



# ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

## ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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July 14, 2015

Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Suite 300  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

**SUBJECT:           1.        **Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum (RTA)****

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**   **The Planning Commission recommends the County Board accept the County Manager’s recommendations included in the July 1, 2015 memorandum to authorize advertisement of public hearings by the Planning Commission on September 6, 2015 and the County Board on September 15, 2015 to consider adoption of the Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum noting the Planning Commission supports:**

- 1) The proposed heights as included in the June 12, 2015 draft Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum; and**
- 2) The proposed location of the “Civic Building” at the southern end of Courthouse Square (north of 14th Street North) and the resulting amount of open space on Courthouse Square.**

**The Planning Commission further recommends the County Manager’s draft plan be amended to:**

- 1) Restrict 15th Street North generally to pedestrians, bicycles and transit;**
- 2) Include a central bike parking facility in the new underground garage;**
- 3) Locate the “Memorial Grove” along N. Courthouse Road from south to north, forming a green edge on the east side of Courthouse Square and organize the garage layout to optimize growing conditions for trees in this area;**
- 4) Ensure the use of the same design “language” and design guidelines for street-level building frontages and interiors used in the draft Arlington County Retail Plan;**

**P.C. #37**

- 5) **a. Limit potential historic preservation on the Landmark block to portions of the two buildings identified in the Historic Resources Inventory;**  
**b. Require consideration of preservation of façade and notable interior features during SPRC and HALRB reviews balancing historic preservation goals with other site plan goals, including functional program and urban design;**
- 6) **Use the streetscape standards as illustrated in the 2007 Rosslyn/Ballston Corridor Streetscape Standards report as updated;**
- 7) **The design of the civic building in the south square should allow the first floor to be of an open design to facilitate community and other public uses; and**
- 8) **The civic building located in the southern portion of the Square be allowed to exceed fifty feet in height to accommodate possible design features appropriate for a municipal building.**

Dear County Board Members:

The Planning Commission heard this item at its July 6, 2015 public hearing. Jason Beske, Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development (CPHD) – gave an overview of the six topic areas contained in the draft plan. These areas include: Open Space; Building use; Building Location and Design; Circulation and Parking; Cultural Resources; and Sustainability. Mr. Beske gave an overview of the public process over the last year and highlighted outstanding issues which include open space, building heights, and the location of the proposed civic building location in Courthouse Square.

Additional staff present included Steve Cover, Director, CPHD, Bob Duffy, Director, CPHD-Planning, and Kris Krider, Urban Design and Research Supervisor, CPHD-Planning.

### **Public Speakers**

There were three public speakers for this item.

Jim Huryz said the plan represented too much density, too little open space, and no on-site renewable energy. The multi-modal transportation in the plan is a means of packing as many pedestrians, bicycles, and motor vehicles on-site as possible without any thought of the consequences or where future residents will go for recreation. Large plazas serve the interests of upscale retail and restaurants and not low-wage workers that do not have affordable housing.

June O’Connell, a resident, asked that the project be deferred until after the County Board has a work session with the County Attorney, Department of Environmental Services Real Estate office, and the Chief Financial Officer. Alternatively, she suggested, drop the words “Adoption

of a Sector Plan Addendum” in the recommendation and go with “Courthouse Vision 2015”. Ms. O’Connell stated the current draft contains no specific guidance on how developer contributions will fund the community benefit of the public plaza roof and the underground garage and there are no County dollars to cover the cost. Developer contributions should cover the cost of the garage. She noted Site Plan #231 with Charles E. Smith covers the current plaza so the County cannot just tear up the parking lot and build a public plaza. Ms. O’Connell stated the Strayer site cannot have underground parking for a proposed 19 story building. A building on The Landmark block could not support a lot of underground parking. These two buildings can be consolidated, so it is imperative to know how deep the underground parking under the Landmark can go. It is also important to know site constraints from Metro and whether a second Metro entrance is available. We should know why developer contributions won’t cover the cost of improvements and amenities and what is the taxpayer dollar anticipated, all of which need to be covered by a work session with the County Board.

Stuart Stein reminded the Planning Commission that this plan is for the heart of Arlington and the parking should be plentiful, as cheap as possible, and accessible to everyone in the County. The County has much decision making power over partially owned sites such as the Landmark block. Decisions should be made for the best of the seat of government and surrounding community rather than trying to pay for the Envision Courthouse plan by trading private financing for something that might not be right for the area. If an office building is the right thing for the block Landmark block, a building with distinctive architecture should be specified. The site is an important entrance to the center of Arlington and should not be cut off from Clarendon Boulevard and Wilson Boulevard. The preservation of sight lines are important. Mr. Stein hopes the County government would be a good neighbor to surrounding communities. The concerns of all neighbors should be carefully considered before final action is taken.

