. The Vision Plan currently sets forth a range of techniques and approaches for minimizing the less desirable effects of urban infrastructure, including tree canopies, tree boxes, landscaping, bollards, wide sidewalks, and so forth, all designed to temper the austerity of the concrete and steel core infrastructure necessary to move people through the redeveloped Corridor. Once again the Task Force has not considered Goal 6 as paramount in the planning process. What the Vision Plan fails to do is to extend this appropriate concern and consideration to the neighboring residential communities. The Vision Plan fails to include:

NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRATION WITH CRYSTAL CITY DEVELOPMENT

- *Pedestrian Friendly East-West Crossings at Jefferson Davis Highway*
 - *Landscaped Neighborhood Entrances*
- *No Signage from Crystal City pointed West into Neighborhoods*
- *No new Cross Streets Between Rt1 and Eads*
 - *Street landscaping*
 - *Maximum width sidewalks*
- *Minimize impact from loading docks, garbage and waste services, delivery services*

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- a. Appropriate traffic calming remedies, and purposeful means of disincentivizing drivers from ‘cutting through’ the residential neighborhoods, or to the extent that they do, do so in a slow, aware, and respectful manner to the residents, including children and elderly and handicapped that live, work, and play in the neighborhood;
- b. Creating community ‘entrances’ at the boundaries between the Pentagon City and Crystal City neighborhoods and north and east sides of the Aurora Highlands neighborhood, or the 395 or Glebe arterials on the West and South sides of the Arlington Ridge Neighborhood; and
- c. Ensuring that the less attractive aspects of urban growth and development (for example, signage, loading docks, delivery trucks, garbage and waste services) do not adversely impact the residents and residential properties that line the Crystal City and Pentagon City development corridors.

Achieving Pedestrian Safety

Despite massive community effort to achieve reasonable control of our central neighborhood roads, we have been limited in what we can achieve by the current designation of these roads as 'arterials.' Arterials are excluded from even the limited fixes allowed within Arlington County's "Traffic Calming" program.

Currently, the Crystal City redevelopment plans threaten to increase the danger for pedestrians. The Vision Plan states in one of its key recommendations (§ 3.6.1 pg 46) to "Maintain the capacity of Jefferson Davis Highway...and divert traffic primarily to arterial streets to minimize adverse impacts of cut through traffic into surrounding neighborhoods". Our concern is that these arterial streets ARE our neighborhood streets. This "arterial" designation is an historical artifact. Long ago, for example, Arlington Ridge Road/Mt Vernon was the main connection between Alexandria and Washington, D.C. Today, there are numerous available routes, and there is no longer a reason to designate Arlington Ridge Road an arterial. 23rd Street is the major north/south divider in the adjoining neighborhoods (much as Jeff Davis Highway is as an east/west divider to Crystal City) and thus "our grand boulevard". We ask the same special concessions granted to Crystal City for their "grand boulevard" be extended to 23rd street. Arlington Ridge Road, along with 23rd Street S, and Fort Scott Road, need to be re-designated as collector roads and alternate routes in and out of Crystal City for commuters have to be planned. By aiming traffic at these "neighborhood arterials" the plan is defeating its stated objective.

The redesignation of these roads to collector status is important to commuters as well as pedestrians. These are old neighborhoods. The roads and intersections and driveway accesses were planned and constructed decades ago; most of our Community was built out by mid-century, and much of it predates World War II – extending even to the era of trolley cars along South Eads Street.

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This Community is simply not constructed to safely carry such large loads of traffic. Drivers backing from home driveways onto roads with speeding cars, and intersection configurations such as that at Lang and Arlington Ridge Road, are tragedies waiting to happen. Our neighborhood road configurations are far too out-of-date for current loads and mixed uses than are the buildings and roads in Crystal City. Our streets were not designed to adequately balance the needs of pedestrians, residents, and outsider vehicles in the modern age of proliferated cars, delivery and service trucks. Many design deficiencies and traffic control shortcomings make our neighborhood roads uncomfortable and unsafe even under current traffic volumes. Problems include unusual intersection configurations with no accommodation for pedestrians, narrow “yield” streets, blind curves and hills, high-speed oblique right turns (aka “slip turns;” “free right turns.”), and inappropriate speed limits.

Infrastructure improvements to our Community’s roads and sidewalks are needed to ameliorate the effects of the increased traffic and activity generated by new growth and density.

