

**Rosslyn Plaza Guiding Principles**  
**Comments received on 8/28/12 draft document**

## Rosslyn Plaza Guiding Principles

Comments Submitted by Karen Kumm Morris, FASLA

8/31/12, updated 9/11/12

### General Comments

- Good comprehensive set of guidelines that range from building form and heights to parking and loading and sustainability.
- Although no priority ranking is intended, the organization of guidelines needs some revision perhaps starting first with uses and then proceeding with physical form guidelines such as urban design that includes building form and heights, compatibility and placemaking, etc.
- The extensive open space guidelines are excellent. It is very helpful to recognize the recreational function of sidewalks as part of the open space system, (E. OS Guideline 5, page 4), especially in a highly urban setting, such as Rosslyn. The sidewalk system provides walking, seating areas for social gathering, people watching and café opportunities, and even street entertainment in the form of street performance artists, all in addition to the primary function as access to destinations.

### Needs more work

- Identify the context of this project within Rosslyn. Using an approved or generally accepted framework for Rosslyn, in what district or neighborhood is this project? Is it really a gateway or a significant edge as viewed from the Monumental Core. Context is important to understand because it suggests how to view compatibility and placemaking.
- Achieving Compatibility and Creating a Sense of Place needs more text on how to achieve these very important, significant principles. This section should provide clear guidance for project review. More thought should be given to how compatibility for this project with surrounding existing and future uses can be achieved without being too restrictive. For example, A. 1, guideline might list the ways that compatibility could be achieved.

#### Sample text:

1. Development should achieve compatibility with the surrounding existing and future uses by such means as stepping down building heights from the core area, minimizing the building's bulk and mass through building arrangement and articulation of the building facades, minimizing traffic impact, location and level of lighting and signage, location of open spaces, and retail activation.
- Creating a sense of place guidelines need more clarity and guidance. Part of the challenge is that this project is ahead of the Rosslyn Sector Plan Addendum where a framework plan would logically define the placemaking elements. Given the proposal, two key placemaking features are the primary open space and the Spectrum Theater. To ensure that they become significant placemaking features, adding text on how to achieve this would be helpful. For example, A. 5. Guidelines, page 2 might say:

#### Sample Text:

6. The cultural facility should provide placemaking elements such as a visible primary entrance and plaza as seen from Wilson Boulevard, a distinctive architectural form that reads as a contemporary theater, integrated public art that is site specific and placemaking in character.
  7. The primary open space should be designed as a unique place with features and elements that draw upon Rosslyn's history and identity.
- Building and Heights might say more about placement of residential towers to take advantage of views along the river and provide more slender edges as seen from the Monument Core, to minimize the sense of a massive wall of buildings.

These principles are shaping up well. The challenge is that the framework for this site isn't determined yet. Is it an edge with a belvedere overlook, or is it a network of streets with standard urban development facing streets?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Additional comments may come later.

#### 9/11/12 Additional Comments

- Building Form - Maximize Rosslyn's view sheds of the National Mall by locating the slender side of buildings towards the east side of the site.
- Compatibility and Placemaking - Arrange buildings and design the site in a manner that strengthens the sense place within Rosslyn as a distinct district and providing significant views along the eastern edge of the site. Views from adjacent development should be considered in site design.
- Open Space - provide a variety of open spaces that meet the needs of the Rosslyn community including flexible spaces that can be programmed for multiple activities.

## Rosslyn Plaza Guiding Principles

Comments Submitted by Rosslyn BID (shown in red)

9/5/12

### Guiding Principles

In response to a Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) submitted for the Rosslyn Plaza site, County staff, the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC), and the Planning Commission drafted these principles to guide the long-term development of the site and to evaluate future site plan applications. They are based on existing Arlington County policy documents, including:

Rosslyn Station Area Plan Addendum (1992);  
General Land Use Plan (2011);  
Arlington Master Transportation Plan (2009-2011);  
Rosslyn Multi-Modal Transportation Study Draft (2011);  
Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor Streetscape Standards (2007);  
Retail Action Plan (2001);  
Public Spaces Master Plan (2005); and  
County Board Resolutions on Building Heights (1982, 2002, 2007).