### **Planning Commission Committee Report**

Commissioner Iacomini, Chairman of the Courthouse Square Working Group, stated there have been 17 working group meetings over the past year and a half. The working group is advisory to staff, and there will be one more working group meeting in July to discuss the final draft.

Commissioner Cole said the LRPC reviewed the draft on June 25. Commissioner Forinash added there were five planning commissioners present at the meeting and asked staff if comments are being tracked and if the June 12 draft will be remain unchanged for the County Board. Mr. Beske confirmed comments are being tracked and the June 12 draft will remain unchanged and be the draft presented to the County Board for advertisement.

### **Planning Commission Discussion**

The Planning Commission discussed the Plan by topic area.

### **Vision and Guiding Principles**

There was no comment on this topic.

## **Sustainability**

Commissioner Schroll asked why bioretention along 15th Street North between North Uhle Street and Courthouse Road is a consideration rather than a recommendation. Mr. Beske responded that 15th Street North might be a shared street that would be an extension of the open space and some bio retention strategies (swales, etc.) could represent a barrier to making 15<sup>th</sup> Street North more integrated with the open space. Staff wanted to ensure the flow of pedestrians through the site would not be impeded.

Commissioner Cole pointed out that all the buildings designated for district energy are public buildings and asked why there was no effort to include private sector buildings in the district energy plan since the amount of gross floor area (gfa) in the private buildings and the critical mass needed for an efficient district energy plan means public buildings may not suffice. Mr. Beske responded it can be an efficient plan with just two buildings. The Integrated Energy Master Plan (IEP) scope takes 15 buildings into consideration including the Landmark and Strayer sites. In the model for the Courthouse Addendum, seven key buildings were considered that would make the best customers based on the loads, timing, compatibility for connecting to the system, and ownership. From a timing point of view, staff included existing buildings or new buildings that would come on line within the four to ten year planning window. The Strayer block is not likely to develop for 10 years, and the Landmark Block is anticipated to come in two to three years. The timing according to the modelling and initial review were not ideal. The IEP gives seven buildings to focus on but does not exclude the others from future planning and connection to the system.

Commissioner Gutshall asked about the overall context for the IEP and if the Energy and Environment Conservation Commission (E2C2) has reviewed the plan. Mr. Beske responded that the Community Energy Plan will be the overriding policy for any major sector plan and one of the primary reasons to embrace it in this area is to lead by example. E2C2 has reviewed the plan twice.

Commissioner Harner said it would be useful to weave the transportation narrative into the sustainability aspect of this by including shared parking in order to make sure not to overbuild parking for daytime uses that sits empty in the evening. He also noted a central bike parking facility would offer an opportunity for the County to be a leader in sustainability in transportation and integrate the bike parking with Metro and with ART bus and METRO bus.

## **Circulation**

Commissioner Iacomini said the Working Group discussed 15th Street North becoming a pedestrian and transit only street after completion of a traffic study. Such a treatment furthers the notion that 15th Street North essentially becomes part of the proposed Square. The notion of a shared street is something other communities are exploring but the Working Group was not sure that mixing all the modes would be useful here and hoped eventually it would be just be pedestrian and transit. The Working Group desired pedestrian connectivity across the Square including east, west, and diagonal connectivity as this is a permeable space and human nature should be respected in design of the Square. Members of the Working Group were also

interested in a garage entrance at 14<sup>th</sup> Street North and North Courthouse Road that would give cars the ability not to travel further north on Courthouse Road if coming from the south.

Commissioner Cole added the LRPC discussion on 15th Street North was supportive of the notion of a primarily pedestrian (and bicycle) thoroughfare with vehicles not to be permitted. Commissioner Forinash added there was support at LRPC for bus stops but not idling busses.

Commissioner Cole stated that his motion will include making the Courthouse Square area consistent with rest of the Rosslyn-Ballston (ROSSLYN/BALLSTON) Corridor in terms of streetscape standards. The ROSSLYN/BALLSTON Corridor Streetscape Standards were developed originally in 2007 and subsequently updated. The document establishes a range of streetscape standards for the entire corridor, specifically the 16 foot 8 inch sidewalk width for arterials. He asked why the streetscape standards in the proposed Addendum are so vague or unspecific and why staff is proposing a different set of streetscape standards for this small area compared to the rest of the entire ROSSLYN/BALLSTON corridor.

