

Arlington County Planning Commission Site Plan Review Committee

Report of the Site Plan Review Working Group Potential Revisions to the Site Plan Review Process

Preliminary Report

June 2014



Big Ideas

- Clarified role of other commissions and civic
- Introduction of an Optional Preliminary Review
- Introduction of a Streamlined (shorter) Review
- Clarified Role of Site Plan Review Chairs
- Revisions to SPRC Membership
- Restructured review agenda/discussion item list
- Revisions to submission requirements

Role of SPRC, other commissions, and civic associations in site plan reviews

- SPRC would continue to be the County's principal forum for site plan reviews
- Other commissions and civic associations would be encouraged to time their initial reviews/discussions of site plan proposals so their SPRC representative could represent their interests effectively during site plan reviews
- Final reviews of site plans by other commissions and civic associations should be scheduled to allow their advice to be considered by the Planning Commission and County Board

Optional Preliminary Review

- An opportunity for developers to get feedback about a proposal before they have made significant investments and when changes are still relatively easy
- Would occur at an early conceptual stage, prior to 4.1 submission
- Would involve a subset of SPRC – Commissioners, citizens, and staff – who would also participate in the final review
- A one-time, two-hour meeting

Streamlined Review

- An opportunity for faster reviews for site plan proposals with few exceptions from existing County policies and plans.
- Participation in a preliminary review required to determine whether a streamlined review would be appropriate
- Determination made jointly by review chair, planning staff and developer
- Would be completed in three or fewer SPRC meetings
- Same review agenda

Role of Site Plan Review Chairs

- Responsible for determining composition of committee for their site plan review
- Responsible for setting meeting agendas; determining issues not relevant for a particular reviews
- Responsible for actively managing review process
- Partners with staff planner on all of these items

Changes to SPRC Membership

Goal: All interests represented; more efficient meetings

- Total potential membership for individual reviews would be reduced from more than 40 to about 30. Expected average participation would decline from about 15-18 to 12-15.
- Civic associations where proposed development is located would continue to have two representatives
- Adjacent civic associations would also be represented – by a single representative
- Commissions with an interest in every site plan proposal would be standing members of SPRC: Transportation, Park and Recreation, Energy and Environment Conservation, and Urban Forestry
- Other Commissions would be represented whenever issues of importance to them are part of a site plan proposal: Historic Affairs and Landmark Review Board, Arts, Housing, Pedestrian, Bicycle and Transit Advisory Committees, and others as appropriate.
- Changes to at-large membership: (1) standing representative of Civic Federation; (3) at-large citizens for 2-year terms; (3) former Planning Commissioners for 2-year terms.
- Final membership for a specific review determined by review chair

Changes to Review Agenda

Current Agenda – Major Issue Areas

- Information Presentation
- Land Use and Zoning
- Site Design and Characteristics
- Architecture
- Transportation
- Open Space
- Community Benefits
- Construction Issues

Proposed Agenda – Major Issue Areas

- Overview and Analysis of Site Plan Proposal
- Urban Design
- Site Design and Building Form
- Architecture
- Sustainability
- Community Benefits
- Other

Changes to Submission Requirements

- New checklist through which developer identifies requested zoning ordinance modifications and exceptions to other County policies and plans
- New requirements for optional preliminary reviews
- New requirements related to submission of materials for SPRC meetings

Other Changes

- Clarification of roles of SPRC participants – especially review chair, staff and applicants
- Review of PDSPs to be done by Long Range Planning Committee
- Site plan review meetings to provide an opportunity for observers to make comments and ask questions
- Incorporation of regular site visits at early review meeting

Next Steps

- Review recommendations with SPRC and incorporate changes (6/14)
- Brief County Board Members and the County Manager (6/14)
- Work Session with the County Board (6/14)
- Adoption of Recommendations by the Planning Commission (est. 7/14)
- Development of Implementation Tools (7-12/14)
- Final Adoption of Changes to Site Plan Review Process (est. 12/14)
- Implementation Goal: January 2015