Should new County policy be adopted in the future **prior to each new PDSP amendment and the final site plan, each phase** should be evaluated in the context of these principles and the latest County policy. The order of the principles is not intended to suggest relative priorities.

### A. Compatibility and Placemaking

1. Development should complement surrounding existing and envisioned uses and create a distinct sense of place.
2. Development should contribute to the rebuilding of Rosslyn in a more urban form with a functional street grid, mixed uses, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, easy access to transit, buildings that relate well to one another and to the street, and connected openspaces.

*Note, the applicant has suggested the following alternative principle for A.2:  
"Development should contribute to the rebuilding of Rosslyn in a more urban form with thoughtful vehicular and pedestrian connections, mixed uses, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, easy access to transit, buildings which relate to one another and to the street, and connected openspaces."*

**The alternative is more appropriate. It is undesirable to break-up the block in an attempt to create a more extensive street grid given the location, adjacent highway use and the topography of the site. Rather, the block should be broken-up with pedestrian connections. Context and topographical features of the site must be considered. (Note this was discussed at the September 10, 2012 meeting)**

3. Development should define a gateway into Arlington and contribute to the distinctive image of Arlington from the waterfront and monumental core.

4. The site design should seek to improve the site's edge condition adjacent to Interstate 66, both visually and physically.
5. Development should include certain placemaking features, such as cultural facilities, public space, entertainment and recreational activities, and destination retail to enhance the site's sense of place.

## **B. Uses**

1. Development should create a live-work-shop environment, encourage vitality throughout the day and evening, and contribute to a more balanced use mix in Rosslyn.
2. Development should include a mix of uses, including office, residential, hotel, retail which serves a variety of users, cultural, and a community facility or civic space.
3. Retail should be clustered, have **access and visibility to Kent Street**, and have good visibility from primary streets in central Rosslyn to encourage its success. **Direct street frontage would not allow retail to penetrate the block neither would it front onto pedestrian or openspace plazas.**
4. Ground floor uses should complement adjoining public openspaces and activate streetscapes.
5. Ground floor spaces should be attractive and flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of tenants, including small retail and service businesses

## **C. Circulation**

- 2.1. Development should enhance Rosslyn's street network and provide multimodal, complete streets which improve pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular access to, through, and around the site.
2. A street grid that organizes openspace, defines building placement, and distributes loading, parking, and emergency access points throughout the site should be phased into the development to break up the existing superblock.

*Note, the applicant has suggested the following alternative principles for C.2:*

*"Break up superblocks with pedestrian connections or new streets. Analyze the site's context, topography and phasing in determining if a pedestrian connection or street is appropriate."*

*"Building placement, openspace creation, loading / parking, creation of new streets and overall site design should be considered holistically. Site design should weigh the positive attributes and tradeoffs between different components of the site design."*

**The alternative is appropriate. The site's location and topography must be analyzed and pedestrian connections should be used to break up the superblock and organize the space in this location. (Note this was discussed at the September 10, 2012 meeting)**

3. Improved pedestrian and bicycle access from Rosslyn to the Mount Vernon Trail and Potomac Riverfront should be considered as part of the development plan, subject to collaboration with Virginia Department of Transportation and the National Park Service.

4. Streetscapes should maximize pedestrian-friendly features, including widened sidewalks, shortened crossing distances, accessibility improvements, and street trees.
5. Creative and functional design solutions to topography challenges which improve site access and prevent blank walls should be used.
6. Special treatment should be used to distinguish key intersections or focal points of the site.