Mr. Krider responded that staff has recognized that the ROSSLYN/BALLSTON standards are not up to date with current applicability and construction standards. Many of the sector plans along the ROSSLYN/BALLSTON Corridor have additional streetscape standards. Staff chose to refrain from specificity because part of the open space design for Courthouse Square is to create an aesthetic where the fixtures, the open space, and street furniture are integrated around the design of the Courthouse Square environment. Rather than using the ROSSLYN/BALLSTON standards which are inconsistently applied, staff is proposing that streetscape standards be established as part of the overall master plan design.

Commissioner Cole responded there should be a Courthouse Square aesthetic but the issue is when the sidewalks can range from six to 12 feet but there is no guidance in any particular place, or when the landscape zone is five to six feet and when the ROSSLYN/BALLSTON standards say four to six feet and why staff is not allowing it to be four feet in areas where current County guidance says that it should be. Parking lanes can be seven or eight feet and traffic lanes that could be eight to 10 feet. He asked if those decisions about the public realm are made by the site plan applicant and said it seems that the obligation to the site plan applicant is to define the public realm in which they can then propose a developable project. He is concerned that the County is not doing their part of the job.

Mr. Krider responded that staff attempted to identify all the pieces but also to recognize that design will be driven by the multi-modal standards in place at the time that street is developed. Staff believes that is not in control of the developer but in control of the County to determine those, and that having a range is a minimum and more appropriate measure at this point in the plan.

Commissioner Cole responded this is the only sector in Arlington where bike lanes can be four feet wide rather than five feet wide which does not include buffered lanes and it is concerning that there is not sufficient specificity and there is an allowance for unsafe conditions for cyclists.

Mr. Krider said it is an approach that has been taken and the flexibility adds to the future longevity of the plan.

Commissioner Harner responded that it is important as part of overall implementation strategies to have specific streetscape standards along with open space standards.

Commissioner Schroll asked for clarification about the alternate parking entrance along Courthouse Road and Mr. Beske responded that page 28 is correct and any inconsistencies will be corrected in the final draft.

Commissioner Cole said there is an issue regarding the extent to which the proposed structure for street frontages in retail departs from the language and standards as established in the Draft Retail Plan. The proposed language in the Retail Plan notes Courthouse is “TBD” as the sector plan addendum has not been finalized. Commissioner Cole stated this plan uses completely different language and design standards for retail than the rest of the County. For example, under Design Standards, while the draft Retail Plan calls for floor to ceiling heights of 15 feet, the Courthouse plan calls for 14 feet. Where the draft Retail Plan calls for four different street types and associated frontages, this plan calls for three street types and specifies a different kind of design for the exterior than would normally be required in the Retail Plan. He asked staff to provide justification for this plan having a different standard than everywhere else in the County other than trying to create a unique environment here in Courthouse Square. He noted the building requirements are still roughly the same and part of the retail here will be across from retail that is not in the Sector Plan Addendum. How do we justify and explain why there are different standards here. Mr. Beske said staff is going to reconcile the retail standards in the plan to match up more closely with the Retail Plan once that plan is adopted. He anticipates a more consistent relationship between the two plans.

Commissioner Iacomini added it is true that in the current draft Retail Plan Courthouse is a greyed out area. Staff said Courthouse would align with that. She also remembers that the draft Retail Plan is still saying that where sector plans are more specific about retail and the types of frontage, those would take precedence over the Retail Plan.

Commissioner Iacomini said that generally before sector plan updates are undertaken there tends to be a lot of data amassed. However, the Courthouse Addendum identifies data that is still needed such as a parking study to discuss right sizing the parking that takes into account County needs as well as surrounding needs, a the traffic study for more information about how traffic currently uses 15th Street North, and an AED Cultural Facilities study. Staff and the Working Group felt it to be important to have a vision for the area now that will provide a framework to inform the future data studies.

Commissioner Harner stated a central bike parking facility in the Courthouse Square area would offer a great opportunity for Arlington to become a leader in bicycle transportation. Since we are developing a parking garage for cars, it is a great narrative to build an easy to use, secure, and sheltered bike facility connected to Metro.