The Working Group maintains that no zoning changes allowing for additional density in Crystal City should be allowed before a comprehensive master plan is developed and funded for all neighborhood roads, including arterials. This plan should create pedestrian accommodations and safety reflecting the latest thinking and rhetoric on balancing interests of pedestrians with other modes of travel. The residents of Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge are too often required to “play catch-up” to the many high density, high traffic developments brought into our 22202 community – receiving improvements for crossing, sidewalks, and traffic controls decades after the development, and on a hard-won piecemeal basis that wears down resident volunteers. We would like to see our community receive the same holistic planning focus that the County gives to developers, and to Lyon Village (home of two Board members, based on a far smaller development threat).

We strongly urge Arlington County planners to ensure that the Crystal City redevelopment Vision Plan adequately address these concerns, and offer the adjoining residential neighborhoods a well-thought-out and funded plan to ensure well-controlled traffic that permits pedestrians – including children and the elderly – a safe and comfortable and livable neighborhood.

Zoning

Zoning regulations must protect the health, safety, and welfare of the populace as well as to provide economic return. Any change in the zoning regulations planned for Crystal City redevelopment must ensure the safety and livability requirements of all residents of the 22202 community.

We support the Vision Plan objective to enhance green space and urge that existing parks, play and picnic areas, benches along walkways, bike paths be preserved, and such spaces be expanded proportionally as density increases. The view shed for all residents should be considered, building heights scaled, and building styles of new structures adjacent to existing buildings should be

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consistent in style and design with the current neighborhood. Overall, integration of new construction with the existing neighborhood should be a priority for Crystal City redevelopment.

Zoning regulations should protect our local small businesses. South Arlington has long been very friendly to locally-owned and operated businesses. We urge this tradition be maintained. In particular, we urge the continuance of the existing zoning regulations that protect our 23rd Street Restaurant Row, (encompassed in the Crystal City Planning Area in the Vision Plan, but actually long a landmark in the Aurora Highlands neighborhood), in a way that allows local small businesses to prosper while preserving the neighborhood flavor that makes it unique.

The Working Group will continue to study the ramifications of the zoning changes proposed in the Vision Plan and will submit questions and concerns to Arlington County.

Park and Open Space

Due to the increasing usage demands upon the park and open space within the Community as density increases, such parks need to be upgraded with the infrastructure necessary to permit higher levels of utilization. This is a clear community benefit that can be realized as increased density is permitted by the County. Furthermore, the open space and park plans in the Vision Plan are highly ‘urban’ in their contrived definition: Pocket parks; rooftop parks; inner courtyards; and the like. There are no open fields to support large numbers of people and activities, despite a representative image of the ideal: Chicago’s Millenium Park, a considerably larger open space than perhaps all of the park space included in the Crystal City Plan.

The Community also understands the economic limitations unique to Crystal City. It is an area in which the proportion of private ownership of land is exceptionally high, and therefore the redevelopment of the area requires sensitivity to the realities of the business case for retail, office space, and residential developments. Under such conditions, the simple fact is that securing more public space or open space within Crystal City will

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

- *Improved Park Infrastructure, Including All-Weather Park Infrastructure (artificial surfaces; multi-use surfaces)*
- *Outdoor Arts and Performance Space*
- *Year-Round Swimming / Aqua Facility*
- *Pedestrian and Bicycle-Only Trails/Paths Integrating the 22202 Zip Code (i.e., from Crystal City to Fort Scott to Arlington Ridge to Pentagon City through Aurora Highlands)*

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be difficult to obtain, and the debate will look for further contrivances to argue that there is sufficiently 'open space' as broadly defined as is possible. Therefore, a well-conceived and integrated Vision Plan would recognize the inevitable demands upon the open space and park space in the Community, and begin planning for how to make the investments, either County-based or developer-based, which will improve this infrastructure for the common good, including the livability and aesthetics of the broader Community.

Schools in the Community

The demands upon the schools in the Community will increase as density increases. It is inevitable. Therefore, a proactive approach to planning would anticipate this impact, and begin by designating where additional facilities can be and should be located as the number of residents with families increase. Currently, while the Vision Plan well conceptualizes where shops, retail, and entertainment facilities will integrate into the fabric of a new Crystal City, it is silent as to where core community infrastructure should be located, like an additional elementary school if necessary. It is recommended that the Vision Plan at least project the number of additional school age children in the Community as density increases, and articulate some 'vision' for whether a new 'urban' type school housed in a high-rise will be required, whether Oakridge and/or Gunston will require further expansion, and other such fundamental planning parameters.