*Note, the applicant has suggested the following additional principle for Circulation:  
"Create a pedestrian (and bicycle) priority street as part of the development of the site."*

#### **D. Parking and Loading**

1. Parking should be provided below grade as much as possible. Visibility of above grade parking structures should be minimized by wrapping parking with other uses and incorporating facades consistent with high-quality architecture on the site.
2. Flexibility for below grade parking under new streets should be considered if it improves garage functionality without adversely impacting streetscapes or utilities.
3. Loading and parking areas should be located so as to minimize conflicts with pedestrians and to distribute access points.
4. On-site and on-street public parking should be provided to accommodate short-term visitors and retail customers.

#### **E. Openspace**

1. Well-designed public openspace should be highly visible, have direct street frontage, and be at grade with major pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation around and through the site.
2. A significantly sized public openspace should be provided on a prominent street and should be designed to accommodate active and passive recreation and provide flexibility for multipurpose programming.
3. Public openspace should expand and diversify Rosslyn's openspace resources by providing new types of spaces which attract a broad range of residents, workers, and visitors and encourage evening and weekend use.
4. Public openspace should respond to the site's unique opportunities such as its proximity to the waterfront, Roosevelt Island, and nearby recreational trails.
5. Public openspace should be designed and located so as to minimize the negative impacts from the site's adjacency to Interstate 66.
6. Streetscapes should be designed as useable public space with enhanced pedestrian elements such as widened sidewalks, seating, and multipurpose green spaces.

7. Public art should be incorporated into the site's openspaces in order to activate them, improve wayfinding, complement cultural uses, and contribute to a sense of place for the site.

8. Openspaces should be designed to encourage pedestrians into and through the site with visual connections and attractive design.

9. Openspace should be connected to, visible from, and part of an overall system of openspaces and plazas in Rosslyn. Openspace should support retail and residential activities that enhance the pedestrian experience in Rosslyn.

## **F. Building Form and Heights**

1. Design techniques such as tapering, step backs, orientation of building footprints (base and tower), and distinctive top elements should be used to enhance Rosslyn's skyline, maximize key view corridors to, from, and through the site, and improve the pedestrian environment.

2. Views from the Central Place observation deck and other key public view corridors should be protected.

3. Building heights should be notably varied and generally taper down from Central Place.

*Note, the applicant has suggested the following alternative principle for F.3:  
"Building heights should be varied and generally taper down from Central Place."*

4. Buildings should be located and designed to create a consistent, pedestrian-scaled street wall with visual interest, variety, and transparency.

5. Building placement and form should be sensitive to shade impacts and the seasonal needs for both sunlit and shaded public space.

6. The development plan should accommodate viable, marketable floor plates for the various uses.

*Note, the applicant has suggested the following alternative principle for F.6:  
"The development must be financially viable and provide efficient and marketable floor plates typical for each type of use."*

## **G. Sustainability**

1. Development should incorporate best practices and County policies for green buildings and stormwater management.

2. Development should seek to achieve applicable County energy goals to ensure efficient building design, operation, and energy infrastructure.

3. Development should increase the tree canopy of the site and include green, landscaped elements throughout outdoor areas where feasible, including the use of roof gardens.

## **H. Phasing**

1. Key public infrastructure and community benefits should be achieved at each phase.
2. Phasing should ensure short-term functionality of the site and accommodate existing uses and their garage and street access in the interim.
3. Development of early phases should preserve connectivity through the site and to transit access points.
4. Retail uses should be located so that a critical mass is maintained throughout phasing. Interim uses, such as temporary retail vendors or structures, should be considered to achieve this principle.
5. The phasing plan should allow for the replacement of the existing theater on site during the same phase in which it is demolished.
6. The PDSP should include urban design guidelines to facilitate the long-term development of the site and ensure consistent, high-quality urban design and architecture in future site plans

## **I. Connectivity**

1. Strong pedestrian and visual connections must be made at all possible points to the existing pedestrian routes on 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Wilson Boulevard, Lynn Street and Freedom Park, . Future potential for pedestrian links should be established to the George Washington Memorial Parkway bike path, retail shopping at 1000 Wilson boulevard, Artisphere, Gateway Park, and Metro.