## **Open Space**

Commissioner Iacomini said more open space and the idea of a large public square here at Courthouse were the ideas that most captivated those who attended the community workshops. The attendees at those workshops were divided on the type of open space that should be developed. The Working Group felt a balance between hard- and soft-scape was important because the design of the Square needs to support large gatherings and programmable space as the center of Arlington as well as offer some green respite areas. There was a desire for a civic presence to the southern part of the site for prominence as one exits Metro. There was support for a less tall, more open structure to support the farmers market and outdoor performances in the southern part of the proposed Square.

Commissioner Hughes said the civic structure and the open space should be considered as one because buildings are part of the open space just as much as open space is part of the building.

Commissioner Cole noted staff said one outstanding issue was location of the civic building and another was building heights. His motion will say the Planning Commission supports locating the civic building at the south end of the Square on the north side of 14th Street North as proposed by staff. If this were a Square that were surrounded on three sides by streets, it takes on a much less warm and inviting kind of place and the building on the south end is a good thing. Community uses at the ground level are important to integrate the civic building into the life of the community.

Commissioner Iacomini added that the design of this structure will be the most important thing because if it is open on the ground floor or designed in a non-traditional way that gives more transparency to the first floor and perhaps for large entrances that could be left open during events the building would be more a part of the open space. Such an open design could house aspects of the weekly farmers market, or perhaps offer space to weekday vendors or even serve as a performance “stage.”

Commissioner Forinash said he supports the improvement to the daily pedestrian experience from residential buildings to the south toward Metro instead of the current commute through a parking garage.

Commissioner Harner said that in the plans, there is a reluctance to create overly high expectations about the nature of a place and still preserve flexibility, however there is a time and place to commit to a vision that gives enough direction to move forward. If there’s any building or site in the plan that deserves focus in the design guidelines and the statement about ground floor uses, this is the one iconic building or site and we should say it. A statement of intent for that building is really important.

Commissioner Harner said it would be important to allow the ability to grow mature trees by orienting the parking structure such that there is good ground underneath trees along the edge that would screen the jail and open up the site more to the Landmark block which is an edge that can be controlled. He suggested adding text to give the opportunity for consideration of a shift in the Memorial Grove from a crescent in the north to a stronger green border on the east. There is not a parking program or analysis currently and it is most important to identify the urban design

goal and the parking works around that. To the extent the location of the parking structure limits mature trees, it is important that the parking analysis would not limit that goal.

Commissioner Gutshall was concerned about reducing the overall square footage available to G1 level parking in order to widen the portion of the Square that does not have parking under it along North Courthouse Road.

Mr. Beske said the garage is a conceptual diagram and there is room for a sufficient floor plate for an underground parking structure. It is also possible to create the depth of soil for mature trees above a parking garage. A garage located beneath the square could be sited to allow for both mature trees on the surface and an efficient parking area underground.

Commissioner Iacomini noted one of the speakers spoke to the need for open space as the Courthouse area grows. Over the years developers of properties in the Rosslyn/Ballston Corridor have proposed small plazas and pocket parks that have not been located in the best places for public access and use. As the County has matured we know better what kinds of spaces are more usable by the public. She has great confidence that the open spaces proposed in the Envision Courthouse plan will be used by citizens and the public will indeed benefit

### **Buildings**

Commissioner Iacomini reported that the Working Group had a great deal of discussion about the location of the built civic presence for the Courthouse Square area. The discussions considered the ownership realities of the area. The Working Group coalesced around Court Square West as the site for a possible new County office building. A new building would be constructed on the Court Square West site with an eye to possibly combining the new building with the AMC Theatre site. Such a combination could be possible if for its own business reasons the current cinema decides to relocate. All parties expressed their desire for the theatre to stay. There was a suggestion of adding an entrance on the north of a new civic structure on a combined AMC/Courts Square West site. This entrance would be more prominent to those using the Metro entrances than just an entrance off of the Square. Commissioner Iacomini noted the Working Group discussed heights at the Strayer and Landmark buildings and said that clear community benefits should be realized from the increased heights. The Working Group did envision a three to four story transparent building on the Verizon plaza which is currently zoned Public and has no density on it. The provision for the creation of density on the site does mean there would need to be mitigations noted in the plan. Such mitigations should contribute to the important vision of the plan which is the creation of a large public square and the provision of underground parking. The Working Group did not designate residential or office buildings except for noting civic buildings.

Commissioner Hughes expressed concern that the 50 foot height limit on the proposed civic building in the southern part of the square is overly restrictive and suggested that designs that provide a civic sense of presence be allowed. Such a design might include a tower element that could go above 50 feet.

