

**CRYSTAL CITY CIVIC ASSOCIATION:**

1. Several members of the Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA) have participated in all the virtual presentations, comment periods and surveys of the PC PDSP drafting exercise. We have consistently supported the comments of the Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) and the Arlington Ridge Civic Association (ARCA), our partners in Livability 22202, as the proposed PDSP area falls within the boundaries of their associations. Major issues have included density, open space calculations, the preservation of the existing library and community center uses within the study area, the need for specific siting and timing for a new school site and transportation capacity.
2. Crystal City planning and development is governed by the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCSP). As a result, we have experienced the opportunities and constraints that an adopted County plan can have on growth and change in a neighborhood. Both AHCA and ARCA are primarily low density residential, so it is understandable that the substantial increase in density and height envisioned in the PC PDSP raises concerns about the impact on the low-density neighborhoods. Sector plans and PDSPs take a long time to develop and even longer to amend as conditions change, so getting it right from the beginning is important. Opportunities for input into the draft exercise have been robust, yet some concerns remain, including how specific and detailed the plan’s requirements and guidance will be.
3. Pentagon City is planned for high-density development, as are other neighborhoods along the Metro corridors. Our experience with the CCSP shows that careful planning can minimize the impacts of increased office and residential density. It also has demonstrated that specificity can sometimes stifle creative thinking, especially regarding open space, transportation issues and planning for future community benefits.
4. The PDSP study area includes Virginia Highlands Park and Grace Hopper Park, existing resources about which Crystal City residents can only dream. These parks provide excellent continuous green space along South 15<sup>th</sup> and Joyce Streets and should remain in place while being studied to maximize their uses. There is no need to disrupt that area by relocating Joyce Street; the cost would be prohibitive with no apparent gain in open space. **RESPONSE:** The relocation of S. Joyce Street does not disrupt the park any more than a typical park master planning effort would as it considers comprehensive design and landscape improvements through that entire public space. The Plan’s recommendation to shift S. Joyce Street to the west would initially just involve the construction of the (new) realigned segment through the existing RiverHouse driveway/parking area. This would be the responsibility of JBG Smith as the property owner and expected concurrently with their initial phases of redevelopment on that site. Those improvements are not expected to disrupt amenities on the VHP site as the existing S. Joyce Street would remain until the park master planning effort would confirm how that area should be repurposed. The assertion in the last sentence that the “cost would be prohibitive with no apparent gain in open space” is simply inaccurate and unsubstantiated.
5. The draft plan calls for meandering greenways, which may connect depending on future development. However, the study area includes several mega-blocks with existing PDSPs, including existing MetPark and proposed PenPlace. These two sites will have substantial park areas in their cores, which primarily benefit site users. Connecting them to other greenways in the study area to their west will require special signage at least. The green connections are further hampered by the

fact that the Kimco (COSTCO) site and the Mall are NOT included in the plan, making it more difficult to apply some uniform standards and requirements in the study area. **RESPONSE:** Access to the planned MetPark and PenPlace central open spaces is already identified in their respective site plans and park master plans. Wayfinding, which can further enhance that access and increase visibility to those community resources (and others in the area) are noted in the Plan as requiring further planning and close coordination with the National Landing BID who is expected to soon undertake a similar effort within their entire district. The primary pathway for the green ribbon intentionally avoids the block between S. Joyce and S. Hayes Streets where redevelopment would significantly impact the timing of these improvements. Staff believes the current alignment ensures the community can benefit from this network much sooner as near-term redevelopment occurs. With respect to the Kimco block, staff believes that any subsequent request to adjust the vision on that block would trigger a separate process to ensure the remainder of that parcel redevelops in a cohesive manner that reflects the recommendations of the Sector Plan.

6. As is often the case, community benefits are of special concern. We continue to maintain that site selection and planning for a new school to serve 22202 must be part of the PC PDSP. We recognize the political sensitivity and priorities around siting and funding for new schools. We urge cooperation between the County and APS to ensure that school population projections reflect the proposed new development in 22202 to minimize complications from overcrowding and to allow 22202 students to access their home schools with minimal busing. One site for a possible upper school would be the existing Aurora library and community center. Others have spoken to this site for collocating community facilities. Should the best use of the site not include the community center, it should definitely be located close to the residential neighborhoods without encroaching on public open space. **RESPONSE:** The Sector Plan addresses the topic of schools in a level of detail that has not occurred in past Sector Plans. While it stops short of formally identifying a specific location for a new elementary school, the Plan clearly indicates the strategic benefit of considering a potential location of this public facility within the subsequent park master planning effort. Absent of this approach, if APS waits another decade before they begin such an effort, the few (limited) sites will likely be unavailable or already redeveloped. As private redevelopment will be addressing a multitude of other needs previously identified as priorities by the community, staff believes the VHP will likely represent the final destination for the new school. The Plan also encourages near-term redevelopment to consider accommodating a community center or library in their ground story spaces as a qualifying community benefit that meets the Plan's goals. However, should those opportunities not materialize, the Plan further signals the need of the VHP master planning effort to consider how both community facilities could be expanded within that publicly-owned area.
7. Finally, we remain concerned about planning for multimodal transportation uses, and discourage any proposal which allows for diversion into the single family neighborhoods. In Crystal City, we have seen what happens when an existing street becomes overloaded with many uses. In new development, buildings can be designed to allow for generous sidewalks and street planting. However, they don't widen the roads, so where street parking is retained for convenience the result is conflict between pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. It also makes exiting garages in a vehicle hazardous, which is already the case on many blocks. We applaud the effort to improve Hayes Street, making it more efficient and attractive with special emphasis on the entrance to Virginia Highlands Park. **Response:** The Sector Plan prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle mobility along existing and future connections. While there is some specificity included in the Plan, a number of items related to this topic are included in the Implementation Matrix for further study.