## Rosslyn Plaza Guiding Principles

Comments Submitted by Commissioner Brian Harner

9/9/12

### A. Compatibility and Place-making

*5. Development should include certain place-making features, such as cultural facilities, public space, entertainment and **recreational activities**, and **destination retail** to enhance the site's sense of place.*

I am dubious of including the two items bolded above (recreational activities and destination retail) as given principles. Is provision of one item from the full list above adequate? Two? Or all of them?

I think it is worth discussing what we mean by these terms:

recreational activities:

I normally think of recreational activities as including sports or games, and not generally shopping, walking, or attending performances, as these are more appropriately included in the retail, cultural, or entertainment categories. We should discuss what recreational activities might be appropriate at this site, which the community is in need of, or which might be appropriate. The only two I can think of that might have merit at this site would be bicycling and walking, in the sense that the site tie into a broader system of bike trails or the pedestrian network. Beyond that, there might be an option for a bocci or volleyball court, but not much else I can think of. Does a private fitness center count as "recreational activity?" Does the community need a fitness center? Does it need an enhanced fitness center such as one that includes tennis, racket ball, or swimming?

destination retail:

How do we know that this is a good site for destination retail? What do we consider destination retail to be? Is destination retail defined as something that draws from more than just the immediate neighborhood? If so, then what is the geographic area we are talking about? What other areas in Arlington do we consider to be destination retail? Clarendon and Pentagon City? Clarendon is restaurant-shopping. Pentagon City is shopping-restaurant. Is inclusion of a grocery store enough? Does a grocery store comprise "destination retail?" I personally don't see this site as a strong candidate for destination retail. This site is on the edge, out of sight, and out of the way. We have to be careful about what we say are principles for, or requiring "destination retail."

### B. Uses

*1. Development should create a live-work-shop environment, encourage vitality throughout the day and evening, and contribute to a more balanced use mix in Rosslyn.*

What do we mean by "more balanced use mix" in Rosslyn? How is that determined and what are the benchmarks? What level of residential or retail will be required to balance the uses? What else is required to create "more balanced uses?"

*2. Development should include a mix of uses, including office, residential, hotel, retail which serves a variety of users, cultural, and a community facility or civic space.*

This is poorly worded. Does it mean include office, residential, hotel, retail, cultural, and a community facility or civic space? Or some combination of those uses? Does cultural include entertainment? Are a community facility or civic space required but interchangeable? Or are they optional?

*3. Retail should be clustered, have direct street frontage, and have good visibility from primary streets in central Rosslyn to encourage its success.*

Does retail need to tie into or be immediately adjacent to retail on other blocks in order to provide continuity? Is visibility from one street acceptable or does it need to be more than one street? What streets do we want visibility from - Wilson, Lynn, other? If retail is "clustered" in one location such as a retail pavilion, does that mean that it does not need to provide continuous frontage along a street?

Keep in mind that what kills urban retail environments are gaps in the retail frontage. Studies show that continuous storefront with a variety and mix of shopping opportunities are most attractive. So do we try to create a continuous retail frontage or promenade? Or not?

### **C. Circulation**

*2. A street grid that organizes open space, defines building placement, and distributes loading, parking, and emergency access points throughout the site should be phased into the development to break up the existing superblock.*

I'm not sure we absolutely have to distribute loading on the street grid. It is conceivable that there could be a centralized loading system in the first level below the deck.

*3. Creative and functional design solutions to topography challenges which improve site access and prevent blank walls should be used.*

This seems to be a design issue and should be included in Section F. Building Form and Heights

### **D. Parking and Loading**

*1. Parking should be provided below grade as much as possible. Visibility of above grade parking structures should be minimized by wrapping parking with other uses and incorporating facades consistent with high-quality architecture on the site.*

Suggested re-write:

1. Parking should be located below grade. Very limited structured parking above grade may be considered if visibility of above grade parking structures are minimized by wrapping parking with other uses and incorporating facades consistent with high-quality architecture on the site. Inclusion of above grade parking must not compromise the reduction of building bulk or height, the achievement of tapering, or other desirable elements of building massing, nor the creation of active building frontages on public spaces and streets.