Commissioner Cole pointed out staff has indicated there is an unsettled issue with the heights of the Strayer and Landmark buildings and his motion will say the Planning Commission supports

the heights as represented in the plan. The limiting factor on the public building should be the shadow that is cast. Is it possible for it to be higher than 50 feet and cast no shadow that is longer than the 120 foot building that is to the south of it? If that's true, shadows should not be a reason to keep the height at 50 feet. The size should be defined by uses so that if the use required for public functions of government is larger, then it should be larger.

Commissioner Iacomini clarified that the heights are absolute heights. Mr. Beske added that the height is earned up to the allowed height, and overruns would be included within that absolute height and the County Board could not exceed it.

Commissioner Harner said there might be potential for a taller building on the Landmark and Strayer site that would have minimal impact on other parts of the plan. Additionally, there are additional design guidelines that would be useful in making this a great civic place. The Landmark site shows a consistent setback around all four sides of the diagram although the rendering on the Courthouse side does not show that setback. There is no real rationale as for why those setbacks are in the plans, although he thinks it may be due to historic preservation. He is concerned that it is creeping in as a design guideline. On the Strayer side, there is a setback on the triangular side that carries down to the County building so one can see the rationale of a setback regime along the promenade that strengthens it as an urban design component but it weakens it to carry it all the way around to the Landmark Building. He would prefer to see that setback element responding directly to the promenade and let the Landmark building be free on its other facades. There are other design considerations such as which facades are iconic, should there be iconic elements on any facades around the Square or not, are the entrances shown on some of these building demarcated with strong iconic architecture or are they downplayed, and what is the balance between those major architectural moves relative to the civic building and to the County building. Materials is another consideration. There is generally a white-ish pre-cast consistent theme among the jail, courthouse, Bayou Bakery building and Clarendon Boulevard. Do we want to keep the same palette or do we want to keep a palette for the commercial buildings and different for the civic buildings? What if the Landmark building came in with an all glass building? Does it create glare on the plaza and are there thoughts on that materiality and what it says relative to the other buildings. He believes the County should take these design guidelines a little farther since they have control and an opportunity to think about it as a whole. If left unfettered, the Landmark and Strayer blocks could have potentially deleterious effects on the plaza.

Mr. Beske said staff would take those comments into consideration. There were numerous reasons for the 15 foot setback around the building including trying to minimize the imposition of the building on the pedestrian experience as well as to create some articulation and architectural interest. Commissioner Harner asked staff to put that in the text.

### **Cultural Resources**

Commissioner Iacomini said this topic includes the public art, memorial trees, historic preservation, cultural facility, and the farmers market which is iconic to Courthouse. The promenade should be seen as something that could facilitate vendors at the farmers or other market. The small civic building proposed for the southern portion of the square is also seen as a structure that should lend support to activities in the square. The Working Group continues to

endorse the presence of some sort of cultural facility in Courthouse. Commissioner Iacomini acknowledged that “cultural facility” is a broad term. Some people believe such a facility could be a history center or a performing arts venue or a library. AED is supposed to be doing an inventory of what cultural facilities the County currently has and what we are projected to need. A small structure with greater transparency would support the market and outdoor performances and functions.

Commissioner Cole clarified that his motion will have two points related to historic preservation. The first one is to limit the potential historic preservation on the Landmark block to the two buildings that are on the Historic Resources Inventory (HRI). Staff indicated there are four buildings in the plan that could be preserved. He stated the two he would not include are the Jerry's Subs building at the northwest corner of Courthouse Road and 15th Street North and the Boston Market building which is sandwiched between the Cosi and the Summer's restaurant building on the Clarendon Street frontage. There are only two buildings actually on the HRI and he is not aware of any County Board action or County Manager action that has directed staff to study additional potential candidates for historic preservation. Staff has studied these other buildings but he wants to limit it to the ones the Board has actually acted on and included on the HRI. Secondly and importantly it says that the plan should require consideration of preservation of facade and other notable interior features during the HALRB and SPRC review processes. The notion is that ultimately the determination as to whether or not to actually preserve these particular structures will depend on balancing the range of issues that come before HALRB and SPRC and ultimately the Planning Commission and the County Board. These should be active discussions at SPRC and the Sector Plan addendum should not usurp that decision at this point because it can't really balance real world considerations in a vacuum.

