

Arlington Ridge Civic Association

SPECIAL EDITION: ARCA ARCHIVES

This newsletter recalls earlier County efforts to develop Long Range Plans and the final results of these plans. It is offered to provide on the Crystal City Redevelopment PDSP.

WHAT IS A PDSP?

Well, it stands for a Phased Development Site Plan.

WHO CREATED THE PDSP?

In the spring of 1975 the County's planning department developed a zoning process by which a coordinated development of several parcels of land under a unified plan could be implemented. This zoning process has two components the **Phased Development Site Plan** and **Final Site Plan**.

DO WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF A PREVIOUS PDSP?

The first example under this process was the 116 acre site known as the Pentagon City Tract. The PDSP was prepared by Dewberry, Nealon & Davis and submitted to the County in 1975. The County Board approved the Plan on February 25, 1976.

PENTAGON CITY PDSP

WHAT DID THIS PDSP PROVIDE?

Former chairman of the Arlington County Planning Commission Sidney Dewberry (also the principal in the above noted firm) stated in his November 29, 1976, testimony to the Arlington Court regarding this PDSP that it provides a long range plan in which the **"uses and densities are fixed by parcel"** and the citizens know what development to expect over future years. This assures that development won't be **"helter skelter"**!

DID DEVELOPMENT TAKE PLACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PDSP?

For the 116 acre Pentagon City tract there were five distinct land parcels with the various uses and precise densities assigned to each parcel. The final site plans for Parcel 4 and Parcel 5 were filed and constructed in accordance with the PDSP. Namely, for Parcel 4, the 12.4 acre Park was deeded to the County. This is seen today as the softball fields and soccer field across the street from the River House apartments on South Joyce Street. For Parcel 5, the 17 acres, was also developed in accordance with the PDSP. Namely, the Southampton townhouses, Claridge House and the nursing home.

WHAT ABOUT PARCELS 1, 2, and 3?

Development for these parcels, comprising 75% of the 116.4 acre tract, is best described as

"**helter skelter**" development in that it departed from the vision and detailed plans laid out in the 1976 approved PDSP. The original vision for these parcels was to create a "live-work-shop" relationship around the Metro station with specific amounts of residential, office and retail commercial assigned to each Parcel. The plan was to result in an essentially "**carless community**"! Starting around 1980 the final site plans that were filed changed considerably. Apparently the land owner was not able to find developers who were interested in the PDSP requirements. As part of the site plan changes, parcels 1, 2, and 3, were re-carved and are known today as Parcels 1A - 2A, 1B - 2B, 1C, 1D, and 3.

In reviewing the various final site plans that were filed for these parcels, and approved by the County Board, it appears that the County allowed developers to "pick off" the more profitable uses, office and commercial, and consolidate them into major projects. The less profitable residential use lagged behind. Later, planned residential units were exchanged for more retail commercial.

The PDSP therefore offers no assurance as to what development will take place. Essentially, what happens is final site plans are filed depending on market conditions and a specific developer's expertise, i.e., in the business of building office, residential, etc. The final site plans that are filed for a specific project reflect the best financial interests of the landowner as opposed to following an approved County PDSP.

Accordingly, under the PDSP one does not know what will be built, when it will be built or even if it will be built. So, this begs the question, **WHY HAVE A PDSP? There are those who believe it is done to mislead and out-right deceive the community, while enriching the landowner with additional building rights over which the county has no control.**

IS THE PENTAGON CITY PDSP FINALLY DEVELOPED?

No, the changes continue. On July 11, 2009, another amendment was filed and approved by the County Board to rearrange residential and hotel units among parcels. The PDSP Map as it stands today is shown on Page 4. As an aside, the Parcel 1D was a potential site for a baseball stadium.

POSITIVE COMMUNITY BENEFITS FROM THE PENTAGON CITY PDSP

However, the most positive benefit to our community was having Parcels 4 and 5 developed in accordance with the approved Plan. With Parcel 4 the community received a **12.4 acre park**. And, with Parcel 5 the **existing single-family residential community is buffered** by the less intense uses, namely, townhouse and nursing home development.

CRYSTAL CITY REDEVELOPMENT PDSP

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE CRYSTAL CITY REDEVELOPMENT PDSP?

At present the County Board approved a concept and the County's Long Range Planning Committee(LRPC) is reviewing the plan for the redevelopment of Crystal City. At the ARCA's May 14, 2009, meeting County Planner Anthony Fusarelli made a presentation on draft plan for the Crystal City Redevelopment PDSP. He made it clear that under this PDSP there are no

assurances that any thing would be rebuilt as called for in the concept plan. Also, the task force that prepared the draft concept only addressed concerns within the boundaries of the redevelopment area. The impacts on the surrounding community were not addressed. Since then community representatives have been appointed to the LPRC.

ARCA's POSITION

As a result of the May meeting many questions have been raised regarding the redevelopment of Crystal City. While ARCA did not take a position on this redevelopment many concerns were expressed by those in attendance. Redevelopment as such is probably supported by most of the community. Many of the buildings are old and do not meet present building codes. However, the present concept for this redevelopment has raised many unanswered questions. A significant increase in additional density is being requested along with the redevelopment. This is being requested without addressing the impact on the surrounding community. The ARCA has forwarded its questions to the County Board and we continue to await its response.

SOME CONCERNS

The major concern is the plan does not address the adverse impacts on the community outside the PDSP plan area. This was not studied. Another example is the plan appears to remove urban park area within Crystal City as opposed to providing a community benefit with additional park area. In general it appears that open space created by present set back requirements is to be replaced with buildings, i.e., you would no longer see the planted landscaping along Route 1. In general there do not appear to be any significant community benefits that would justify the County Board's granting additional building rights to the land owners just for the sake of redevelopment.

AIRPLANE SAFETY ISSUE?

The Citizens for the Abatement of Aircraft Noise (CAAN) has raised a safety concern with the Crystal City Redevelopment concept. It notes that "if the pilot requests or an air traffic controller orders a wave-off (go around), the only direction the pilot can go is towards the west, right where the 200 to 300 foot buildings will be placed." CAAN believes that while aircraft pilots can presently navigate their planes down the river and land when the weather is good, having to contend with these buildings at night or in inclement weather may pose an unwarranted safety risk.

PDSP versus SITE PLAN

From ARCA's experience over the past forty years, the PDSP process does not provide any assurance that plans will be followed. Having a PDSP in place is not necessary for redevelopment. For example, when ARNA Valley was redeveloped by Avalon Bay there was no PDSP. Further, the County Board has a history of generosity in awarding increased density for redevelopment as was done when Avalon Bay filed its site plan for redevelopment. Even now within Crystal City an office building is being converted to residential. It could well be that the County has more to gain by considering individual redevelopment site plans block by block, as opposed to a massive PDSP covering approximately 300 acres. Once the County Board grants additional building rights, they cannot be taken away.

PENTAGON CITY PHASED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