This is intended to first establish that all parking is expected to be located below grade, and then make some performance standards for any above-grade parking very clear.

## **E. Open Space**

*2. A significantly sized public open space should be provided on a prominent street and should be designed to accommodate active and passive recreation and provide flexibility for multipurpose programming.*

Again, what constitutes "active" recreation? And for that matter what constitutes "passive" recreation?

*3. Public open space should expand and diversify Rosslyn's open space resources by providing new types of spaces which attract a broad range of residents, workers, and visitors and encourage evening and weekend use.*

That's asking for a lot! It would be better if the site's open space were part of a comprehensive plan for needed open space in Rosslyn, complementing rather than competing with Rosslyn's other open spaces. What do we mean by "new types of spaces?" This statement is a bit of a slippery slope. We would ideally have some idea of what the principal open spaces in Rosslyn are and what are expected to be the most important spaces, and what will make them fit into a hierarchy of uses and places. Things that can help determine the character and use of open spaces are their size, solar access, location within a pedestrian and urban design framework, established elements (such as Iwo Jima memorial), etc. I think you could make a case that we would be better off with an open space contribution from this project to the renovation of gateway park rather than development of an on-site space. We have to be careful not to demand that "all sites have all things." What would the creation of destination retail and a major urban space on this site do to Central Place? Complement or detract? It doesn't work for Rosslyn in my opinion if it is not directly connected to Central Place.

4 and 5: Please note that these two items are likely contradictory to each other.

## Rosslyn Plaza Guiding Principles

Comments submitted by Jennifer Zeien, President North Rosslyn Civic Assoc.

9/11/12

Responding to the request last night about revisiting particular design principles, I'd like to recommend the following items be on our list:

**B.3.** The item states in part that retail should have good visibility from "primary streets in central Rosslyn" -- what does this mean in the context of this site? When I think of "primary streets" I think about Wilson (which would be possible, but it is so near the underpass from 110 that loitering vehicles in that area could be dangerous and there is no facing streetfront retail to speak about at 1101 Wilson), Lynn, Moore . . . and those streets aren't contiguous. I suppose Kent Street could be made a primary street, but it is not one now and the proposed (by staff) 18th street extension would not connect to Lynn until way later if ever. So I'd like us to discuss what primary streets mean in this item.

**B.5.** I'd like to recommend either an addition to this item or a new item under B addressing any proposed retail facilities have all requisite attributes to enable the proposed uses. For instance, at Turnberry, a commercial space designated for restaurant use in the original plan cannot accommodate this use because the necessary ventilation shafts for a kitchen were not installed during construction and cannot (apparently) be retrofit economically into the site. I'm also thinking of the essential loading dock facilities -- including the ability to move pallets/boxes etc. between those loading docks and the retail establishments, particularly if these are on different levels. There may be other aspects to this such as electrical service etc. Maybe this is too technical, but I certainly do not want us to be in the position of thinking we're going to have a particular type of tenant in a particular space only to find out later that the space is not economically viable or leasable for that purpose because it is unsuited or not ideal.

**E.4.** The principle talks about public open space responding to the "proximity to Roosevelt Island and nearby recreational trails." Is this a veiled reference to the proposal for a pedestrian bridge or something more general? I am tempted to say that the site is so near but so far from these amenities when considered in the more general sense.

**G.** Suggest adding an item under Sustainability that ensures tree pits in particular locations (particularly if located on a raised deck) are sufficiently large to support the larger shade trees like oaks or maples and not just little saplings or decorative trees like crepe myrtles and dogwoods, where appropriate.

Thanks,

Jennifer

Jennifer Zeien

President North Rosslyn Civic Association