Commissioner Harner said he was concerned that a couple of buildings subject to historic preservation may be driving solutions that are sub-optimal. If someone asked him to design a great block here while preserving these buildings he would say it is possible but preserving some of them may have deleterious effects on the success of the design. If they said to design it without those buildings, then of course it is possible. A couple of the buildings are of such limited architectural merit that they could actually undermine historic preservation efforts in the County by diminishing the streetscape and architectural quality of the building on the Landmark building and could be seen by the public as something that is not a direction that we want to take our historic resources. He supports Commissioner Cole's position to limit it to the HRI and even with those be judicious with analysis.

Commissioner Harner said if someone asked him if the County needs a performing arts facility, a theater, and is that something that the County needs to have, he thinks it is clear that staff and the commission have said it is something the County could use but there is not proof that there is broad support and commitment to it. If someone asked him what kind of facility would best fit with Courthouse Square, he said a performing arts facility in the sense of creating that 18 hour use of being a facility of such broad based appeal. There is no much activating use on the south end and a performing arts museum would fit that bill. It's hard to commit to a facility of that type in this plan but it could really help this civic center.

Commissioner Iacomini said she disagrees with Commissioner Harner in that a library or a history museum could be an activating feature at the south of the Square if combined in an innovative way with something like a café that could be run by a 3rd party. History exhibits could take the form of active installations on walls that are part of space where you are having your coffee. Such installations could change periodically. If there was a library that was a digital library and provided some access to databases that are too expensive for people to subscribe to that was open later than a traditional library, we could perhaps attract a different type of patron. The world is changing and we have a whole different work force that works at all hours. Some different out-of-the-box could work and could provide something 24/7 that a cultural facility wouldn't. There is a lot of possibilities if we think creatively. Cultural facilities is a term used in a very broad sense to encourage creativity.

Commissioner Harner said the models for urban revitalization using theaters are much more well-proven rather than a historic oriented facility. In terms of tried and true model, performing arts is a safer bet.

Commissioner Iacomini said it is not a place of revitalization but opportunity. Locking ourselves into saying performing arts, particularly with the sunsetting of one of our other cultural facilities that was supposed to provide exactly that, might not be the best thing at this time. Keeping options open is not a bad thing.

Mr. Krider responded that the narrative needs to be first of all that Courthouse transforms dramatically in the course of the evening from a work environment to a residential neighborhood and the goal is to acknowledge that there needs to be more evening and nighttime activities and particular attention should be paid to the south Square to generate those types of activities that support more of an 18 hour environment. Commissioner Iacomini added that it should be an 18 hour environment for perhaps others besides residents and have activities/retail that entice people to visit the Square.

Commissioner Iacomini commented on historic preservation and said the Cosi building and the homeless shelter are the two buildings on the HRI. Mr. Krider said that preservation staff identified Jerry's Subs as a potential candidate because it's the last example of Lawyer's Row in the district.

Commissioner Iacomini appreciates staff's research. As a standalone building, the Simmonds Building (currently Jerry's Subs) does not lend itself strongly to facade preservation. Architects can be creative and do wonderful work but also they can do wonderful work when they have starting points that the community has said are important to them. Sometimes historical facades embody not a great piece of architecture from history, but rather embodies a memory of the past of the specific site. Some people have a more visceral reaction to something that is older because it makes us feel more comfortable and gives a sense of place. Preservation of facades also gives us a place to start we design of new architecture. The facades on the Clarendon Boulevard side (Landmark block) have a dialogue with the buildings that were outside of the study area in the Four Courts block. The businesses and buildings on the north side of Wilson Boulevard are precious to the neighborhood. Keeping some of the facades on the south side continues the current dialogue with the other side. This dialogue in turn strengthens the presence of the

structures and their tenants on the North side of Wilson. It is a partnership. Preservation (and perhaps restoration) of facades should be a starting point for discussions of new construction.

### **Community Benefits**

Commissioner Iacomini said the Working Group discussed that open space and the garage were benefits clearly linked to redevelopment of sites within the study area. The increased height and density on some of the blocks as well as the conferring of the ability to build on the Verizon plaza are to help implement the vision for Courthouse that includes the public features of the Square with its underground parking. Currently there's a paucity of information and nexus of such an expectation in the draft. There is a table in the back that says who provides elements but there is not a clear discussion of that in the draft plan and that's important to have it there for citizens, the County Board, Commissions, and developers. We have great expectations for this area and there will be shared benefits that serve not just with the public but also those who decide to build here.