Medical Facilities & Emergency Response Planning

The Community is located at the heart of the United States military establishment, with the Pentagon on the northern edge of the study area; legions of government contractors and military personnel in the Crystal City office buildings; one of the primary sites of the airline attacks on 9/11 that launched the United States into military actions that have endured longer than WWII; not to mention being framed on the eastern side by Reagan National Airport, and with the political establishment of the United States located only minutes away across the Potomac.

Yet, there is no hospital in the 22202 zip code, nor is there any emergency or urgent care facilities. Residents within the Community must travel to Alexandria or North Arlington for any such medical services.



Yet, with exception a brief reference to emergency services, the Vision Plan is silent as to this critical community infrastructure despite the realities of its geographic and the national strategic importance of the location, and the demonstrable inadequacy of current medical care services in the Community. It is recommended that a 'vision' for the future of these community at least address the need for improving the medical infrastructure in the area, and developing emergency plans which will effectively manage response and evacuation needs during a crisis as density increases, arterials

Community Center & Library

The Aurora Hills Complex – the library, community center, and the now retired fire station – plus the adjacent park came into existence in 1978. They comprise part of a community amenity presented to the neighborhood by the developers of Pentagon City. The library, community center, and the old Fire Station No. 5 are distinct entities that occupy separate spaces housed under the same roof, in the same building.

With the exception of the library, the complex is neglected and underutilized at a time when facilities County-wide are strained by overuse. The fire station presently acts as a storage depot; the community center is open for only six hours, three days per week for a senior citizens' program. Today, 21,000 County residents, or roughly 10 percent of the County's entire population, live within one mile of the Aurora Hills Complex. By 2013, the County anticipates this number to be 26,000. An expanded and revitalized community center and library complex is a requirement of the Community, and should be fully considered as an expanded vibrant and vital resource at the heart of and designed to better serve the Community.



The Working Group asks to see a plan for physical and 'use' improvements to this complex that fosters further connectivity with the Community, including Aurora Highlands, Arlington Ridge, Crystal City, Pentagon City, and the Pentagon. Through physical and use improvements, the community center should become a central resource for an expanded senior citizens' program, continuing education courses, literacy programs, recreation and exercise programs, community meetings, youth programs, perhaps even a visiting health clinic, a venue in which community musicians perform and local artists display their work.

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Full weekend hours at the Aurora Hills Library are among the benefits that the Community wishes to see considered, given the large and diverse community that this particular library supports, as well as both its central location and proximity to Community.

Finally, we have the opportunity to use this space to reinforce Arlington County's broader role in the region by commemorating and celebrating our local heroes. Retired fire station No. 5 dispatched the very first truck, Engine Number 105, to the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, and this represents an important piece of the history of our Community. We would like to see this center house an historical display honoring Arlington's firefighters and emergency personnel who responded to the attack on the Pentagon. Such a display would complement the story now memorialized on the Pentagon's west side.

With a revitalized fire station community center anchoring one end of the complex and a flourishing library open seven days a week on the other end, the Community would be anchored by a strong heart at its center.

Summary

We urge Arlington County planners to recognize and protect the long-established, stable, lovely family-oriented neighborhoods of Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge with our small town atmosphere in a near-urban location. It is a place where we seek to raise families, seek respite from demanding jobs that are often of national and international scope, and finally retire and grow old. We value the proximity to services and our central location.

Our pride and love for our neighborhood is evident in the impeccable care of residences and grounds. We are extremely fortunate in our local police and fire protectors, who help keep our neighborhood safe. Volunteers spend time every Sunday tending to common spaces in our neighborhood. We vigorously support our local library. Our schools have improved exponentially in recent years due to parent and resident support and involvement.

Ours is among the most diverse communities in the metropolitan Washington area. Our local elementary school, Oakridge Elementary, welcomed students from more than 50 nations of origin in the past academic year. Our residents are young professionals, families, and retirees; their incomes range from lower-levels to affluent. Ours is not a transient neighborhood, so common to the region. Many of our residents have lived in this zip code for decades – some were born here. These are wonderful neighborhoods, worth protecting.