8. A major goal of the Green Ribbon is to create a sense of place. Unfortunately, the Design Guidelines are so vague as to change the path every time a different group builds a specific section.
  - a. First, all way-finding signs need to be standardized. A basic design should be approved for the all Green Ribbons. A standard sign would help link the different parts of the Green Ribbon.  
**RESPONSE:** The updated Sector Plan speaks further to the need for consistency in the branding and wayfinding throughout this network. This may require close coordination with the National Landing BID or simply benefit from a subsequent process to establish a standardized approach. To be clear, staff agrees and supports this approach while reinforcing the benefits of allowing each site to uniquely interpret the character of their segment through redevelopment. Focus group discussions and research from our consultants highlighted the advantages of allowing various widths, turns, and design features which improve the diversity and unique character of those spaces. We realize some localities and sites may find a repetitive cross-section ideal, but our earlier discussions led us a different solution for Pentagon City.
  - b. Second, material and color of the paths needs to be established. One path should not have several different materials as a base. **RESPONSE:** With respect to the first two points, variety in character and unique interpretations could actually help in achieving beneficial diversity in design and ensuring that more elements from the design guidelines menu are ultimately utilized. Construction of some segments of this network may occur years apart – something that SPRC discussions should have a chance to inform (especially with subsequent segments that may require proper transitions or to establish cohesiveness with previously installed segments nearby).
  - c. Third, a standard lighting scheme should be selected. **RESPONSE:** Segments of the green ribbon will traverse residential properties, unique retail environments, public streets, and public parks. Since all of those will involve different ground floor environments adjacent to the green ribbon, it becomes difficult to presuppose a standard lighting scheme that could consistently be applied across all 3 miles of this network.
2. Lastly, a basic path design should be selected. For example, a path should be at least 15' path with 2' Shrub planting, a 4' path, a 3' center tree canopy, with flowering garden or shrub plantings under the trees, a 4' path and the 2' shrub planting. **RESPONSE:** Focus Group discussions from 2020-2021 informed the current approach which encourages varying widths and curved alignment that results in more complexity and brings greater interest to these spaces. A rigid cross-section aligned in a straight line for long spans was not desired here. Singular dimensional minimums have also proved challenging to implement based on recent SPRC reviews of site plan proposals. As a result, the green ribbon cross-section includes a range depicted in feet for each of the zones which should provide greater flexibility for future discussions.
3. Without tighter design specifications, the Green Ribbon could be all of these designs in a three block path. Having all of the choices open to each developer will produce a confusing and bizarre path. **RESPONSE:** Initial developments will prove quite useful in establishing precedents for these while subsequent projects will be asked to ensure compatibility with previously approved segments of the green ribbon. This issue will be addressed at SPRC when actual proposals are submitted. We believe the development community is aware of this and does not want to invest in a design that results in a confusing and unattractive environment. Staff does not share in the opinion that absent of this guidance such an outcome is otherwise inevitable.

4. Appendix Comments: **RESPONSE:** Staff will take these under advisement.
- a. Path construction: The path needs to be of a similar type and look throughout the Area. I personally like the Tessellated Pavers as Natural Analogues. How can it be a 'Green Ribbon' if it looks industrial?
  - b. Planting Zone: While having trees is really important, maybe we can be more specific with the alternative: Flowering Garden.
  - c. Planters: I do not think round planters should be in the mix.
  - d. Shade Structures: Any shade structure should maximize natural plants, through trellis, not be an industrial structure.
  - e. Vertical Elements: If necessary, they should be a Living Wall or Water Feature. Axe the Mural or Architectural Façade.
  - f. Way-finding: This is one my biggest complaints. The way-finding should be constant throughout the area. Having multiple types of way-finding is really bad. We need to pick one.
  - g. Inlays: I like inlays, but they need to be the same.
  - h. Seating (refuge): One type of seating should be selected. I like the "Tucked Seating", but we need one type.
  - i. Lighting: We need one type of lighting and Pedestrian Lighting seems the best.