### **Other**

Commissioner Gutshall said the formatting of the document is confusing and asked if there is information about Public Spaces in Section 3 that is not in Section 2. Mr. Beske responded it is complementary and provides additional precedent that was captured through the community engagement process. Commissioner Gutshall responded this is the Urban Design Framework section and he's not sure how you use it as a Framework because it's not similar to the others as it doesn't have levels of detail that makes some sense of what we want from these public spaces.

Commissioner Gutshall commented that each recent plan document has its own unique format which could be confusing to the public and not user-friendly. Allowing that stylistic flexibility can help spur innovation and creativity, he suggested the public would benefit from taking the best ideas and molding them into a consistent plan document style and framework.

As already noted in the discussion, several items in this document are a departure from what we have in other documents. For example, it would be useful to know the context of the Integrated Energy Plan or the forthcoming retail frontages and the answer that we'll do the best we can to make it consistent is troubling. The relationship of the streetscape standards in this plan to the Rosslyn/Ballston streetscape standards is another example. Maybe instead of doing our own here because we want to create the flexibility, part of the implementation framework ought to be to update the Rosslyn/Ballston streetscape standards. If it's good for Courthouse, it's probably good for the whole Rosslyn/Ballston Corridor.

Mr. Duffy responded that when compared to the Rosslyn and WRAPS documents, there are distinct variations in the purpose of the Courthouse Square Addendum. It is also important to recognize that we are starting to move away from paper documents and moving to an electronic format and embrace how the products relate to all the community outreach we've done.

Mr. Duffy continued and noted where we can provide similarity we should do that. There are some areas of this plan mentioned that need to relate to one another. We can do that. In terms of standards and how they relate to larger corridor standards, Courthouse is a unique project and to make it a unique place, it will need some variation. And so while it can inform the larger corridor

this plan tries to balance the corridor needs with the very site specific needs and standards here. Mr. Duffy stated he thinks we look at the context and look at the corridor and try to balance and put those elements together.

Commissioner Hughes asked if the Working Group felt like the County would retain significant ownership of the land that the County currently owns. Commissioner Iacomini said the discussion included no thought of the Square or Court Square West going private. However, there was some discussion that if comparable land that could serve the County better were in near proximity, land could perhaps be swapped if there was no net loss of value. The County's land is an asset and in trust for the citizens.

Commissioner Schroll said he appreciated the level of the detail in the implementation actions but it is hard to know the priorities of staff in terms of what is supposed to be done when. Mr. Duffy responded there is an ongoing discussion with DMF and DES on some of those issues and in the next draft of the plan, the most important next steps will be clear.

Commissioner Schroll said that on page 76 the text says that the recommendations and implementation matrix are not the County Manager's recommendations. He said it would be helpful to know which components are or are not recommended by the County Manager. Mr. Duffy responded the language cited is there because there is work to do on the implementation section. The ultimate plan will be recommendations from the County Manager.

### **Planning Commission Motion**

Commissioner Cole made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend the County Board accept the County Manager's recommendations included in the July 1, 2015 memorandum to authorize advertisement of public hearings by the Planning Commission on September 6, 2015 and the County Board on September 15, 2015 to consider adoption of the Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum noting the Planning Commission supports:

- The proposed heights as included in the June 12, 2015 draft Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum.
- The proposed location of the "Civic Building" at the southern end of Courthouse Square (north of 14th Street North) and the resulting amount of open space on Courthouse Square.

Further, he moved the Planning Commission recommend the County Manager's draft plan be amended to:

1. Restrict 15th Street North generally to pedestrians, bicycles and transit;
2. Include a central bike parking facility in the new underground garage;
3. Locate the "Memorial Grove" along N. Courthouse Road from south to north, forming a green edge on the east side of Courthouse Square and organize the garage layout to optimize growing conditions for trees in this area;
4. Ensure the use of the same design "language" and design guidelines for street-level building frontages and interiors used in the draft Arlington County Retail Plan;

5.
  - a. Limit potential historic preservation on the Landmark block to portions of the two buildings identified in the Historic Resources Inventory;
  - b. Require consideration of preservation of façade and notable interior features during SPRC and HALRB reviews balancing historic preservation goals with other site plan goals, including functional program and urban design; and
6. Use the streetscape standards as illustrated in the 2007 ROSSLYN/BALLSTON Corridor Streetscape Standards report as updated.

Commissioner Schroll seconded the motion.