We urge the Arlington County planners to recognize the interconnectedness of our community, and to consider the entire 22202 zip code when planning this redevelopment. Plans for Crystal City redevelopment will inevitably affect our neighborhoods. If planning is done well, the effects will be positive. If planning is done poorly, or if our neighborhood is overlooked, the effects will be negative. Again, this is inevitable.

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The 22202 neighborhoods and landmarks complement and reinforce one another. It is unlikely that one can flourish without the others' flourishing. The Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge neighborhoods welcome the improvements planned for our neighbors in Crystal City. Still, we urge Arlington County planners to recognize that no "integrated vision plan" focusing solely on Crystal City can succeed.

We respectfully submit these comments and recommendations to the Task Force for their consideration. We believe that careful consideration of these proposals will help to ensure that the Crystal City Development effort satisfies its goal to "Preserve the integrity of the single-family neighborhood to the west". We request that any changes to GLUP, Zoning or the Transportation Master Plan be held in abeyance until you accomplish your review.

A truly integrated plan would appropriately inventory, utilize, improve, and invest in the existing infrastructure of the communities of Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge. In doing so, the proposed development effort will provide optimal value to the county while also achieving and maintaining the vision of 22202 as one of the county's premier urban oases.

Collectively, we have the opportunity to envision and then build a community in which a high density urban area built around public transportation hubs can not only coexist, but seamlessly integrate with, an immediately adjacent neighborhood of single family homes, schools, and such valuable community infrastructure as a library, community center, and numerous parks. This integration is accomplished by effective management of vehicular volumes and driver behavior, with significant investments being made to ensure safe, aware, and cautious driving through residential neighborhoods; by encouraging the single family neighborhoods to utilize bicycles, walking and other forms transportation other than vehicles through the purposeful development of pedestrian and bike-friendly thoroughfares that connect through the entirety of the 22202 zip code; by carefully managing zoning and land use so as to ensure a seamless, aesthetically-pleasing, transition between the single family neighborhoods and the more urbanized developments in Crystal City, Pentagon City, and Potomac Yard; to continuously upgrade and invest in the common community infrastructure of our parks, open space, and recreational facilities throughout the 22202 zip code; and to further strengthen the Community's access to exceptional public education; health services; and police, fire and emergency services.

Appendix A

The Lyon Village Case Study

Much can be learned from areas that have already grown along the lines proposed for Crystal City—some growth in transit and walk share is probable, but not in the numbers touted by the County thus far in the planning process. Congestion will grow and people will be forced to adapt. This is the basis for the Community's fundamental stance: *The County has the responsibility to protect the Community from paying too steep a price for Crystal City's future growth.*

In the 1990s, Lyon Village faced a similar problem when faced with growth in the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. In response to the situation, the County and Civic Association teamed together to develop a comprehensive traffic-calming program for the neighborhood. The program is proudly highlighted on the County web site at:

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Using developer contributions associated with the development of Clarendon Center, a comprehensive approach to protecting neighborhood livability and sustainability was developed. The solution addressed incursions at the neighborhood perimeter and reinforced the message with dozens of improvements inside the perimeter. Neighbors and consultants hired to address their needs quickly realized that the isolated use of individual calming measures would not be sufficient to deter drivers from speeding once they entered the neighborhood. Successive treatments such as speed tables and traffic circles were used to control traffic.

In the example shown below along Key Boulevard, a series of attractively landscaped traffic islands have been installed. They are supplemented by such improvements as street nubs, high contrast crosswalks, speed tables, pavement markings, and road signs.

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Traffic controls along Key Boulevard

Lyon Village also instituted a series of restriction to through truck traffic. This will be particularly important for the Community. The safety of the County children attending Oakridge Elementary School, Gunston Middle School, and numerous pre-schools, as well as our many working and elderly pedestrians, is of paramount importance. It is also directly aligned to Arlington County's stated intention to be among the nation's most pedestrian friendly. It is not acceptable for the neighborhoods adjoining Crystal City to become the route through which excavation and construction traffic passes. *These restrictions must be put in place before the truck traffic caused by demolition and construction begins.*

It is worth noting that the improvements to Lyon Village that are outlined above were undertaken as a priority action associated with the development. Funds were spent without going through the Neighborhood Conservation, Residential Traffic Management, or Neighborhood Traffic Calming processes. Our communities merit commensurate consideration, especially considering that the relative magnitude of development sought in Crystal City far exceeds the Clarendon Centre project. None of this is currently considered in the transportation analysis.