Commissioner Gutshall asked for clarification on 5b and asked if that is inherent. Commissioner Cole responded it probably is but the two together make it clear that the sector plan does not require preservation of these buildings or the elements of these buildings but is preserving the potential for them to be preserved while ultimate decision made by the Board when it considers a site plan application. B makes it clear this must be a significant topic of conversation for site plans involving the Landmark block.

Commissioner Gutshall is concerned that we are muddying the water because a sector plan is guidance. What we are talking about is the Board signaling to site plan applications what the expectations are and are you attempting to lessen the intensity of the expectation for historic preservation.

Commissioner Harner responded the Pierce Queen Street project is an example where the sector plan identified two garden apartments for preservation but there were three other buildings on that site that potentially could have been preserved instead and resulted in a better building orientation for the project. There are some in the community that feel sector plans are great ways to absolutely guarantee historic preservation. It is just not that simple to set something so inviolable in a sector plan because it limits the ability to make adequate determination of all the other factors involved. If the sector plan is not determinative and has not done enough study to be the final answer on this, it is not appropriate for the sector plan to be the final answer.

Commissioner Gutshall agrees but that point is not coming across clearly.

Commissioner Iacomini stated the example is apples and oranges. The preservation of the two apartment buildings in Pierce Queen were whole buildings and it was through the Ft. Meyer Heights North plan civic process that particular buildings were deemed to be of import to the neighborhood as a whole because they help to embody what had been there as a bridge to what would be there, and to keep a pedestrian scale and use of materials. Facades are a different animal, and are not full buildings and do not change the arrangement of buildings on a site. They can be removed and put back. They provide a certain placemaking and a certain cue to architects about materials and style. The style and materials of new buildings with preserved facades often use modern materials and styling in a way that's complementary to the preserved/renovated facades. We see examples of this in Clarendon. It can work either way.

Commissioner Iacomini made a motion to strike 5b from the main motion. Commissioner Gutshall seconded the motion.

Commissioner Harner stated that when reading the sector plan there is nothing that discusses the level of flexibility for historic preservation. Both the Promenade and 15th Street North presumably want retail porosity or outdoor cafes, but there is nothing in the sector plan that talks about how much of the facade has to be preserved or in what manner. He is concerned that a hard and fast rule in a sector plan does not give guidance one way or another and it should be discussed in a site plan process. 5b merely says that standard order is followed and the Historic and Landmarks Review Board (HALRB) in the site plan process will implement the intent of a sector plan and it cannot be used as an edict. Commissioner Iacomini feels there is an opinion that sector plans are policy and guidance and not statute. By leaving the language in the draft report, facades are called out and their presence is important and leaves the discussion to the site plans. 5b lets them be eliminated more easily and that is not leaving the discussion to the site plan.

The motion to amend failed 2-8 with Commissioners Iacomini and Gutshall in favor, and Commissioners Brown, Ciotti, Cole, Forinash, Gutshall, Harner, Hughes, Iacomini, Schroll, and Siegel against.

Commissioner Iacomini made a motion to amend the main motion to add an Item 7 that reads "The design of the civic building in the south Square should allow the first floor to be of an open design to facilitate community and other public uses." Commissioner Cole seconded the motion.

Commissioner Siegel asked about the difference between an open and closed design. Commissioner Iacomini responded she did not want to presuppose the type of openness.

The Planning Commission voted unanimously 10-0 to support the motion with Commissioners Brown, Ciotti, Cole, Forinash, Gutshall, Harner, Hughes, Iacomini, Schroll, and Siegel in support.

Commissioner Hughes made a motion to the base language which states the proposed heights and proposed that it should read "...the proposed heights, with the exception of the civic building which may have features exceeding fifty feet." Commissioner Ciotti seconded the motion.

Commissioner Hughes spoke to his motion and stated that he does not want to exchange the massing of the building but leave open the possibility that architects or a future site plan may present features to which are appealing to the Board at a later time that may exceed 50 feet without violating the compact with the community.

The Planning Commission voted unanimously 10-0 to support the motion with Commissioners Brown, Ciotti, Cole, Forinash, Gutshall, Harner, Hughes, Iacomini, Schroll, and Siegel in support.

The Planning Commission voted to support the main motion as amended 9-0-1 with Commissioners Brown, Ciotti, Cole, Forinash, Gutshall, Harner, Hughes, Schroll, and Siegel in support and Commissioner Iacomini abstaining.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Arlington County Planning Commission

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Forinash". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

Christopher Forinash  
Planning Commission Chair